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The Australian Indigenous foodscape from missions to media: food as a tool in the Australian colonial project

A dissertation submitted to fulfil requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

This is to certify that to the best of my knowledge the content of this dissertation is my own work. This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or other purposes.

I certify that the intellectual content of this dissertation is the product of my own work and that all the assistance received in preparing this dissertation and sources have been acknowledged.

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Funding Declaration

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Acknowledgement of Country

This dissertation was written on the traditional lands of the Gadigal, Cammeraygal, and Guringai peoples of the Eora nation. This dissertation speaks to the cultural memories and heritage of many groups of Indigenous people across Australia and acknowledges their ownership of, and generosity in sharing, traditional knowledge. I acknowledge their custodianship of, and right to, country, and the pain and displacement caused by the ongoing processes of colonisation. I recognise that the land known collectively as Australia was never ceded.

This research contains images of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Abstract

This dissertation investigates key aspects of the social, ethical and environmental challenges faced by the developing Australian Indigenous food industry. I prioritise the value of social and environmental ethics and examine the relationship of both of these to the Australian foodspace. In doing so, I highlight areas of concern that have had, currently have, or will in the future have, an impact on attitudes towards Indigenous food and culture. Ethical strategies are essential for the development of state and federal food security and bio-knowledge policies, food production and hospitality development. Additionally, diverse media and social discourse prioritising Indigenous perspectives is needed to disrupt Australian leadership and business and consumer attitudes to Indigenous knowledge, spirituality, and food. Using critical discourse analysis and a food systems approach, I explore culinary cringe and how narrative representations made by Australian food system actors form a malleable contemporary foodspace.

I investigate the use of food as a tool in the Australian colonial project, particularly the colonial religious project as rolled out in missions. This trajectory outlines a cyclical interest in Indigenous foods throughout the nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Addressing complexities faced by a now burgeoning contemporary native foods industry I assess contemporary native foods businesses' transparency regarding benefit sharing models. This provides the opportunity to analyse the impact of narrative, branding and intellectual property on the Australian foodscape and provide a more complete assessment of the impact

of historical food systems on contemporary foodscapes, particularly in the hospitality industry and digital media space. The following questions drive my research:

1. How have past and contemporary Indigenous communities worked with edible flora and fauna as part of cultural and economic practice?
2. How has the insidious experience of shame and stigma perpetrated by colonising forces on Indigenous Australians impacted the development of the Australian foodscape?
3. How is information on, and representation of, Indigenous foods disseminated by Australian and international media?
4. Is Indigenous food at risk of colonisation rather than the subject of a productive, benefit-sharing relationship?
5. What are the responsibilities of hospitality businesses and consumers regarding innovative business models and modes of interacting with Indigenous communities and their cultural knowledge?

Keywords

Aboriginal peoples, Australia, colonialism, culinary cringe, foodscape, food systems, food violence, Indigenous Peoples, narrative, native foods, sacrality, seeking practices, structural conditions.

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In addition to my acknowledgements to past and present Indigenous peoples I offer my thanks to my supervisor Professor Carole M. Cusack, staff and peers in the Department of Studies in Religion, at The University of Sydney my parents Anna and James and my patient friends.

A Note on completing doctoral work during COVID-19

As an early career researcher, and younger doctoral candidate I am aware that my attempts to approach the topics I write on with an academic generosity and open eyes and ears, while navigating the structural realities of research practice, will not always be as sophisticated as I would want. The global events of 2020-2022 have shifted the practice of research; cultural and social scientists, research scientists, medical scientists, economists, those focused on epidemiology and those experts in collective trauma now have a lived experience of global change which will change the course of their disciplines. The threats racial and class inequality poses to the health and safety of every member of society have become impossible to ignore, and trauma became something every human experienced or witnessed. The beginning and end of my candidature was marked by grief. At the beginning a personal grief with the loss, in close succession, of my father and grandmother and at the end an experience of collective grief and trauma as the COVID -19 pandemic reshaped our world. For Indigenous people globally, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia, collective, generational grief has been held amongst communities for generations. I have hope that the global communities experience of collective grief will afford greater empathy, action and increased alliance for First Nations communities.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Preamble: Australia is a young nation. Australia is not a young country

‘Notions of what is considered edible or inedible are culturally constructed, what is considered disgusting in one particular culture is regarded with delight by another.’

Blake Singley¹

‘Man feeds not only on proteins, fats, carbohydrates, but also on symbols, myths, fantasies.’

Claude Fischler²

Research into Australian food cultures and foodscapes starts with the oldest, yet most recently fashionable, foods: native foods that have sustained Aboriginal groups physically and spiritually for tens of thousands of years. The complex cultures of the multitude of different Aboriginal groups have been under siege from European colonisers since the First Fleet landed on Australian shores in 1788.³ Native foods form part of these cultures and have mostly been rejected by White Australia: there has been resistance and lack of interest stemming from the combination of cultural misconceptions, lack of knowledge and exposure, and the shadow of ‘cultural cringe.’ The imported food culture of White Australia in the 1800s, which was rolled out in mission spaces and in the form of rationing, has enacted a form of ‘food violence’ against Aboriginal people the repercussions of which resonate in community, and individual, health outcomes. This dissertation acknowledges the continuing process of colonisation, the struggle for an improved food culture amongst Aboriginal communities and focuses on the foodscapes formed in the wake of a contemporary revival of interest in Australian native ingredients.

¹ Blake Singley, “‘Hardly Anything Fit for Man to eat’: Food and Colonialism in Australia’, *History Australia* 9, no. 3 (2016): 33.

² Claude Fischler. ‘Food habits, social change and the nature/culture dilemma’, *Anthropology of Food* 19, no. 6 (1980): 937.

³ Katherine Roscoe, *Islands of Incarceration and Empire Building in Colonial Australia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021)

The Australian hospitality space is a vibrant representation of a multicultural society, yet native foods are rarely encountered by the average consumer.⁴ Native food industry stakeholders and advocates may hope that future Australian cuisine will incorporate and appreciate the extensive, diverse range of endogenous produce but progress is slow. Growing interest in native foods is part of a belated national acknowledgement of the relationships between people and country in Australia that existed for thousands of years prior to invasion. Food should play a significant role in efforts towards reconciliation and hopes of decolonisation within Australian culture. The deep relationship between food and cultural, economic, and personal life results in industry challenges beyond the need to educate consumers on the new taste sensations gracing their restaurant table. As the native food sector grows, the greatest ethical concern is ensuring that the actors (both producers and consumers) involved in all stages of production are held to standards of operation which avoid cultural appropriation and actively engage in ongoing community education and collaboration to ensure both the recognition of, and benefit sharing with, Aboriginal people and organisations. Chef and food politics researcher Jenny Dorsey identifies the pitfalls of the professional hospitality industry's engagement with concepts of fusion food, and the difficulty navigating a responsibility towards ethical cooking responsibility. Dorsey's work forms a framework for Chapter Four of this dissertation. Dorsey identifies key challenges in the industry, which include equity of access and proper representation. She engages with the systemic challenges that result in a narrow representation in food business, writing that

Only privileged segments of the population – often affluent white men – can feasibly start a food business, acquire press and media support, and be rewarded (especially financially) for their work... [Almost] all food is fusion ... but not all fusion is equal. Some foods have evolved through migration or trading routes, others have changed under instances of colonialism, imperialism and war. The results of these past interactions still play out.... [so] we need nuance in how we as chefs educate, frame and present food.⁵

⁴ Andrew Junor, 'Backward, British and Bland', *First Bite*, Radio National, 9 August 2014, accessed 14 October 2020, at <https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/archived/rnfirstbite/backward2c-british-and-bland3f/5655914>; Lara Anderson and Heather Merle Benbow, 'Cultural Indigestion in Multicultural Australia: Fear of "Foreign" Foods in Australian Media', *Gastronomica* 15, no. 1 (2015): 35.

⁵ Jenny Dorsey, 'Why can't I just cook what I want and like? and other common sentiments in the food industry, examined', Chef Jenny Dorsey, 4 July 2020, accessed 8 August 2020, at <https://www.jennydorsey.co/single-post/2020/07/03/Why-Cant-I-Just-Cook-What-I-Want-Like>.

Dorsey's short form work on fusion and social privilege can be applied effectively to the native foods industry in Australia and is particularly useful when analysing the narrative created by Australian and international media.

In contrast to the models of profit driven mass agri-business, small-scale farmers and producers of native foods form a rich alternative link between community projects, activism, and the degustation menus of fine dining restaurants. As demand for native foods increases, so does the need for providers and farmers to remain alert to the complex ethical landscape of reconciliation, decolonisation, and ethical consumption. I do not dismiss the strenuous nature of farming, nor the difficulties and insecurities associated with the profession. Australia saw a 40% drop in the number of farmers between 1981 and 2011, and during the 2002-2003 drought there was an 11% drop in farming population. 56% of farmers worked 49 hours or more a week, and income rates were significantly lower than other occupations.⁶ However, I reject the political mythology of the Australian farmer as primary custodian of the land and the exclusion of Aboriginal communities inherent to that narrative.⁷

The landscape of food trends is driven by the acceptance of middle-class consumers and 'foodie' subculture.⁸ In Australia, burgeoning contemporary interest in endogenous (native) foods may demonstrate the shedding of biases that have previously marked White Australian food and consumer markets. Regardless, there has been a consistent preference for those native foods which are not marketed as such (macadamia, lemon myrtle, shellfish, rockpool crustaceans) and a lingering wariness of native greens, fruits, and meats. The intentional isolation of a product from its heritage is a historical trend. Cultural historian Blake Singley notes that kangaroo cuts were often known as kangaroo venison due to an aesthetic similarity to a meat more familiar, and palatable, to Europeans.⁹ An emerging narrative change can be identified on Australian television screens and in a proliferation of articles that emerged in

⁶ 'Farmers and Farming', *The Australian Bureau of Statistics*, 11 December 2012, accessed 22 October 2017, at <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4102.0Main+Features10Dec+2012>

⁷ Garnham Bryant, 'The Fallen Hero: Masculinity, Shame and Farmer Suicide in Australia', *Gender, place and culture: A journal of feminist geography* 22, no. 1 (2014): 67–82. See also: Mayes, Christopher. *Unsettling Food Politics: Agriculture, Dispossession and Sovereignty in Australia*. (London: Rowman & Littlefield International Ltd, 2018).

⁸ Josée Johnston and Shyon Baumann, 'The Culinary Other: Seeking Exoticism', in *Foodies: Democracy and Distinction in the Gourmet Foodscape*, eds. Josée Johnston and Shyon Baumann (New York: Routledge, 2014), 86 – 111.

⁹ Singley, 'Hardly Anything Fit for Man to eat', 30.

late 2015-early 2016 championing the quandong, the warrigal green, and the saltbush.¹⁰ While this attention mitigates resistance due to ignorance, it may also foster culinary elitism and exclusion. The most easily accessible native foods are found in the form of delicatessen products, such as specialty pickles, jams, and relishes.¹¹ These products facilitate gentle cultural acclimation, nudging, or easing, the palate of non-Aboriginal Australia into the flavours of Australia. However, these products are found in specialty food stores with premium price tags due to small production batches from small harvest crops: this impacts their accessibility.

A perception of food as indulgence is not relegated to the wealthy: much of the poor nutrition connected to rising levels of lifestyle illness amongst poorer socio-economic groups may be attributed to foods which are pleasurable and achieve a sensory ‘bliss point’ (food production jargon for a crave point).¹² As the ‘bliss point’ is reliant on fat, sugar, and salt, these are commonly nutritionally wanting products. Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of cultural capital is at play here, Carlijn B. M. Kamphuis et al. endeavoured to empirically test associations of socioeconomic position with cultural capital and food choices, finding that ‘cultural capital may be a promising determinant for (socioeconomic inequalities in) food choices.’¹³ Kamphuis et al. make the case that cultural capital may be a ‘potentially powerful explanation for inequalities in food choices.’¹⁴ They continue to specify that cultural capital can be inherited and used as a form of currency, a form of cultural capital that is white, middle to upper class.¹⁵ Following on from the theory of Bourdieu and the empirical support of Kamphuis et al., it stands that the transference of White cultural capital onto Indigenous foods may lift them out of the reach of lower socioeconomic groups and large swathes of the Australian population, including Aboriginal people who may have a more distant relationship with their culture as a result of forced removal and /or, assimilation practices. The elitism of

¹⁰ *MasterChef Australia*, *Kriol Kitchen*, and *Chefs Table* will all be discussed in Chapter Four as examples of this phenomenon. Denise Carter, ‘15 Food Trends for 2015’, *The Cairns Post*, published 24 January 2015, 10; Sarah Hudson, ‘Bushfood Menu’, *Weekly Times (Melbourne, Australia)*, 5 October 2016, 59.

¹¹ Examples of these include products from Kurrajong Native Foods, <http://www.bushtuckershop.com/>; The Outback Spirit range, <http://outbackspirit.com.au/shop/>; The Outback Pride range, <http://www.outbackpride.com.au/>; and a 2015 limited edition Blueberry and LillyPilly jam by French company Bonne Maman.

¹² Michael Moss, ‘The Extraordinary Science of Addictive Junk Food’, *The New York Times*, 20 February 2013, at <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/24/magazine/the-extraordinary-science-of-junk-food.html>.

¹³ Carlijn B. M. Kamphuis, Tessa Jansen, Johan P. Mackenbach and Frank J. van Lenthe, ‘Bourdieu’s Cultural Capital in Relation to Food Choices: A Systematic Review of Cultural Capital Indicators and an Empirical Proof of Concept’, *PLoS One* 10, no. 8 (2015).

¹⁴ Kamphuis et al. ‘Bourdieu’s Cultural Capital’, 16, 3.

¹⁵ Kamphuis et al. ‘Bourdieu’s Cultural Capital’, 16, 3.

food raises ethical questions of access and cultural capital. Additionally, balance must also be sought between the appreciation of native foods by mainstream Australia, an ease of access to that produce, and efforts to retain the burgeoning native agricultural industry in Australia and Aboriginal communities amid fears it could become controlled by big agribusiness or even an import market (as has happened in the macadamia industry).¹⁶ In addition to addressing the complex exploitation of large-scale foodscapes, I explore how a colonial fear of place, body and food has morphed into a complex performance of the cultural rejection of Indigenous peoples and a system of bureaucratic structures which enmesh Indigenous communities in a maze of structural inequality. The connection between the physical human body and the environment, especially the edible environment, is a connection to which I regularly return.

1.2 Disciplinary commentary and research methods

This research was written under the supervision of Carole Cusack, Professor of Religious Studies at The University of Sydney. I completed my Undergraduate Coursework and Research Honours in the Department of Studies in Religion and developed a strong understanding of the importance and value of interdisciplinary research. Under the guidance of the academics I worked with, I was faced with certain challenges as I developed this doctoral dissertation. The history of the discipline of religious studies, which is rooted predominantly in comparative studies, has strong links with anthropology, which has a complex, and often tense, relationship with Indigenous peoples. The work of European anthropologists focused on Indigenous peoples globally, and has contributed to the displacement of Indigenous bodies, corruption or co-option of (or colonisation of) knowledge patterns, and the development of policies that have curtailed freedom for many people. More recently, the work of historically problematic anthropologists may be useful to rebuild, and repatriate, community knowledge and practice decades, even centuries later, as some communities finally have the support and funding to rebuild.¹⁷ Certainly, it is important for researchers to acknowledge that, despite the free and easy proliferation of knowledge that has

¹⁶ Tyne Logan, 'WA bush food industry struggles to keep up with demand', *ABC Rural*, 4 November 2015, at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-11-04/bush-food-demand-too-big-for-supply-wa/6912922>.

¹⁷ See the work of James L. Cox, *Restoring the Chain of Memory T.G.H Strehlow and the repatriation of Australian Indigenous Knowledge*, (Sheffield: Equinox, 2018).; The AIATSIS work with communities to assist with the negotiation for repatriation of knowledge (or the 'return of cultural heritage') see Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 'Return of Cultural Heritage', accessed 5 May 2022, at <https://aiatsis.gov.au/about/what-we-do/return-cultural-heritage>; see also Martin Thomas and Beatrice Bijon (dir.) *Etched in Bone* (2019) at <https://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/the-screen-guide/t/etched-in-bone-2019/37434/>

occurred at a rapid rate in the late twentieth century and beyond, that knowledge may still belong to particular communities that are studied.¹⁸ I endeavour to highlight these tensions frequently and identify that the history and politics of demanding cultural information commonly serves academic research and not necessarily the lives of those sharing their cultural knowledge.

To continue discussing disciplinary hurdles and challenges, I acknowledge that comparative religion, while a useful tool to build structure and commentary around the common experiences of sacrality felt, and developed, by humans, is inherently problematic when utilised in discussions of Indigenous religion. Historically, the comparative religious discipline has been (and still tends to be) developed in Eurocentric institutions and environments and does not yet have a large body of work invested in decolonising the practice.¹⁹ I engage in comparative lines of investigation as carefully as possible while acknowledging that one of the great challenges that has contributed to resistance to positive change, acknowledgement and true inclusion of non-Western peoples in globalised narratives, is the application of Western thought patterns to other communities.

The creation of new knowledge is part of the purpose of doctoral research. I believe that this dissertation contributes newness by situating a great variety of non-academic sources in an academic framework. However, I reject the assumption that newness equates to increased value. I seek to appreciate and recognise the diverse and existing knowledge that has been colonised and/or rejected rather than layering my own voice over voices that have been silenced in favour of newness and progress. To do this, I engage regularly in analysis and criticism of non-Indigenous actors working within the Australian foodspace, in order to ensure academic rigour and technique is demonstrated. My research utilises existing and publicly available materials, I felt strongly I did not want to complete field research to satisfy a need for ‘newness’. The knowledge and emotional energy of Indigenous Australians has already been regularly taxed, and my doctoral project better serves by accessing the wealth of

¹⁸ James L. Cox, *A Phenomenology of Indigenous Religions: Theory and Practice* (London: Bloomsbury, 2022), 221.

¹⁹ Malory Nye, ‘Decolonizing the Study of Religion’, *Open Library of Humanities* 5, no. 1 (2019): 43; Sara Alnufaishan and Nawar Sari Alanezi, ‘Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Decolonising Religious and Human Rights Education’, *British Journal of Religious Education* 43, no. 1 (2021): 91–102; Liam Gearon, ‘Religious Education and the Pandemic: Postcolonial Perspectives’, *British Journal of Religious Education* 43, no. 1 (2021): 9–22; Liam Gearon and Arniika Kuusisto, ‘Decolonising the Religious Education Curriculum’, *British Journal of Religious Education* 43, no. 1 (2021): 1–8.

existing literature, including a myriad of interviews and media articles, as data. This method acknowledges the tensions that exist as a result of the history of anthropological interaction with, in particular, Indigenous people. Indigenous communities rarely have positive memories of early exposure to research, the result of which was frequently the misuse of the knowledge gained and consequent social and cultural harm. This is reflected in Linda Tuhiwai Smith's 2012 *Decolonizing Methodologies*: '[t]he word itself, "research", is probably one of the dirtiest words in the Indigenous vocabulary. When mentioned in many Indigenous contexts, it stirs up silence, it conjures up bad memories, it raises a smile that is knowing and distrustful.²⁰ The methodological desire to work with an existing public record over obtaining new data is interwoven with those conversations about labour and knowledge which have come to the forefront of public discourse within the 2020 conversations on race and equality spurred by the prompt globalisation of the American Black Lives Matter movement. This process of globalisation has expanded to represent Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour around the world. The movement regularly requests a reprieve from the demand for information or intellectual and emotional knowledge from Black, Indigenous and People of Colour, pointing to the wealth of resources and materials already produced. This approach asks for White allies, White people, and those outside of these communities to 'do the work.' This has been coupled with a renewed focus on the need for the solidarity aspects of allyship to be at the forefront of people's behaviour: a call for action over acknowledgement. These sentiments are consistent with Indigenous Australian voices and themes in decolonisation methodologies.

My background in the comparative study of religion and the social sciences has shored up my ability to approach ideas and narratives as a complex whole rather than seek to find a secret kernel of 'truth' within text, data or dialogue. This approach aligns with efforts to challenge the rational, 'truth' seeking core of Western academic thought, as it has been entrenched as the preferential form of knowledge through a global academic dominance that has fostered the exclusion, and limitation, of non-English speaking academics and has been shored up by colonial projects. I would like to acknowledge that as an English speaking, White student, I have automatically benefited from all these disparities.

²⁰ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: ZED, 2012), 30.

The speed at which the global community shares and processes information and mobilises action has been supercharged by the speed of digital communication and is no longer in line with the speed and timeline of systemic change. This speed is a challenge faced in every area, including research, and it has been challenging to keep this project in pace with industry changes even across my, relatively short, four-year candidature. However, work like this, create newness by looking beyond the boundaries of academic canon will continue to add value, and hopefully alter the perception of what knowledge is considered valuable.

Globally, Indigenous people's food systems are inextricably connected to Country, a relationship which, in turn, is interwoven with issues of self-determination, livelihood, health, cultural and spiritual heritage, and gender.²¹ Ongoing loss of lands and Country and the dominant agri-food model further threatens the stability of Indigenous people's food systems worldwide.²² The work of Stephanie Lemke and Treena Delormier is useful for approaching academic engagement with Indigenous peoples and narratives. Lemke and Delormier determine that principles of 'respect, responsibility, and relationships, and an openness to different worldviews, can facilitate a bridging of Indigenous and Western approaches in research and community action conducted in partnership with Indigenous people.'²³

In Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are more likely to be food insecure than non-Indigenous individuals.²⁴ The reasons for this disparity are manifold and embedded in histories of colonisation and dispossession that have disconnected Indigenous people from Country and systems of knowledge transmitted through generations.²⁵ Structural inequalities, characterised by lack of access to Country and other resources, and threaten Indigenous people's food systems and nutrition, undermine the resilience of individuals and communities and contribute to environmental degradation, loss of biodiversity, intensify competing demands for land for production of food or fuel. This can culminate in unsustainable and

²¹ Land may also be called Country.

²² Stephanie Lemke and Treena Delormier, 'Indigenous Peoples' food systems, nutrition, and gender: Conceptual and methodological considerations', *Maternal and Child Nutrition* 13, no. S3 (2017): 1.

²³ Lemke and Delormier, 'Indigenous Peoples' food systems, nutrition, and gender', 1.

²⁴ Ami N. Seivwright, Zoe Callis and Paul Flatau, 'Food Insecurity and Socioeconomic Disadvantage in Australia', *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 17 (2020): 5; Jeromey B. Temple and Joanna Russell, 'Food Insecurity among Older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders', *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 15, no. 8 (2018): 1766. Similar trends are seen in the Canadian context: Graham Riches and Valerie Tarasuk, 'Canada: Thirty Years of Food Charity and Public Policy Neglect', in *First World Hunger Revisited*, eds. Graham Riches and Tina Silvasti (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 44–45.

²⁵ Lemke and Delormier, 'Indigenous Peoples' food systems, nutrition, and gender...', 2.

unhealthy consumption patterns and lifestyles, and centralisation of power in market structures.²⁶ Interference by state and corporate actors continues to dispossess Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, impacting access to their Country and undermining opportunities for communities to develop processes of self-determination while also violating rights to adequate food and nutrition.²⁷ This interference and violation forms part of a campaign of food violence levelled at these communities.

Land, and therefore Country, forms the site on which this conflict is grounded. Lemke and Delormier write that land is ‘an often-unrecognized resource issue that has a gendered dimension, underpinning food, environmental, and migration-related insecurities.’ That land is an unrecognised resource is not entirely accurate in the Australian case, where land rights are a well-known issue (landmark land rights case *The Mabo Decision* [1992] forms a key part of the Australian primary and high school curriculum) and a relatively recent feature of our legal system. Lemke and Delormier also conclude that a loss of land and Country is often concealed under the veil of development. This much is true in Australia. While community consultation is expected, there are regular instances of opposition from Traditional Owners (particularly against the mining industry) which fail to prevent changes deemed important for national economic progress.²⁸ Research must operate in an ethical space which requires two key sets of characteristics. Firstly, the inclusion of core principles of respect, responsibility and relationships, and secondly, the intention to contribute to ‘a progressive way forward ... enabling the building of relationships among researchers and Indigenous people for the benefit of all.’²⁹

I utilise journalism to explore how this genre of discourse provide examples of narrative framing while impacting both the public reception of Indigenous ecological knowledge and the formation of accepted narratives of identity. While journalistic standards dictate that news should be presented as objectively as possible, and the profession of journalism maintains its credibility by questioning and cross-checking sources, the proliferation of independent, unregulated outlets such as blogs and social media has begun to reshape the boundaries of media. I will explore the story construction, social frames and distribution of media sources

²⁶ Lemke and Delormier, ‘Indigenous Peoples’ food systems, nutrition, and gender...,’ 1.

²⁷ Lemke and Delormier, ‘Indigenous Peoples’ food systems, nutrition, and gender...,’ 3.

²⁸ Lemke and Delormier, ‘Indigenous Peoples’ food systems, nutrition, and gender...,’ 3.

²⁹ Lemke and Delormier, ‘Indigenous Peoples’ food systems, nutrition, and gender...,’ 6.

while undertaking content analysis and acknowledging the value of, and simultaneous danger of, the broadening boundaries of journalism. I regard my approach as in keeping with critical discourse analysis, I assess and analyse choices of language and expression, and consider the importance of the sources genre when I approach content. In keeping with M and T Bloor, I understand discourse to be found in many forms; written language, gestures, visual and aural.³⁰ Critical discourse analysis (CDA) can be effectively used by disciplines that study social groups and structures.³¹ I am particularly interested by the concept that discourse is an ‘integral aspect of power and control.’³² It is this understanding which guides my own use of CDA. In addition, Bloor and Bloor discuss the importance of genre in CDA. Genre may dictate the form of text, the purpose of a text but also is a term for ‘social events that use regular linguistic and discursal patterns,’ cultural storytelling and Dreaming stories form a genre as do the colonial mission diaries and newspaper records that I use in this research.³³ To summarise, I have approached texts from the perspective of a discourse analyst seeking to identify how discourse reflects and constructs social problems, how ideologies, injustices and power structures are preserved in language and to investigate the creation of meaning.³⁴ I understand these tenets of critical discourse analysis to be directly relevant to all scholars of societies, communities and religions. Throughout this research, I chose to utilise textual material that was already available, and frequently prolific, rather than requiring further labour, both emotional and professional, from Indigenous people. The history and politics of demanding cultural information commonly serves academic research and not necessarily the lives of those sharing their cultural knowledge.

1.3 Literature Review

The following literature review forms an introduction to key texts which have greatly influenced the content, or approach, of this research. I have sought to prioritise the use of media resources and texts written or produced by Indigenous Australians. Early literature focused on the peculiarity, or ‘otherness’, of Indigenous foods as colonial authors were driven by a sense of discovery and desire for survival. Contemporary writers respond instead to a greater public interest in, and enthusiasm for, native foods in Australia. A consistent

³⁰ Meriel Bloor and Thomas Bloor, *The Practice of Critical Discourse Analysis: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2007), 1.

³¹ Bloor and Bloor, *The Practice of Critical Discourse Analysis*, 3.

³² Bloor and Bloor, *The Practice of Critical Discourse Analysis*, 4.

³³ Bloor and Bloor, *The Practice of Critical Discourse Analysis*, 9.

³⁴ Bloor and Bloor, *The Practice of Critical Discourse Analysis*, 12.

theme of domestic interest has remained in the literature, cookbooks for example are still a key source of information about the history, and preparation of, native foods. I contribute to this canon by engaging with a wide range of textual sites, all publicly available, in which native food is centred. In so doing I embrace democratic access to information and recognise that valuable knowledge is found in a wide range of voices, genres and mediums. This approach is important as First Nations voices have historically been pushed to the outskirts of academia, or simply excluded.

While it is not practical to detail specific newspaper articles in this section, I utilise a number of platforms regularly including the *Australian Broadcasting Corporation*, *The National Indigenous Times*, *Special Broadcasting Service Australia*, and the lifestyle publications *Time Out* and *Gourmet Traveller*. Articles were primarily sourced from digital platforms. There is a significant canon of literature detailing specifics on endogenous plant species and their uses. A growing area of research is the impact of intellectual property legislation on the native food industry, Jocelyn Bosse, Margaret Raven and Daniel Robinson lead academic research in this area.³⁵ Indigenous cultural intellectual property (ICIP) is key to the positive development of the native foods industry in Australia.³⁶ ICIP incorporates literary, performing and artistic works (which are classified under copyright); languages; types of knowledge, including spiritual knowledge; tangible and intangible cultural property; Indigenous ancestral remains and genetic material; cultural environmental resources; sites of Indigenous significance; and documentation of Indigenous heritage.³⁷

³⁵ The work of these academics is prolific. Some more recent examples include the following: Kamalesh Adhikari, Jocelyn Bosse, Allison Fish and Brad Sherman, Intellectual property and related legal issues facing the Australian Native Food Industry, *Agrifutures Australia*, 18 no. 84 (2018). David Claudie, David Jefferson, Jocelyn Bosse, Margaret Raven, Daniel Robinson, 'Australia's plants and animals have long been used without Indigenous consent. Now Queensland has taken a stand', *The Conversation*, 16 September 2020 at <https://theconversation.com/australias-plants-and-animals-have-long-been-used-without-indigenous-consent-now-queensland-has-taken-a-stand-144813> Robinson, Daniel, Margaret Raven, Elizabeth Makin, Donna Kalfatak, Francis Hickey, and Trinison Tari, 'Legal Geographies of Kava, Kastom and Indigenous Knowledge: Next Steps Under the Nagoya Protocol Geoforum,' no. 118 (2021): 169–179.; Robinson, Daniel, and Margaret Raven, 'Identifying and Preventing Biopiracy in Australia: Patent Landscapes and Legal Geographies for Plants with Indigenous Australian Uses', *Australian Geographer* 48 no. 3 (2017): 311–331.

³⁶ Alexis Moran, 'What is Indigenous cultural intellectual property and copyright and how can I respect it?' *ABC*, 11 May 2020, at <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-05-11/what-is-indigenous-cultural-intellectual-property-and-copyright/12150308>

³⁷ Taken from the Ten True Tracks principles developed by Terri Janke and company. See: Moran, 'What is Indigenous cultural intellectual property and copyright and how can I respect it?'

Many of the more in-depth texts investigating plant species focus on geographically specific regions, such as Margaret-Mary Turner Neale's *Bush Foods* (1994) which catalogues the foods of the Arrernte people, and Rees Campbell's *Eat Wild Tasmanian* (2017) which catalogues Tasmanian flora and fauna.³⁸ Cookbooks abound, more recent publications include Meriam chef Normie Bero's *Mabu Mabu* (2022) and Adnyamathanha and Dieri man Damien Coulthard and Rebecca Sullivan's *Warndu Mai* (2019).³⁹ Other texts incorporate investigative research with recipe collections. This is the case with John Newton's *The Oldest Foods on Earth* (2016).⁴⁰ Newton fills pages with recipes from culinary luminaries including Mark Olive, Peter Gilmore, Maggie Beer, Clayton Donovan, Jean Paul Bruneteau, and Beau Clugston. Newton posits food as a key tool for reconciliation, arguing that the connection of consumption with identity can be utilised to connect non-Indigenous Australians to land, Country and Indigenous cultures. To provide a historical context to this disconnect the work of Tim Rowse (*White Flour, White Power: from rations to Citizenship in Central Australia*) and Alison Wishart ('The way to a man's heart is through his stomach' – food as an assimilation strategy: re-writing the menu at Mapoon mission') unpack the use of food and rationing as part of assimilation and indoctrination in Australian mission environments.⁴¹ Work by Christopher Mayes, *Unsettling Food Politics: Agriculture, Dispossession and Sovereignty in Australia* (2018) has assessed the role of agriculture in Australian nation and colony building practices.⁴² Historian Bill Gammage's *The Biggest Estate on Earth: How Aborigines Made Australia* (2011) is part of an emerging canon which challenges accepted perceptions of Australian landscape.⁴³ They suggest that commonly held understandings of land as 'virgin' are inaccurate as they dismiss pre-existing land management practices by Traditional Owners, particularly the use of fire. Gammage, a historian, relies heavily on artistic depictions of landscape. This approach earned criticism from those who reject artwork as reliable source material, despite artwork having long been a way for communities to

³⁸ Margaret-Mary Turner Neale, *Bush Foods: Foods from Central Australia = Nhenhe-areye anwerne-arle arlkweme*, (Alice Springs: IAD Press, 1994); Rees Campbell, *Eat Wild Tasmanian* (Hobart: Fullers Publishing, 2017).

³⁹ Normie Bero, *Mabu Mabu* (Melbourne: Hardie Grant, 2022); Damien Coulthard and Rebecca Sullivan, *Warndu Mai (Good Food)* (Sydney: Hachette Australia, 2019).

⁴⁰ John Newton, *The Oldest Foods on Earth* (Sydney: New South, 2016).

⁴¹ Tim Rowse, *White Flour, White Power: from Rations to Citizenship in Central Australia* (Melbourne: Cambridge University, 1998); Alison Wishart, 'The way to a man's heart is through his stomach' – food as an assimilation strategy: re-writing the menu at Mapoon mission', *TEXT Journal*, 14:2, (2010), 1-26.

⁴² Christopher Mayes, *Unsettling Food Politics: Agriculture, Dispossession and Sovereignty in Australia*, (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018).

⁴³ Bill Gammage, *The Biggest Estate on Earth: How Aborigines Made Australia* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 2011).

preserve and communicate knowledge. I seek to question choices made by dominant power brokers on what forms of knowledge are legitimated.

1.3.1 Indigenous voices

In addition to the news articles I use throughout my research (which I find amplify varied and current perspectives from First Nations people), I consider the 2011 *Aboriginal people, bush foods knowledge and products from central Australia: Ethical guidelines for commercial bush food research, industry and enterprises* produced by the Merne Altyerre-ipenhe Reference group as a key source which underpins my approach. This is an important First Nations authored text, yet it is not regularly referenced by organisations or researchers working in the field.⁴⁴ The guidelines aim to address discrepancies between the financial or material returns for Aboriginal bush food harvesters and custodians compared to those for people involved in other parts of the bush foods industry value chain. It works to develop an industry code of conduct focused on an ethical and socially responsible framework. The group identifies two key points of tension:

1. A hunter-gatherer-cultivator system with a collective, custodial relationship to land, resources and knowledge embedded within a customary law system that negotiates rights and responsibilities
2. A Western monetary-based system with prescribed ownership of property and knowledge resources and legal systems based on an individual's or company's property rights.⁴⁵

Aboriginal communities are aware that 'bush foods are trading internationally with a monetary currency rather than as small, local and regional trade based around social relationships.'⁴⁶ As a result, the reference group seeks to:

⁴⁴ Merne Altyerre-ipenhe (Food from the Creation time) Reference Group, Josie Douglas and Fiona Walsh, *Aboriginal people, bush foods knowledge and products from central Australia: Ethical guidelines for commercial bush food research, industry and enterprises*, DKCRC Report 71 (Ninti One Limited, Alice Springs, 2011).

⁴⁵ Merne Altyerre-ipenhe Reference Group, Douglas, Walsh, 'Aboriginal people, bush foods knowledge and products from central Australia,' 7.

⁴⁶ Merne Altyerre-ipenhe Reference Group, Douglas, Walsh, 'Aboriginal people, bush foods knowledge and products from central Australia,' 10.

1. recognise Aboriginal peoples' rights and interests relating to seeds, fruits and plants and their associated knowledge, traditions and practices
2. Encourage equitable opportunities for negotiating commercial outcomes and benefit sharing in the production of bush foods
3. Guide the proper management of intellectual property relating to Aboriginal knowledge of bush foods management, harvest, preparation and trade.⁴⁷

The reference group presses the importance of stakeholders in the native food industry engaging appropriately with existing customary systems in the communities with whom they work. They specify that custodianship and care of bush food species on Aboriginal managed land has produced the most reliable sources of wild-grown native foods and, therefore, 'Aboriginal people should expect to benefit from commercialisation of particular bush food species to a greater extent than has happened to date.'⁴⁸ Furthermore, the reference group calls for greater consideration of how customary systems, for example, communities requesting access and permission from other communities, can be incorporated into the structures that guide commercial trade.⁴⁹

In addition to the work of the Merne Altyerre-ipenhe Reference Group, I use the work of Bruce Pascoe, *Dark Emu, Black Seeds: Agriculture or Accident?* Whose line, 'You can't eat our food if you can't swallow our history' is chosen by journalists, reviewers and social media alike when referencing the subject.⁵⁰ Bruce Pascoe is a Yuin and Bunurong man of the Kulin nation. As a teacher, Aboriginal language researcher, fisherman, a farmer and writer he has most recently established a crowdfunded production and distribution business, Gurandgi Munjie, for the development of native foods.⁵¹ Bruce Pascoe himself provides a synopsis of his own text, borne of years of research into the true history of his people;

⁴⁷ Merne Altyerre-ipenhe Reference Group, Douglas, Walsh, 'Aboriginal people, bush foods knowledge and products from central Australia,' 10.

⁴⁸ Merne Altyerre-ipenhe Reference Group, Douglas, Walsh, 'Aboriginal people, bush foods knowledge and products from central Australia,' 13-14.

⁴⁹ Merne Altyerre-ipenhe Reference Group, Douglas, Walsh, 'Aboriginal people, bush foods knowledge and products from central Australia,' 13.

⁵⁰ Bruce Pascoe, *Dark Emu, Black Seeds: Agriculture or Accident?* (Broome: Magabala Books Aboriginal Corporation, 2014); Kirsten Bradley, 'Listen to this: Land Cultures - Bruce Pascoe - David Holmgren', *Milkwood*, 14 April 2016, accessed 19 November 2016, at <https://www.milkwood.net/2016/04/14/listen-land-cultures-bruce-pascoe-david-holmgren/>; Stephen Mudd, 'Bruce Pascoe and the Gurandgi Munjie project is trying to rewrite pre-colonial history', *Daily Advertiser*, 28 August 2016, accessed 15 November 2017, at <http://www.dailyadvertiser.com.au/story/4124513/challenging-the-story-of-first-peoples/>.

⁵¹ Bruce Pascoe, 'Sow the Seed: Aboriginal Agriculture', *Pozible*, 22 December 2015, accessed 14 November 2017, at <https://pozible.com/project/202236>

You can read other theories of Aboriginal culture, spirituality and economy in New Age texts or the books of over-enthusiastic researchers, but often they are making guesses to bridge the gaps in knowledge. Too often they ascribe all sorts of mystical wisdom to their subjects, but their earnest romanticism is unnecessary as the observations of the first explorers and settlers provide an enormous body of materials. In this book I am drawing on only a small sample of what is available to an Australia with a computer mouse or a library card... [to] emphasise the depth of the available material and the desperate need for a revision of our history.⁵²

Pascoe's *Dark Emu Black Seeds: Agriculture or Accident* (2014) is a vehicle for his campaign to reframe the assumption that Aboriginal Australians had an exclusively hunter-gatherer history.⁵³ Pascoe utilises the public record, particularly the records and diaries of settler colonists, to highlight inconsistencies in the narrative myth-making that have been utilised to justify dispossession. These myth-making practices have stunted Indigenous sovereignty in Australia and the Torres Strait and have reinforced the colonial program. They also enable the continuation of relationships built upon the legacy of colonialism.⁵⁴

Pascoe identifies a national agriculture strategy of environmental modification that existed long before European colonisation. He determines that there was no better way to justify enforcing the political position of 'Terra Nullius' than to suggest the land was not in use, that it was going to waste, and to ignore the recognisable structures across the landscape. Brook and Bowman point to an accepted fallacy of Australian landscapes being 'pristine' before European intervention.⁵⁵ Pascoe encourages independent, even amateur, research and hopes that there will be funding for archaeological and analytical exploration of Aboriginal history and due recognition of valuable culture(s) that have been dismissed for generations. More than this, Pascoe speaks of a hope that non-Aboriginal people will feel connected to the land, stating that 'we need non-Aboriginal people to love Australia' and to protect it in more meaningful and practical ways than the half-hearted efforts of self-serving politicians. 'Love'

⁵² Bruce Pascoe, *Dark Emu, Black Seeds: Agriculture or Accident?* (Broome: Magabala Books Aboriginal Corporation, 2014), 69.

⁵³ Bill Gammage levels similar challenges in *The Biggest Estate on Earth: How Aborigines Made Australia*

⁵⁴ Adele Wessell, "'We Will Show the Country': Bringing History to Life', *MC: A Journal of Media and Culture* 20, no. 5 (2017).

⁵⁵ Paul Humphries, 'Historical Indigenous use of aquatic resources in Australia's Murray-Darling Basin, and its implications for river management', *Ecological Management and Restoration* 8, no. 2 (2007): 110.

is used as a rallying call for progress, a call to move outside the capitalist ethic. Pascoe uses colonialist words to rock the foundation of colonialist culture in Australia drawing substantial evidence from both historical structures and practices, as well as historical attitudes, from the journals and logbooks of European explorers and settlers. Official historiography seems to have mainly avoided these valuable testimonies. This dissertation calls for an understanding of history as a narrative of identity. Pascoe's text aims to engage an Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal audience with the purpose to challenge national myth-making and increase the connection of all Australians to a history, and future, of the land.

I am also interested in Indigenous creative works as the creative voice an essential commentator, inspiring and relevant. I engage with the work of playwrights Robert Merritt and Nathan Maynard. Both Maynard and Merritt, writing over forty years apart, utilise foodspaces to situate their personal investigations into cultural practice, family dynamics and food access. Merritt, writing in the 1970s explores the impact of colonial figures and institutions on communal identities and food security in *The Cake Man* (1975). Maynard, writing in the 2010's turns a contemporary lens on the impact of similar colonial legal, institutional and commercial activity on contemporary cultural practice, namely birding (the hunting of marine birds) in Tasmania in *The Season* (2017). I find Maynard's work to be an important exploration of food as a cultural history, as part of the living, natural environment. Merritt's work grounds itself in a space of political anger and racial division in colonial regional Australia and utilises food as both a real and symbolic framework. The installation of oral history and storytelling by both Merritt and Maynard in the medium, or genre, of theatre (an existing form of storytelling), is an excellent demonstration of how non-academic texts are important in interdisciplinary research approaches and within a critical discourse analysis approach.

1.3.2 Non-Indigenous voices

The discourses I analyse in this dissertation are various and the academic works I consult are multi-disciplinary including social sciences, history, anthropology and religious studies. This multi-disciplinary approach is in keeping with contemporary Studies of Religion and in keeping with a critical discourse analysis approach. The social science works that underpin my analysis are *Purity and Danger* (Mary Douglas), the work of Zane Ma Rhea (including *Frontiers of Taste: Food sovereignty, sustainability, and Indigenous-Settler relations in*

Australia and ‘Towards an Indigenist Gaian pedagogy of food: Deimperializing Foodscapes’) and *White Flour, White Power: from rations to Citizenship in Central Australia* (Tim Rowse).⁵⁶

British Anthropologist Mary Douglas (1921-2007) has led contemporary anthropological thought on the role of stigma as the manifestation of a complex narrative shaped by fear, concepts of dirt and symbolic language.⁵⁷ Understandings of spatial boundaries, and race and purity, influence the methodological approaches I employ. Developing ideas of the centrality of spatial boundaries, dirt and purity to identity, I place importance on discussions that explore ideas of moral geography (the concept that people, things, and practices may belong in certain spaces, places and landscapes and not in others) and its relationship with power and identity.⁵⁸

In this dissertation, I draw together the threads of scholarship and reveal the importance of food as a medium that traverses social boundaries and forges religious, spiritual and secular communities.⁵⁹ Food is generally a framework for something else, for example; food and gender; food and faith; food and race, consequently food is part of both material religion and expressive culture.⁶⁰ The work of Douglas expands on these ideas, framing food as a sign of ethnic difference, and changes in social register.⁶¹ This concept is ‘food semantics’ and explores the meaning of food in different cultures where food is invested with strong religious significance.⁶² By replacing the subject (fashion) with the subject of this dissertation (food) the writing of Roland Barthes sums up these social and religious operations in this manner; Fashion (insert: food and religion) is the abstract concept which stands for an articulated set of principles about how the clothing system (insert: food) is supposed to relate

⁵⁶ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (London: Routledge, 1966).; Zane Ma Rhea, *Frontiers of Taste: Sustainability and Indigenous-Settler Relations in Australia*. (Singer: Verlag Singapore, 2016.); Zane Ma Rhea, ‘Towards an Indigenist, Gaian pedagogy of food: deimperializing foodScapes in the classroom’, *Journal of Environmental Education* 49 no.2, (2018), 103 – 116.

⁵⁷ Douglas, *Purity and Danger*.

⁵⁸ Tim Cresswell, ‘Moral geographies’, in *Cultural Geography: A Critical Dictionary of Key Ideas*, eds. David Atkinson, Peter Jackson, David Sibley, and Neil Washbourne (London: IB Tauris, 2005), 128-134.

⁵⁹ This dissertation looks at both the commensality and exclusion present in the operation of food within culture and community, in this view the work of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu is relevant as he concluded in *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984) that food can exclude by defining the inside and outside of group boundaries.

⁶⁰ David Sutton, Nefissa Naguib, Maggie Dickinson and Leonidas Vournelis, ‘Food and Contemporary Protest Movements’, *Food, Culture and Society: Journal of Multidisciplinary Research* 16, no. 3 (2013): 346.

⁶¹ Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 28.

⁶² Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 7.

to the world system (and community).⁶³ Douglas links world and social systems to purity writing that dirt is matter out of place by returning to the concept of boundaries and social structures. If dirt is matter out of place, then it is a product of systemic ordering of matter and linked to symbolic systems of purity, meaning it is an impurity not included in the system and therefore its presence is disruptive.⁶⁴ These understandings are useful for my discussion on how sacred sites, geographical landmarks, land rights and spaces of consumption contribute not only to a moral geography but to an Australian foodscape and identity.

Tim Rowse's anthropological text *White Flour, White Power: from Rations to Citizenship in Central Australia* explores forms of government ration policy and their ongoing impact on communities surrounding Alice Springs.⁶⁵ Rowse's work bridges analysis of mission operation, including agricultural ventures and dietary practices, and the contemporary structure of the Indigenous native food industry including challenges facing its various stakeholders. While some decades old, Rowse's work has been essential for my approach to the impact of Christianity on food violence, social exclusion and contextualising the use of religion as a conduit for the colonial project. Rowse's work complements the work of Mary Douglas on social boundaries and shame by exploring concepts of moral geographies which are useful to this dissertation.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith confronts issues faced by Indigenous people working within and interacting with Western knowledge systems in *Decolonising Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*.⁶⁶ Tuhiwai Smith demonstrates that the value of decolonisation is not limited to research of colonised countries and people. Decolonisation allows for a challenge to the existence of dominant discourse, the control held by groups that have historically monopolised research. The need for increased criticism and reflexivity in research in turn requires an increased openness in the academic community to new forms of academic writing and styles of criticism. The work further concurs with this dissertation in acknowledging the importance of listening. These theories are highly attuned to difficulties in Studies in Religion's efforts to resist the rule of rationality in accepted academic approaches, given that

⁶³ Roland Barthes in Mary Douglas, *Food in the Social Order* (London: Routledge, 2003), 26.

⁶⁴ Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 44, 50.

⁶⁵ Tim Rowse, *White Flour, White Power: from Rations to Citizenship in Central Australia* (Melbourne: Cambridge University, 1998)

⁶⁶ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonising Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 1999)

much of the development of the ‘rational’ is bound up in the rejection of all of that which was bundled together as the ‘primitive,’ including religious activity, myths, and Indigenous traditions. In this way, rationality is a perspective borne from a specific time and place. Tuhiwai Smith explores the work of Foucault and the nation-building relationship of imperialism, knowledge and research. This brings to light the various ways in which imperialism is a seam through the dominant academic approach to truth through a prescribed body of knowledge and methodologies. It confirms the ways in which research can intentionally and unintentionally serve to bolster existing modes of power and archives of global narratives. Tuhiwai Smith and the contributors to *Decolonising Methodologies* explore how discourses of power assimilate Indigenous communities into their methods.

To conclude, several key concerns are identified in *Decolonising Methodologies* and I have found some of these to be useful anchors for my own analysis. These concerns are the need to:

- situate and conceptualise research within its wider genealogy of Western imperialist and colonialist processes
- contextualise the formation of knowledge in relation to power dynamics
- connect the power dynamics of interfacing processes of political, economic, cultural and social change and bureaucratic and corporate entrenchment ⁶⁷

Zane Ma Rhea is a professor of education with wide ranging work covering wisdom pedagogies of Indigenous Australians, the cultures of the Indo-Asia-Oceania region, and environmental sustainability and food security.⁶⁸ Ma Rhea questions how post-colonial educators encourage non-Indigenous people ‘to...find ways within their cultural frame to address...food revulsion.’⁶⁹ I determine that food revulsion is terminologically adjacent to food racism which is entwined with food violence. These are terms which should be embraced by students of food systems. Ma Rhea utilises anecdotal evidence, oral histories

⁶⁷ Heather Howard-Bobiwash, ‘Reviewed Work: Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples by Linda Tuhiwai Smith’, *American Indian Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (2005): 282.

⁶⁸ Zane Diamond, Monash University, <https://research.monash.edu/en/persons/zane-diamond>. As of a final check of credentials before submitting this dissertation I discovered Zane Ma Rhea now goes by the name Zane M. Diamond on the Monash University website. As her work is published under Ma Rhea I have left my references as attributed to Zane Ma Rhea.

⁶⁹ Zane Ma Rhea ‘Towards an Indigenist, Gaian pedagogy of food: deimperializing foodScapes in the classroom’, *Journal of Environmental Education* 49 no. 2, (2018), 103.

and historical records. I too utilise these genres of text as part of my critical discourse analysis approach. The work of Ma Rhea also introduced to my thinking the terminology of endogenous and exogenous. I embrace the terminology endogenous in my research finding it a useful descriptor of native, or bush, flora and fauna. Ma Rhea introduces endogenous as ‘having an internal cause or origin’ and as relevant to native foods.⁷⁰ Ma Rhea seeks to create conceptual differentiation between flora and fauna as they are used by First Nations people and the exogenous (having an external cause or origin) nature of the colonial settler foodspace.⁷¹ I interpret Ma Rhea as positing a shifting category of endogenous food in the sense that if these foods are prepared and interpreted by non-indigenous people, that these foods may lose their particular status as indigenous foods. I appreciate the distinction, but it is a distinction that is contrary to the intentions of my dissertation and, having used the terminology of endogenous food throughout in an unproblematic way, I will continue to refer to those plants and foods native to the continent of Australia as endogenous foods meaning having an internal origin. Ma Rhea argues that the ‘frontier of taste...for contemporary Australians has not moved very far beyond that of their ancestors.’⁷² Here Ma Rhea suggests that interest in endogenous foods remains cyclical. I feel, however, that increased journalistic attention and representation on the screen does indicate a changing cultural taste even if wider palette taste is slower to follow.

The key legal and business sources that underpin my analysis are The Nagoya Protocol and the work of the Merne Altyerre-ipenhe Reference Group (introduced earlier in this chapter). The 1993 Convention on Biological Diversity identified three primary areas of concern: first, the conservation of biological diversity; second, the sustainable use of its components; and third, the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the use of genetic resources. Developed by the committee in 2010 The Nagoya Protocol introduced a focus on traditional knowledge. The Protocol established consistent guidelines for access to genetic resources and to ensure benefit-sharing when genetic resources leave the country providing the genetic resources. However, not all countries are bound to this agreement.⁷³

⁷⁰ Zane Ma Rhea, *Frontiers of Taste: Sustainability and Indigenous-Settler Relations in Australia* (Singer: Verlag Singapore, 2016), 6.

⁷¹ Ma Rhea, *Frontiers of Taste*, 6.

⁷² Ma Rhea, *Frontiers of Taste*, 184.

⁷³ ‘The Nagoya Protocol - Convention on Biodiversity’, Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, accessed 11 September 2020, available from <http://www.environment.gov.au/science-and-research/australias-biological-resources/nagoya-protocol-convention-biological>.

The Nagoya Protocol requires the following domestic access measures:

- Create legal certainty, clarity and transparency
- Provide fair and non-arbitrary rules and procedures
- Establish clear rules and procedures for prior informed consent and mutually agreed terms
- Provide for issuance of a permit or equivalent when access is granted
- Create conditions to promote and encourage research contributing to biodiversity conservation and sustainable use
- Pay due regard to cases of present or imminent emergencies that threaten human, animal or plant health
- Consider the importance of genetic resources for food and agriculture for food security
- Benefit Sharing is subject to mutually agreed terms. Benefits may be monetary or non-monetary such as royalties and the sharing of research results.⁷⁴

I seek to use the Nagoya Protocol as a benchmark for the operation of a business or not for profit engaged with the product of Indigenous ecological knowledge while acknowledging that these same organisations may well be working in line with the federal and state restrictions imposed within their particular location. The Nagoya Protocol has significant implications on the dissemination of traditional ecological knowledge (TEK). TEK refers to the enduring body of knowledge of Indigenous people, including skills, practices, and innovations (sometimes referred to as technology), acquired mostly through oral history and experiential learning from one generation to the other over thousands of years. I have chosen to use the terminology Indigenous ecological knowledge, in place of traditional ecological knowledge after reading the Merne Altyerre-ipenhe (Food from the Creation time) Reference Group's ethical guidelines for commercial bush food research, industry and enterprises. The Nagoya Protocol falls in line with a food sovereignty approach to food systems as defined by the Declaration of Nyéléni which is as follows:

Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to

⁷⁴ 'The Nagoya Protocol - Convention on Biodiversity', Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment.

define their own food and agriculture systems. It puts the aspirations and needs of those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations.⁷⁵

The work of a number of key popular writers on foodways has influenced my research and analysis in particular the work of Chinese American Chef and Researcher Jenny Dorsey. A key part of my methodological approach is the use of digital text. Digital texts and platforms provide increased opportunity for individuals to share commentary and critique of social issues. For non-White voices, both individuals and businesses, social media platforms have facilitated significant activism and shifted long held social narratives in many areas. Food politics researcher and professional chef Jenny Dorsey provides an important critical narrative that aligns with my own methodological approaches and the key issues I discuss. I consider Dorsey's content, distributed on her professional Instagram account and website, as a key text. Dorsey's writing contributes to dialogue on the racial disparities of access to opportunities, and exposure, within the hospitality industry. Dorsey asserts that a rising number of White chefs gaining significant financial and professional success from their skill in cooking fusion food, or the cuisine of other cultures, exacerbates the divide in opportunity for non-White chefs. This practice means that the benefits of cultural knowledge flow around, rather than to, traditional knowledge holders. Dorsey is an important source as she represents contemporary, non-academic, non-White criticism within the food studies genre.

Journalist John Newton's doctoral thesis *Terra Nullius, Culina Nullius: The contradictions of Australian Food Culture* completed at University of Technology Sydney provided the groundwork for *The Oldest Foods on Earth* (2016).⁷⁶ The publication of the latter text occurred soon after the research for my dissertation commenced and has informed it. *The Oldest Food on Earth* is catalogic, Newton attempts to cover a wide variety of topics all complex and varied in this publication which is a culmination of his years of interest in the topic of Australia's fragmented, contentious relationship with native foods. Newton writes that his book is 'about the unique flora and fauna that nourished the Aboriginal peoples of this land for over 50,000 years.'⁷⁷ Newton does not restrain his passion, writing that

⁷⁵ Declaration of Nyéléni as discussed in Raj Patel, 'Food Sovereignty', *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 36:3, (2009), 673.

⁷⁶ John Newton, *The Oldest Food On Earth: A history of Australian native foods with recipes* (Sydney, NSW: New South Publishing, 2016)

⁷⁷ Newton, *The Oldest Foods on Earth*, viii.

European Australians shunned native foods as those of the ‘wild, untamed, uncivilised, naked other.’⁷⁸

Newton had the advantage of publishing into a field not yet saturated. While a trickle of texts on the subject of bush foods has been published since the 1980s most have taken the hybrid form of cookbook and fieldwork report, often written by chefs or restaurateurs, for example, Jean-Paul Bruneteau’s *Tukka: Real Australian Food* (1996). Newton includes twenty recipes which feature on the contents page of the book, as markers, within each chapter. Despite their intention as a thematic spine, the recipes sit jarringly amongst the bulk of text devoted to detailing the various echelons of the native food industry and their challenges. Newton calls for an embrace of native foods to use culinary identity to change broader Australian identity. I found thematic relevance in Newton’s focus on colonial pride and lingering perceptions of racial superiority both contributing to food racism. However, I sought more depth and specificity than Newton provides. I am concerned with the ethics of various aspects of the current Australian food system and its projected future. Newton’s text, coupled with Pascoe’s *Dark Emu, Black Seed* and various scientific and agricultural science articles, provides a frame through which to explore the destruction of productive food cultivation and land management which has affected Australia in the 288 years since 1788 and Australia’s colonisation.

1.4 Key research concepts

This dissertation includes a substantial amount of textual analysis as part of my method and approach. The following section will introduce, and seek to clarify, how I use a selection of terms and concepts in this dissertation. This is not intended to act as a formal glossary, but as a brief introduction to key concerns and/or, potentially unfamiliar terminology.

Benefit sharing based on ethical principles involves the participation of Indigenous knowledge holders. Critically the Merne Altyerre-ipenhe Reference group specifies the provision of benefits should not be dependent upon commercial outcomes, as successful commercialisation is never guaranteed. Instead, benefits need to be gained by and returned to Aboriginal people throughout research and development phases as well as commercial

⁷⁸ Newton, *The Oldest Food On Earth*, 83.

phases.⁷⁹ Benefit sharing should formalise relationships, providing a consistent and ‘known’ international framework for the relationship between researchers and Indigenous peoples. Transparent policy allows for effective implementation across a range of stakeholders including smaller Indigenous communities. It is not a globally enforceable system, and in Australia particularly the impact of early and amateur anthropology has created an environment where ‘a great deal of Indigenous knowledge has already been acquired from people and is stored in public or private records which can be accessed and utilised independent of Indigenous communities.’⁸⁰ Critique of the contemporary Australian native food industries engagement with benefit sharing forms a central part of this dissertation.

The late twentieth century saw the rise of the Fair-Trade movement which subsequently became the Fair-Trade brand incorporating accreditation and regulation.⁸¹ The movement was born from efforts to increase, and regulate, the ethical component in consumer and capitalist practice. However, Fair-Trade has struggled to remain a dominant trademark as the digital marketplace has snowballed in size and influence; digital regulation across borders has undermined Fair-Trade. Consequently, the trademark is less recognisable, and the marketplace is less regulated. The most significant global progress since the Fair-Trade movement has been policy advice borne from The Nagoya Convention on Biological Diversity (2010) and the Bonn Guidelines on Access to Genetic Resources and Fair and Equitable Sharing of the Benefits Arising out of their Utilization (2002). The key principle relevant to this research has been the development of The Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilisation.⁸² This text is now considered a landmark text in food politics. The key principles of this document and its recommendations are as follows; that policy should create an environment for the equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilisation of genetic resources from the use of knowledge, innovations and practice relating to the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. This can be done by adhering to the suggestions

⁷⁹ Merne Altyerre-ipenhe Reference Group, Douglas, Walsh, ‘Aboriginal people, bush foods knowledge and products from central Australia’, 13.

⁸⁰ Jeremy Morse, ‘Nurturing Nature, Nurturing Knowledge: The Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing’, *Indigenous Law Bulletin* 7, no. 24 (2011): 4.

⁸¹ Home of Fair-Trade Enterprises, ‘History of Fair-Trade’, accessed 12 September 2020, at <https://wfto.com/about-us/history-wfto/history-fair-trade>

⁸² ‘The Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing’, Convention on Biological Diversity, 29 October 2010 - 24 December 2020, accessed 4 September 2017, at <https://www.cbd.int/abs/>

made by IRAM, the International Regime on Access and Benefit Sharing.⁸³ The results of this work included goals to ensure genetic resources held by Indigenous communities are only accessed with the prior consent or approval and involvement of the knowledge holders and that benefits from the utilisation of such genetic resources and knowledge will be shared.⁸⁴ IRAM stipulates that signatories to the Protocol would need to take into consideration Indigenous customary law, community protocol and procedures. The Bonn Guidelines aimed to guide countries as providers in establishing national legislative, administrative or policy measures for access and benefit-sharing, such as recommending the elements that should make up a prior informed consent (PIC) procedure and to assist providers and users in the negotiation of mutually agreed terms (MAT), by providing examples of what elements should be included in these agreements.⁸⁵

Sociologist Helen Merrell Lynd wrote that ‘experiences of Shame, a cold self-consciousness...are characteristically painful. They are usually taken as something to be hidden, dodged, covered up even, or especially, from oneself.’⁸⁶ I understand shame to be central to colonial Australia’s reaction both to native foods, bound up in a history of forced assimilation, genocide and cultural oppression, and in instances of cultural cringe. Cultural cringe, a concept within cultural studies coined by A. A. Phillips, is the rejection of culture due to internalised perceived inferiority in comparison to other, European, cultures.⁸⁷ In Australia this has been a central part of the colonial project, a resistance towards multiculturalism and effective celebration of Indigenous culture due to a perceived inferiority of those in comparison to European traditions. I suggest that an Australian food politics perspective must build on the idea of cultural cringe and extend it to what I have identified as ‘culinary cringe’ a term not yet as widely used as I feel it should be. Culinary cringe can be defined by those food trends considered dated or unfashionable.⁸⁸ Common examples might

⁸³ ‘International Regime on Access and Benefit Sharing: Negotiation of Operational Text’, Convention on Biological Discovery, 2-8 April 2009, accessed 5 September 2017, at <https://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/abs/abswg-07/official/abswg-07-07-en.pdf>

⁸⁴ Morse, ‘Nurturing Nature, Nurturing Knowledge: The Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing’, 3-6.

⁸⁵ *The Bonn Guidelines*, Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, published 2011, accessed 12 October 2018, at <https://www.cbd.int/abs/infokit/revise/web/factsheet-bonn-en.pdf>

⁸⁶ Helen Merrell Lynd, *On Shame and the Search for Identity* (New York: Science Editions, Inc., 1961), 19-20.

⁸⁷ See A. A. Phillips, *On the Cultural Cringe* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, 2006.)

⁸⁸ It would be remiss to not note that there has been at least one published use of the term ‘culinary cringe’. Australian food writer ‘Cherry Ripe’ published *Goodbye Culinary Cringe* in 1996. The text is now out of print but is an extensive, sweeping survey of various features of the food scene in mid-1990s Australia from the cheese industry, to multicultural restaurants, to the differing uses of cooking oil. Cherry Ripe, *Goodbye Culinary Cringe*, St Leonards, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 1996.

be 1970s and 1980s recipes resplendent with gelatine and food colouring but more subversive examples can be found in instances of racism channelled through a critique of diet. I utilise the concept of culinary cringe in assessments of dominant attitudes towards ‘bush tucker’ firstly in the initial colonial settler era and most prominently in the commercial hospitality industry over the second half of the twentieth century. Currie woman and educator Arabella Douglas noted that Australia has suffered ‘200 years of being infatuated with European models... which has created “a lack of confidence in their own country.”’⁸⁹ This lack of confidence, highlighted by Douglas, when read alongside Merrell Lynd’s analysis of shame can be seen to be a key contribution to this undercurrent of cultural cringe. Douglas advocates for local knowledge, suggesting developing this connection with Country will develop spiritual connections that enable people to be ‘deeply satisfied’ with the plants and animals endemic to the land. Cultural and culinary cringe are weaponised (even by those experiencing their own cultural cringe) against marginalised communities. The dismissal of migrant and Indigenous foods is bound up in the weaponisation of shame through cultural and culinary cringe.

Food politics is an interdisciplinary field of study which has seen significant growth over the last two decades. Academics working in the area of food politics frequently have backgrounds in sociology, anthropology and geography, but are also well represented in the fields of ethics, economics, agriculture, law and the sciences. Food politics incorporates analysis and investigation into food policy, food legislation and food systems including the details of production, control, regulation, inspection, distribution, and consumption of food. Discipline specific areas also include research into food security, sovereignty and hopefully there will be increased uptake in interest in food violence and food racism which are concepts I explore in this dissertation.⁹⁰ As a multi-disciplinary area there are many key authors. Internationally Marion Nestle and Michael S. Carolan (*Embodied Food Politics* Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2012) are well known.⁹¹ In Australia Alana Mann, Michelle Phillipov

⁸⁹ The Orana Foundation, ‘Introducing the Indigenous Food Database - Part 2’, Instagram post, published 6 October 2020, accessed 6 October 2020, at https://www.instagram.com/tv/CF9X5sijPW0/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link.

⁹⁰ Concepts of sovereignty are important to the topics I discuss in this dissertation, certainly the foodspace is an effective setting for efforts towards sovereignty.

⁹¹ Michael S. Carolan, *Embodied Food Politics* (Farnham ; Burlington, VT : Ashgate Publishing, 2011).

and Christopher Mayes, among others, work in the space of food politics incorporating investigation into food in the digital space and ethical approaches to food studies.⁹²

Food informs the basic pillars of many societies, impacting social hierarchies, economic and environmental systems and influencing the development, and enforcement, of legal systems.

Jenny Dorsey writes that capitalist food systems are:

...built from the exploitation of slave labour...still today many of our food based, critical industries (e.g. agriculture, food processing, hospitality) reinforce oppressive systems that disproportionately hurt communities of color.⁹³

This critique flags the oppressive history that still infiltrates food systems and is of central importance to the foodscape in many colonial countries. In Australia, a history of racial oppression is seen across the foodscape from the mainstream reaction to native foods to the lack of support for migrant workers during the COVID-19 crisis of 2020 wherein large numbers of migrant workers employed in casual hospitality, and freelance food delivery roles, found themselves without work or adequate social support.⁹⁴

The meaning of a foodscape can be wide and all-encompassing, but typically incorporates different stages, and sites, of food production, distribution, and consumption at a variety of scales that connect food, places, and people.⁹⁵ I have chosen to define foodscape as including

⁹² Recent publications include Alana Mann, *Food in a changing climate* (Emerald Publishing Limited, 2021); Alana Mann, 'Beyond the hashtag: Social media ethnography in food activism', in Jonatan Leer and Stinne Gunder Strom Krogager (eds.), *Research Methods in Digital Food Studies* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2021), 86-98; Christopher Mayes, 'White Medicine, White Ethics: On the Historical Formation of Racism in Australian Healthcare', *Journal of Australian Studies* Vol. 44, (2021) 287-302; Christopher Mayes, *Unsettling food politics: Agriculture, dispossession and sovereignty in Australia* (Rowman and Littlefield: London, 2018).

⁹³ Jenny Dorsey, 'Yes, Food is Political', Instagram post, 12 June 2020, accessed 12 June 2020, at <https://www.instagram.com/p/CBTXohADQRY/>.

⁹⁴ Enqi Weng, Fethi Mansouri and Matteo Vergani, 'The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on delivery of services to CALD communities in Australia', *ADI Policy Briefing: Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation Series 2(2)*, (2021).; Heli Askola, Helen Forbes-Mewett, and Ohla Shmihelska, 'Migrant Precariousness in the Time of COVID-19: Migrant Workers, Risks and Rights', *Castan Centre for Human Rights Law & Monash Migration and Inclusion Centre, Monash University*, (2021).

⁹⁵ Sohel Ahmed, Mordechai (Muki) Haklay, Cecilia Tacoli, Grace Githiri, Julio D. Dávila, Adriana Allen and Eric M. Fèvre, 'Participatory mapping and food-centred justice in informal settlements in Nairobi, Kenya', *Geo: Geography and Environment* 6, no. 1 (June 2019); S. Cummins and S. Macintyre, 'A systematic study of an urban foodscape: The price and availability of food in greater Glasgow', *UrbanStudies* 39 (2002): 2115–2130.; L. Trenouth and T. Tisenkopfs, 'The evolution of household foodscapes over two decades of transition in Latvia', *Journal of Baltic Studies* 46 (2016): 355–375.

food production (including land use, processing practices and supply), consumption (both private and public) and associated cultural, spiritual and historical narratives which allow humans to glean meaning from food and occupy both a physical and digital space in society. To continue with the language and concepts of food studies, I introduce the term food violence as a key component of this dissertation referring to the weaponisation of food to control and or harm another party.⁹⁶ Food violence can be intentional and direct or subversive and systemic. It is particularly powerful because food is essential for human survival. Food violence forms a core part of the foodscape of colonised countries including Australia. In these environments food is commonly used to interfere with, and alter, the behaviours, identity, and community makeup of Indigenous people. Food violence in Australia is deeply connected to cultural weaponisation of shame, cultural and culinary cringe, and erasure of identity. I have based the concept of food violence on anthropological interpretations of other specific violence(s) such as gendered violence and racial violence.

1.5 Native Title, Land (and Law)

Land and Country are central to Indigenous Australian identities and the former is also central to non-Indigenous Australian identities. Australia is a landmass of extremes, and the extreme heat, the already dramatic impacts of climate change, the expensive cost of living, the frequent fire danger and increasingly frequent floods provide some context for the way in which the land is, and has been, a central and significant concern in the consciousness of Australian residents in a way that is distinct from other countries.

Yiman and Bidjara woman Marcia Langton AM describes the inextricable relationship between Land and Law as follows:

What our people mean when they talk about their Law, is a cosmology, a worldview which is a religious, philosophic, poetic and normative explanation of how the natural, human and supernatural domains work. Aboriginal Law ties everyone to kin, to country - estates of land and to Dreamings. One is born with the responsibilities

⁹⁶ I differentiate between food violence and food conflict, the latter being recognised as conflict regarding access to food for sustenance. See Saswati Bora, Iride Ceccecci, Christopher Delgado, and Robert Townsend, 'Food Security and Conflict', *World Development Report 2011* (Agriculture and Rural Development Department, World Bank, 2010).

and obligations which these inheritances carry... As many of our people observe, Aboriginal Law is hard work.⁹⁷

The idea and content of Law grows out of, and is different for, different groups. Law is complicated in discussion by an alternative understanding of the meaning of the word law as colonial law which is the dominant system of control in Australia. My research deals with limited components of Aboriginal law namely heritage, land and narrative.

Native food can be read as topically adjacent to Native Title. Native Title is a form of land title that seeks to recognise the unique ties Aboriginal people have to land.⁹⁸ Australian law recognises that Native Title may be granted for areas where Aboriginal people have maintained a traditional connection to their land and waters, since sovereignty. Native Title is the major example of arguably successful law making that recognises Aboriginal history and narratives, although some critical voices are sadly still given platforms; for example, Democratic Labor Party Senator Peter Kavanagh was the only Member of Parliament to vote against the Victorian Government's Traditional Owners Settlement Bill arguing that nomadic people had no concept of land ownership. Kavanagh suggested Native title entrenched a system of racial discrimination in favour of one group against every other group.⁹⁹ Kavanagh declared, 'Today's Aboriginals would not be Traditional Owners of the land even if their ancestors were.' Kavanagh's lone criticism unintentionally highlighted generational dispossession and demonstrated an attitude which denied agency and autonomy for contemporary Aboriginal communities to engage and be recognised in introduced law making processes.

1.6 Outline of chapters

Chapter One is a discussion of key research questions, research approach, key texts, definitions of key terms, and concludes with this outline of the following chapters. My research is concerned with the intersections of food and space. While I do begin the investigative chapters with a historical focus and conclude by assessing contemporary food

⁹⁷ Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, National Report Vol. 5 (AGPS: Canberra, 1991) 361.

⁹⁸ Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 'About Native Title', accessed 10 August 2022, at <https://aiatsis.gov.au/about-native-title>; Attorney General's Department, 'Native Title', accessed 10 August 2022, at <https://www.ag.gov.au/legal-system/native-title>

⁹⁹ Richard Willingham, 'Native Title Law attacked by DLP', *The Age*, 16 September 2010, accessed 15 August 2020, at <https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/native-title-law-attacked-by-dlp-20100915-15cne.html>.

systems, I have taken an overall thematic, rather than chronological, approach to structuring the content of this research.

Chapter Two explores the impact of colonial structures on Indigenous, primarily Aboriginal, foodscapes in Australia. Starting with a selective history of Missions in Australia, specifically The Daly River Mission, St Joseph's New Uniya and Brewarrina mission, I explore how the space of the Christian mission was a platform for the introduction of imported food cultures, which ultimately impacted the emotional, physical and spiritual health of Aboriginal people. I argue that the alteration of physical bodies and spiritual identities was pursued through diet, and that diet was utilised as a doctrinal tool by many religious leaders. I discuss how mission systems acted as early forms of social welfare provision, particularly the provision of rations, the history of which is identified in the structure of welfare systems in contemporary Australia. Chapter Two concludes with an in-depth textual analysis of Robert Merritt's play *The Cake Man* (1983), exploring the impact of social segregation and Christian texts on the lives of Aboriginal people. *The Cake Man* provides an example of narrative construction and the role of the arts as a space to preserve cultural memory. Chapter Two demonstrates that food and food spaces have been central to colonial expansion in Australia, and provides a historical background for the changing foodscape following colonial arrival. I introduce themes of power, control and interference, alongside the co-option of certain introduced narratives, primarily Christian mythmaking, into the cultural memory of Aboriginal communities across Australia.

Chapter Three continues to assess the changes that occurred following colonial arrival through a series of case studies focused on agricultural practice. This selective survey covers the following aspects of agricultural practice and land management: the wild harvesting of flora and fauna, the development of niche native food industries (primarily the developing saline vegetable industry), and the lingering impact of colonial attitudes to native game on the cultivation and sale of native meats (primarily kangaroo farming). I explore several cross-cultural projects and alliances addressing how stakeholders navigate effective alliances and ensure maintenance, and communication, of cultural knowledge, and fair benefit sharing protocols. I demonstrate how geography impacts cultural and agricultural practice and locate storytelling, relationships and structures (including both natural structures and built structures such as fish traps and middens) in a cultural foodscape while exploring the modernisation, and potential industrialisation, of some of these practices. As in Chapter Two, this chapter

includes an exploration of the representation of the foodscape in theatre with an in-depth analysis of Nathan Maynard's play, *The Season* (2017). I conclude with a close examination of marine and riverine aquaculture and land management; specifically, how riverine engineering (for example Baiame's Ngunnhu, the Brewarrina fish traps) and built topographical spaces, (for example middens), play an important role in the Australian foodscape by retaining and communicating, the narrative history of a geographical area and the cultural practices of its inhabitants. This section explores how changing market dynamics and demand for native foods impact Aboriginal communities' access to, and engagement with, native foods.

Chapter Four explores the failures, successes and future representation of native foods and Indigenous foodscapes in the hospitality industry. I explore the presentation of native foods on the screen analysing the treatment of this narrative by the media identifying areas for improvement. This final investigative chapter pulls together the threads of land management, cultural and spiritual foodscapes, corporate and personal responsibility and themes of decolonisation and benefit sharing in a series of contemporary case studies. Chapter Four explores the concept of restaurants as food networks treating the restaurant as an experiential space in which, and from which, a web of culinary and cultural connections is situated. I analyse various chefs who work with endogenous Australian foods to identify the impact they have on culinary narratives, identity and the native food industry. A significant portion of Chapter Four is focused on one individual, Scottish chef Jock Zonfrillo. The choice to focus this analysis on Zonfrillo, a non-Indigenous chef, is strategic. Zonfrillo's career is the ideal case study to explore a series of crucial issues faced across the cross-cultural engagement in native foods and efforts towards alliance and solidarity. This is partly due to his extensive public profile and cross disciplinary role in food television. The case study of Zonfrillo allows me to engage with the significant role the media plays in the structure of the hospitality industry through its contributions to the professional profile of a chef and narratives and images of success. This case study provides an opportunity to engage with how the media and hospitality industries work to make native foods 'palatable' to the mainstream hospitality market. In so doing, I engage with the responsibility shared by those working with, or on the subject of, native plants to provide appropriate cultural acknowledgement, celebration and benefits to the custodians of those plants. Chapter Four concludes with a succinct survey of the challenges faced by Australian Indigenous and non-Indigenous owned businesses engaged in the native foods throughout which I question how

they navigate growth and competition while protecting traditional knowledge. I assess whether the narratives they project engage with traditional ecological knowledge holders and utilise the available publications on managing culturally valuable materials. The three investigative chapters are guided by the inclusion of the production, processing, distribution, and consumption components of food systems. These components are made cohesive through a critical discourse analysis approach which assesses the language of representation and the creation of food centred narratives.

Chapter Two: A history of colonial structural impacts on Indigenous foodscapes

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I assess the history of missions in Australia by utilising three case studies: The Daly River Mission (Northern Territory), St Joseph's New Uniya (Northern Territory), and Brewarrina (New South Wales). I conclude that patterns of control, limited social and cultural freedom, and nutritional disadvantage were fostered at these sites. The foodscape developed in mission environments has shaped the cultural memory of countless Aboriginal communities. Tensions borne from transactional relationships, power, worth and behaviour, and tensions funnelled through rationing systems and social welfare schemes still influence the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in the twenty-first century. I identify narrative connections between cultural practice, especially storytelling traditions, and the adoption of Christianity by some Indigenous communities. Robert Merritt's *The Cake Man* (1975) is a central text here and an example of the Indigenous voice utilising narrative to communicate the impact of colonial structures (including religious authority) on communities, family units and cultural practice.

Colonised from 1788, Australia's record of human rights is internationally recognised as amongst the worst in the G20.¹ A painful history of colonisation, and the inevitable fractious social by-products that accompany it, is the shadow of Australian culture and community. I analyse the narrative and structural violence imposed on generations of Indigenous peoples through an assessment of foodscape, from the early observations of James Cook who declared that the people inhabiting the land had 'hardly anything fit for Man to eat', to the complex system of welfare that has continued to disempower and control communities.² I situate my examination in the history of mission practices in Australia, and focus on the lasting changes in food and lifestyle that shape the history of the Australian foodscape.

¹ John Connor, *The Australian Frontier Wars 1788-1838* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2005); Louise Chappell, John Chesterton and Lisa Hill, *The Politics of Human Rights in Australia* (Port Melbourne, VIC: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 23.

² James Cook, *The Journals of Captain James Cook on His Voyages of Discovery* (Cambridge: Published for the Hakluyt Society at Cambridge University Press, 1955), 442.

Blake Singley describes initial colonial interactions with native flora and fauna as transactional relationships of sustenance; ‘Necessity obliged the settlers to engage gastronomically with the strange creatures and plants that inhabited the landscape around them.’³ However, ‘Once the food supply was stable and the fear of starvation no longer loomed, the need and desire for native wildlife began to wane.’⁴ Singley’s use of language emphasises the rise of choice over necessity which allows for ‘desire’, or taste, to dictate consumption. The Australian landscape has typically been seen as primarily profitable through logging, grazing, and mining. This unimaginative focus on destruction contributes to the slow development of White Australian innovation. Australia’s main exports reek of haunting industrial attitudes from eighteenth century English settlers.⁵ The continent’s great winds, sun exposure, and water resources are yet to be effectively harnessed, alongside the flavour, nutritional variety, and horticultural hardiness of native flora.

While she writes about a different geographical area and historical context, I find by Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra and Rebecca Earle’s work on Early colonial Spanish America to be valuable. I would argue that my inclusion of Earle’s material, specifically that of fear of the unknown in the colonial foodscape, provides a useful perspective for the Australian context. Earle writes:

Many aspects of early modern colonial expansion proved unsettling for its European protagonists. The encounter with entirely new territories and peoples raised doubts about the reliability of existing knowledge and also posed theoretical and practical questions about the proper way for Europeans to interact with these new peoples and places.⁶

This fear is well documented in the Australian case, in myriad written records by colonists; and in the lasting canon of Australian bush literature, which is rife with the haunting dread of

³ Blake Singley, ‘‘Hardly Anything Fit for Man to Eat’’: Food and Colonialism in Australia’, *History Australia* 9, no. 3 (2016): 28.

⁴ ‘General Orders,’ *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, 3 February 1805, 2, in Singley, ‘Hardly Anything Fit for Man to eat’, 31.

⁵ Australia’s top exports include Iron Ore, Natural Gas, Coal, Beef and Wheat. ‘Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Investment at a Glance 2021’, *Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Investment* (2021) at <https://www.dfat.gov.au/publications/trade-and-investment/trade-and-investment-glance-2021>

⁶ Rebecca Earle, ‘‘If you eat their food...’’: Diets and Bodies in Early Colonial Spanish America’, *The American Historical Review* 115, no. 3 (June 2010): 688.

an unknown landscape.⁷ Comparatively fearful reactions can be seen in the behaviour of sixteenth century Spanish colonists in the ‘New World,’ and nineteenth century European colonists in Australia, particularly in regard to perspectives on landscape, and consumption of flora and fauna. In both colonial communities, consumption of native flora was accepted with greater enthusiasm than consumption of native fauna. Earle identifies pineapple, tomato, chilli peppers, and other vegetation that were embraced by the Spanish and wider European community while ‘hedgehogs, weasels... locusts... caterpillars’, easily accessible native sources of protein, were greeted with horror.⁸ Similar attitudes remain to this day regarding the consumption of grubs, birds and animals in Australia.⁹ Colonial fear of place, body and food has morphed into a complex performance of Indigenous cultural rejection and a system of bureaucratic structures which enmesh Indigenous communities in a maze of structural inequality regarding food sources.

Earle concludes that; ‘Far from being an enterprise based on an unquestioning assumption of European superiority, early modern colonialism was an anxious pursuit.’¹⁰ At the very core of the colonial pursuit is an assumption of the superiority of the coloniser. This is communicated by performative actions and further entrenched through a performed curiosity and a mindset structured through particular understandings of ownership, particularly of goods and land. However, the latter point, that colonialism is an ‘anxious pursuit’ should garner more attention.¹¹ Earle explores this concept of anxiety through the framework of the human body. This aligns with my research themes, in particular my understanding that the body acts as a vessel for nonphysical concepts of identity.

Earle writes:

This anxiety is captured most profoundly in the fear that living in an unfamiliar environment, and among unfamiliar peoples, might alter not only the customs but also

⁷ Examples include Joan Lindsay, *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (Melbourne: Cheshire, 1967); Barbara Baynton, *Bush Studies* (London: Duckworth, 1902); Henry Lawson, ‘The Bush Undertaker’, *Wagga Wagga Express*, 18 March 1893.

⁸ Earle, ‘‘If you eat their food...’’, 703.

⁹ Earle, ‘‘If you eat their food...’’, 703.

¹⁰ Earle, ‘‘If you eat their food...’’, 688.

¹¹ Earle, ‘‘If you eat their food...’’, 688.; Lisa Slater’s, *Anxieties of Belonging in Settler Colonialism: Australia Race and Place* (United States, Routledge, 2018) stands out as a text which explores colonial anxiety in depth. However, I feel more attention should be given to this anxiousness which challenges the social mythmaking around intrepid, brave settlers which has fed both into the depiction of tough white regional Australian today. Slater determines that settler anxiety is the result of the refusal to engage with or even encounter Indigenous difference and can be a reaction to contemporary settler shame. (see Chapter 1, *Anxieties of Belonging*).

the very bodies of settlers. Perhaps, as Columbus suspected, unmediated contact with these new lands would weaken settlers' constitutions to such an extent that they died. Or perhaps it might instead transform the European body in less lethal but equally unwelcome ways, so that it ultimately ceased to be a European body at all.¹²

Colonists' fear of illness, death, and bodily transformation held by colonists were used as tools of ownership and control over the bodies and spirits of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia.

These concepts of transformational body politics are extrapolated on by Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, who posits that sixteenth and seventeenth century settlers in the New World assumed 'radical discontinuity between European and Indigenous bodies' to account for the higher mortality rate of Amerindians.¹³ In doing so European and Indigenous bodies were framed by a narrative of fundamental difference. It can be suggested that race as a fixed, bodily condition subsequently emerged in colonial intellectual environments. Cañizares-Esguerra's argument focuses on the impact of climate on this construction of race. This provides a narrow focus for his conclusions, and it is more helpful to look at climate as part of the broader changing environment experienced by colonists.¹⁴ In doing so, the impact of daily environmental and cultural difference on the construction of enforced social behaviours and introduced methods of environmental control can be seen more clearly, and the impact of colonial fear on Indigenous peoples globally, and particularly in Australia, can be addressed.

My research treats food as a conduit for identity. I establish that diet, as an aspect of performative identity, is a narrative element reclaimed by Aboriginal people over the timespan of colonial Australia. In contrast, Earle introduced ideas of body politics at a cellular level. Earle's work is framed through an assessment of the bodies of colonists; however, these theories can be universally applied. Diet must be considered in the 'construction and maintenance' of every individual body, not simply in the 'performance of European colonial identity.'¹⁵ This construction of the body is not a new concept in food studies or religious studies, but it is important to explore the crossovers between bodily theories in colonial studies, history, Indigenous studies, and food studies. Earle's research on

¹² Earle, 'If you eat their food...,' 689.

¹³ Earle, 'If you eat their food...,' 689.

¹⁴ Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, 'New Worlds, New Stars: Patriotic Astrology and the Invention of Indian and Creole Bodies in Colonial Spanish America, 1600–1650,' *American Historical Review* 104, no. 1 (1999): 33–68.

¹⁵ Earle, 'If you eat their food...,' 690.

the ‘New World’ incorporates medical texts and private and official documents on understandings of the humoral body. She asserts that the common theme is the concept of the human body as ‘porous, in active dialogue with the environment.’¹⁶ This idea resonates with food and cultural studies while also encapsulating the relationship between land, Country, food and the body expressed by Aboriginal voices. Earle’s research focuses on a period 250-300 years prior to colonial arrival in Australia, yet her key conclusions on early modern body politics remain relevant. Similar references to the reformed body can be found in the work of Australian anthropologists Ronald M. and Catherine H. Berndt who wrote, ‘the spiritual component (the soul) and material welfare needs (or practical Christianity, as it was called: that is, the body)...[were] demarcations [that]...that became blurred in the course of everyday mission activities.’¹⁷

Earle explores the case study of Spaniard Jerónimo de Aguilar in an analysis exploring the bodily performance of faith:

Aguilar had been shipwrecked off the Yucatan Peninsula in 1511 and lived with local Maya Indians until his rescue by Hernán Cortés in 1519. Following his return to Spanish society, he was offered European food, but to the surprise of his rescuers, he ate only sparingly. When asked why he was so moderate, he explained that “after so much time he was accustomed to the food of the Indians, and his stomach would regard Christian food as foreign.” Long residence among the Indians had left his stomach unable to tolerate a normal Christian diet. His digestive system had gone native; in humoral terms, he had acquired a ‘second nature,’ and as a result, his body was not quite as Christian as it had been prior to his shipwreck.¹⁸

Aguilar’s body’s rejection of European food, and his mental association of this with a second nature, complicates the narrative of colonial interaction and merits a detailed analysis.

Aguilar enmeshed himself in the lives of the Maya Indian peoples for years investing in their community, and consequently in their cultural practice and consumption. It seems Aguilar perceived the actions of his body as operating separately to his mind. This quotation does not

¹⁶ Earle, ‘‘If you eat their food...’’, 690.

¹⁷ Ronald M. Berndt and Catherine H. Berndt, ‘Body and Soul: More than an Episode!’ in *Aboriginal Australians and Christian Missions: Ethnographic and historical studies*, eds. Tony Swain and Deborah Bird Rose (Bedford Park: Australian Association for the Study of Religions, 1988), 45.

¹⁸ Earle, ‘‘If you eat their food...’’, 693. I must note that this reference is not included in the humoral framework without criticism, however, the core tenets at play in this quotation are valuable for research into the processes of assimilation and colonisation in what became contemporary Australia.

suggest that Aguilar's faith has been impacted, but that his physical body is less Christian. I will reference the Eucharist in this analysis; while not specifically included in the above quotation, in the Roman Catholic tradition the process of transubstantiation transforms the eucharistic wine and bread into body and blood, allowing the faithful to consume, and digest, the very nature of Christ. It seems plausible that this understanding of consumption would filter through the boundaries of the sacrament into understandings of identity and informal, or arguably non ritualistic, consumption. The Christian body is approached through the narrative framework of the Eucharist. This is a faith-based Christian body, as opposed to a racially, or culturally, Christian body. In the case studies presented by Earle, Christianity is not yet associated with Whiteness as a primary defining feature. Bread and wine became representative not only of body and blood, as taught in the sacrament of communion, but of colonial culture and concepts of civilisation.¹⁹ Earle in fact details confusion surrounding the very makeup of bread, a confusion rooted in faith and in doctrine. The Roman Catholic church defined bread as wheat bread only (based mainly on the writings of Thomas Aquinas), which created a boundary and defined what bread could and could not be thereby excluding the maize and corn breads available in the new world.²⁰ These boundaries and definitions clearly link to the understanding of the Christian body as physically, not just spiritually, created.

Earle refers to missionary evangelism in the 'New World' as operating hand in hand with agricultural practice. She notes the writings of Dominican priest Diego Duran to illustrate this connection:

Never will we succeed in teaching these Indians to know the true God if we do not first eradicate and totally remove from their memory their superstitions, ceremonies, and false cults to the false gods whom they worship, just as it is not possible to grow a good field of wheat in mountainous and shrubby soil if you have not first completely removed all the roots and growths that it naturally produces.²¹

¹⁹ Earle, "If you eat their food...," 700; Rebecca Earle, *The Body of the Conquistador: Food, Race and the Colonial Experience in Spanish America, 1492–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 58, 65; Luis Millones Figueroa, "The Staff of Life: Wheat and 'Indian Bread' in the New World", *Colonial Latin American Review* 19, no. 2 (2010): 315.

²⁰ Earle, "If you eat their food...," 706; Jacob Neusner, "Why Not Use Rice in Making the Host?" *New Blackfriars* 82, no. 962 (2001): 175.

²¹ Earle, "If you eat their food...," 707.

Duran's stance leans towards the extreme yet represents the global attitude of many evangelical and missionary programs. The desire to replace an existing identity with a Christian one took the form of strategies that incorporated more than faith and included diet, social practice, agriculture, and the physical body. Berndt and Berndt echo the same conclusion writing, 'The basic intention of missionaries was to change the socio-cultural systems and individual lives of the people with whom they worked.'²² Duran's agricultural metaphor of crowded, contaminated soil indicates colonialism's potential to transform a physical environment as well as its inhabitants. In these ways policies of assimilation through diet were rolled out in contact spaces like missions. Tension lies in the necessity of consumption, in the knowledge that colonising peoples must eat native foods in order to survive, despite their fears that these foods may damage, or change, their bodies. Simultaneously colonisers encouraged, or forced, colonised people to consume introduced foods, to change colonised bodies therefore manipulating fears of damage to health and identity as a tool to alter and assimilate the colonised other. I determine that these behaviours are seen in the Australian context with the exception of the contrasting behaviour of those who consume the unknown as a method of demonstrating wealth and power. Food histories of Australia frequently detail colonial parties commonly hosted by prominent public figures including governors and Lieutenants. These parties provide researchers with case studies of colonist interactions with native foods in an environment separate from their interactions with Indigenous people. Godfrey Mundy's 1852 publication *Our Antipodes: or, Residence and Rambles in the Australasian Colonies, with A Glimpse of the Gold Fields* contributed to the unique niche of colonial writing that bridged travel writing and pseudo-ethnographic reflection. Mundy details a dinner at 'Tarmons,' the residence of Lieutenant-General Sir Maurice O'Connell, on 29 June 1846.²³ The menu featured wonga wonga pigeon, wallaby tail soup and kangaroo.²⁴ One guest, Mundy writes, found themselves, 'sipping doubtfully, but soon swallowing with relish, a plate of wallabi-tail soup, followed by a slice of boiled schnapper, with oyster sauce. A haunch of kangaroo venison... A delicate wing of the wonga wonga pigeon with bread sauce.'²⁵ The space of this party, constructed not only of the menu but also the furnishing, guests and the undertones imbued by those guests professional and

²² Berndt and Berndt, 'Body and Soul: More than an Episode!', 45.

²³ Godfrey Mundy quoted in Jacqui Newling and Scott Hill, 'The Cook and the Curator: I dined this day with relish', *Sydney Living Museums*, published 27 June 2013, accessed 14 September 2016, at <https://blogs.sydneylivingmuseums.com.au/cook/i-dined-this-day-with-relish/>.

²⁴ Singley, 'Hardly Anything Fit for Man to eat': Food and Colonialism in Australia', 35.

²⁵ Godfrey Mundy quoted in Jacqui Newling and Scott Hill, 'The Cook and the Curator: I dined this day with relish.'

personal backgrounds, indicates a fascination with exoticism. The dinner party is a social ritual designed to impress and provide a distinctive experience for guests.²⁶ Unusual and unfamiliar foods were commonplace at stately meals across the globe and at dinner parties which initiated those events. In colonial Australia a history of imitation and cultural cringe is reflected in building style, fashion trends, garden design and culinary trends. While the dinner at ‘Tarmons’ features a significant number of native faunas on the menu, I would suggest it was less about an appreciation for the land and is more indicative of aspirational practice, a reflection of the opulent daring of stately culinary experimentation.

2.2 Missions in Australia: The emotional and physical impacts of imported food cultures

The following section provides a historical survey of the beginnings of what became the contemporary Australian foodscape. To do so this section focuses on the role of food in Christian missions across Australia. The imported food culture of White Australia, which emerged in the 1800s, has been a form of food violence against Australian Aboriginal people. The use of food as a tool of both identity performance and also identity alteration (or manipulation) amongst colonists and Aboriginal peoples, and the subsequent creation of difference and distance between these groups, reaffirmed this violence. Social historian Adele Wessell identifies food consumed in colonial spaces as a device used to reassert cultural links while endeavouring to create a shared sense of British identity.²⁷ Expanding on Wessell’s thinking, I note that food has long been a marker of identity. To some convict communities eating native foods became an unwanted performative action that publicly aligned them with Indigenous peoples who were a subjugated group. Therefore, food is a marker of performative identity. Anthropologist Sidney Mintz writes in greater detail on this phenomenon, identifying that those ‘who eat strikingly different foods ... are thought to be strikingly different, sometimes even less human.’²⁸ These assertions align with Earle’s work on the transformation of the physical body and spiritual identity through diet. In contrast to eating a variety of native foods, the British colonial diet was heavy in sugars and flours and generally lacked fresh fruits and vegetables. As colonising forces increased their control of

²⁶ Margaret Visser, *The Rituals of Dinner: The origins, evolutions, eccentricities and meaning of table manners* (New York: Penguin, 1991), 94 – 96.

²⁷ Adele Wessell, ‘There’s no taste like home: The food of empire’, in *Exploring the British World: Identity, Cultural Production, Institutions*, eds. Kate Darian-Smith and Patricia Grimshaw (Melbourne: RMIT Publishing 2004), 811.

²⁸ Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Viking, 1985), 3.

the Australian landmass and peoples, including clearing land and corralling different Aboriginal kinship groups into regulated settlement areas, this diet became the dominant diet and the basis for the national Australian diet until the migration boom of the late twentieth century provided diversification.

Missions in Australia were established after an 1837 'Report on Aboriginal Tribes' presented to the House of Commons by a Parliamentary select committee.²⁹ This committee followed the establishment of the Aboriginal Protection Society in 1835 in Britain.³⁰ The report detailed that Aboriginal protection was a state duty and that missionaries should be encouraged to work in Australia. The missions were usually established by clergy, to house, protect, and 'Christianise' local Aboriginal people. Using Christian texts to guide and justify their actions, missionaries encouraged Aboriginal people to move into mission settlements and join small, European Christian communities.³¹

Government reserves appeared soon after the first missions were established but were not officially Christian spaces. Both missions and reserves were parcels of land usually on sites which Aboriginal people already used for gatherings or rituals. These were frequently existing campsites, or well-known sacred and productive areas such as fishing grounds. Missions were on the whole highly controlled environments. Parallels can be drawn with colonial systems in other countries, especially the United States of America, South America, and Canada. European colonists brought their diet into the ports of Australia and rolled it out in the form of rationing amongst the Christian missions and government reserves. Through food and other means, missions displaced large swathes of Aboriginal peoples from their Country and had a series of devastating impacts on their lifestyle, religious well-being, culture, and health. Removal from Country, their traditional lands, exacerbated loss of inter-generational cultural knowledge.³² Behaviour, consumption and language were all actively monitored in a nationwide attempt to assimilate the Aboriginal communities. Food was a

²⁹ 'Remembering Mission Days,' *Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies*, accessed 15 August 2019, at <http://aiatsis.gov.au/exhibitions/remembering-mission-days>.

³⁰ 'Australian Law as Applied to Aborigines,' *Australian Law Commission*, published 18 August 2010, accessed 25 October 2018, at <https://www.alrc.gov.au/publication/recognition-of-aboriginal-customary-laws-alrc-report-31/4-aboriginal-customary-laws-and-anglo-australian-law-after-1788/australian-law-as-applied-to-aborigines/>.

³¹ 'Missions', *Department of Environment and Heritage*, accessed 25 November 2018, available from <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/nswcultureheritage/Missions.htm>. In the state of Queensland alone between 1898 and 1939, 64 missions and reserves were home to around 7000 Aboriginal peoples. Trish Barnard, 'Missions and Reserves', *Queensland Historical Atlas*, 27 October 2010, accessed 25 November 2018, at <http://www.qhatlas.com.au/content/missions-and-reserves>.

³² Barnard, 'Missions and Reserves'.

method of transitioning Aboriginal people to the ‘normative culture of the colonisers.’³³

Missions were run by mission managers who were accountable to the Welfare Board. This power structure increased opportunities for exploitation. An absence of citizenship and rights under law meant Aboriginal people on missions, reserves and towns had neither the authority or path clear to access rights and protections. In addition, both missions and reserves were sites where people from different kinship groups and tribes lived together accelerating the loss of language and tradition, often creating tension and complicating the path to civic unification.

2.2.1 Why stay? Why some residents remained on, or moved to, mission environments

The following section discusses some of the motivations for Aboriginal people to move to, and remain in, mission communities. The advantages of recognisable, intentional community structure, and the sudden necessity of external support due to fragmentation of families, separation from Country (which impacted the availability of traditional foods) and traditional community were the primary factors.³⁴ While historian Regina Ganter describes missions as ‘alien cultures’ with ‘rigid disciplines’ she asserts that they were made appealing through a number of factors, predominantly their relative safety in comparison with the realities of the ‘danger[s] of ... frontier society’ and their ‘material advantages’ of ‘endless supplies.’³⁵ Positive responses to this appeal are not unique to Aboriginal people, these appeals are central to the structure and success of religious organisations. Ganter suggests that the ‘interior logic of the missions was decipherable through a shared ontology of power.’³⁶ Ganter highlights missionary conventions of referring to members as ‘father, brother, sister, mother’ as translating well given the strength of kinship nominals.³⁷ The missionaries’ use of these kinship terms linguistically invited a recodification of their patronage as ‘normal’ gift giving behaviour. Anthropologist Peter Willis suggests that this allowed for the development

³³ Alison Wishart, ‘The way to a man’s heart is through his stomach’ – food as an assimilation strategy: re-writing the menu at Mapoon mission’, *TEXT Special issue: Rewriting the menu: the cultural dynamics of contemporary food choices* (2010), 23.

³⁴ Alison Wishart writes that the mission residents at Mapoon sought refuge from decreasing availability of bush food and the conflict with pastoralists when they tried to hunt, gather and fish on their country. Wishart, ‘The way to a man’s heart is through his stomach’, 1.

³⁵ Regina Ganter, *The Contest for Aboriginal Souls: European Missionary Agendas in Australia*, (Canberra: ANU Press, 2018), 81. I will note that missions were not always safe places and missionaries were not excluded from performing acts of violence and, as I argue in my research, many missionary systems inflicted cultural violence on those they controlled.

³⁶ Ganter, *The Contest for Aboriginal Souls*, 81.

³⁷ Ganter, *The Contest for Aboriginal Souls*, 82.

of an interaction he terms ‘riding’, or ‘kinship riding,’ whereby Aboriginal communities strategically engaged with White patronage as a method of retaining some level of agency in the interaction and avoid being a ‘client.’³⁸ Language and discourse are key in my research as they shape individual, and community, physical and spiritual environments. Religious people were perceived to be regularly interacting with the supernatural, they seemingly had powers and stories which explained weather, history, food and more, this was a way of thinking and communicating that was closer to the stories and oral heritage of Aboriginal communities.³⁹ The spoken word was, and remains, highly significant for Christian principles of outreach and learning, long before and long after the translation of important texts such as the Bible into the vernacular. The most notable example of this is *The Pitjantjatjara Bible*, a 1940’s translation of the Bible completed at Ernabella, which has served to preserve some aspects of language.⁴⁰ Catholic missionaries in particular had a ‘particularly impressive arsenal of rituals, ideas and objects to exert power over the natural world.’⁴¹ Aboriginal conversion to Christianity, while nationally part of the colonial movement, occurred as a result of a particular kind of encounter between two groups with particular orientations. Christianity was represented by particular White people who, while possessing desirable goods and claiming certain kinds of superiority, may not exhibit the hostility and violence of other White people and in fact sometimes disrupted this hostility and violence while seeking to establish an interactive relationship with Aboriginal people (this is not a blanket statement, there are many records of missionary violence, some of which I discuss later in this chapter).⁴² Willis and Ganter’s analysis of the impact of religious structure and language likely facilitating higher degrees of success in some conversion attempts introduces the significance of language into discourse on the relationship between intentional, and unintentional, food violence, religion and language.

When given the choice, many Aboriginal people chose to remain on missions, not simply for free and stable housing, but for the established sense of community. It is worth highlighting that the notion of choice bears with it a cultural and social history which weakens the assumed, positive potential. Choice is very different for subjugated communities than it is for

³⁸ Peter Willis, ‘Riders in the Chariot: Aboriginal Conversion to Christianity in Remote Australia’, in *Religious Business: Essays on Australian Aboriginal Spirituality*, ed. Max Charlesworth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 135.

³⁹ Ganter, *The Contest for Aboriginal Souls*, 81.

⁴⁰ *Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women’s Council Aboriginal Corporation, Traditional Healers of Central Australia: Ngangkari* (Broome: Magabala Books Aboriginal Corporation, 2013), 3.

⁴¹ Ganter, *The Contest for Aboriginal Souls*, 81.

⁴² Willis, ‘Riders in the Chariot: Aboriginal Conversion to Christianity in Remote Australia’, 128.

those with social and financial mobility and privilege. Jimmie Barker (1900-1972), a Murawari man and son of a Murawari woman and a German pastoralist, chose, reluctantly, to remain living on the Brewarrina mission after regularly experiencing the exhaustive, casual, and culturally embedded racism of White townspeople.⁴³ Barker remarks that ‘To the people who called us these [names] it was all good fun; for us it was depressing and horrible.’ His experiences of racism made him decide to settle at the mission, ‘to spare me having to listen to these remarks about black fellows’.⁴⁴ Barker spoke up for his community, negotiating with bureaucrats and attempting to combat excessive managerial power by acting as a whistleblower to the Aborigines Protection Board.⁴⁵ Financial management for missions was enforced through a trust system established by the Aboriginal Welfare Board. This deprived Aboriginal people of control over their earnings.⁴⁶ Therefore, earnings were devalued. Guugu Yimithirr activist Noel Pearson writes that the mission system contributed to the ‘trap of passive welfare’ that many Aboriginal communities find themselves in, to this day.⁴⁷

Wiradjuri businesswoman Norma Ingram grew up on the Erambie Mission. She remembers a diet high in flours, sugars and teas, and shopping lists that had to be checked by the mission manager. This process is echoed in modern day Australian bureaucracy where federal government bodies pushed for the distribution of restricted use debit cards to central Australian communities to monitor and restrict the goods that can be purchased with welfare money.⁴⁸ The process on missions could be similarly invasive. Ingram writes that after food was purchased it was checked by the mission manager against an approved list. Ingram writes there was very little fresh fruit or vegetables, and that items were mainly bread, tomato sauce, syrup, and powdered milk foods with little to no nutritional value and a high sucrose content.⁴⁹ Diet-related diseases, exacerbated by poverty and dispossession, continue to cause havoc for Australian Indigenous communities nationwide. The Australian Bureau of Statistics

⁴³ Heather Goodall, ‘Baker, James’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, available at <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/barker-james-jimmie-9433>; ‘Barker, James (Jimmie) (1900–1972)’, *Indigenous Australia, National Centre of Biography*, Australian National University, accessed 19 December 2016, available from <http://ia.anu.edu.au/biography/barker-james-jimmie-9433/text2660>.

⁴⁴ Janet Mathews, *The two worlds of Jimmie Barker: The life of an Australian Aboriginal 1900-1972* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1998), 122.

⁴⁵ ‘Barker, Jimmie,’ *Australian Dictionary of Biography*.

⁴⁶ Ruth A. Fink Latukefu, ‘Recollections of Brewarrina Aboriginal Mission’, *Australian Aboriginal Studies* 1 (2014): 72.

⁴⁷ Noel Pearson, *Up from the Mission: Selected Writings* (Melbourne: Black Inc., 2009).

⁴⁸ Melissa Davey, ‘‘Ration days again’: Cashless welfare card ignites shame’, *The Guardian*, 9 January 2009, accessed 19 February 2019, at <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/jan/09/ration-days-again-cashless-welfare-card-ignites-shame>.

⁴⁹ Rebecca Huntley, *Eating Between the Lines: food and equality in Australia*, (Melbourne: Black Inc. Books, 2008), 107.

notes that a study on Australian Disease recorded that diabetes accounts for approximately 9% of disease amongst Aboriginal people and found diabetes related death rates three times higher than in the rest of the population.⁵⁰

Australian Catholic historian James Franklin surveyed the Catholic missions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁵¹ These were predominantly scattered in the far coastal reaches of North-Western Australia. They included New Norcia, Rapid Creek, Daly River, Beagle Bay and Thursday Island. Some missions struggled due to financial constraints, difficulty with conversion, and even natural disasters. For instance, the Daly River mission was routinely devastated by floods.⁵² An 1899 article in the *Northern Territory Times and Gazette* stated that:

The missionaries are quite content to continue their Christianising efforts, but the late inundation rendered it impossible for them to remain where they were, risking every year the loss of their stock, the ruin of their gardens and their own lives by floods.⁵³

I explore three mission sites, The Daly River Mission and St Joseph's New Uniya in the Northern Territory, and Brewarrina, in New South Wales are explored using historical records to construct a picture of mission operations, the role of religion, experiences around, and the development of, geographically specific foodscapes.⁵⁴ The foodscape of a mission served to impact ongoing cultural memory associated with particular places and peoples. These records are primarily ethnographic or ecclesiastical. It is important to acknowledge that both forms of sources have had complex, sometimes problematic, roles in the written history of Australian Indigenous communities. That withstanding, they are the primary records available, and I have included them for this reason. This chapter includes an extended case study on Robert Merritt's play *The Cake Man* (1975), which depicts mission life, food, and religion in an Aboriginal voice.

⁵⁰ In the most recent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey of 2012 to 2013, 8% of Aboriginal and Indigenous people reported consistently high blood sugar or diabetes. These statistics increased in correlation to age and 39% of Aboriginal and Indigenous people over 55 were diabetic.

⁵¹ James Franklin, 'Catholic Missions to Aboriginal Australia: An Evaluation of their overall effect', *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society* 37: 1 (2016): 45-68.

⁵² Franklin, 'Catholic Missions to Aboriginal Australia', 47-48.

⁵³ 'Daly River Mission to be Abandoned', *Northern Territory Times and Gazette (Darwin, NT: 1873 - 1927)*, 7 July 1899, 3.

⁵⁴ I engage with discussion of contemporary communities on Elcho Island, NT, which was the site of a Methodist mission from 1942 until the mid-1970s. The Northern Territory was part of the state of South Australia until 1911, and I have chosen to use the contemporary geographical reference for clarity for the contemporary reader.

2.2.2 The Daly River Mission (1886 – 1899)

Much of the following case study makes use of the research of Regina Ganter for Griffith University on The Daly River Mission aiming to provide a historical overview of the variety of challenges in mission spaces ranging from the missionary structure itself to the physical and organisational challenges posed by climate and the environment.⁵⁵ The Daly River Mission was established in the Daly River Area in the Northern Territory in 1886 and operated for a relatively short period—just over a decade—until 1899. Residents of the mission were primarily Malak Malak. The mission was known variously as Queen of the Holy Rosary Station, Old Uniya (1886-1891), Sacred Heart Mission, Serpentine Lagoon (1889-1891), and St. Joseph’s Mission, Uniya (1891-1899), but the term ‘Daly River Mission’ is used for the site on which the mission was based to avoid confusion. As of 2010, the remaining community at Daly River was still 75% Roman Catholic according to the Remote Area Health Corp.⁵⁶

Records of missionary exploits are fairly extensive and are useful for researchers investigating the institutional roots, and consequent social impact, of faith groups in Australia. It must be acknowledged that very few reports included First Nation voices and so these public records, as with many colonial texts, provide a limited perspective and must be read with that knowledge. In this section Robert Merritt’s play *The Cake Man*, and the memories of Jimmie Barker and Norma Ingram of life on mission sites, are relied upon for First Nation voices. The leadership struggles of missionaries working on The Daly River Mission site were documented in newspapers including *The Northern Territory Times and Gazette* and Adelaide based *The Advertiser*. *The Northern Territory Times and Gazette* was the primary media source for Northern Australia.⁵⁷ During the 54-year period there was only one rival publication *The North Australian* (which operated between 1883-1889) as a result the *Times and Gazette* dominated communication in the area.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Ganter’s key resource is *The Daly River Mission Diary* which will be referenced in this section.

⁵⁶ ‘Community Profile: Daly River (Naiyu),’ *Remote Area Health Corp*, (2010), accessed 19 November 2019, at https://www.rahc.com.au/sites/default/files/documents/community_profiles/Daly%20River%20Community%20Profile.pdf.

⁵⁷ Established in 1873 in Darwin, the paper was known as *The Northern Territory Times and Gazette* until 1927, and *The Northern Territory Times* until its closure in 1932. 14 July 1899, *Northern Territory Times and Gazette (Darwin, NT: 1873 - 1927)*, 2.

⁵⁸ *Northern Territory Times and Gazette (Darwin, NT: 1873 - 1927)*, accessed 7 January 2022, at <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/title/9>.

Reports on missions appeared in newspapers and spanned from amateur anthropological commentary to political commentary. The papers served to provide updates to the city, other missionaries, and other invested communities including philanthropists. On 14 July 1899, *The Northern Territory Times and Gazette* published the following:

If anyone took the impression from our last week's remarks that the Daly Mission was being abandoned because of the inability of the Mission to obtain satisfactory results from the blacks it was a mistaken interpretation. The Rev. Father Conrad, who has, perhaps, the greater experience of all the members of the Mission, is of the opinion that the work of Christianising the natives will have to be extended over several generations before any permanent results can be expected. He has studied the language, manners and customs and the general disposition of the blacks very closely and...has had ample opportunity of delineating their character. Little or nothing can be done with the old people except to ameliorate their lot by the gifts of the good things provided by the Mission and it is the influence of the elders that makes it so difficult for the Mission to secure the desired results with the children.

The development of the juvenile brain into channels of thought superior to native intelligence would be sooner achieved if the parents of the children would leave them at school instead of taking them into the bush periodically and returning them as dense as ever....The missionaries are quite content to continue their Christianising efforts but the late inundation rendered it impossible for them to remain where they were, risking every year the loss of their stock, the ruin of their gardens and their own lives by floods.⁵⁹

This commentary provides significant information about the purpose of, and challenges faced by, the mission community. Key to this commentary is the lamentation that traditional activities, primarily returning to the bush for cultural practice, somehow disrupts the work of both schoolteachers and missionaries threatening education and faith, two pillars of change that the missionary structure relied upon as a marker of success.⁶⁰ This reveals to the contemporary reader the strength of Aboriginal peoples. In this instance kinship connection to Country is recognised by missionaries as being powerful enough to challenge the 'God

⁵⁹ 14 July 1899, *Northern Territory Times and Gazette* (Darwin, NT: 1873 - 1927), 2.

⁶⁰ Some missionaries felt their own anxieties regarding their vocation and successes for example Friedrich Albrecht of Hermannsburg mission was concerned that conversions to Christianity were superficial. See James L Cox, *Restoring the Chain of Memory*, 111.

given' Christian faith. The ecology of Country was therefore perceived by colonists and missionaries as not simply a threat to the physical Christian body but also to the spirit.

The Northern Territory Gazette and Times extensively covered the closure of the Daly River Mission site on 7 July 1899. An article titled 'Daly River Mission to be Abandoned' details the visit of Reverend Father John Miltz to the site.⁶¹ The report determines that the Jesuits intended to 'break up the station and abandon all further Christianising efforts in that district.'⁶² Furthermore, while Daly River resident missionaries Father Conrad and Brother John were reported to be returning to Europe, their colleagues Father Fleury and Father O'Brien were to leave at a later date to 'take up work in more congenial places.'⁶³ The departure of Father Conrad and Brother John is marked in comparison to the redeployment of their colleagues. This communicates a sense of finality and frustration in the Jesuit ranks at the failure of the utopian attempts of their program. I choose to use the term 'utopian' here with some flexibility, indicating the utopian endeavour held by missionaries, while acknowledging the very different experience of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people residing on missions. The unidentified journalist speculates that after spending £50,000 and many years 'it must be very disheartening to the good people of the Mission to have to admit that there is no excuse for continuing the experiment.'⁶⁴ The term 'experiment' suggests a clinical attitude towards the mission in that area. Faith as an experiment on other people is a concept which undermines the core Christian ethos of mission for the sake of spreading God's word.

The report proceeds to detail the sale of livestock to a businessman. The report lists '170 head of mixed cattle, 37 horses, and 1500 goats. Then there are extensive buildings, vehicles, gardening implements, and a variety of other things.'⁶⁵ The sale is described as a 'great bargain,' suggesting a hurried disposal of Jesuit assets, and lending an air of turmoil and even excitement to the situation at Daly River.⁶⁶ It is noticeable that the journalist does not mention any future plans for the community that had lived at the mission; certainly, it begs

⁶¹ 'Daly River Mission to be abandoned,' 7 July 1899, *Northern Territory Times and Gazette (Darwin, NT: 1873 - 1927)*, 3; Record of the death of Rev. Father John Miltz can be found in the Prayer Requests of the Adelaide Cathedral Parish, accessed 8 May 2020, available from <http://www.adelcathparish.org/files/f/18726/25%20Feb%202018.pdf>.

⁶² 'Daly River Mission to be abandoned', 3.

⁶³ 'Daly River Mission to be abandoned', 3.

⁶⁴ 'Daly River Mission to be abandoned', 3.

⁶⁵ The description of assets includes agricultural assets including citrus and mango trees. 'Daly River Mission to be Abandoned'.

⁶⁶ 'Daly River Mission to be Abandoned', 3.

consideration of how the community would change and operate with the removal of their structural sources of sustenance. While the community subsisted with their own practices before the mission, learned habits and generational education after thirteen years would have impacted their activities after the mission closure, during which its assets and stock were sold. A simple concluding line notes that the missionaries had considered moving the mission site to higher ground away from flood plains but ‘had reluctantly to confess that the conditions were against favourable occupation in whatever part of the district they might shift to.’⁶⁷ Whether the favourable conditions were simply physical, or to do with the community they worked with, is left ambiguous.

Anthropologist Deborah Bird Rose provides an analysis of this discourse that hypothesises that a narrative in which the Jesuits had ‘no impact’ on the area in which their missions had been served to distance them from association with the changes they had introduced. However, they made significant impacts on communities by altering established understandings of, and rites surrounding, marriage and death, as well as other social practices including eating, farming and building. Rose notes that the dismantling of the buildings, sale of livestock and removal of garden irrigation was a shock to the community, since ‘for all those who had taken the promise of the missionaries seriously,’⁶⁸ ‘the work of their lives was put up for sale.’⁶⁹ Rose’s analysis encapsulates the dismissiveness that exists between the lines of the *Northern Territory Times and Gazette* article in one poignant sentence; ‘The withdrawal of the missionaries to other assignments underlined ‘the final expendability of Aboriginal people.’⁷⁰

On the 14 July 1899 only one week after the publication of the previously discussed article *The Northern Territory Times and Gazette* published a follow up segment which began with an apology to the effect that the Daly Mission was not in fact being closed down due to the ‘inability of the Mission to obtain satisfactory results from the blacks.’⁷¹

This commentary indicates that there was significant community speculation about, and interest in, activity related to the demise of the mission. The apologies continue with praise of resident missionaries, for example Father Conrad, who was previously referred to as simply

⁶⁷ ‘Daly River Mission to be Abandoned’, 3.

⁶⁸ Deborah Bird Rose, ‘Signs of Life on a barbarous frontier: Intercultural encounters in North Australia’, *Humanities Research* 2 (1998): 17-36.

⁶⁹ ‘Daly River Mission to be Abandoned’, 3.

⁷⁰ ‘Daly River Mission to be Abandoned’, 3.

⁷¹ *Northern Territory Times and Gazette* (Darwin, NT: 1873 - 1927), 2.

‘Father Conrad’ is now given full title as ‘The Rev Father Conrad [with] the greater experience of all the members of the mission’.⁷² The report details Father Conrad’s opinion on the difficulties the mission faced starting with his advocating a generational approach:

Little or nothing can be done with the old people except to ameliorate their lot by the gifts of the good things provided by the Mission and it is the influence of the elders that makes it so difficult for the Mission to secure the desired results with the children. The development of the juvenile brain into channels of thought superior to native intelligence would be sooner achieved if the parents of the children would leave them at school instead of taking them into the bush periodically and returning them as dense as ever.⁷³

The tone of this report conflicts with liberal contemporary values but reveals the nature of interaction between clergy and residents at some missions. Frustration laces the words of Father Conrad. His irritation at the Aboriginal residents’ maintenance of their cultural activities and practices may seem telling to modern readers, who are more conscious of racism and the tactics employed by settler cultures to disempower and destroy Indigenous cultures. M. J. Alroe writes that ‘missionaries were, and are, ... parasites that depended on the survival of their host for their continued existence’ arguing that missions were flawed institutions which if successful at converting, and assimilating, the communities they worked with, then rendered their social control void.⁷⁴ The closing paragraph of this following segment is as follows:

The missionaries are quite content to continue their Christianising efforts, but the late inundation rendered it impossible for them to remain where they were, risking every year the loss of their stock, the ruin of their gardens and their own lives by floods.⁷⁵

I deduce the missionaries were unhappy with the treatment of their character, perhaps concerned that it would affect their place in the community. While it may seem strange to be concerned about the legacy of personal character in a place which they were ‘leaving for Europe...and more congenial locations,’ they may have seen the report as damaging for

⁷² *Northern Territory Times and Gazette (Darwin, NT: 1873 - 1927), 2.*

⁷³ *Northern Territory Times and Gazette (Darwin, NT: 1873 - 1927), 2.*

⁷⁴ M. J. Alroe, ‘A Pygmalion complex among missionaries: The Catholic case in the Kimberley’, in *Aboriginal Australians and Christian Missions*, eds. Tony Swain and Deborah Bird Rose (Bedford Park: Australian Association for the Study of Religions, 1988), 41.

⁷⁵ *Northern Territory Times and Gazette (Darwin, NT: 1873 - 1927), 2.*

public perception of their personal, and thus the broader Jesuit, zeal.⁷⁶ Jesuit missions aimed to change attitudes towards faith but also towards social, marital, and economic structures. Each mission and station treated marital alliances and monogamy as central tenets of desirable social order. As a result, couples were frequently provided with a small plot and the materials to build a hut. Jesuit missions had strict ordinances that applied to domestic structures mandating that they had to be architecturally European. Constructed from a list of approved materials (iron, wood etc.), these huts created visual and social boundaries. In doing so the Jesuit policy was the architect towards the nuclear family, a concept reinforced by living quarters and the distribution of rations. While domestic spaces were distinct, the mission design was one of a communal society with shared spaces frequently including a church, school, kitchens, and gardens.

Most Jesuit missions had policies against providing monetary assistance to families living within their boundaries. Basic food supplies were sometimes exempt from these policies, as was tobacco. The nutritional content of tobacco is nil, and the nutritional content of flour is not varied enough to have a significant dietary impact; however, both products were desirable and considered to be luxurious.⁷⁷ Cultivated livestock was not a guarantee for these remote communities. *The Daly River Mission Diary* details the presence of cow herds but notes that bush food was the ‘staple diet, supplemented by purchased provisions such as flour, sugar and tea, and occasionally a goat or bullock from mission herds.’ The mission diary also discusses the primary foods of the residents (or ‘colonists’ as they were frequently referred to) as; yams, yillik (waterlily), goose-eggs, kangaroo, geese, ducks, and an occasional crocodile (if it was not a man-eater). In many mission communities bush food, or traditional food, was discouraged and in some instances banned, to forcefully acculturate residents to a Western, Christian way of life. This may have been because few crops grew well in the region except those foods which were already established. The *Daly River Mission Diary* paints a different picture for researchers, one which demonstrates the breadth of approaches taken by mission administrators.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ *Northern Territory Times and Gazette (Darwin, NT: 1873 - 1927), 2.*

⁷⁷ The negative effects are many including lung cancer, emphysema, and reduced quality of life. *Tackling Indigenous Smoking*, Department of Health, Australian Government, published 22 January 2020, at <https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/tackling-indigenous-smoking>.

⁷⁸ Griffith University, ‘Daly River: 1886-1899,’ *German Missionaries in Australia* (Brisbane: Griffith University, no date), accessed 15 August 2020, at <http://missionaries.griffith.edu.au/mission/daly-river-1886-1899>. This research is largely compiled by Regina Ganter using the following as a primary source ‘Diary of the Station of St. Joseph of the Mission of the Society of Jesus on the Daly River, in the Northern Territory of

Economic and agricultural plans developed by mission managements were not always successful despite the possibility of future advantages to mission residents. A lack of community consultancy and collaboration resulted in ineffective schemes. At Daly River gardens assigned to each married couple and larger gardens shared by mission residents were supposed to supply fresh fruit and vegetables like corn, potatoes, and bananas.⁷⁹ This was compounded by traditional practices (such as circumcision ceremonies), which required mission residents to be absent from the mission, during which time their garden plots could be reassigned. Reassigning the gardens devalued their worth and consequently the perceived worth of agricultural pursuits. In addition, the concept of cultivating many crops in an intensive manner on a small plot was a departure from Aboriginal methods of agriculture which saw produce available seasonally and spread through the environment. Consequently, these mission gardens failed to embrace the connection to land that already existed in the practice and narrative of different groups.

Animal husbandry and the consumption of game meat was managed poorly.⁸⁰ Rose observes ecological failure in the consumption of excessive numbers of kangaroos, geese, and other large birds including pelicans and ducks. The mission diary details that in one year, ‘we have shot about 550 kangaroos, 600 geese, 30 pelicans and 50 ducks.’⁸¹ Sources of both animals and plants were severely depleted and conflict arose over resources. Father Kristen is recorded as observing, ‘When this stock is exhausted, it is hard to see where the natives will find anything to live on this year.’⁸² Little consideration seems to be given as to why these resources are suddenly so scarce, whether it was the concentration of residents or the changes to agricultural production methods. The Daly River community was short lived and not well planned. Supplies were a particularly challenging component of the operation. The supply line was by water and was provided by the Coppermine steamer and a Chinese sampan, both of which were unreliable.⁸³ Father Kristen wrote of frustration and desolation when the supply chain was delayed, lamenting that ‘So little do people think of us in our poverty!’⁸⁴ These periods of food insecurity resulted in the dismissal of residents from the mission,

Australia’ translated by Paddy Dalton SJ, revised and typed by F. J. Dennett SJ August 1982, in Archives of the Society of Jesus, Hawthorn. Following Griffith Universities style of reference for this text I will refer to it as ‘DRM’ and then reference Griffith University (see following references).

⁷⁹ Griffith University, ‘Daly River: 1886-1899,’ *German Missionaries in Australia*.

⁸⁰ Rose, ‘Signs of Life on a barbarous frontier’, 17-36.

⁸¹ Rose, ‘Signs of Life on a barbarous frontier’, 24.

⁸² DRM 30 August 1892. Griffith University, ‘Daly River: 1886-1899’, *German Missionaries in Australia*.

⁸³ The sampan is a boat. Griffith University, ‘Daly River: 1886-1899’, *German Missionaries in Australia*.

⁸⁴ DRM 9 December 1893. Griffith University, ‘Daly River: 1886-1899’, *German Missionaries in Australia*.

allowing only children and ‘the most loyal residents’ to remain on site.⁸⁵ This selection process would have fragmented the community devastating any bonds of trust that may have been established between administration and residents, and between residents. Those who were sent away were ultimately at risk of starvation.⁸⁶ At other times of the year, too, Aboriginal people in the Daly River catchment came close to starvation in the bush. Griffith University research shows records from March 1895 that detail the case of an absconding couple from the mission who were ‘recaptured ... in the jungle almost starving.’⁸⁷ In September 1896 a woman was brought in ‘nearly dead with starvation.’⁸⁸ Rose determines that the ecology of the Daly region had been seriously disrupted. Changes in the landscape restricted the voices, and degraded the mental health, of mission residents, who, by nature of their reliance on the institution, had to be on good terms with the mission. Similar impacts were felt in outlying communities, who, due to the changing ecology of the area, found they too had to rely on the mission at times of crisis. The difficulties and hardships for both the local people and the missionaries documented in the mission diary make it heart-rending reading. Records show that 1892 was a particularly difficult year at the Daly River Mission. The government had withdrawn certain funds and subsidies rendering ‘the economic state of the mission’ to be declared as ‘very, very serious.’⁸⁹ By mid-year there was ‘not a penny in the house.’⁹⁰ Basic supplies like flour and sugar were not available in the mission for some weeks, and the missionary administrators who remained at the mission were becoming ill from a diet consisting only of meat. Almost all residents had been sent away, but bush food was also scarce. The mission diaries detail that two of the ‘most promising converts starved to death in the bush.’⁹¹ 1892 was a year of sickness, grief and guilt for the Daly River community and in 1893, as a direct reaction to the preceding months, the Jesuits altered their policies and distributed a wider variety of food supplies amongst the community.

Non sanctioned gatherings, such as cultural ritual gatherings, were typically not permitted in mission spaces. Missionary administration essentially attempted, and often succeeded in destabilising existing traditions by banning attendance at ritual gatherings. Some records suggest that the administration claimed the opportunity to attend cultural ritual gatherings

⁸⁵ Griffith University, 'Daly River: 1886-1899', *German Missionaries in Australia*.

⁸⁶ Griffith University, 'Daly River: 1886-1899', *German Missionaries in Australia*.

⁸⁷ DRM 17 March 1895. Griffith University, 'Daly River: 1886-1899', *German Missionaries in Australia*.

⁸⁸ DRM 20 September 1896. Griffith University, 'Daly River: 1886-1899', *German Missionaries in Australia*.

⁸⁹ DRM 29 April 1892. Griffith University, 'Daly River: 1886-1899', *German Missionaries in Australia*.

⁹⁰ DRM 20 July 1892. Griffith University, 'Daly River: 1886-1899', *German Missionaries in Australia*.

⁹¹ DRM 20 July 1892. Griffith University, 'Daly River: 1886-1899', *German Missionaries in Australia*.

lowered attendance at Mass and therefore disrupted the structure of mission operation.⁹² Many of these records were kept to be called upon to help justify the operation of mission spaces including accessing extra support or funding. The Daly River diary details that The Caramalla (aka Karamalla) corroboree usually held in March or April at the Coppermine Landing (aka Paramal) drew mission residents away from their usual tasks, and from attending Mass, and was therefore liable to be punished. Another reference begins with Father Conrad breaking up an event and enacting social punishment on the community:

10 April 1898: 'Easter Sunday. At sunrise there was great shouting from the spectators of the Caramalla games, for which about 250 persons had assembled. A Father and Brother went to the place near the Reduction where the celebration was taking place and dispersed those taking part in the barbarous rites. As the colonists (all but 2) were present at these games, we held no public games at the Station, by way of penalty.'⁹³

Similar scenes occur in records on the Tyaboi festival held in August 1890. In preceding weeks mission administration had clashed with mission residents and forbade the attendance of young women. Confusion and misinformation abounded amongst the missionaries about the purpose, and practices, of the Tyaboi festival. One, superior Father McKillop suggested in his own amateur anthropological notes that the *Tyaboi* involved human sacrifice.⁹⁴ This assumption is discounted by Rose, who suspects that the 'evil spirit' (or Jin-man), to whom sacrifice might be made, was God himself.⁹⁵ This interpretation suggests that concepts of human sacrifice were introduced, or at the very least institutionalised in community narrative, by the missionaries themselves.⁹⁶ In addition, the Daly River mission had a large cross placed on the hill at which the mission superior would hold meetings and deliver speeches. Regina Gantor's research at Griffith University identifies records detailing instances of mission residents being 'called to the cross' for correction and teaching.⁹⁷ Consequently, the cross was complicated as a symbol of punishment. Images of Jesus crucified would solidify this perception.

⁹² Griffith University, 'Daly River: 1886-1899,' *German Missionaries in Australia*.

⁹³ DRM 10 April 1898. Griffith University, 'Daly River: 1886-1899', *German Missionaries in Australia*.

⁹⁴ Donald Mackillop, 'Anthropological notes on the Aboriginal tribes of the Daly River', *Transactions of the Royal Society of South Australia* 17 (1892-93): 262.

⁹⁵ Rose, 'Signs of Life on a barbarous frontier', 25.

⁹⁶ It would be plausible to suggest that the introduction of the narrative of the sacrifice of Christ blended well with understandings of human sacrifice.

⁹⁷ Gantor, *The Contest for Aboriginal Souls*, 97.

References to the Tyaboi festival provide an early insight into the development of Aboriginal Christianity and avenues of religious autonomy in mission spaces. Rose details the purpose of the festival in her research, noting that the term ‘Tyaboi’ was most likely a reference to the Jesuits.⁹⁸ The festival was held every few years until the 1930s. Rose suggests it was a ‘contact cult to incorporate the new, unknown, and unpredictable in Indigenous cosmology, and so to tame it.’⁹⁹ This need to explore the new can be seen in reports that discussion at the mission had included Jesus’ lineage. The question had been raised of whether Jesus was in fact Malak Malak, meaning one of them and therefore, where did Jesus’ loyalty lie.¹⁰⁰ Father Conrad is described as believing the festival involved ‘objectionable rites’ and even associated the death of Paramal woman with her husband’s involvement in ‘the diabolical Tyaboi.’¹⁰¹ Fr. Conrad claimed the ritual had brought evil into their lives and diseases onto the woman, diseases which mission medicine could not heal.¹⁰² Father Conrad’s reaction and superstition highlights his own fear and distrust while imbuing the Tyaboi with the power of recognition.

2.2.3 St. Joseph’s Mission, New Uniya (1891-1899)

In 1891 three locations—Rapid Creek and the Daly River sites—were surrendered in favour of a new mission located downstream from the settlement of Old Uniya. Brother Scharmer at Holy Rosary station built a river boat that made it easier to pick up provisions for the mission from a steamer.¹⁰³ The river boat was launched in June 1891 as the Uniya. This engineering resolved the supply issues frequently faced by remote mission settlements. The New Uniya site was large, around 270 acres, and was a great distance (144 km) from the nearest White community which was located along the railway line.¹⁰⁴ The site was previously used as a copper mine staffed primarily by Chinese migrant miners, some of whom still resided in the

⁹⁸ Griffith University, ‘Daly River: 1886-1899’, *German Missionaries in Australia*.

⁹⁹ Rose, ‘Signs of Life on a barbarous frontier’, 25.

¹⁰⁰ Rose, ‘Signs of Life on a barbarous frontier’, 33.

¹⁰¹ DRM 20 April 1891. Griffith University, ‘Daly River: 1886-1899’, *German Missionaries in Australia*.

¹⁰² DRM 20 April 1891. Griffith University, ‘Daly River: 1886-1899’, *German Missionaries in Australia*.

¹⁰³ Paddy Dalton (trans.), *Diary of the Station of St. Joseph of the Mission of the Society of Jesus on the Daly River, in the Northern Territory of Australia* (Hawthorn: Archives of the Society of Jesus, 1982), 27 June 1891.

¹⁰⁴ G.J. O’Kelly, ‘The Jesuit Mission Stations in the Northern Territory 1882-1899’ (Honours Thesis, Monash University, 1967), 43.

area at the time the mission was established. The mission diary references involvement of this existing community in the mission.¹⁰⁵

A number of staff from other missions moved to New Uniya, including the aforementioned Father Kristen. The staff consumed kangaroo meat, but only until the goat herd was large enough to be butchered.¹⁰⁶ This attitude is consistent with narratives surrounding bush food, or native foods, as survival foods. Bannerman writes those endogenous foods may have been ‘exploited’ and ‘tinged with adventure’ but ultimately also represented failure, particularly the ‘depletion of stores’ and ‘separation from...home.’¹⁰⁷ As New Uniya established, significant infrastructure works took place. Workshops were built and fitted with equipment, including a ‘steam-powered saw’ and key temporary structures, were put up including a church, a school, dormitories, and a monastery.¹⁰⁸ Domestic structures for married couples featured allotment gardens much like the previous Daly River site and gradually more communal structures were constructed to flesh out the site; granary, stables, sawmill and a forge. The Chinese residents of the area provided labour to dig wells and underground aqueducts alongside a steam engine powered pump which increased the agricultural possibilities of the land. In addition, the community had approximately one-hundred and fifty cattle, one-hundred and thirty pigs and thirty-three horses and killed up to twenty goats per week.¹⁰⁹ It is recorded that approximately sixty acres were productive with crops including maize, yams, sweet potatoes, pineapples, kaffir corn, watermelons, Indian beans, tobacco, bananas, coconuts, papaws, and mangoes.¹¹⁰

New Uniya has been referred to as a ‘reduction’, a term more commonly used for Jesuit communities in the area which is now South America. These have been referred to variously as ‘political experiment’ and ‘socialist utopia’.¹¹¹ Essentially these spaces were planned

¹⁰⁵ Contemporary examples can be found of fusion cooking borne from multicultural interactions during the late 1800s. Some accessible examples of these recipes are featured on the Kriol Kitchen television show, including combinations of fruit and seafoods and later spices and some cooking techniques. NITV’s *Kriol Kitchen* is explored in greater depth in Chapter Four of this dissertation

¹⁰⁶ Griffith University, ‘Daly River: 1886-1899’, *German Missionaries in Australia*.

¹⁰⁷ Colin Bannerman, ‘Indigenous Food and Cookery Books: Redefining Aboriginal Cuisine’, *Journal of Australian Studies*, 30 no. 87 (2006), 20.

¹⁰⁸ Griffith University, ‘Daly River: 1886-1899’, *German Missionaries in Australia*.

¹⁰⁹ Owen Stanley, ‘The Mission and Peppimenarti: An economic study of two Daly River Aboriginal communities’, *North Australia Research Unit Darwin* (1985), 8.

¹¹⁰ Stanley, ‘The Mission and Peppimenarti: An economic study of two Daly River Aboriginal communities’, 8.

¹¹¹ Dalton (trans.), *Diary of the Station of St. Joseph of the Mission of the Society of Jesus on the Daly River*, 10 April 1989; Richard Gott, *Land Without Evil: Utopian Journeys Across the South American Watershed* (London: Verso, 1993), 8; Robert Aldrich and Kirsten McKenzie, *The Routledge History of Western Empires* (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2013), 27.

towns, the early South American reductions mimicking baroque urbanism with plazas, churches, guildhalls and other infrastructure common in the Spanish homelands of the Jesuits. South American reductions were hives of economic and industrial activity, the only benefit to Indigenous residents being basic supplies and protection. It is likely that, even around three-hundred years on, Australian Jesuits idealised the format as a marker of success.¹¹² Records show that Father Marschner began to ‘experiment with crops and cured tobacco’ and multiple references suggest colonists ‘paid’ reduction/mission residents in tobacco.¹¹³ These ‘in kind’ payments became attached to Aboriginal labour opportunities. Some of the Chinese community re-entered the area after the mission collapsed and engaged in mining and smelting. The Aboriginal people they employed were paid in kind with goods including food, clothes, alcohol, tobacco, and opium.

The Daly River mission, which preceded New Uniya, had also had a common farm and a school attended by children who were ‘boarded and lodged at the expense of the mission’ and were ‘brought up to habits in industry...[and] agriculture.’¹¹⁴ *The Wagga Wagga Express* reported on a lecture given by Reverend S Marschner at St Joseph’s Hall, Wagga Wagga on the topic of the Daly River mission and wrote of the mission residents, including ‘thirty children...fourteen young men who were trained to agriculture...twenty families to each of which the mission granted eight acres.’¹¹⁵ This reinforces the understanding of mission spaces as cultural experiments and residents as subjects. The lecture continued to discuss the relationship of residents to the Christian faith, which was supposedly shored up by the growing number of families living on site and the use of ‘their own language’ for worship ‘At mass on Sunday’s the aboriginals sang in their own language Haydn’s mass for the people.’¹¹⁶ The use of vernacular in Christian church liturgy was formally accepted at the Second Vatican Council; it symbolised the institutional church relinquishing a small portion of power. This change facilitated increased independent engagement with religious texts and rituals but was a valuable tool for conversion and missionary pursuits.

The Wagga Wagga Express’ journalist offers a brief reflection on the lecture as follows:

¹¹² Aldrich and McKenzie, *The Routledge History of Western Empires*, 29.

¹¹³ Griffith University, ‘Daly River: 1886-1899’, *German Missionaries in Australia*.

¹¹⁴ ‘The Daly River Mission: Aboriginal Superstition’, *The Wagga Wagga Express*, NSW, published Saturday 20 October 1894, 4.

¹¹⁵ ‘The Daly River Mission: Aboriginal Superstition’, *The Wagga Wagga Express*, 4.

¹¹⁶ ‘The Daly River Mission: Aboriginal Superstition’, *The Wagga Wagga Express*, 4.

Those few facts, the lecturer contended, demonstrated that the influence of Christianity alleviated the sad fate of the blacks, and helped to prevent the speedy decay of the unfortunate race. The aboriginals of North Australia must have held in remote times a high place in the scale of culture and civilisation, which was proved by remnants of their language, which displayed astonishing distinctness and precision. Therefore, their present debased state showed, on the one hand, the precipice of moral and physical decay to which all natives hastened in proportion as they abandoned religion from their lives, and, on the other, of the blessings of Christianity which had preserved the White race from such degradation. What earnest man, the lecturer asked, considering that truth, would not feel moved to make some effort in aid of his much less fortunate and miserable brethren in order to secure for them, or at least for their children, the benefits which the Lord gave them, centuries ago, by sending missionaries to their Pagan forefathers? The lecturer concluded by exhorting those present to render practical assistance to the Daly River Mission.¹¹⁷

The patronage entreated from the audience by the lecturer is at the core of the lay mission. The audience can finance deliverance without interacting themselves with those they are supposedly assisting in delivering. I conclude here by deferring to a brief reflection from Robert Merritt's 1975 play *The Cake Man* (which forms a case study later in this chapter) which astutely critiques these endeavours in a monologue delivered by disenchanted Aboriginal man Sweet William: 'For y' travel over land and sea to make one convert...an' when ya' finished with 'im, why, that fellers twice as fit for hell as you are y'self.'¹¹⁸

In the late 1890s financial strife and natural disaster, particularly flooding, caused the mission to be closed down and the land reverted to the government. Vehicles, tools and other assets were sold, and a landowner, W. J. Byrne, purchased one-hundred and seventy head of mixed cattle, thirty-seven horses, one-thousand five-hundred goats, as well as machinery and other property.¹¹⁹ New Uniya is an excellent example of how displaced peoples built a new social history in a new location. Following the closure of the Jesuit mission in the area, industry evolved, and the ex-residents were employed variably as gardeners, butchers, and trappers. Gradually the community that remained at New Uniya changed. Jesuit Brother Melzer who

¹¹⁷ 'The Daly River Mission: Aboriginal Superstition', *The Wagga Wagga Express*, 4.

¹¹⁸ Robert Merritt, *The Cake Man* (Redfern: Currency Press: 1983), 12-13.

¹¹⁹ 'Daly River Mission to be Abandoned', *Northern Territory Times and Gazette*, 7 July 1899, 3, accessed 7 March 2016, available from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4235572>.

revisited the area at the turn of the century (November 1899) declares that ‘natives’ ‘had reverted to nakedness’, and that polygamy and a prostitution industry had emerged between them and the mining community.¹²⁰ The latter industry was again centred on the trading of food and tobacco. Consequently, food, and therefore survival, was a bartering chip used to control the remaining residents.

Local press featured a debate, on the topic of the failure of the mission, asking why the missionaries could not live at the Daly River all year round as the residents did.¹²¹ The press suggested that the mission had little impact, and the Jesuits eventually conceded this point. I resist this conclusion, as would many contemporary communities, and likely many mission residents and their families. The impact of the mission was significant and lasting in the area, changing social structures, agricultural zoning and investment. The withdrawal of mission administrators, funding and the sale of tools and infrastructure that generations of Aboriginal residents had learned to use, in effect destabilising a changed community. This demonstrated a lack of consideration for the existing community, a lack of respect, and a clear example of paternalism. It suggests an assumption that without guidance the Aboriginal residents would not have the skills to turn the land into a profitable enterprise. While the community adapted on their departure, I argue the Jesuits failed in their ethical responsibility to their community.

2.2.4 Brewarrina (1886 – 1966)

Brewarrina Mission, recognised as the first institution established by the Aborigines Protection Board for segregation, operated until 1966 on the North-West of New South Wales.¹²² Murawari man Jimmie Barker was a station hand who grew up in South West Queensland in various communities including Mundiwa, Milroy, and the Brewarrina mission.¹²³ Barker features heavily in the writing of anthropologist Ruth A. Fink Latukefu who visited the Brewarrina Mission in the mid-north of New South Wales for a number of months in 1954.¹²⁴ Her reflections on her time there are useful in providing detailed observations of the nuances of mission life, particularly an article of recollections Fink Latufeku published in 2014 (with all the benefits of 60 years of cultural hindsight to inform

¹²⁰ Griffith University, ‘Daly River: 1886-1899’, *German Missionaries in Australia*.

¹²¹ ‘Daly River Mission to be Abandoned’, *Northern Territory Times and Gazette*.

¹²² State Library of NSW, ‘Central western plains: Brewarrina Aboriginal reserve in photograph album of NSW Aboriginal Reserves, C 1910’ at <https://gather.sl.nsw.gov.au/digital-heritage/central-western-plains-brewarrina-aboriginal-reserve-photograph-album-nsw>

¹²³ ‘Barker, James (Jimmie) (1900–1972),’ National Centre of Biography.

¹²⁴ Fink was of German Jewish background but married Tongan Pacific historian Sione Latukefu in the 1960s.

her reflections) for the *Journal of Australian Aboriginal Studies*.¹²⁵ Barker observed that many of the traditional customs of people living at the mission had already been lost by 1922 as many Elders had died during an influenza epidemic in 1919. For generations managers at the Brewarrina Mission had discouraged Aboriginal beliefs and rituals. Children on the Mission were indoctrinated to believe anything connected with their Aboriginality was primitive and should be forgotten. Like most missions, Brewarrina discouraged, or banned entirely, cultural practices such as hunting, feasting and dancing. Ngemba man Feli McHughes says that upon colonisation the Ngemba people were rounded up and ordered to live at Brewarrina Mission, nine miles away.¹²⁶ Cultural practices went ‘underground... And they weren’t allowed to come here and get fish from [the] traps.’¹²⁷ In these ways mission residents were frequently unable to freely preserve their religious relationship with sites of cultural significance. This spiritual connection with the land, their Country, was, and is, the basis for many forms of narrative communication and education between generations and is a crucial part of Aboriginal identity. Today, the impact of displacement on emotional, religious, and spiritual well-being is increasingly acknowledged. In 2014, the Australian Government’s Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet released a report on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Statistics which detailed the connection between traditional ownership of land, land resources, and health.¹²⁸ The report explained supporting traditional culture, including customary law, religion and governance structures helped improve health. In practice this would involve ensuring Indigenous peoples have access to Country to take part in ritual activity.

Fink Latukefu recalls visiting Brewarrina in the 1950s, noting that residents demonstrated a sense of shame if a White person observed them engaging in anything culturally Aboriginal, such as eating traditional bush foods.¹²⁹ Fink Latukefu writes briefly of the secrecy surrounding food, noting that many Aboriginal people cooked their traditional food in secret. Sharing meals like an ash cooked goanna with Fink Latukefu showed trust, friendship, and

¹²⁵ Fink Latukefu, ‘Recollections of Brewarrina Aboriginal Mission,’ 72.

¹²⁶ Monica Tan, ‘The fish traps at Brewarrina are extraordinary and ancient structures. Why aren’t they better protected?’, *The Guardian*, 10 July 2007, at <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/jul/10/fish-traps-brewarrina-extraordinary-ancient-structures-protection>.

¹²⁷ Tan, ‘The fish traps at Brewarrina are extraordinary and ancient structures. Why aren’t they better protected?’

¹²⁸ Australian Government, *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework* (2014), accessed 21 February 2022, at https://www.pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/publications/Aboriginal_and_Torres_Strait_Islander_HPF_2014%20-%20edited%2016%20June2015.pdf.

¹²⁹ Fink Latukefu, ‘Recollections of Brewarrina Aboriginal Mission’, 72.

vulnerability. Aboriginal people on missions were taught that their food was dirty and unfit and were instead provided with rations.¹³⁰ Rations were primarily intended for the infirm, elderly, or children; able bodied people were expected to work to support their families. Fink Latukefu writes one woman told her a friendly White man took the children hunting and caught a kangaroo to share with the families on the mission but the woman's shame was such that she was unable to cut or eat the meat in front of him.¹³¹ Fink Latukefu suggests that some people would not mind if they were caught gambling by White people but would be upset if they were found eating bush foods. Colonists and settlers alike weaponised the foodways of the colonised and their strange and 'revolting' foods as a sign of uncivilised, inferior status.¹³² Blake Singley identifies an example of this in records of one young Aboriginal boy who was considered to have been rehabilitated into civilisation only 'once his penchant for 'scorched' kangaroo cooked in cinders was eliminated and his palate was able to become civilised into European ways.'¹³³

Under the leadership of manager J.G. Danvers the Brewarrina Mission gained a community garden. From my reading it seems Danvers seemed to have a generally positive impact on the community, exercising proactive leadership which resulted in the planting of an orchard, community garden and a lucerne plot. The latter is a plant used for pasture, fodder and reducing groundwater discharge.¹³⁴ In addition, capital works were undertaken including the construction of lavatories and a slaughterhouse.¹³⁵ The slaughterhouse enabled mission station livestock to be slaughtered to improve the diets of the malnourished community. Records from 1935 mention a policy of tool, seed and shrub distribution to encourage self-sufficient gardening amongst the community.¹³⁶ Records from the time suggest that although

¹³⁰ Laila Haglund, 'Community-based Aboriginal Heritage Study for the Aboriginal Communities (Ngyiampaa/ Ngembah, Morrowari, Yuwaalaraay) and the broader community of the Shire, Brewarrina Shire Council and the Heritage Section of the Department of Heritage,' *Brewarrina Shire Council* (2012): 102, accessed 12 August 2019, at <http://www.brewarrina.nsw.gov.au/f.ashx/aboriginal-heritage-study-2012-part-2.pdf>.

¹³¹ Fink Latukefu, 'Recollections of Brewarrina Aboriginal Mission', 73.

¹³² Damian M. Mosley, 'Breaking bread: the roles of taste in colonialism', *Food, Culture and Society: An International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research* 7 (2004): 56.

¹³³ *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, 2 September 1804, 3, in Singley, 'Hardly Anything Fit for Man to eat,' 33.

¹³⁴ 'Lucerne - the plant and its establishment, Agriculture and Food Western Australia,' *Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development*, published 2 October 2018, accessed 20 February 2020, at <https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/pasture-establishment/lucerne-plant-and-its-establishment>.

¹³⁵ Haglund, 'Community-based Aboriginal Heritage Study for the Aboriginal Communities (Ngyiampaa/ Ngembah, Morrowari, Yuwaalaraay)', 106.

¹³⁶ Haglund, 'Community-based Aboriginal Heritage Study for the Aboriginal Communities (Ngyiampaa/ Ngembah, Morrowari, Yuwaalaraay) and the broader community of the Shire, Brewarrina Shire Council and the Heritage Section of the Department of Heritage', 104.

Danvers had left it would have been his legacy that provided the impetus for this project.¹³⁷ The community garden is recorded as a great success amongst the community with Danvers reporting to a parliamentary hearing that:

I established a community garden...the people came in quite willingly and did their bit, it was all done with mattock and shovel; Within about four months we had vegetables on the station for everybody ... everybody then had a garden of his own. They worked in the community garden and also in their own gardens ... it made people proud of their homes and they got on much better.¹³⁸

Danvers focus on community wellbeing, and his efforts towards self-empowerment through land can be read as early attempts at solidarity.

Gradually, as a result of generations of social and community work, parts of the colonially introduced, and maintained, veil of shame has lifted around Indigenous cultural practices, and young Indigenous people in the twenty-first century are looking for ways to learn language, practise dance and absorb knowledge in all its forms.¹³⁹

These three mission case studies have provided historical background for early institutional relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. These relationships have served to set the tone for many further, failed attempts at effective alliance. As can be seen in these case studies, cultural confusion, a lack of respect and high levels of community interference sullied opportunities for effective alliance or the development of practices of solidarity. The foodscape developed in mission environments has significantly impacted cultural memory for countless Aboriginal communities. This foodscape was framed by understandings of transaction, power, worth and behaviour controlled through access to food which was utilised as a doctrinal tool by many communities. These same frameworks filtered into the development of rationing systems and social welfare schemes which still impact the life experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in the twenty-first century.

¹³⁷ Aborigines Inland Mission of Australia, *Our Aim: The monthly record of the Aborigines Inland Mission of Australia* 26, no. 5 (23 April 1932): 11.

¹³⁸ Janet Mathews, *The two worlds of Jimmie Barker: The life of an Australian Aboriginal 1900-1972* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1988), 216.

¹³⁹ The Bangarra Dance Theatre exemplifies this, providing opportunities to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists. Bangarra communicates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stories and knowledge through dance. Bangarra Dance Company, 'Our Company,' *Bangarra Dance Company*, accessed 19 March 2020, at [https://www.bangarra.com.au/about/company.](https://www.bangarra.com.au/about/company.;); National Indigenous Culinary Institute, <http://nici.org.au/>.

2.3 Food as outreach: Edible tools for doctrine

I have observed that casual discourse and sentiment often draw unspoken distinctions between the practice of ‘exploring’ and the act of colonising, as if to preference one as somehow less politically aggressive than the other. Yet there are many elements of colonising present in the act of exploring, so much so that commentators are starting to engage in cultural criticism of the way wealthy, particularly White, travellers engage in tourism.¹⁴² Certainly, in the traditional sense of ‘exploring,’ the act of staking a flag, an emblem, or any other mark, on a space lays visual claim to that space although these symbols are not always so obvious. Reverend Joseph Docker and Assistant Protector of Aborigines James Dredge carved imperial signs into a tree in the Murray region and Mitchell writes that this act results in an implied emptiness of the land and notes that the men had also named areas after themselves as they travelled.¹⁴³ Today, Aboriginal people, parks and wildlife bodies and bushwalkers identify and may recognise Aboriginal carvings and other indicators to identify the existing, known, spaces.

Evangelical Protestant groups were involved in the British abolitionist movements. Upon arrival in Australia these same evangelical groups became publicly invested in a desire to ‘reduce the abuse of native people.’¹⁴⁴ In most colonial countries they endeavoured to create systemic social change through missionary activity rather than political pressure.¹⁴⁵ The early nineteenth century featured more Indigenous autonomy than the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries although it was still less than pre-settlement. In the latter, protection boards, government bodies and missionaries held significant sway over Indigenous peoples lives and culture.¹⁴⁶ Mitchell has found that philanthropist and missionary records are predominantly concerned with ‘efforts to civilise Indigenous people, their implicit concerns revolved strongly around what it meant to be British, imperial and White.’¹⁴⁷ This mirroring of subjecthood, Black as a reflection of what White is not, rather than what the Black person

¹⁴¹ Jessie Mitchell, *In Good Faith: Governing Indigenous Australia through God, Charity and Empire, 1825-1855* (Canberra: Australian National University EPress, 2011), at http://epress.anu.edu.au/good_faith_citation.html; Mitchell, *In Good Faith*, 1-2.

¹⁴² S.E. Smith, ‘‘The people are so beautiful:’ That’s enough of the colonial tourism’, *The Guardian*, 9 April 2014, accessed 15 December 2016, at <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/apr/08/people-beautiful-colonial-tourism-travel>.

¹⁴³ Mitchell, *In Good Faith*, 2.

¹⁴⁴ Mitchell, *In Good Faith*, 4.

¹⁴⁵ Mitchell, *In Good Faith*, 4.

¹⁴⁶ Mitchell, *In Good Faith*, 4.

¹⁴⁷ Mitchell, *In Good Faith*, 5.

actually is, is not uncommon in colonial literature, and is still a criticism that can be levelled at many anthropological investigations, opinion editorials, and even academic research today. Missionaries and philanthropists relied on the state to support their work and so reports had a twofold purpose: to record work, and to procure the support of the state to continue said work. This may change the tone and selection of material in a report. As soon as the first settlers set foot on Australian soil, issues of ownership of land and labour arose. A social structure beset with the difficulty borne of its status as a penal colony, and the dramatic distinctions of class and respect that alone caused, struggled to incorporate an already resident peoples who looked, lived and spoke differently. Efforts to share and learn were limited by this and ultimately unsuccessful in creating lasting social and economic impact. Aboriginal access to land (and therefore Country), the power of the Crown, and the perceived superiority of European agricultural methods created a volatile confusion centred on land and entitlement.

Food is a conduit for meaning not merely a form of sustenance. For missionaries and protectors, food was a way to persuade Aboriginal people to stay geographically close to missions and reserves even in the early nineteenth century, when many Aboriginal people were still mobile and obtained food from other sources considered ‘immoral’ by philanthropists.¹⁴⁸ Mitchell does not specify what sources were considered immoral, but it can safely be assumed these were sources of unfamiliar bush foods including bush game. In 1846 James Gunther, a Wellington Valley missionary, noted ‘we must...[give] them the bread that perisheth if we want the opportunity of administering to them the un-perishable life-giving bread of heaven.’¹⁴⁹ This declaration was confirmed by William Thomas who claimed, ‘No preacher will succeed with the Bible without the loaf.’¹⁵⁰ This bitterness and animosity ignored that missionaries and protectorates had started the practice of rewarding

¹⁴⁸ Mitchell, *In Good Faith*, 115.

¹⁴⁹ Mitchell, *In Good Faith*, 115.

¹⁵⁰ William Thomas, 14 June 1846 in Mitchell, *In Good Faith*, 115. This same sentiment is echoed by Howard J. Pohlner, who records that German missionary Georg Pfalzer found that when his sermons went on too long he was interrupted by mission residents who asked ‘do you want us to chop some wood, or dig the garden?’ or more bluntly, ‘are we getting something to eat now?’ See Howard J. Pohlner, *Gangurru* (Lutheran Church of Australia, Adelaide, 1986), 40. It was from these sort of ‘realisations’ and reports that there grew a general sense that Indigenous people were somehow lazy. This is one source of still rampant, cultural, colonial discourse and perception that Indigenous people are lazy, and expect ‘handouts.’ The most well-known and influential proponent of this attitude is Senator Pauline Hanson. See Pauline Hanson, *Closing the Gap - What a Joke*, 13 February 2020, accessed 22 May 2020, at <https://www.senatorhanson.com.au/2020/02/13/closing-the-gap-what-a-joke/>.

religious participation with food. They were disturbed when people began to demand this payment blatantly, interrupting religious discussions with food requests.

Cultural complications specific to the European colonial heritage of many missionaries further problematised the relationship between rationing and Indigenous identity. Historian Tim Rowse observes that rationing became an ‘issuing of good for a more complex and ill-defined return’ that was caught up in preconceptions of the ‘deserving poor.’¹⁵¹ This concept was transferred to colonies as a twofold entitlement for dispossessed people but also a reward for ‘compliance with civilising regimes.’¹⁵² By accepting the reward people became indebted subjects of the empire. While people obtained sustenance from other colonial and traditional sources, they became dependent on charitable supplies as dispossession increased and their foodscape altered. Increasing dependency resulted in increased judgement for their need and increased pressure to perform the role of ‘deserving poor.’

The concept of deserving poverty is an example of class segregation and a culture of expected subservience and humble gratitude rather than mutual respect between class groups.¹⁵³ Usually directed at the homeless and low socio-economic groups, in the Australian context this attitude was quickly directed toward Indigenous peoples. I highlight here the irony of a community with roots in convict migration, many of whom would have felt the judgement of deserving or un-deservingness in their home country, turning the attitudes towards others, is evident. Part of the model the governors hoped to achieve in Australia was the acceptance of their hierarchical leadership by Indigenous peoples and for them to work as labourers. Philanthropists’ mixed Imperial loyalties, their dependence on the state, and their wish to incorporate Indigenous Australians as British subjects sat uneasily beside their distress at the harm caused by dispossession, their mistrust of White colonists, and their disputes with Indigenous people over questions of authority.¹⁵⁴ Tellingly the Wellington

¹⁵¹ Tim Rowse in Mitchell, *In Good Faith*, 109.

¹⁵² Mitchell, *In Good Faith*, 110.

¹⁵³ See Jessica Gerrard, ‘The economy of smiles: Affect, labour and the contemporary deserving poor’, *The British Journal of Sociology*, 70, no. 2 (2019), 424-441. Accessed 20 January 2021, at <https://onlinelibrary-wiley-com.ezproxy.library.sydney.edu.au/doi/pdf/10.1111/1468-4446.12350>. Earlier discussions of deserving poor often centred on almshouses and workhouses in England. An example can be found in the following text: Herbert Smith, *A Letter to the People of England on Behalf of the Deserving Poor. Making of the Modern World*. (London: Printed by W. Tyler, 1838).

¹⁵⁴ Mitchell, *In Good Faith*, 6.

Valley missionaries lamented that the Wiradjuri were ‘indifferent as stones’ to Christian teaching but ‘cunning enough as regards their stomachs.’¹⁵⁵

The work of Tim Rowse is central to this historical review. Rowse focuses on the community of Alice Springs in central Australia and its relationship with government policies of rationing. Rowse’s close reading of rationing is useful and relevant to this my broader investigation of Aboriginal foodscapes. Discussion of rationing thematically bridges my analysis of mission operation, including agricultural ventures and dietary practices, and the structure of the Indigenous native food industry in contemporary Australia including challenges facing its various stakeholders. Rowse, an anthropologist, worked and lived in Alice Springs from 1987 to 1996. His book *White Flour, White Power: From Rations to Citizenship in Central Australia* followed his doctoral studies at The University of Sydney and was published in 1998 under the supervision of Jeremy Beckett and Les Hiatt, both anthropologists with research interests in Australian Aboriginal communities. In the acknowledgements, Rowse mentions specifically the work of Margaret Mary Turner and so it is under the influence of these three anthropological powerhouses that I place the work of Rowse. Rowse’s opening chapter includes the following statement:

The inherited structures of rationing relationships had to be made to serve the ends of ‘assimilation’, on pastoral properties and on the settlements.

As the contradictions matured in the strategy of basing ‘assimilation’ on spatial segregation, and on the reform of rationing regimes, the authorities found it increasingly difficult to police the town - bush boundary.¹⁵⁶

In these two sentences Rowse summarises some key concerns of his book, including assimilation as policy and rationing in its many forms, and therefore food, as a way to reinforce physical spatial boundaries. The bush-town boundary referred to by Rowse fits well within Mary Douglas’ discussion in *Purity and Danger* of spatial boundaries, race and purity, arguments which heavily influence the methodological approaches I have employed. I consider on discussions of moral geography to be important for this research. While Rowse explores moral geography primarily through its role in early colonial structures and urbanisation, I aim to broaden the discussion to incorporate spaces of consumption.

¹⁵⁵ Mitchell, *In Good Faith*, 116.

¹⁵⁶ Rowse, *White Flour, White Power*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 9.

Chapter Five of Rowse's work, 'A Christian Cannot be a Parasite,' examines the organisation and management of various missions in and around Alice Springs. Food is a central part of the mission process. F. W. Albrecht determined that, 'You can't preach to people if they have nothing in their stomachs... You have to deal with the whole person. You can't separate body and soul.'¹⁵⁷ This necessity to feed and nourish physically, and not simply spiritually, necessitated that the mission be productive as a business, whether simply in providing for its dependents or engaging in trade with other businesses. I would suggest a successful religious organisation is dependent on economic prosperity unless it is a contemporary tradition existing in virtual reality. Rowse references the work of sociologist Max Weber, who writes:

...the dependence of religious communities...their propaganda and maintenance, upon economic means... have compelled them to enter compromises... ultimately no genuine religion of salvation has overcome the tension between their religiosity and a rational economy.¹⁵⁸

There is reason to criticise Weber's reference to 'genuine' religion as an exclusionary approach not helpful to the study of new religions which dominates contemporary religious studies. However, Weber highlights the important discordance between many religions, in particular salvation religion Christianity, and capitalist systems of governance. The compromises to which Weber refers involved engaging in trade, including within religious buildings. Rowse claims the Lutherans adapted their spiritual quest to mission to those who have not been exposed to God's word.

Rowse utilises Michel Foucault's theories of observation individuation and transfers this theory (dubbing this research decision as an exercise in the 'mobility of technique') to assess how different institutions manage behaviour.¹⁵⁹ Rowse observes the management of rationing as a colonial technique transferred across a diverse range of institutions including those concerned with governance, pastoral productivity, mission and disciplinary structures.¹⁶⁰ The success of rationing as a transferable policy and mode of behaviour management lay in the transfer of goods, a relationship which did not require cultural bridges or understanding

¹⁵⁷ Friedrich W. Albrecht was a Polish born, American trained Lutheran missionary. Tim Rowse, *White Flour, White Power*, 80.

¹⁵⁸ Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, (London: Routledge, 2009), 332.

¹⁵⁹ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punishment: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1977); Rowse, *White Flour, White Power*, 4 - 5.

¹⁶⁰ Rowse, *White Flour, White Power*, 5.

between donors and receivers.¹⁶¹ Of course, cultural understanding did develop from many rationing relationships, and colonial donors were able to construct valuable knowledge and data records through these interactions. However, I note that these records have also assisted the processes of governing innately generate knowledge on those who are governed and further the established power dynamics.¹⁶² Nonetheless, rationing did not rely on cultural bridging or understanding for its success.

Rowse embarks on a discussion of a conceptual shift from, ‘imagining the recipients of rations to be helplessly corrupted by their contact with alien goods, to a more affirmative construction of Indigenous agency as canny in its own cultural terms.’¹⁶³ This conclusion is likely based on instances of widespread Indigenous movement from rural communities into cities like Alice Springs in search of provisions and facilities. This perspective on agency must be analysed in a larger framework of food violence. This is not to say that Rowse dismisses these complexities, as he writes later that, ‘More and more aboriginal people were beginning to base their life partly on their receipt of European goods and so more and more of them were radically disoriented and rapidly demoralised, notwithstanding the official intention to protect.’¹⁶⁴ Rowse’s discussion of governance encourages the reader to consider rationing as the primary policy of early central Australian governance. He identifies modern government as a body which has the responsibility to improve the lives of those it governs, explore new technologies and increase the productivity of subjects.¹⁶⁵ Rationing allows the governing bodies to transfer primary colonial powers from violence to provision. Again, the concept of food violence can be used to challenge this distinction and complicate this transfer by suggesting instead that rationing was the evolution of violence into a different form. From approximately the 1890s the policy of rationing became worthwhile to a variety of parties and assimilation began to slowly take the place of punitive law.¹⁶⁶ Certainly ‘pastoralists and missionaries were learning the value of rationing as a way of rendering cross cultural relationships peaceful and predictable.’¹⁶⁷ Demand for Indigenous labour and participation during the Second World War shifted official perspectives to acknowledge the ‘potential

¹⁶¹ Rowse, *White Flour, White Power*, 5.

¹⁶² Rowse, *White Flour, White Power*, 5.

¹⁶³ Rowse, *White Flour, White Power*, 6.

¹⁶⁴ Rowse, *White Flour, White Power*, 7.

¹⁶⁵ Rowse, *White Flour, White Power*, 7.

¹⁶⁶ Rowse, *White Flour, White Power*, 8.

¹⁶⁷ Rowse, *White Flour, White Power*, 7.

value [of Indigenous peoples] as active members of the national economy.’¹⁶⁸ Social worth tied to the physical body aligns with the Foucauldian approach Rowse uses, particularly the concept that the modern government had ‘mastery...applied at the level of life itself, it was the taking charge of life, more than the threat of death that gave power and access even to the body.’¹⁶⁹ This of course exemplifies Foucault’s theory of disciplinary power and its complex structure.¹⁷⁰

Much of Rowse’s work dances around different cultural approaches to transactions and the tension these differences caused between mission administrators and Indigenous Australians. The strongest case study for this discussion is the relationship between Lutheran missionaries and the Arrernte people (also referred to as the Arrrunta people depending on the written source), whose traditional lands were in and around Mparntwe, (Alice Springs.)¹⁷¹ Food as the original, central form of rationing begins to define the transactions which establish relationships between the two parties the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people and between the Christian missionaries in positions of power (which at times includes Aboriginal peoples) and Aboriginal peoples.¹⁷² Transaction implies an exchange between two parties. Seeking to explore this idea of transaction further, I entered the key term search ‘transactional relationships’ into the University of Sydney’s library search facility, revealing a series of results overwhelmingly filed under the subjects ‘Business’ (19,310 results as of 12 May 2022) and ‘Psychology’ (15,271 results as of 12 May 2022). Examples of business texts included ‘A buyer’s perspective on collaborative versus transactional relationships’ and historical texts which contained many records of correspondence including ‘Collection of correspondence sent to John C. McDougall by the Methodist Missionary Department, Alexander Sutherland and Nash & Bro Collection of correspondence sent to John C. McDougall by the Methodist Missionary Department, Alexander Sutherland and Nash &

¹⁶⁸ Scott R. Sheffield and Noah Riseman, *Indigenous Peoples and the Second World War: The Politics, Experiences and Legacies of War in the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 303. Similar shifts in perception were seen in other colonised countries including the USA; Lin Poyer, ‘World War II and the development of global indigenous identities,’ *Identities* 24, no. 4 (2017): 421, 424.

¹⁶⁹ Rowse, *White Flour, White Power*, 8.

¹⁷⁰ Gary Gutting and Johanna Oksala, ‘Michel Foucault,’ in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Spring 2019 Edition), accessed 18 March 2020, at <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2019/entries/foucault/>

¹⁷¹ Jane Vadiveloo, ‘Remembering an elder and a warrior,’ *National Indigenous Times*, 18 October 2017, accessed 18 March 2020, at <https://nit.com.au/remembering-elder-warrior/>.

¹⁷² Hoogmartens and Verstraete stipulate that ‘distribution of food played an important role in relations between Aboriginal people and colonisers’. Vicky Hoogmartens and Jean-Christophe Verstraete. “Rations: Flour, sugar, tea and tobacco in Australian languages.” *Australian Journal of Linguistics* 40 (2020), 444

Bro.’ These particular letters from the American Methodist community focus on mission activities and one particular land negotiation with the Blackfoot Indigenous people of Fort McLeod.¹⁷³ Both search results indicate the business framing of transactions and the psychological strategies employed to establish specific power structures in the transactions between colonising, and Indigenous, peoples.

With reference to food specifically, and its role in transactional relationships, we must return to key understandings about food that I reference on a recurring basis. These are themes of nourishment, culture, history and identity. I have previously quoted Friedrich W. Albrecht (1894-1984), a Polish born, Lutheran missionary who took on the Hermannsburg mission from Carl Strehlow (father of the controversial classicist and linguist T.G.H Strehlow who I would regard to have produced inter-disciplinary work that erred towards anthropological investigation) and pushed for food rations to become a central part of Lutheran mission doctrine, saying ‘You can’t preach to people if they have nothing in their stomachs...you have to deal with the whole person. You can’t separate body and soul.’¹⁷⁴ This connection of body and soul is key to the theme of nourishment, a spiritual nourishment through the conduit of physical satiety. Rowse notes that:

through food issues the Lutherans sought to develop the souls and psyches of Indigenous people. This required control over the meaning of the rationing transaction, making the recipients of food conscious that they owed the donors of the food something in return: to stay away from Alice Springs, to listen to Aboriginal evangelists, to do some work.¹⁷⁵

Yet another example of the Christian impact on colonialism is introduced here; the value placed on a certain, defined, model of work. This example of ‘Protestant Work Ethic,’ indicates a perception of the need for, and social implications of, work and employment (as two distinct yet similar concepts) that can be traced through missionary models and

¹⁷³ Judith M. Whipple, Daniel F. Lynch and Gilbert N. Nyaga, ‘A Buyer’s Perspective on Collaborative Versus Transactional Relationships,’ *Industrial Marketing Management* 39, no. 3 (2010): 507–518; Alexander Sutherland and D.H. Nash, ‘Collection of Correspondence Sent to John C. McDougall by the Methodist Missionary Department,’ *Alexander Sutherland, and Nash & Bro: Correspondence*, published 4 October 1886 (Marlborough: Adam Matthew Digital, 2017).

¹⁷⁴ Maurice Schild, ‘Albrecht, Friedrich Wilhelm (1894-1984),’ *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, accessed 12 August 2019, at <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/albrecht-friedrich-wilhelm-12126>; Rowse, *White Flour, White Power*, 80.

¹⁷⁵ Rowse, *White Flour, White Power*, 81.

procedures.¹⁷⁶ Albrecht himself is described as ‘keen to create employment opportunities for people within their communities, he and his wife promoted arts and crafts.’¹⁷⁷ Albrecht is linked to well-known Western-Arrernte artist Albert Namatjira. The National Portrait Project states that Namatjira requested artist materials from Albrecht, who then contacted artist Rex Battarbee for assistance: in reply, Battarbee sent Namatjira his first box of watercolours and the paper to begin experimenting.¹⁷⁸ When viewed collectively, ideas about the value of art, work, and language are highly contested between Indigenous peoples and the mission administrators.

Language is key site in which unequal characteristics of the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples are represented. Many of Hermannsburg’s missionaries were zealous students of Arrernte language however ‘they were not so keen to learn Arrernte law.’¹⁷⁹ This indicates a half-hearted effort on behalf of the missionaries; an acknowledgement of the need to communicate in the vernacular (a tool for manipulation and change) but stopping short of incorporation of, or meaningful engagement with, existing law and cultural practice. Records show that Pastor John Stolz, a member of the Hermannsburg Mission Board, reported to the Northern Territory Administration in 1924. This report detailed a policy of refusing rations to ‘any able-bodied adult for whom no work could be found instead they would need to...work on other stations...we are now able to control our natives better in the way of work, feeding and clothing.’¹⁸⁰ This policy approach remains in the contemporary Australian welfare system where the current iteration is colloquially known as ‘work for the dole,’ or officially as a social security ‘mutual obligation’ requirement.¹⁸¹ These schemes were not established mission environments without issues. Friedrich Albrecht recorded his observations of community responsibility in action whereby a paid worker

¹⁷⁶ Bundjalung writer Melissa Lucashenko has reflected on the impact of the Protestant Work Ethic, and White society, on Aboriginal philosophy; Melissa Lucashenko, ‘Listening to the Land’, *The Age*, 2 May 2009, accessed 22 August 2020, at <https://www.theage.com.au/entertainment/books/listening-to-the-land-20090502-ge7u39.html>

¹⁷⁷ Maurice Schild, ‘Albrecht, Friedrich Wilhelm (1894–1984)’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography* Vol 17 (2007), accessed 30 November 2021, at <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/albrecht-friedrich-wilhelm-12126>

¹⁷⁸ National Portrait Gallery, ‘Portrait of A Nation: Australian Schools Portrait Project’, *National Portrait Gallery*, accessed 12 August 2019, at <https://www.portrait.gov.au/portraitofanation/namatjira-biography.html>.

¹⁷⁹ Rowse, *White Flour, White Power*, 81.

¹⁸⁰ John Stolz in *Northern Territory Report of Administrator for the year ended 30th June 1925*, (HJ Green Government Printer for the State of Victoria for The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1926), 17. accessed 30 October 2021, at https://aiatsis.gov.au/sites/default/files/docs/digitised_collections/remove/59029.pdf; Rowse, *White Flour, White Power*, 85.

¹⁸¹ Department of Social Services, ‘3.2.8.10 Mutual Obligation Requirements for NSA/YA Job Seekers Overview Summary,’ *Social Security Guide*, accessed 9 December 2018, at <http://guides.dss.gov.au/guide-social-security-law/3/2/8/10>

would share his rations with the wider community, not only with his ‘nuclear’ or ‘immediate’ family. This social generosity caused the mission to reinstate feeding allowances for the sick, aged, women and children.

To return to the importance of physical landscape in social narratives I rely on references made to the Manangananga Cave in Rowse’s work. The cave, sometimes identified by its purpose as a tjurunga storehouse, was the site of de-sacralising activity.¹⁸² In 1928 Titus Renkaraka, a well-known Western Arrernte preacher, and Friedrich Albrecht, opened the Manangananga cave on Pentecost Sunday. This was a complex situation. Renkaraka was, from the time of his father’s death in 1924, the ceremonial leader of the Ntaria area people and the custodian of the Manangananga Cave. Phillips et al. note that one Arrernte man remarked ‘He might be Christian, but still in charge of the place’ demonstrating the retention of dual identity, not the replacement of Arrernte with Christian.¹⁸³ The de-sacralisation firstly took the form of the removal of the tjurunga from within the cave and their display to uninitiated members of the community. Rowse writes that ‘Carl Strehlow had refrained from visiting the site... Albrecht and the native evangelists recognised the symbolic value of breaking its taboo.’¹⁸⁴ Most interesting is the record of an early instance of what Aboriginal Christianity; that is, the co-mingling, and maintenance of, traditionally held belief systems with introduced Christianity. In Australia this is primarily referred to as Aboriginal Christianity. Albrecht preached on the topics of the ‘Biblical Moses and Aaron and the Golden Calf, likening the tjurunga to the Golden Calf.’¹⁸⁵ The Golden Calf is referenced in Exodus 32 as an idol made of gold, that is constructed for the Israelites by Aaron while Moses is on the Mountain, and which he destroys upon his return. The comparison is clear, although theologically simplistic, that the tjurunga are idols as false as the Golden Calf. This desacralisation event fits into a broader trend of missionaries offering the gospels as alternatives to cults of place and sacred objects. In this form faith becomes itemised, a concept for sale or trade. The Christian faith then becomes constrained by doctrine and strategy rather than a message of universal hope. There are instances recorded of Arrernte people at Hermannsburg seeking to consolidate their relationships with Europeans by trafficking in highly valued possessions, and, I argue, with their beliefs and cultural practices

¹⁸² *Tjurunga* are sacred objects.

¹⁸³ Elizabeth Harney and Ruth B. Phillips, *Mapping Modernisms: Art, Indigeneity, Colonialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 200.

¹⁸⁴ Rowse, *White Flour, White Power*, 82.

¹⁸⁵ Rowse, *White Flour, White Power*, 82.

as well.¹⁸⁶ This transaction fits within a complex meeting of power, position and purpose. Early missionaries operated like freelancers, fulfilling multitudinous roles including anthropological work, medical work, and linguistic work. When the valued items were traded between, for instance, the Arrernte people and European (often missionaries), it is unclear whether the chain of possession has passed to that individual or to the institution of the church as either path would have different ramifications for the sharing of culture.

Focusing on the centrality of space and place to both Western Arrernte culture and Christian practice, it is clear that holding the Pentecost service in the Manangananga Cave caused a dramatic change in spatial narrative and community history.¹⁸⁷ This ‘catharsis’ is a purging of culture not simply the forced alteration of the consecration of a space. New cultural narratives appeared as a result of this desacralisation. Sometime between 1928 and 1955 the taboo on the Manangananga Cave was reinstated. At the same time the community suffered a scurvy epidemic and the desacralisation of the Manangananga Cave was suggested to have been the cause.¹⁸⁸ Of course, more likely factors were at play, including a significant period of drought. Diane Austin-Broos quotes Friedrich Albrecht, who suggests that this mindset was held primarily by non-mission dwelling Western Arrernte and Arrernte peoples.¹⁸⁹ However, the communal mindset, social imagination, or belief, was still rooted in place and a lived cultural narrative. The scurvy was linked not only to the drought, but also to a changed and introduced diet in the mission environment which was then in turn associated with the trespass of the cave. This is a clear example of a situation shaped by colonial spatial and food related violence. I aim to avoid writing out the autonomy of any group and acknowledge that many mission dwelling Arrernte people, and Titus himself the custodian of the cave and tjurunga, were independently involved in organising the Pentecost service. This is an excellent example of mythologies and narratives linked to the physical landscape shaping responses to social disruption.

¹⁸⁶ Rowse, *White Flour, White Power*, 84.

¹⁸⁷ James L. Cox refers to the writings of Paul Albrecht, son of Friedrich Albrecht, who suggested that Arrernte elders removed secret-sacred objects from the cave before it was co-opted. Albrecht in James L. Cox, *Restoring the Chain of Memory*, 111.

¹⁸⁸ Diane Austin-Broos, *Arrernte Present, Arrernte Past: Invasion, Violence and Imagination in Indigenous Central Australia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 69.

¹⁸⁹ Austin-Broos, *Arrernte Present, Arrernte Past*, 70.

2.3.1 Mercantile Evangelism. Eating in missions and reserves: celebration and control

Tim Rowse utilises the term ‘mercantile evangelism’ as a descriptor for the Lutheran policy of work for reward. The most successful applications of this approach involved the commodification of, and reward for, products of ‘unsupervised work’.¹⁹⁰ This was primarily hunting, gathering, and making implements. This indicates a desire for freedom from surveillance and positive reactions for demonstrations of appreciation of traditional culture. These are reactions contemporary Australian social scientists would not be surprised by; Aboriginal Australian voices have long advocated the positive benefits of cultural appreciation and recognition. Rowse determines that the Lutherans became merchants using either rations or cash to purchase items from Aboriginal Australians and trading those goods with a wider, regional or national economy. This mercantile approach is identifiable here in the Lutheran community, but was common in colonial societies. In Chapter Four of this dissertation I will assert that Chef Jock Zonfrillo is portrayed as a pioneer and spokesperson evangelising the importance of a national connection with food and appreciation of Indigenous culture.¹⁹¹ I determine that mercantile evangelism is evident in the work of Zonfrillo’s Orana Foundation, the work of which includes a series of food business projects, developed with communities utilising traditional knowledge, the resulting produce is then purchased as surety by the Foundation and sold on. In doing so Zonfrillo and Orana Foundation Board Director Norman Gillespie find themselves operating an organisation similar to the industrious merchant approaches of the Lutheran missionaries.

Missions were constantly in cultural flux as cross-cultural tensions between mission leadership and residents evolved. These tensions could be exacerbated by geographic and social isolation. While a mission’s purpose was formally for religious conversion, and secondarily a space in which to encourage social adjustment, they also became spaces of cross-cultural learning and dialogue. Historian Laura Rademaker delved into this concept in an exploration on the rituals of the Christmas holiday.¹⁹² Missions are notorious for their austerity. Mission residents lived on meagre rations—flour, sugar, tea and tobacco—and

¹⁹⁰ Rowse, *White Flour White Power*, 89.

¹⁹¹ See Chapter Four of this dissertation.

¹⁹² Laura Rademaker, ‘Friday essay: dreaming of a ‘white Christmas’ on the Aboriginal missions’, *The Conversation*, published 22 December 2017, at <https://theconversation.com/friday-essay-dreaming-of-a-white-christmas-on-the-aboriginal-missions-88381>

later, token wages; however, Rademaker identifies Christmas as an outlier to this characterisation writing that the time of celebration was remembered by the elderly as a time for foods, gifts and carols.¹⁹³ However, the celebration had a twofold purpose as missionaries hoped the joy of Christmas would replace Aboriginal traditional practices. Rademaker notes that instead, Christmas became ‘an opportunity for creative cross-cultural engagement’ with Aboriginal people adopting the tradition. Today, Christmas traditions around the world centre their celebrations on food. This was the case in Australian missions also, the food being ‘a respite from the usual diet of damper, rice or stew.’¹⁹⁴

I have referred many times to the use of food in mission environments as a successful method of outreach. On Christmas Day at Gunbalanya in western Arnhem Land in 1940 the superintendent called it ‘the happiest we’ve experienced here. Ten huge cakes for Natives – no complaints – 106 at service,’ suggesting that church attendance was linked to the quantity of cakes.¹⁹⁵ Further, Rademaker details a number of recorded food traditions; she identifies turtle-egg cake as a highlight of 1940s celebrations at Groote Eylandt in the Gulf of Carpentaria.¹⁹⁶ As Jabani Lalara recalled, ‘We used to have a lovely Christmas ... In front of the church, that’s where they used to put the Christmas tree and that’s where we used to get a present. Especially like cake, used to make from turtle egg. I love that cake. True.’¹⁹⁷ For those who would not settle on missions, Christmas was used against them. At Yarrabah in Queensland the ‘unconverted heathens’ were invited to join the festivities, but their exclusion was symbolised by them walking at the back of processions, sitting at the back of the church and being the last to be served their meal.

I suggest it is essential to use discourse analysis to delve into the role language plays in the relationship between colonising, and Indigenous peoples. Many missionaries’ eagerness to use Christmas to spread Christianity saw an increase in the use of Aboriginal languages to retell the birth story. At Ngukurr in southern Arnhem Land and Gunbalanya, the first church services in Aboriginal languages were Christmas services (in 1921 and 1936). Missionaries found singing was popular therefore carols were translated.¹⁹⁸ On the 1947 release of the *Pitjantjatjara Hymnal*, Christmas carols were the most popular (‘The First Noel’ sung in

¹⁹³ Rademaker, ‘Friday essay: dreaming of a ‘white Christmas’ on the Aboriginal mission.’

¹⁹⁴ Rademaker, ‘Friday essay: dreaming of a ‘white Christmas’ on the Aboriginal mission.’

¹⁹⁵ Rademaker, ‘Friday essay: dreaming of a ‘white Christmas’ on the Aboriginal mission.’

¹⁹⁶ Rademaker, ‘Friday essay: dreaming of a ‘white Christmas’ on the Aboriginal mission.’

¹⁹⁷ Rademaker, ‘Friday essay: dreaming of a ‘white Christmas’ on the Aboriginal mission.’

¹⁹⁸ Laura Rademaker, Noelani Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua and April K. Henderson, *Found in Translation: Many Meanings on a North Australian Mission*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2018), 156.

parts being the favourite). Translation was intended to make missionary Christianity more attractive, but it opened the way for more profound cultural experimentation. Aboriginal people infused Christmas with their own traditions. On the Tiwi Islands in 1962 there was a ‘Corroboree Style’ nativity on the mission told through traditional Tiwi dance. Dance traditions missionaries had previously called ‘pagan’ were now used by Tiwi people to share the Christian celebration. At Waruwi on the Goulburn Islands in western Arnhem Land, Maung people began ‘Christmas and Easter Ceremonies’ from the 1960s, blending ceremonial styles with Western musical traditions as well as their own music and dance. At Wadeye in the Northern Territory, ‘Church Lirrga’ (‘Liturgy Songs’) include Christmas music sung in Marri Ngarr with didjeridu accompaniment. The Church Lirrga share the melodies of other Marri Ngarr songs that tell of Dreamings on the Moyle River.¹⁹⁹

Many who embraced Christianity sought to express their spirituality without missionary control. At Ernabella Mission in South Australia in 1971, people began singing the Christmas story to ancient melodies, with the permission of their songmen.²⁰⁰ Senior Anangu women at Mimili, South Australia, later sang the Pitjantjatjara gospel to their witchetty grub tune, blending Christmas with their Dreamings and songlines.²⁰¹ Therefore, Christmas was woven into community life. Just as introduced animals found their way into Aboriginal songs and stories, Christmas became part of the seasons and landscape. Therese Bourke reflected on these practices at Pirlangimpi on the Tiwi Islands; ‘They used to have donkeys [here] and the donkeys used to come round in December. And my mother’s mob used to say, “they’re coming around because it’s Christmas and Jesus rode on the back of one.”’²⁰² At Milingimbi in the Northern Territory, Yolngu people developed a Christmas ceremony with clap sticks and didjeridu outside the mission and free of missionary interference.²⁰³

The Yolngu Christmas tradition is also imbued with the seriousness of grief not just for Jesus but also for community members who have passed. In a short film, *Manapanmirr, In Christmas Spirit*, Paul Gurrumurway reflects; ‘Yolngu Christmas can bring men, women and children together through ancestral law. Christmas here is deeper...because this Christmas made sacred connections our law will be renewed and made deeper.’²⁰⁴ In this

¹⁹⁹ Rademaker, ‘Friday essay: dreaming of a ‘white Christmas’ on the Aboriginal mission.’

²⁰⁰ Rademaker, ‘Friday essay: dreaming of a ‘white Christmas’ on the Aboriginal mission.’

²⁰¹ Tunstill, G. citing Edwards, in Marcus Breen (ed.), *Our Place, Our Music: Aboriginal Music*, (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press for the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1989), 19.

²⁰² Rademaker, ‘Friday essay: dreaming of a ‘white Christmas’ on the Aboriginal mission.’

²⁰³ Rademaker, ‘Friday essay: dreaming of a ‘white Christmas’ on the Aboriginal mission.’

²⁰⁴ Muanapanmirr, In *Christmas Spirit*, directed by Paul Gurrumurway (Miyarrka Media, 2012).

example it can be seen that expressions of Aboriginal Christianity have been used to strengthen cultural law, practice and ancestral connection for the Yolngu people.²⁰⁵

Missions transformed into ‘communities’ under a policy framework of self-determination in the 1970s, although missionaries themselves often remained active in the communities for decades. The development of a hybridised, evolved Aboriginal Christianity has been controversial from its early days. Superintendent Albrecht at Hermannsburg mission is reported as reflecting on the work of J.R.B. Love, his colleague at Ernabella (now Pukatja, South Australia), stating that Love ‘held a deep respect for Aboriginal spirituality [but] he could find no way to reconcile traditional religion with Christian faith.’²⁰⁶ J.R.B. Love took the attitude that ‘If the gospel is offered to the native there is no need to trouble any further about his religion. The two, Christianity and their beliefs of old, can well stand together and be of benefit to the people.’²⁰⁷ Albrecht disagreed, seeing no cohesion between the two and instead determining that ‘Christianity is exclusive and if it mixes with other beliefs becomes diluted and loses its power to transform and regenerate.’²⁰⁸ These are significant differences in approach and the interpretation of text and situation that is influenced by doctrinal approaches and independent ministry direction. Albrecht had an inflexible approach to theology and felt it was important for converts to give up traditional practices.²⁰⁹ Paul Albrecht reflects that the inflexibility of conversion practices, specifically requirements that converts isolate from their existing cultural practice, led to the long-term theological failure of the Hermannsburg mission.²¹⁰ Love was also a researcher who in 1912 was appointed by the Board of Missions of the Presbyterian Church of Australia to investigate the ‘condition of Aborigines’ and reported this information alongside suggested locations for future missionary work. The bulk of his work was published in 1915 in a pamphlet titled, ‘The Aborigines, Their Present Condition as Seen in Northern South Australia, the Northern Territory and Western Queensland.’²¹¹

²⁰⁵ Victoria Baskin Coffey, ‘Manapanmirr, In Christmas Spirit,’ *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology* no. 15.1, (2014), 99-102.

²⁰⁶ Rowse, *White Flour, White Power*, 91.

²⁰⁷ Rowse, *White Flour, White Power*, 91.

²⁰⁸ Rowse, *White Flour, White Power*, 91.

²⁰⁹ James L. Cox, *Restoring the Chain of Memory T.G.H Strehlow and the repatriation of Australian Indigenous Knowledge*, (Sheffield: Equinox, 2018), 110.

²¹⁰ Paul Albrecht in Cox, *Restoring the Chain of Memory*, 111.

²¹¹ James R. B. Love, ‘The Aborigines: Their present condition as seen in northern South Australia, the Northern Territory, north-west Australia and western Queensland / by J.R.B. Love, travelling under honorary commission from the Board of Missions of the Presbyterian Church of Australia 1913-1914’ (Melbourne: Board of Missions of the Presbyterian Church of Australia, 1915).

Language is an important factor in the construction of a story. History is in essence the telling of a story or stories from the particular perspective of the author of the story—that is, the historian. Language shared by women is particularly crucial. Christine Choo spends a great deal of effort exploring her reasoning behind terminological decisions.²¹² Choo undertakes self-aware research. Aboriginal women constitute the backbone of Aboriginal society maintaining the memory and oral tradition of their families and communities and keeping social networks alive. Generations of Aboriginal people trace links with communities through women and this path of knowledge has been possible through stories in addition to genetic inheritance.²¹³ Children with mixed race backgrounds were considered ‘better off away from the influences of their Aboriginal ancestry...this policy had its roots in ‘rescue’ and evangelising practices of missionaries...many children were forcibly removed from their Aboriginal families and placed in institutions, missions and foster and adoptive homes in the care of Europeans.’²¹⁴ Storytelling, particularly storytelling of the collective memory of mission life, will be explored in the following section which looks at the work of playwright Robert Merritt.

2.3.2 *The Cake Man* (1975): Preserving cultural memory in the arts

I investigate a variety of forms of narrative expression in order to assess how narratives surrounding endogenous (native) foods and Aboriginal foodscapes have been disseminated throughout the history of pre- and post-colonial Australia. The artistic medium of theatre is in the same ilk as storytelling which forms a key component of Aboriginal Australian culture and communication. Theatre provides a key platform for the expression of narrative and individual and communal identities. The following section explores the use of food as a narrative feature in Robert Merritt’s *The Cake Man* (1975). Merritt’s *The Cake Man* is a short play which meanders through a narrative exploring political anger, racial barriers, and community value systems amongst regional Aboriginal communities in the twentieth century. Theatre historian Julian Meyrick describes *The Cake Man* as a play about the mission

²¹² Christine Choo is a formal social worker who worked with the Aboriginal Medical Service in Perth, Choo’s *Mission Girls* (2001). Choo’s commitment to ethical research is clear from the outset as she discusses the difficulty of ‘Aboriginal women’s experiences with White feminists [which] prevent them from seeing dialogue as anything but a naive and tokenistic beginning.’ Choo, *Mission Girls: Aboriginal Women on Catholic Missions in the Kimberley, Western Australia, 1900-1950*, xv.

²¹³ Choo, *Mission Girls: Aboriginal Women on Catholic Missions in the Kimberley, Western Australia, 1900-1950*, 1.

²¹⁴ Choo, *Mission Girls: Aboriginal Women on Catholic Missions in the Kimberley, Western Australia, 1900-1950*, 2

experience for Aboriginal Australians, and the indignity, injustice and often outright exploitation that came from being ‘protected’ by White Australians with little knowledge and less interest in the traditional culture their arrival had near-fatally disrupted.²¹⁵ The play navigates a core set of themes, concepts of faith, integration and separation, racial trauma, institutional experience, belonging and escape.

The 1989 Currency Press publication of *The Cake Man* includes an author’s preface, comment by Merritt’s acquaintance Mervyn Rutherford, and a short description of the community of Cowra in the latter half of the twentieth century.²¹⁶ Much of the preface focuses on the Arts environment in Australia and the technical and cultural difficulties faced by Indigenous artists. For example, Merritt writes in his preface that ‘the film industry... holds the power to create images and ideals that undoubtedly influence societies and mould our everyday existence—and yet it does nothing positive in its portrayal of Indigenous Australians.’²¹⁷ Meyrick notes that Indigenous engagement with colonially derived theatre has produced playwrights ‘in the European sense’ only in the second half of the twentieth century.²¹⁸ Merritt does not articulate a direct connection between storytelling, dance and performance in Indigenous cultural history and practice with Western traditions of theatre, but he does utilise ‘artist’ as an identifier and notes that ‘Theatre reflects our spirit.’²¹⁹ Merritt describes the audience’s appreciation of the play (when performed in Denver, Colorado, USA), demonstrated with standing ovations, as experiences which ‘made us, brought up in the shadow of 200 years of repression, for the first-time value our worth.’²²⁰ The international recognition appears more valuable than national; the troupe had reached American shores after a protracted funding battle in Australia, which would have rightly impacted their feelings towards the Australian arts environment.

The Cake Man was performed in 1974 by The National Black Theatre in Redfern, a performance to which Merritt was escorted under police guard from detention at Long Bay

²¹⁵ Julian Meyrick, ‘The great Australian plays: *The Cake Man* and the Indigenous mission experience,’ *The Conversation*, published 1 February 2018, accessed 23 October 2019, at <https://theconversation.com/the-great-australian-plays-the-cake-man-and-the-indigenous-mission-experience-88854>.

²¹⁶ I consider *The Cake Man* to be an appropriate inclusion in this chapter as I utilise the text to explore how food is used as a method of control in relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in addition Cowra is the location of Erambie mission (also known as Erambie Aboriginal Reserve) home to the majority of Cowra’s Aboriginal population.

²¹⁷ Merritt, *The Cake Man*, vii.

²¹⁸ Julian Meyrick, ‘The great Australian plays: *The Cake Man* and the Indigenous mission experience.’

²¹⁹ Meyrick, ‘The great Australian plays: *The Cake Man* and the Indigenous mission experience’

²²⁰ Merritt, *The Cake Man*, x.

Jail.²²¹ It was performed again in 1977 at the Bondi Pavilion Theatre, described by Merritt as ‘the white domain.’²²² It was a success, and *The Cake Man* was selected for the 1982 World Theatre Awards in Canada. Much of the preface of this edition focuses on the struggle to procure funding for *The Cake Man* to tour overseas. Eventually a number of different organisations contributed towards funding the project, including funding from the Palatine Fathers and the Brothers of Australia.²²³ This funding suggests an interesting relationship. Frequently, dogmatic religion and the secular Arts do not mix. It seems that in this case the church funding was likely due in part to the narrative links to the history of mission work that is explored in the play. It would be irresponsible not to acknowledge abuses of religious power in colonial Australia and remiss not to include in this note that Father Allan Mithen (d. 19 July 2019) of the Palatine Brothers is mentioned by name as the funder. Mithen was charged with numerous cases of sexual assault which occurred during his time working in the Western Australian mission system. Mithen later worked with Indigenous Australians in Redfern.²²⁴ Exploitation and abuses of power have influenced the experiences of minority communities in Australia for the entirety of post - white settlement recorded history.

Merritt’s autobiographical details shape the environment in which *The Cake Man* is set and inform the themes of control and restriction which frame the narrative. The mission, home to the young protagonist Pumpkinhead and his parents, Ruby and Sweet William, is based on West Cowra, where Merritt was raised at the Erambie Mission. West Cowra was a predominantly Aboriginal occupied area. In 1890, 31 acres of land had been declared a reserve and later, in the early 1900s, that area became a mission with management employed by the Aborigines Welfare Board.²²⁵ By 1965 the area was again deemed a reserve and at that time was under police supervision. The implications of ‘supervision’ are often associated with institutions such as childcare centres and prisons, spaces in which people are not trusted with the welfare of themselves or others. This linguistic association informs our understanding of the operations at West Cowra. These shifts from reserve to mission

²²¹ Maryrose Casey, *Creating Frames: Contemporary Indigenous Theatre 1967–1990* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2004), 104–05.

²²² Merritt, *The Cake Man*, ix.

²²³ Merritt, *The Cake Man*, ix.

²²⁴ Cameron Houston and Chris Vedelago, ‘Fifty Years On, Melbourne priest charged with sexual assault of Aboriginal girls’, *The Age*, 22 May 2017, at <https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/fifty-years-on-melbourne-priest-charged-with-sexual-assault-of-aboriginal-girls-20170522-gwaeia.html>. See also Rangi Hirini, ‘It’s disgusting’: Community anger as former priest receives suspended sentence’, *NITV News*, 16 January 2019, at <https://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/nitv-news/article/2019/01/16/its-disgusting-community-anger-former-priest-receives-suspended-sentence>.

²²⁵ Merritt, *The Cake Man*, xiii.

effectively illustrate that the jurisdiction of a mission, which traditionally implied faith spaces, are less clearly bounded than may be initially assumed.²²⁶ West Cowra experienced mass poverty in the town; it was an underserviced area with very limited employment opportunities, no health services, and inadequate infrastructure which was not effective in tempering the extreme heat and extreme cold typical of the region. These environmental factors inform the play.

The plot of *The Cake Man* is as follows: Ruby (mother), Sweet William (father), Pumpkinhead (son), and their baby live on mission land. Sweet William struggles with alcoholism and unemployment, while Ruby struggles to keep the house warm and her children fed. She entertains her children with stories including the story of the Cake Man, sent by Jesus to feed the Koori children with cake. The family lives in poverty, with Pumpkinhead committing petty theft of coal to keep the house warm. Some of this coal is stolen from the unnamed Civilian, who then reports Pumpkinhead to the mission manager, and embarks on a confrontation at the family home. Upon entering the Civilian sees Ruby's sick baby and regrets his aggressive approach, leaving their home. Sweet William announces he will move to Sydney to work and send money home. The play concludes with the Civilian providing Ruby and Pumpkinhead with a food hamper which contains a large cake. Pumpkinhead believes the Civilian is the mythical Cake Man finally returned. The final scenes show Sweet William in the city struggling with the urban community.

With the synopsis, context and history of the play and its initial performances introduced, my focus now turns to thematics. *The Cake Man* deals with the concept of faith, the development of Indigenous Christianity, the flaws of institutional Christianity, and rejection of religion. *The Cake Man* draws on understandings of faith to underline the life experiences of its characters. Meyrick suggests Merritt's Cake Man is 'half Jesus half Aboriginal spirit.'²²⁷ This is a distinction I disagree with. Although the narrative explores the Cake Man as a messenger and provider from Jesus, thematic comparisons between the Civilian 'Cake Man' and the biblical Jesus, or even the historical Jesus are, I would argue, limited to the trope of the 'saviour' and comparisons between the Civilian Cake Man and Aboriginal spirits are non-existent. Despite this dismissal of such a major connection, I acknowledge parallels can be drawn between the Civilian Cake Man and a saviour figure, second coming, and provider.

²²⁶ Merritt, *The Cake Man*, xix.

²²⁷ Meyrick, 'The great Australian plays: *The Cake Man* and the Indigenous mission experience.'

Other associations can also be made with the Old Testament God, Yahweh, and the Cake Man, who, in Ruby's story, is expressly tasked with providing for the Koori children.²²⁸ Acknowledging interpretive licence, I would suggest it is more accurate and useful to identify a general religious sentiment borne from experiences of, and expressions of faith and provision of resources, rather than an exact parallel by Merritt. Faith in *The Cake Man* is linked to understandings of hope and provisions. Sweet William, who is troubled by hopelessness, is without faith. He sees the Bible, Jesus, the church as false, 'a rort.'²²⁹ Time is differentiated by changes in narrative. Act One is a scene of first contact, it corrals violence and genocide, faith and conversion, food and quality of life and the emasculation of Aboriginal men. Sweet William, hampered by alcohol, carries the heaviness of this cultural history most clearly and his attitude to religion is scathing. He speaks of the work of missionaries without sparing irony quoting blithely to the audience, 'For y' travel over land and sea to make one convert... 'an when ya' finished with 'im, why, that fellers twice as fit for hell as you are y'self.'²³⁰

Ruby relates her story of the Cake Man as follows: 'Long time ago when Dreamtime's ending, Jesus, he sent the Cake Man over the sea to find the Kuri children. And he come... he come with the cake, the cake that was love from Jesus.'²³¹ It is key here to focus on the distinction in time that Ruby creates in her narrative; the Dreamtime ends, and the Cake Man arrives, bearing, supposedly, love. However, the narrative twists:

Ruby: Yes, and all the time since then, the Cake Man been walkin' around the bush lookin' for something' he's forgot about what it was

Pumpkinhead: But he still got all the cakes, and we gotta find him and tell him!

Ruby: He still got all the cakes, that's right, but he don't know any more about who Jesus told him to give 'em to ...

Pumpkinhead: He forgot! He don't even know he is the Cake Man! His eyes gone blind, and he forgot even who is s'posed to give the cakes to, and he forgot about havin' to do it. He don' know who he is... gotta tell him!

Ruby: Pumpkinhead, who's tellin' this story? [Pause] Well then, what we got to do,

²²⁸ The reconstruction of Jesus into alternate avatar figures is common across many communities, early in this chapter the festival of Tyaboi was referenced including the possible exploration of kinship with, and loyalty from, Jesus. Merritt, *The Cake Man*, 22.

²²⁹ Merritt, *The Cake Man*, 13.

²³⁰ Merritt, *The Cake Man*, 12-13.

²³¹ Merritt, *The Cake Man*, 21.

we got to wait for him, got to keep lookin', till we see him there, and then we tell him about the cakes that Jesus sent to Kuri children, make him know himself, remember he is the Cake Man ...²³²

Ruby is trying to foster an environment of hope, keeping that emotion alive for her son, and so she is fiercely protective of the Cake Man, searching for a narrative explanation to the hardship they face and why the love of Jesus, the 'cake', has not arrived to ease their burden. The Cake Man has simply forgotten for a short while. God has not abandoned them, and so they must keep looking for the hope and love of Jesus.

The Bible is a recurring symbol in *The Cake Man*. Associated almost exclusively with Ruby, the Bible takes on a role centred as an object rather than a text. The Bible is a symbol, important for what it represents, not what it contains. In Act One the Bible is offered to the Aboriginal mother and as the later family is a metaphorical mirror of the act one family, Ruby is the bearer of the Bible in Act Two.²³³ It is never read aloud and is instead used as a physical touchstone. Stage directions for the opening scene, in which a drunk Sweet William returns to the house are as follows: Ruby is seen to 'look on miserably. She goes to sit in her armchair, stroking the Bible.'²³⁴ This physical touchstone provides a sense of stability, hope and calmness for Ruby. For Sweet William the book is an object of disdain, a barrier between him and his wife. He remembers one argument between them and tells the audience, 'Nearly hit with that book of hers I was, only she frightened to use it like that.'²³⁵ Character symbols are also in use in Merritt's play. The character of the priest also acts as a symbol but appears only briefly in *The Cake Man* at the start of the script, in the first act. The Priest is allegedly in charge, supposed moral actor for whom the state, represented by the soldier, works and to whom the civilian defers. However, a close reading reveals that the priest is portrayed as powerless; the state does not really do his bidding despite its wishes to attain the moral superiority of his profession. The priest is not only powerless but callous, almost to the point of a comical foil. His faith is simplistic. In response to soldier's momentary regret for murdering an Aboriginal man, the priest instructs him to 'say three hail marys, two our fathers' before he sleeps that night.²³⁶

²³² Merritt, *The Cake Man*, 22.

²³³ Merritt, *The Cake Man*, 11.

²³⁴ Merritt, *The Cake Man*, 24.

²³⁵ Merritt, *The Cake Man*, 13.

²³⁶ Merritt, *The Cake Man*, 8.

Power is illustrated constantly in *The Cake Man*, with every new character introduced with a narrative focus on their status and power in the small community. Pumpkinhead and Ruby hold emotional power over Sweet William, by way of their resignation and disappointment. Sweet William holds financial power over Ruby and Pumpkinhead. The mission manager has authoritarian, legal power over all three. The Civilian Cake Man knowingly holds social power, wielding the law to his immediate advantage when Pumpkinhead steals his coal, and unknowingly, cultural power when in Act Three, Scene Two, he is mistaken for the mythical Cake Man.²³⁷ The priest, soldier and civilian from the opening act hold spiritual, physical, legal control over the family. These intertwined expressions of power interact as a network of conflict and trauma within the mission environment depicted by Merritt. Power and food are a recurring combination in Australian theatre. Theatre Studies researcher Gareth Griffiths claims poisoning gifts of flour with arsenic was a tool used to clear inhabitants from land in early colonial Australia.²³⁸ The use of arsenic was recorded in various newspapers throughout the early half of the twentieth century.²³⁹ One such reference was as follows:

The article, which purported to have been written from Sydney by a Mr Loth, made some extraordinary allegations. Under the heading 'Blackfellows Doomed by Australian Whites,' it was stated that a systematic campaign of extermination was being waged against the aborigines, the methods used being shooting and arsenic in flour, which in certain sections is provided by the Government and private bodies. In the murdering period, of course, the Government did not provide the poisoned flour.²⁴⁰

Theatre studies researcher Gaye Poole references Griffiths in her exploration of Louis Nowra's *Inside the Island* (1980), a play focused on the psychological impact of the interior and exterior landscape of Australia. Poole links the use of arsenic in flour to postcolonial analogies in the choice of poisoned flour as the play's primary image and a historical base for

²³⁷ Merritt, *The Cake Man*, 56.

²³⁸ Gareth Griffiths, 'Australian Subjects and Australian Style', in *Louis Nowra*, ed. Veronica Kelly (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1987), 97.

²³⁹ 'Port Phillip District 1842...the overseer Mr Robinson...had sent away into the bush...a quantity of what was supposed to be flour. Of this they partook...the symptoms usually produced by arsenic; the following morning three men, three women and three children were dead. 'certain known parties' were free to mix more arsenic with more flour, and thus get rid of more blacks...' 'The Story of the Blacks', *Adelaide Observer (SA: 1843 - 1904)*, 39, 27 August 1904, accessed 15 August 2020, at <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article163052838>.

²⁴⁰ 'Past Resurrected', *Daily Standard (Brisbane, Qld.: 1912 - 1936)*, 4 December 1925, accessed 15 August 2020, at <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article185555698>.

claims that the female protagonist's father has 'got rid of the blacks.'²⁴¹ The theme is continued with images of flour-whitened, dazed soldiers wandering close to a hell-like furnace Poole describes the imagery as melodramatic device for a non-Aboriginal playwright to reference the systemic efforts towards Aboriginal genocide.²⁴² Poole notes that food is used by playwrights to establish 'power differentials between characters' creating strategies for character control and conflict.²⁴³ This technique is central to the use of power in Merritt's work.

The cake is introduced in *The Cake Man* as 'the cake that was love from Jesus.'²⁴⁴ The immediate association is the cake is love, love and promise; these associations will be used as a touchstone as I explore more layers of the 'cake.' The cake is treated as a symbol in of itself, separate to the other items consumed. In a broader context, cake represents luxury, nourishment and even exclusivity. Secondly, a baked, risen cake was very much a European foodstuff: the primary ingredients, wheat flour and white sugar were introduced, exogenous, products. Baking itself, particularly baking bread, has been undertaken by Indigenous communities for centuries. Thus, the cake represents shared interest and history and can be read as an early image of reconciliation; except of course in *The Cake Man*, as in life, the cake, this potential symbol of reconciliation, is held by White Australia, represented by the Civilian. Through this reading, certain scenes are daubed with new meaning. In Act One 'God and Gun' the Civilian (it is never clarified whether the Civilian in the main narrative is the same figure) proffers some cake to the young Aboriginal boy after his father is shot by the soldier. The priest, previously the moral touchstone of the scene, 'snatches it away' saying 'no, mustn't give him that. It would only cause him pain. They are not accustomed to cake, they are not ready for cake.'²⁴⁵

By leading first with the proposed understanding of the cake as a vessel of possible reconciliation, this scenario can be read as institutions blocking the emotional reconciliation possible as a result of natural expressions of kindness and empathy. The second, clearer interpretation of this interaction is that of promise and denial. The cake has been used as a tool to lure the boy and his mother to the state and church. The script reads, 'the boy

²⁴¹ Gaye Poole, 'A Consuming Interest: Food Codes In Australian Drama', (MA thesis, University of New South Wales, August 1993), 96, at

<http://unsworks.unsw.edu.au/fapi/datastream/unsworks:62090/SOURCE01?view=true>.

²⁴² Poole, 'A Consuming Interest: Food Codes In Australian Drama,' 96.

²⁴³ Poole, 'A Consuming Interest: Food Codes In Australian Drama,' 96.

²⁴⁴ Merritt, *The Cake Man*, 21.

²⁴⁵ Merritt, *The Cake Man*, 13.

follows...the civilian coaxes him up to the priest.’²⁴⁶ This is representative of the better life, the experience of the love due to all God’s children as described by missionaries then snatched away by the priest who eats the cake in front of the child and his mother. The third and surface implications are a comment on nutrition. The dialogue of the priest is almost clinical in its discussion of nutrition, and this is not a theme that runs through the rest of the script. Apart from the presence of malnourishment, nutrition is rarely raised. The priest suggests the cake will bring ‘pain’ and that ‘they are not accustomed to cake.’²⁴⁷ The key components of cake, flour and sugar, are ingredients long linked to inadequate nutrition and the development of disease, amongst Indigenous peoples in colonial countries. There is a strong link between this and Earle’s work on Spanish South America and the narrative of bodily transformation and illness caused by consumption. Connections can be made again to the food violence alluded to by Griffiths with his references to arsenic poisoned flour, a central ingredient of cake. However, ultimately, this scene of promise, of all that the cake represents, concludes with no lasting positive benefits and the family is served betrayal rather than the desired cake.

The Cake Man is a play heavy with anxiety, frustration and themes of trauma and emasculation. Pumpkinhead is frustrated primarily by his father, who he sees as irresponsible, abandoning the family through perceived inaction. The sense of responsibility for his mother and brother that Pumpkinhead shoulders breeds bitterness and anxiety. Sweet William, his father, struggles with this palpable frustration, aware of his son’s disappointment and conscious that he is trapped by the same circumstances and structural inequalities his son will continue to face into adulthood.²⁴⁸ Sweet William is rendered mute by his situation, emotionally hindered. In his opening soliloquy he articulates to the audience; ‘I don’t talk much real words to my missus... have to pretend a thing, have to live it and hide it all the time.’²⁴⁹ His wife Ruby faces the frustration shared by many women who exist within a framework of gender constructed around social powerlessness. Ruby’s situation is heightened by her race which renders her trapped, relying on a socially rejected breadwinner to provide for her increasingly frustrated children. Ruby is regularly described as tired and worn down. She is anxious for her new-born baby, her son, her husband, and is scared of alcohol, fearful of the damage its consumption has caused her family and conscious of the legal implication

²⁴⁶ Merritt, *The Cake Man*, 13.

²⁴⁷ Merritt, *The Cake Man*, 13.

²⁴⁸ Merritt, *The Cake Man*, 34.

²⁴⁹ Merritt, *The Cake Man*, 13.

of being drunk and black. Ruby's role as carer for her family is threatened by circumstances of class represented in *The Cake Man* through differing opportunities for access, consumption, and food (in addition to opportunities for employment and autonomy). Ruby listens to her young son's misery about their circumstances without being able to change them, Pumpkinhead moans, 'I ain't goin' no school, I ain't got no dinner. Gubbas look at you. Eat their cakes and make me see 'em when they know I ain't got nothin', no dinner.'²⁵⁰ This is a painful, confronting line to read or hear, and must have struck a chord with the primarily white audience who packed out The Bondi Pavilion Theatre. The infamous cake reappears in Pumpkinhead's plaintive appeal, indicative of the impact this elusive food product has on his lived perception of difference and wealth.

The eventual reveal of the supposed 'Cake Man', in the form of the Civilian, occurs after the departure of Sweet William to Sydney and the revelation is as follows:

[Points suddenly in recognition]

Pumpkinhead: Awww! You'd Cake Man!

[The Civilian smiles. He looks to Ruby in puzzlement. Ruby smiles at him and nods to Pumpkinhead.... He rushes at the Civilian, embracing him excitedly. The civilian hugs him back, pleased and affectionate.] ...

[The Civilian looks puzzled, smiling, at Ruby. She shrugs. They both look at the door, and kids come streaming in the door one after another as Pumpkinhead shows the cake, the big beautiful cake, and the Cake Man, who has trouble embracing all those kids as they run to him. Ruby gives him a knife. He gives cake to all the children.]²⁵¹

It is a poignant moment for the community. For the children of the community, their childhood narrative, their faith in the Cake Man, has been realised. Ruby chooses silence, to continue the mythology; it is unclear whether she herself believes. She has vehemently defended the story before to her husband: 'Jesus is true. Cake Man is true. Shut up.'²⁵² The Civilian has stepped in, providing, in an instant, what Sweet William had been unable to provide and has left his family and travelled many hours away to seek: warmth, hope, nourishment. It is a bittersweet scene.

²⁵⁰ Merritt, *The Cake Man*, 19.

²⁵¹ Merritt, *The Cake Man*, 56.

²⁵² Merritt, *The Cake Man*, 33.

The Cake Man is an important example of Aboriginal storytelling and narrative exploring colonial history. It demonstrates the ghettoisation of many Indigenous communities as regional and rural urban centres expanded and the consequent threats to physical and spiritual nourishment as cultural practices were curtailed and family bonds threatened by dispossession. *The Cake Man* addresses the impact of dispossession on women who exist within a framework of gender constructed around social powerlessness. Equally the impact of structural inequality on family bonds are explored through Sweet William's frustration and expressions of helplessness over an inability to either bond with, or gain respect from, his son, alongside a fear of the generational trauma that may plague his son in adulthood. All this is explored alongside both real, and symbolic frameworks of food. The foodspace is the ground on which each character relates to, and communicates with, each other. From the colonial trinity of settler, priest and soldier to the family unit of Ruby, Sweet William, Pumpkinhead and the Baby, food represents not only physical survival and sustenance but also history, religion and identity. Themes of what I categorise as food violence are explored as the malnutrition experienced by Pumpkinhead's family is exacerbated, and made cyclical, by structural inequalities (primarily a lack of employment for Sweet William) that impact their financial situation and therefore their ability to access food. Food is also the narrative vehicle of hope, explored by the character of Ruby who attempts to foster this environment for her family by relating the story of The Cake Man, a saviour whose guileless forgetfulness explains the community's destitution, seeking to explain their apparent abandonment by God.

The pseudo-Jesus figure of the Cake Man is one of a number of examples of cross-cultural mythmaking in Australian literature and storytelling. Rose worked with the Yarralin and Lingara communities, which are made up of Ngarinman, Karangpuru, Bilinara, Mudbara and Ngaliqurru. These groups have a post-invasion history as cattle station workers, with many generations having worked in the pastoral industry at Victoria River Downs and Wave Hill.²⁵³ Bird Rose recalls two stories told to her by Hobbles Danyari in 1981. The following is a summation of those stories. In the first, infamous bushranger Ned Kelly visited Wave Hill station, long before any 'whitefellows' came into the Victoria River District, and taught people how to make tea and cook damper. Although there was only one billy of tea and one little damper everybody got fed. The other story involved Ned Kelly returning to England, there his throat was cut and he was buried. After the sun went down, he left this world

²⁵³ Deborah Bird Rose, 'Ned Kelly Died for our Sins', in *Religious Business: Essays on Australian Aboriginal Spirituality*, ed. Max Charlesworth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 107.

‘BOOOOMMM- Go longa top. This world shaking. All the White men been shaking.’²⁵⁴ These narratives have absorbed biblical stories, for example the Feeding of the multitudes, the Crucifixion and the Ascension but more importantly they are examples of alternative expressions of ‘time, space, events.’²⁵⁵ Ned Kelly, a settler born to Irish convicts, is somehow at Wave Hill Station before colonisers have even come and established it.²⁵⁶ Bird Rose suggests these narratives operate in a similar form to Aboriginal cosmology, which is usually related in the form of Dreaming stories featuring original beings who established moral principles and laws through which the cosmos is sustained, their actions demarcated a spatially identified moral universe. Most Dreamings became mobilised and began to travel through an identifiable geographical space through Country. The Dreaming is not a specifically dated time but simply a time which both precedes the known present and exists alongside it and, in some cases, after it. Both narratives emmesh Dreaming concepts of time and space, with Christian narratives of the Ascension and the Feeding of the Five Thousand.²⁵⁷

2.4 Conclusion

Focusing on mission and reserve spaces has situated this chapter in spaces which were legally ‘designated’ for Indigenous peoples. In this chapter I traversed the history of missions in Australia focusing on three sites: The Daly River Mission, St Joseph’s New Uniya and Brewarrina. I identified patterns of control, limited social and cultural freedom and nutritional deprivation.. In addition, I highlighted the continuing impact of religious organisations in social work in Australia. The foodscape developed in mission environments has significantly impacted and eroded cultural memory for countless Aboriginal communities. This foodscape was framed by understandings of transaction, power, worth and behaviour controlled through access to essential sustenance. These same frameworks filtered into the development of rationing systems and social welfare schemes which still shape the life experiences of

²⁵⁴ Rose, ‘Ned Kelly Died for our Sins’, 114.

²⁵⁵ The Feeding of the Multitudes appears in Matthew 14-Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6-Mark 6:31-44; Luke 9-Luke 9:12-17; John 6-John 6:1-14 NRSV. It is also worth noting that some dreaming traditions have evolved to include aspects on other cultures encountered by the community, for example some Yolngu dreaming stories have examples of Makassan vocabulary and religious ideas. The Makassans were Javanese, Muslim fishermen who reached Australian shores some 200 years before Europeans in search of sea cucumbers for medicinal practice. There is evidence that the Makassans negotiated fishing rights with Aboriginal groups who lived and fished in the areas they were interested in. Anna Clark, *The Catch: The Story of Fishing in Australia* (Canberra: NLA Publishing, 2017), 35.

²⁵⁶ Rose, ‘Ned Kelly Died for our Sins’, 108.

²⁵⁷ Matthew 14:13-21, Mark 6:31-44, Luke 9:12-17, and John 6:1-14

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in the twenty-first century. In this chapter I identified narrative connections between cultural practice, especially, storytelling traditions and the adoption of Christianity by some Indigenous communities.

The Cake Man explores the impact of the colonial trinity of settler, priest and soldier, on the lived experience, faith and storytelling of Indigenous people. These stories are one example of mysticism serving as a primary shared ground between missionaries and Indigenous communities. However, significant tensions were borne from other opposing rituals. Indigenous people were at times told that the gospel narratives were not ‘for, or about’ them in the way that their own Dreaming stories were.²⁶² Thus, cross cultural myth narratives and figures like the Cake Man and Wave Hill’s Ned Kelly provide creative interpretation. In this way both missionaries and Indigenous knowledge bearers harnessed the power of the supernatural and the mystic. Other ritualistic identity building narratives were easier to translate; for example, the symbolic bestowal of names in ritual baptism, incantations of prayers and the Bible as a ritual object that had to be treated with particular respect were recognisable means of establishing relationships between people and with the material and supernatural worlds. This common ground was fragile. While Indigenous communities could recognise the importance of sacred objects and rituals in their Christian context, and the missionaries could likewise recognise the spiritual nature of many traditional practices and objects, there was a volatility to this recognition. Armed with sacred objects, incantations and the support of saintly spirits, Catholic missionaries who in particular have a strong doctrinal focus on ritual performance, strained against the ‘childish superstitions of the blacks’ while Indigenous people often felt that the gospel narratives were untruthful, useless and not for or about them.²⁶³ Translation difficulties compounded the fragility of mutual comprehension. Regina Ganter concludes that relationships with missionary communities began, and often continually navigated, both a mutual incomprehension and a shared commitment to metaphysics. Ganter identifies World War II as a turning point after which were demonstrated notable changes in the ways missionaries and Elders began to harness each other's ontologies, ‘in the project of inculturation, the forging of a shared understanding that led to the emergence of Indigenous churches.’²⁶⁴

²⁶² Ganter, *The Contest for Aboriginal Souls*, 106.

²⁶³ Ganter, *The Contest for Aboriginal Souls*, 106.

²⁶⁴ Ganter, *The Contest for Aboriginal Souls*, 106.

I have demonstrated that colonial institutions, specifically religious missions, damaged the inheritance of generational knowledge and cultural practice. In the next chapter I show that cultural food knowledge has shaped agricultural practice, how communities are utilising cultural knowledge to revitalise contemporary foodways, and how the physical landscape holds important narratives which shape the Australian foodscape.

Chapter Three: Agricultural practice: a selective survey of Aboriginal farming practices

3.1 Introduction

Australia is the smallest continent and largest island equating to five percent of the world's landmass and hosting an astounding variety of landscapes and climates.¹ It is, therefore, not surprising that geographically disparate Aboriginal nations ate different endogenous foods, prepared in different ways. Their descendants, many of whom no longer live on Country, are bound together not only by similar approaches to law (as expressed in Dreaming stories), but also a similar sense of custodianship of, and relationship with, Country and a solidarity amplified by the common experience of dispossession and residual collective trauma.

A plant or animal endogenous to a climate or location indicates their specific biology: they are designed to thrive in that precise geographical location and the conditions usually experienced there. I use the term endogenous as derived from the work of Zane Ma Rhea on de-imperialising foodscapes.² In much of Australia, endogenous crops are hardier, require less irrigation, and thrive in a lower quality soil than their introduced counterparts. In a word they are survivors, adapted to the harsh conditions that govern large swathes of the Australian landmass. Industrialised crop development, the change from a plant that is primarily gathered to one which is uniformly grown and harvested in large quantities for sale, is not yet the normative production method for most native edible plants in contemporary Australia. However, researchers are performing assessments of the nutritional potential of native plants leading to the potential for effective crop management and marketing.³

In this chapter I investigate the significance of existing geographical engineering and inherited knowledge about land and marine management, identifying ways in which past and contemporary Aboriginal communities have worked with edible flora and fauna as part of cultural and economic practice. In this chapter I engage with the production and processing stages of the Australian food system. The key Aboriginal voice in the following section is

¹ 'Australia's size compared,' *Australian Government Geoscience Australia*, accessed 19 March 2019, available from <http://www.ga.gov.au/scientific-topics/national-location-information/dimensions/australias-size-compared>.

² Zane Ma Rhea, 'Towards an Indigenist, Gaian pedagogy of food: deimperializing foodScapes in the classroom', *Journal of Environmental Education* 49.2, (March 2018), 103 – 116.

³ A recent, catalogic, example is Yasmina Sultanbawa and Fazal Sultanbawa (eds.) *Australian Native Plants: Cultivation and uses in the health and food industries* (CRC Press: Taylor and Francis 2021).

Bunurong and Yuin man Bruce Pascoe, particularly his work in *Dark Emu, Black Seed: Agriculture or Accident* (2014). The preceding chapter established a social portrait of Aboriginal experiences which determined how religion, mission environments and the use of those combined forces, restructured the way communities were physically and spiritually nourished. I now explore the active relationship of Aboriginal communities to land, Country, and custodianship, assessing contemporary projects which develop and reinvigorate these practices. This will complement the work in the following chapter, addressing contemporary uses of native Australian foods in consumer facing environments.

This chapter addresses the erasure of traditional agricultural practice and the impact erasure of these traditions, coupled with the displacement of many Aboriginal peoples from their homelands, has had on the maintenance of existing examples of agricultural engineering and controlled ecosystems around Australia. The first section looks at flora; primarily addressing recent progress in the cultivation of saline bush vegetables. The second section addresses animal agriculture and explores how different approaches to conservation have created friction surrounding the consumption and management of endogenous animals. The third section focuses on marine and riverine aquaculture, including the Brewarinna fish trap aquaculture system. The final section expands on the legal challenges faced by Aboriginal harvesters and fishers.⁴

3.1.1 Agricultural erasure and intellectual property

This chapter will begin with a profile of intellectual property in relation to Indigenous knowledge in Australia. Intellectual property in Australia functions to protect legitimated knowledge as defined by the dominant power brokers at any given time. Consequently,

⁴ Here I use the non-gendered term ‘fishers’ as opposed to ‘fishermen’.

⁶ Bruce Pascoe, *Dark Emu, Black Seed: Agriculture or Accident* (Broome: Magabala Books Aboriginal Corporation, 2014). Pascoe is the published author of nine books including *Bloke* (2009) and *Convincing Ground: Learning How to Fall in Love with your Country* (2007). Bruce Pascoe identifies as a Yuin, Cooloom and Boonwurrung man, but only the Yuin community have accepted his lineage. I will not make judgements about the fraught issue of Aboriginal identity and will refer to Pascoe primarily as a Yuin man based on the available statements from representatives of all three nations.

⁷ Bruce Pascoe, ‘We are the Australians, we have the power | Lin Onus Oration, The University of Melbourne ...’, *Pursuit*, 13 April, 2016, at <https://pursuit.unimelb.edu.au/articles/we-are-the-australians-we-have-the-power>; Relocalise Hepburn, ‘Bruce Pascoe and David Holmgren to meet and share knowledges’, *Relocalise Hepburn*, 17 March, 2016, at <http://relocalisehepburn.blogspot.com.au/2016/03/bruce-pascoe-and-david-holmgren-to-meet.html>

⁸ Ltnt George Grey in Pascoe, *Dark Emu*, 21.

alternative sources of knowledge are often excluded as a result of restrictive parameters. Dora Marinova and Margaret Raven reported that ‘... Indigenous knowledge is often defined as being holistic and collectively owned, and appropriate protection should allow for maintaining the cultural and physical environment that has generated it.’⁹ Globally it is acknowledged that many ‘Indigenous communities have shared their knowledge, for the good of humanity...’¹⁰ Environmental lawyer Thomas Burelli specialises in Indigenous communities and patent law and writes that, given this generosity, ‘When you see it for commercial use, or you see people trying to benefit from it without sharing anything, you have a moral issue.’¹¹ Current policies for the protection of intellectual property in Australia are limited in their scope for recognising indigenous rights to Indigenous knowledge.¹² An exception would be recent developments in biodiscovery laws in Queensland where changes (2020-2021) have mandated anyone undertaking biodiscovery must take ‘all reasonable measures to form agreement with the custodians of Indigenous knowledge being used’ and must develop a benefit sharing agreement in line with recommendations of the Nagoya Protocol.¹³ Intellectual Property Australia (IPA) has commissioned Indigenous intellectual property specialist Dr Terri Janke to prepare a report to assist IPA in developing more effective processes with regards to Indigenous knowledge. Janke is the leading expert in her field and tends to be the consultant referenced when cases of intellectual property are reported on. Janke states:

We need new laws to recognise Indigenous peoples’ connection with words that are associated with plants and the plants themselves ... When outsiders find out the healing properties they look to patent or trademark the healing properties, and the

⁹ Dora Marinova and Margaret Raven, ‘Indigenous knowledge and intellectual property: A sustainability agenda,’ *Journal of Economic Surveys* 20, no. 4 (2006): 587.

¹⁰ Marinova and Raven, ‘Indigenous knowledge and intellectual property’, 588.

¹¹ Burelli manages The Ethics Hub, a digital resource centre hosted by The University of Ottawa which focuses on ‘resources that can contribute to the establishment of more respectful and equitable relationships between researchers and Indigenous and local communities.’ See Prianka Srinivasan, ‘Christian Dior reaches secret agreement with New Caledonia over patenting native plants’, *ABC*, 7 December 2019, accessed 15 January 2020, at <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-12-07/christian-dior-reaches-secret-agreement-with-new-caledonia/11773612>.

¹² Marinova and Raven, ‘Indigenous knowledge and intellectual property’, 587.

¹³ David Claudie, David Jefferson, Jocelyn Bosse, Margaret Raven, Daniel Robinson, ‘Australia’s plants and animals have long been used without Indigenous consent. Now Queensland has taken a stand’, *The Conversation*, 16 September 2020, at <https://theconversation.com/australias-plants-and-animals-have-long-been-used-without-indigenous-consent-now-queensland-has-taken-a-stand-144813>

words, and use them commercially. They stop Indigenous people from being able to use their assets for their own commercial purposes.¹⁴

Janke represents a growing area of law known as ICIP, Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property.¹⁵ This incorporates literary, performing and artistic works (copyright); languages and types of knowledge, including spiritual knowledge; tangible and intangible cultural property; Indigenous ancestral remains and genetic material; cultural environmental resources; sites of Indigenous significance; and documentation of Indigenous heritage. Copyright law does not cover ICIP as it is linked to the author's mortality, lasting 70 years from the date of death, and therefore is tricky to apply to kinship knowledge and cultural knowledge.¹⁶ In addition, art in the public domain can be reproduced and the reproductions copyrighted. These same principles do, and will continue to, impact the protection of knowledge about native foods including expressions of creativity in which food is the medium. Again, this is a case of existing legal systems fitting poorly into cultural, religious systems and in many cases failing to protect the development of mutually beneficial social systems in colonised countries. Adhikari, Bosse et al suggest that a program of pre-emptive patenting may be effective.¹⁷ I agree this model should prove advantageous for communities who hold Indigenous ecological knowledge about particular flora.¹⁸

¹⁴ Jemima Burt, 'Gumby trademark bid angers Indigenous people who want intellectual property rights reform', *ABC Capricornia*, 9 April 2019, accessed 10 April 2019, at <https://mobile.abc.net.au/news/2019-04-09/gumby-gumby-trademark-bid-angers-indigenous-people/10975908?pfmredir=sm&fbclid=IwAR3sJZXDCSo4wNkRB3m17WHFcQvMI4WAq756XF27XoI6H6eWCaMmtEziM8Y>.

¹⁵ Alexis Moran, 'What is Indigenous cultural intellectual property and copyright and how can I respect it?' *ABC*, 11 May 2020, accessed 11 May 2020, at <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-05-11/what-is-indigenous-cultural-intellectual-property-and-copyright/12150308>.

¹⁶ Moran, 'What is Indigenous cultural intellectual property and copyright and how can I respect it?'

¹⁷ Kamalesh Adhikari, Jocelyn Bosse, Allison Fish and Brad Sherman, 'Intellectual property and related legal issues facing the Australian native food industry', *Agriutures Australia* 18.084, September 2018, accessed 10 October 2021, at www.agriutures.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/18-084.pdf

¹⁸ Although I do not discuss trademarks in this chapter I would like to draw attention to suggestions made by Adhikari, Bosse et al to allow that the native food industry should develop a trademark to build and protect new markets and prevent third parties (particularly from outside of Australia) from passing themselves off as if they were part of the industry. See Adhikari, Jocelyn Bosse, Allison Fish and Brad Sherman, 'Intellectual property and related legal issues facing the Australian native food industry', *Agriutures Australia* 18.084, September 2018, accessed 10 October 2021, at www.agriutures.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/18-084.pdf. The Australian Native Food Industry attempted to file a logo in 2007 but the registration lapsed. Adhikari, Bosse et al suggestions are supported by David Jefferson who similarly writes that 'One way that Indigenous groups could ensure that they exercise control over the development and expansion of the Australian native foods and agribusiness sector would be to establish an effective certification regime to ensure that the knowledge and practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are appropriately converted into commercial products. The creation of an effective certification regime could be enabled through the use of intellectual property, especially by strategically leveraging trade-mark law' David Jefferson, 'Certification marks for Australian native foods: A proposal for Indigenous ownership of intellectual property', *Alternative Law Journal* 46.1 (2021), 53-57.

The connection of language and space in many Aboriginal groups is well documented, but these connections are at risk of exploitation, and violation, under Australian copyright and intellectual property practices. Ngarigu woman and linguist Professor Jakelin Troy has referenced how language has been damaged by the disruption of physical space, especially landscape. In a panel discussion at the University of Sydney, Troy noted that the word for a particular site will not be retained if that site is dismantled, as the purpose of the word becomes defunct.¹⁹ The ramifications of the loss of a particular site, and the associated language, may also damage words for rituals and practices associated with that site. As this web of language erodes, so oral tradition is weakened, and the linguistic depiction of physical space is degraded.²⁰ As an opposing example the use of place names in the commercial naming of endogenous food plants can strengthen the connection between locality and produce. We see this with the Kakadu plum. Steve Sunk commented that Kakadu plum patents would be ‘like patenting the culture of the Aboriginal people here in the Northern Territory. The plum is part of their travelling, their walkabout, their Dreaming.’²¹

Gardens are excellent examples of the significance of site, place, and land as a central component of the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians. Bidyadanga Elder James Yanawana has experience growing and harvesting gubinge, known commercially as Kakadu plum, in Western Australia.²² Yanawana relates that his community grew their first trial crop as early as the 1990s on a site previously home to the former mission market gardens. The focus of the interview was the contemporary gubinge growing project, but I will redirect the analysis to focus on the use of that site. Growing a trial crop on mission market gardens provides an opportunity to cleanse the space and challenge a history that is deep in the soil, a history of suppression of native ingredient production and consumption, with the introduction of a new way of farming. Yanawana and community leaders worked with Kim Courtenay, horticulturist at the Kimberley Training Institute, to ‘develop the plantation into a commercial enterprise.’ While the gubinge has ‘superfood

¹⁹ Jakelin Troy, ‘The Road to Indigenous Repatriation’, Panel Discussion at The University of Sydney, 10 April 2019.

²⁰ Troy, ‘The Road to Indigenous Repatriation.’

²¹ Sunk is a Chef and Lecturer in Cookery at the University of South Australia. Alyssa Betts, ‘Chef wild over plum Battle looms with Mary Kay’, *Sunday Territorian*, 17 October 2010, accessed 15 May 2020, at <https://territorystories.nt.gov.au/bitstream/10070/224492/7/ntn17oct10007x.pdf>.

²² Meredith Birrell, ‘Why there aren't more native Australian foods on the table’, *Nine News*, 3 October 2017, accessed 1 February 2018, at: <https://kitchen.nine.com.au/2017/10/03/12/34/why-there-arent-more-native-australian-foods-on-the-table>.

status' and contains levels of vitamin C much higher than those found in oranges, it is not yet used widely and therefore the cost of sale and production is still high. Most of Bidyadanga's harvest is shipped internationally for use in the USA cosmetics and dietary supplements industry. Birrell notes that the 'the cultivation of more productive crops needs to be weighed against the potential risks of breeding out some of the selling points, including antioxidant properties and pest resistance which become compromised when the plant encounters more favourable growing conditions.'²³ Additionally, the growth of the industry must be accompanied by the growth of education for chefs and other hospitality workers.



Figure 1. Arrernte woman Brittany Krol at the memorial garden dedicated to her mother in Alice Springs. Photo: Samantha Jonscher

At the Alice Springs Language Centre there is a memorial garden dedicated to Arrernte language teacher Margaret Krol. The garden is planted with various endemic bush medicine plants labelled with their Arrernte name. The site combines connection to place with language learning, as well as providing a physical space for generational connection.²⁴ I would suggest that the tactility of food and environment provide opportunities for language to be reintroduced and preserved in contemporary communities. Like the Margaret Krol

²³ Birrell, 'Why there aren't more native Australian foods on the table.'

²⁴ Samantha Jonscher, 'Arrernte language alive and well in Alice Springs with next generation 'inspired' to teach Indigenous language', *ABC Alice Springs*, 18 September 2020, accessed 18 September 2020, at <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-09-18/arrernte-language-honoured-alice-springs-bush-medicine-garden/12672100>.

memorial garden, language and land management skills are passed on at Yerrabingin garden at South Eveleigh, on the borders of Redfern, an area that is still a bastion of urban Aboriginal communities in Sydney. The site is managed by Bundjalung man Clarence Slockee, and Woiwurrung and Maneroo man Christian Hampson. Plantings focus on edible native bush foods and the space, described as a ‘cultural start up,’ is used regularly for cultural education. Although the project has been financially supported by Mirvac, the developer who owns the site, Yerrabingin is self-funded through a series of workshops focused on cultural arts and practice, permaculture, food origin and cooking lessons. Hampson declared the site would ‘influence future designs by showing how native plants can integrate a sense of history into new developments...This is a significant step forward in embedding reconciliation into placemaking while harnessing the potential of Aboriginal social enterprise.’²⁵ Reconnecting communities with the etymological narrative of language strengthens connections and shores up the feeling of power that comes with affirmed knowledge. Language is, and will continue to be, a key element of intellectual property protection for Indigenous people globally.

Legislative change, such as is needed within intellectual property legislation, can be difficult, complex, and delayed. Grassroots community work can sometimes facilitate social change in a more effective timeline to allow benefits to be experienced sooner. In 2011 the Merne Altyerre-ipenhe (Food from the Creation time) Reference Group, with Josie Douglas and Fiona Walsh, published a set of voluntary ethical guidelines.²⁶ These guidelines were aimed at bush foods researchers and enterprise leaders, as well as labourers in the industry. The Merne Altyerre-ipenhe Reference group comprises individuals from the major language groups across central Australia, including M. K. Turner (Eastern Arrernte), Veronica Dobson (Eastern Arrernte), Lorna Wilson (Pitjantjatjara), Myra Ah Chee (Pitjantjatjara), Bess Price (Warlpiri), Gina Smith (Warumungu), Rayleen Brown (Ngangiwumirr/ Eastern Arrernte) and Maree Meredith (Central Land Council representative).²⁷ The group’s guiding statement specifies:

²⁵ South Eveleigh, ‘Yerrabingin and Mirvac open Australia’s first Indigenous rooftop farm,’ *South Eveleigh*, 10 March 2019, accessed 15 April 2019, at <https://www.southeveleigh.com/whats-on-new/news/2019/04/10/yerrabingin-opening>

²⁶ Merne Altyerre-ipenhe Reference Group, J. Douglas and F. Walsh, ‘Aboriginal people, bush foods knowledge and products from central Australia: Ethical guidelines for commercial bush food research, industry and enterprises’, *Desert Knowledge CRC Report Number 71* (2011), accessed 28 August 2020, at https://www.nintione.com.au/resource/NintiOneResearchReport_71_BushFoodGuidelines.pdf.

²⁷ The inclusion of Maree Meredith as Central Land Council (CLC) is due to CLC being the peak statutory body for Aboriginal Land Trusts where harvesting takes place.

We see ourselves as expressing the interests of many Aboriginal people on lands to which we are connected, although we are not elected representatives. We do not speak for Aboriginal people elsewhere in other parts of Australia. The Australian bush foods industry is growing very quickly. We are concerned that many of the people involved know very little about custodial Aboriginal cultural rights, responsibilities and attachments to bush food plant species.²⁸

The research group aims to provide information about bush foods, harvest, preparation, and trade. Their work aims to address a lack of effective inclusion of the owners and custodians of Indigenous ecological knowledge in the industry. It will develop a set of guidelines to help those with ‘a commercial interest in bush foods—in both the research and industry sectors’ in Central Australia.²⁹

While the reference group focuses on Central Australia, the recommendations can be applied on a national scale. In addition, the group provides commentary on the potential exploitation of Aboriginal women due to a lack of effective guidelines on, or support for, an equitable bush foods industry. Women are the backbone of wild harvesting efforts in Australia and, as harvesting reaps the lowest monetary reward, in the food system they are most at risk of missing out. The chefs using native foods in the hospitality industry, and reaping the largest monetary reward and publicity, are predominantly men. The Merne Altyerre-ipenhe Reference Group aims to determine what benefit sharing may encompass. They identify both monetary benefits and non-monetary benefits. The latter includes maintenance of cultural tradition, intergenerational transfer of traditional knowledge, and the health and well-being derived from being on Country and eating nutritionally rich bush food.³⁰

An intellectual property case centred on the Gumby Gumby plant is an example of how, left unchecked, Western conceptions of intellectual property further a colonial practice of stealing Indigenous knowledge for capital gain, and threatens the continuity of Indigenous

²⁸ Merne Altyerre-ipenhe Reference Group, Douglas, Walsh, ‘Aboriginal people, bush foods knowledge and products from central Australia’, 3.

²⁹ Merne Altyerre-ipenhe Reference Group, Douglas, Walsh, ‘Aboriginal people, bush foods knowledge and products from central Australia’, 3.

³⁰ Merne Altyerre-ipenhe Reference Group, Douglas, Walsh, ‘Aboriginal people, bush foods knowledge and products from central Australia’, 13.

knowledge. Wiradjuri and Ngemba woman Roxanne Smith associates the Gumby Gumby plant with her family.³¹ The plant is used to treat eczema, sprains, colds, and lactation. It was also the centre of an intellectual property battle developing between the Wiradjuri people and non-Indigenous Queensland business owners Katja Amato and Klaus Otto Von Gliszczynski. Amato and Von Gliszczynski obtained a patent for the use of Gumby Gumby leaves for medicinal purposes under the Latin name *Pittosporum angustifolium*.³² According to research into Amato and Von Gliszczynski compiled by the ABC, they claimed to have invented the term Gumby Gumby, a claim which conflicts with the communal memory of the Wiradjuri.³³ In this case language is used, even weaponised, against Indigenous Australian peoples. The patent would be granted for a plant identified by the original language of Western colonisation. I acknowledge the value of Latin as the international language of horticulture.³⁴ However, while the patent was registered under the Latin name, by seeking to trademark the term Gumby Gumby, Amato and Von Gliszczynski are using a foreign language against Aboriginal people and in doing so creating a path to colonise, to steal, Wiradjuri language.³⁵

This is not an isolated case. Palawa woman Lee Doherty sells Gumby Gumby capsules through her business The Traditional Bush Medicine Company, based in Brisbane, Queensland. Doherty includes a statement of intention alongside her products, reproduced below, and appeals to a sense of ethical consumerism, a theoretical model on which the emerging bush foods industry is reliant.

Choosing to support The Traditional Bush Medicine Company means that you are helping to empower Indigenous communities of Brisbane and Redcliffe Peninsula and

³¹ Caitlin Fitzsimons, 'A Native plant is exposing the clash between traditional knowledge and western conventions,' *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 September 2019, accessed 29 September 2019, at <https://www.smh.com.au/business/the-economy/a-native-plant-is-exposing-the-clash-between-traditional-knowledge-and-western-conventions-20190925-p52upf.html>.

³² This patent is currently under investigation as part of the work of Daniel Robinson, Margaret Raven and their team at the University of New South Wales; IP Australia, Patent No. 2008300612: 'Production of leaf extracts of *Pittosporum phylliraeoides* and the use thereof in medicine', 26 March 2009, accessed 9 January 2023, at <http://pericles.ipaustralia.gov.au/ols/auspat/applicationDetails.do?applicationNo=2008300612>

³³ Jemima Burt, 'Gumby Gumby trademark bid angers Indigenous people who want intellectual property rights reform,' *ABC Capricornia*, 9 April 2019, accessed 10 April 2019, at <https://mobile.abc.net.au/news/2019-04-09/gumby-gumby-trademark-bid-angers-indigenous-people/10975908?pfmredir=sm&fbclid=IwAR3sJZXDcSo4wNkRB3m17WHFcQvMI4WAq756XF27XoI6H6eWCaMmtEziM8Y>.

³⁴ Short and George, *A Primer of Botanical Latin with Vocabulary*.

³⁵ The patent application over the term 'gumby gumby' was eventually denied after a three-year campaign by community leaders and academics. Burt, 'Non-Indigenous business fails in bid to trademark Aboriginal bush medicine.'

create a real economy for Indigenous Australians based on cultural food knowledge and practices. Our business is 100% Aboriginal owned meaning the profits flow back into our community and region.³⁶

Doherty also states that ‘culturally based land care techniques ensure the health and protection of the wild trees.’³⁷ Doherty criticises the implications of trademarking cultural language, because this means Indigenous people then must pay to use that language and access their culture. Ghangalu man Steve Kemp sees the principle of people legally reserving Indigenous language as wrong and describes Indigenous culture as having a bedrock of ‘benevolence’ which included the distribution of medicine, including Gumby Gumby leaves, for free. Kemp notes ‘that’s what all old Aboriginal people thought and that’s why they told all these people about the medicine.’³⁸ In this case benevolence may well be highlighted as an absence of capitalist structure dictating the form of transactions as purely monetary. Kemp suggests one way to increase the possibility of a more equitable use of Gumby Gumby would be employment for Indigenous people in the harvesting process. This would align with the Nagoya Protocol and by the Merne Altyerre-ipenhe Reference Group regarding benefit sharing.

³⁶ Lee Doherty, ‘Gumby Gumby’, *Farmhouse Direct*, 10 April 2019, at <https://web.archive.org/web/20200312204639/https://farmhousedirect.com.au/gumbygumby>. As of 26 July 2022 this page is no longer available on the Farmhouse Direct website.

³⁷ Doherty, ‘Gumby Gumby.’

³⁸ Burt, ‘Gumby Gumby trademark bid angers Indigenous people who want intellectual property rights reform.’

3.2 Flora and wild harvesting case studies: Developing a saline vegetable industry

‘When colonial sources acknowledged Indigenous dispossession [they] ... highlighted ... the destruction of traditional food sources.’

Thomas Mitchell ³⁹

‘The yam was a crop so important to the Dharug people of NSW that they referred to themselves by their name for it.’

Bruce Pascoe ⁴⁰

I will now explore the saline vegetable industry and the results of collaboration between researchers, small scale farmers and some market gardeners who have explored the potential value of native foods in reaction to increased salinity and rising temperatures as drought continues and as land is exhausted by imported methods of agriculture. Soil salinity is one of the primary degrading factors impacting agricultural land in Australia. The New South Wales Environmental Protection Authority reported that large areas of New South Wales along the Great Dividing Range, and in the Liverpool Plains, Hunter Valley and Greater Sydney regions, reported soil salinity as their main issue of concern.⁴¹ The 2016 Australia State of the Environment Report declared that if water balances remained static, dryland salinity was projected to ‘increase from 5.7 million hectares to 17 million hectares by 2050.’⁴² Despite this, the millennium drought, which brought with it a host of alternate environmental impacts, halted the continued spread of dryland salinity in many areas including the hard hit south-western Western Australia and parts of Victoria.⁴³ However, eventual returns to wetter conditions would reinvigorate that spread. Land clearance can also lead to soil erosion and, when it results in a changing water balance, to dryland salinity.⁴⁴ The Western Australian

³⁹ Mitchell, *In Good Faith*, 110.

⁴⁰ Pascoe, *Dark Emu*, 27.

⁴¹ NSW Environment Protection Agency, *NSW: State of the Environment 2015* (Sydney: State of NSW Environment Protection Agency, 2015), accessed 15 August 2020, at <https://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/-/media/epa/corporate-site/resources/soe2015/20150817soe-2015.pdf>.

⁴² ‘Soil: salinity and acidification,’ *Australia: State of the Environment*, 2016, at <https://soe.environment.gov.au/theme/land/topic/2016/soil-salinity-and-acidification>.

⁴³ ‘Soil: salinity and acidification,’ *Australia: State of the Environment*.

⁴⁴ ‘1370.0 - Measures of Australia's Progress, 2010,’ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 15 September 2010, at <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/1370.0~2010~Chapter~Salinity%20%286.2.4.4%29>

Wheat Belt suffers from massive soil degradation as a direct result of salination levels. The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development has calculated the lost value of agricultural production from dryland salinity in south-west Western Australia to be at least \$519 million per year since 2009–2010.⁴⁵

Work on the Western Australian saltbush crop is one example of collaborative processes being developed to address the issue of dryland salinity. Western Australian stud farmer David Thompson had saltbush and samphire growing wild on his property before he entered the native foods market supplying to restaurants to which he provided meat.⁴⁶ Thompson welcomes the opportunities presented by native crops: ‘It’s something that we can actually get value out of, of land that has no value.’⁴⁷ Differing perspectives of what constitutes value is a recurring tension present in many intersections of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australia. The perception of land with high salinity as being without value indicates a profit driven, rather than environmental, approach. Thompson’s approach, and his context as a professional farmer working mostly with livestock, suggests his primary concern is economic transaction which shapes one part of the relationship between consumer and land itself. Certainly, such a large area (350 hectares of salt affected land on a property) would colour perceptions of its value.⁴⁸ However, this case study raises questions about increasing salinity levels in soil recorded nationally across Australia, and the viability of that land. This is an area that the Katanning Landcare group is exploring. They posit that ‘Saline bush tucker – native bush foods grown in salty conditions – has the potential to revolutionise the way we look at the 2+ million hectares of salt-affected farmland.’⁴⁹

⁴⁵ ‘Dryland salinity: extent and impact,’ *Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development*, 26 February 2020, accessed 15 August 2020, at <https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/soil-salinity/dryland-salinity-extent-and-impact>.

⁴⁶ Fiona Pepper, ‘Farmer supplies Perth restaurants with Saltbush and Samphire growing wild on his property’, *ABC WA*, 21 March 2016, at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-03-21/farmer-supplies-salt-bush-and-samphire-to-perth-restaurants/7262912>. Samphire is an ancient food genus well suited to coastal areas. It is a succulent vegetable with a crunchy texture and salty, fresh flavour profile

⁴⁷ Pepper, ‘Farmer supplies Perth restaurants with Saltbush and Samphire growing wild on his property.’

⁴⁸ Jenne Brammer, ‘Sheep Farmer’s bush food that’s salt of the earth’, *The West Australian*, 31 August 2018, at <https://thewest.com.au/business/agriculture/sheep-farmers-bush-food-thats-salt-of-the-earth-ng-b88941272z>.

⁴⁹ Katanning Landcare, ‘Bush Tucker’, *Katanning Landcare*, accessed 15 August 2020, at <https://katanninglandcare.org.au/nlpbushtucker/>.

An ABC interview was recorded a few weeks after Thompson moved to supply saltbush to restaurants in 2016.⁵⁰ Journalist Jenne Brammer returned to the farm two years on, in 2018.⁵¹ Brammer reports that the Thompsons had a predicted 2018 harvest of one tonne of native produce, primarily saltbush, baby pigface, ice plant and samphire. Projections for the organisation were for 10 tonnes of produce distributed within two years.⁵² External validation has come in the form of a steady increase in orders and accolades. Moojepin Foods’



Figure 2. Saltbush. Photographer uncredited. <https://www.farmweekly.com.au/story/6593588/native-shrub-is-now-on-the-menu/>

‘baby pigface’ was awarded a gold medal at the *Delicious* magazine national producer awards.’⁵³ A short film on the Moojepin Food’s Facebook page features David Thompson discussing environmental change in social, cultural and physical terms as he envisions is

⁵⁰ Fiona Pepper, ‘Farmer supplies Perth restaurants with Saltbush and Samphire growing wild on his property,’ *ABC WA*, 21 March 2016, accessed 20 June 2022 at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-03-21/farmer-supplies-salt-bush-and-samphire-to-perth-restaraunts/7262912>

⁵¹ Brammer, ‘Sheep Farmer’s bush food that’s salt of the earth.’

⁵² Brammer, ‘Sheep Farmer’s bush food that’s salt of the earth.’ At the time of writing updated figures could not be located to assess whether this projection manifested.

⁵³ Brammer, ‘Sheep Farmer’s bush food that’s salt of the earth.’

possible through the cultivation of native plants and food.⁵⁴ Nurturing plants that are adaptive and have already adapted to the physical environment will not only increase earnings for landholders but will also help lower the water table and sink the salt layer. Thompson notes that there is a sense of community hope in the project and its potential. He identifies that the native foods market is much more lucrative than the animal feed market. This latter comment reflects a need to change the perception of standard farming practices across many Australian regions.

Thompson sheds light on the first supply relationship he had with restaurants via Perth chef Dan Fisher:

He was looking for local saltbush, because he was getting some from South Australia, but it had to be treated with gas before it was allowed to enter WA, which meant he had to add some salt to it before he could use it to garnish dishes.⁵⁵

Delicate produce like saltbush present logistical difficulties; structural fragility and a short shelf life. However, the year-round availability of saltbush guarantees efficient distribution. Although all produce comes from his property, Thompson harvests and records pick and sale quantities in compliance with a Department of Parks and Wildlife licence. While not specified in the interview, it is likely Thompson holds a permit under Regulation 63 of the Biodiversity Conservation Regulations 2018 Flora licence for Supply (and possess for the purpose of supply) flora taken lawfully from private property.⁵⁶ Other produce, such as samphire, red karkalla and ice plant, flourish for a shorter period during warmer weather. Thompson and business partner Lance McLeod pursued greenhouse cultivation, hoping that successful development of a controlled environment would improve the consistency of supply. I contemplate whether the change in growing environment and process then changes the story of endogenous plants and if, by removing them from the environment into controlled growing places, that First Nations people would then be excluded from their changing story. The traditional, holistic approach of Aboriginal people towards native plants

⁵⁴ Moojepin Foods, 'Bush Tucker Project,' FaceBook video, 3 March 2020, at <https://www.facebook.com/MoojepinFoods/videos/1937945696349543>.

⁵⁵ Linda Sharman, 'Native Shrub is now on the Menu,' *Farm Weekly*, 24 January 2020, at <https://www.farmweekly.com.au/story/6593588/native-shrub-is-now-on-the-menu/>

⁵⁶ 'Conservation and Attractions,' Department of Biodiversity, Government of Western Australia, 31 December 2018, at <https://www.dpaw.wa.gov.au/plants-and-animals/licences-and-authorities?showall=1>

regularly includes characteristics such as storytelling surrounding food, narratives to assist with the identification of fruiting and blossoming cycles of flora, and the migratory habits of fauna as a calendar impacting agricultural availability. Will the cultivation of some of these plants alter the lived history and storytelling by rendering those methods part of history?

The pursuit of controlled cultivation has been supported by the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development's Smart Farming Partnership. The team aim for hydroponic greenhouses to extend the seasonality of the ice plant and karkalla. While this may seem counterintuitive to the desire to utilise swathes of land not currently viable, Thompson plans to bore water from salinated regions to use in the hydroponic greenhouses. He states:

WA is the driest State in the driest continent in the world, and so much of our available water sources are salt water...We might as well make some money out of that salt water by growing plants that thrive in it - there are massive amounts of country this can be done on...And the amazing thing is that samphire, for example, is 98 per cent water, whereas wheat is only up to 10pc moisture, and you can make good money from a bucket-full of samphire.

The advantage Thompson describes is derived from the effective use of existing unused resources; here, that is salt water.

I consider it problematic that Thompson does not include First Nations people and heritage in his discussions with journalists given that the saline vegetables he cultivates are endogenous and fall under the umbrella of bush foods. Instead, Thompson approaches saline vegetables as global plants and does not reference the local cultural significance. Samphire is endogenous to many marine environments in the Northern Hemisphere.⁵⁷ Thompson hopes that future iterations of the Western Australian saline vegetable market would allow for international

⁵⁷ Sharman, 'Native Shrub is now on the Menu.' Samphire is an ancient food genus well suited to coastal areas. It is a succulent vegetable with a crunchy texture and salty, fresh flavour profile. This ancient genus is not found only in Australia, and consequently it can be suggested that samphire would more accurately be termed a wild food rather than native food. I argue there is very little of significance to be found between the two distinctions and will retain the label native food as the primary descriptor. Spencer identifies the rock samphire variety as so popular it is now very sparse around the United Kingdom, including in the Isle of Wight and Isle of Man where it was once common. See also Colin Spencer, 'The Magical Samphire,' in *Disappearing Foods. Studies in foods and dishes at risk: Proceedings of the Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery 1994*, ed. Harlan Walker (Totnes: Prospect 1995), 197.

trade to fill the gap in seasonal markets in the northern hemisphere. Thompson credits media exposure ‘through cooking shows, as well as...chefs posting their creations on social media’ as a significant boon to the native plants industry.⁵⁸

The next case study I want to consider is Moojepin Foods is one of the partners of the Katanning Landcare group. Katanning Landcare works on projects that are parallel in purpose to Moojepin foods product development. The chronological timeline of this agricultural research predicted 2022 as the public launch date signalling the commencement of training programs for landowners and managers interested in investing in the saline vegetable market - I have reviewed this in June 2022 and found the project did launch. The Katanning project technically utilises the same infrastructure as Thompson’s tunnels; a controlled tunnel environment accesses pumped saline groundwater to facilitate a hydroponics growing system for crops which would typically be restricted by season.⁵⁹ In addition, Katanning Landcare aims to develop a new form of machinery which would allow mechanical harvesting of soft stem produce to decrease human labour requirements by forming harvestable bushes. These machines will, ideally, be a sustainable option which fits to an existing tractor to improve the accessibility of the economic investment needed. The organisation mentions it will also seek to ‘research into the natural resource impacts of commencing and/or intensifying production from saline land, including salinity, soil health and vegetative cover.’⁶⁰

A presentation on the project was made by representative and Landcare officer Ella Maesepp at Edith Cowan University in Joondalup.⁶¹ Maesepp provides insight into the development of Katanning Landcare’s horticultural program particularly discussion between three local stakeholder groups, Ngoolark Rangers, Badgebup Aboriginal Corporation and Moojepin Foods in pursuit of cultural consultation, development and collaboration. The Ngoolark

⁵⁸ Sharman, ‘Native Shrub is now on the Menu.’

⁵⁹ Ella Maesepp, ‘Growing a saline bush tucker industry’, *Our Coast Our Land, Striving Together*, 2019 WA State NRM and Coastal Conference *Ngaalang booyembara Ngaalang boodjar Dandjoo warminy* 1-4 October at Edith Cowan University, accessed 5 July 2020, at <https://youtu.be/C7eljChDzXE>

⁶⁰ Katanning Landcare, ‘Bush Tucker’, *Katanning Landcare*, accessed 14 July 2020, at <https://katanninglandcare.org.au/nlpbushtucker/>

⁶¹ The speech was given to the West Australian State Landcare Conference ‘Our Coast Our Land, Striving Together 2019: WA State NRM and Coastal Conference *Ngaalang booyembara Ngaalang boodjar Dandjoo warminy*.’

WA Landcare Network, ‘2019 NRM & Coastal Conference: Ella Maesepp - Growing a saline bush tucker industry,’ YouTube, 31 March 2020, accessed 5 July 2020, at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C7eljChDzXE&feature=youtu.be>.

wanted opportunities to continue upskilling and diversifying the abilities of their rangers; Badgebup Aboriginal Corporation in developing a strategic plan focused on incorporating opportunities within the bush food industry with the Western Australian tourism industry; and Moojepin Foods were already working in the saline bush vegetable market. The groups eventually sought out more partners, including horticultural engineers Wide Open Agriculture, to work on greenhouse tunnelling. They have also worked with WAGOGA, who, through their involvement with Moojepin foods, would develop strategic food marketing for saline vegetables.⁶² Maesepp identifies the key challenge of the program as the development of a reliable supply chain to be used as a template for local farmers interested in working with saline vegetables. Endogenous crops trend towards highly regionalised growth causing difficulty for environmentally friendly distribution methods. My case study on Moojepin foods has highlighted the difficulty of transporting delicate crops and small numbers of production sites. Maesepp posited that the team wanted to ensure traditional knowledge, which she references as ‘cultural science,’ and thus embedded it in the program. The team would also pursue opportunities for restoring soil health and management, facilitating food production from land not considered to be arable and try to increase economic opportunities for farmers.

Katanning Landcare reported that their project was the first-time samphire has been grown in a horticultural system and the first time the slender ice plant has been cultivated to flower consistently.⁶³ Experimenting with a transition from wild harvest to cultivars will be key for the expansion of the saline vegetable industry. Alongside the machinery developed by the group are alternative growing methods; for example, shade house cultivation of creeping plants which could be planted in waist-height planters, providing more options for ergonomic harvesting.⁶⁴ While Maesepp does not specifically mention this, ergonomic harvesting also

⁶² WA Landcare Network, ‘2019 NRM & Coastal Conference: Ella Maesepp - Growing a saline bush tucker industry.’

⁶³ WA Landcare Network, ‘2019 NRM & Coastal Conference: Ella Maesepp - Growing a saline bush tucker industry.’

⁶⁴ WA Landcare Network, ‘2019 NRM & Coastal Conference: Ella Maesepp - Growing a saline bush tucker industry.’ In addition to community engagement, Maesepp outlined ongoing research into the possibilities for soil rejuvenation, cultivation and maintenance in partnership with Dr Bede Mikan, a soil biologist and Adjunct Research Fellow at University of Western Australia’s School of Agriculture and Environment. The project hypothesises that utilising site specific pumped saline groundwater as the uptake of the plants will draw down the saline water basin and potentially reduce the salinity of surrounding soil. If this hypothesis materialises, the positive environmental impact of saline vegetable horticulture cultivation could signal significant potential for much of Australia and hopefully prove a positive leader influencing the handling of Indigenous people’s intellectual property in Australia.

provides advantages for farmers and communities as they age.⁶⁵ This is important for Aboriginal communities and the ageing regional population in Badgebup.

The Badgebup Aboriginal Corporation was a key stakeholder in the project seeking to manage a local packing shed to be used by Moojepin Foods and other farmers who may take up saline vegetable production utilising the project's resources. This would allow Badgebup people living in the area to retain a role in the cultivation and distribution of native ingredients and access monetary compensation. Similarly, several Noongar students were encouraged to undertake vocational training through a partnership of Katanning Landcare and TAFE (see figure) and complete a Certificate II in Horticulture in order to be involved fully with program development.

Updates on the Katanning Landcare site in 2020 noted that:

Badgebup Aboriginal Corporation exited the project with Katanning Environmental Inc now taking the Packing Shed delivery role – but the outcomes we're going to achieve, the excitement we feel for the Project and the positive contribution that it's going to make haven't changed one bit!⁶⁶

Statements regarding the involvement of local Aboriginal communities in the project have not been made at this time. This is of itself a failure to engage stakeholders and supporters with a complex and crucial element of the project. The continued involvement and financial opportunities for Noongar people living in the region was a key structural point of the projected development of the Saline Bush Vegetable industry pitched by Katanning Landcare. I feel the 2020 statement set the project at odds with similar harvesting

⁶⁵ The most recent Australian Bureau of Statistics data records the average age of a farmer to be 56 years old and, Western Australian farmers in particular to be an average age of 56 for men and 55 for women; '7121.0 - Agricultural Commodities, Australia, 2017-18,' *Australian Bureau of Statistics*, accessed 8 March 2019, at <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/7121.0>.

⁶⁶ 'Bush Tucker', *Katanning Landcare*, accessed 14 July 2020, at <https://katanninglandcare.org.au/nlpbushtucker/>.

development projects run by organisations such as the Orana Foundation, which facilitate mutual benefit sharing in line with the Nagoya Protocol.⁶⁷

In the same saline vegetable industry as Moojepin Foods and Katanning Landcare, but located 3,598 kilometres east of Katanning, Andrew and Gabi French harvest marsh samphire at Snowy River Station in Corringale, Victoria. Like the Katanning community, the Frenchs' foray into saline bush vegetable cultivation was borne of geographical necessity. After many years of working to prevent the flooding of their pastures with salty estuary water they learned to harness it using river tides to direct the flow onto the property and encourage endogenous plants, in particular the samphire crop.⁶⁸ The Frenchs' farming techniques incorporate permaculture attitudes, or practices, meaning they listen to, and work with, the land rather than aggressively altering the landscape to fit use that was inappropriate for the place. In this way they engage with custodianship and land management rather than purely approaching the business as an occupation. This is significant praxis in a colonial environment.

⁶⁷ Substantial progress was made in 2022. The team provided comprehensive training for landowners and managers who wished to explore saline bush tucker production in March and in April published the Environmental Reporting for Saline Bush Foods Production and The Saline Bush Foods Overview Manual. National Landcare Program Bush Tucker Project, accessed 5 May 2022, at <https://katanninglandcare.org.au/nlpbushtucker/>

⁶⁸ Ewan McEoin, *The Field Guide to Australian Produce* (Melbourne: Thames and Hudson, 2016), 252.



HORTICULTURE COURSE

On Country at Badgebup, Western Australia



AHC20416 - Certificate II in Horticulture

Learn about bush tucker species used in planting programs across the country to restore degraded land. Gain vital skills in the bush foods industry and build strong foundations with local conservation and agricultural groups which could lead to employment opportunities in your community.

Projects will include:

- ▶ Participate in planting and horticultural crop management
- ▶ Identify saline bush food species
- ▶ Learn how to harvest bush foods
- ▶ Monitor and evaluate plant growth
- ▶ Gain skills and knowledge to work in a growing industry
- ▶ Participate in a social return on investment case study

You must show a keen interest in horticulture and conservation and land management, be punctual and reliable and be able to work in a team. Aboriginal people are strongly encouraged to apply.

9am-3pm, Tuesdays and Wednesdays - Starting 23 July 2019

This project is supported by Katanning Landcare, through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program, Badgebup Aboriginal Corporation and Moojepin Foods.



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Figure 3. Advertisement for TAFE WA Horticulture program in collaboration with Katanning Landcare. July 2019.
<https://katanninglandcare.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Hort-course-724x1024.jpg>

Samphire is an ancient food genus well suited to coastal areas. It is a succulent vegetable with a crunchy texture and salty, fresh flavour profile.⁶⁹ Like Samphire, Karkalla (Carpobrotus

⁶⁹ Spencer, 'The Magical Samphire,' 195.

Rosii) is another sea vegetable found primarily in beachfront, dry and saline areas around southern Australia.⁷⁰ It is a tough plant which acts, as has been seen in the preceding case studies, as a useful salinity indicator. South Australian chef Jock Zonfrillo is enthusiastic about karkalla calling on individuals to ‘Change your leek crop to karkalla ... it’s also drought resistant, can survive heat waves and does not need irrigation.’⁷¹ In the same family, and often treated as the same plant, is Pigface (*Carpobrotus Glaucescens*). The pigface ripens when the flower is pollinated and spent, and the fruiting body swells up turning a deep red contrasting clearly with the rest of the otherwise green plant.⁷² The plant is a crop with little waste; the leaves can be used as balm for stings and burns or can be eaten raw or lightly steamed. The fruit was utilised by settlers for jams and jellies, including in rosella jam.⁷³

As the climate changes it is yet to be seen whether plants endogenous to Australia will survive. The seasonal nature of Aboriginal hunting and gathering still practised by some groups will be affected. If stingray season is marked by the bloom of a particular flower which requires a set of seasonal conditions, will the shifting of weather patterns and rising temperatures affect this organic understanding of the land? These are important questions without clear answers. It is possible that the loss of cultural knowledge will predate the changes of season. Regardless, it seems the recording of traditional knowledge, or cultural science, may be the most lasting option. This section has explored the challenges faced by the emerging saline vegetable industry, particularly regarding developing sustainable production methods. The saline vegetable industry utilises saltwater from abandoned, over-salinated land. I have begun to explore the ability of how non-Indigenous lead projects navigate businesses development, production, research and supply chains while engaging, or not engaging, Indigenous ecological Knowledge holders. In the following section I will move to explore an example of Aboriginal-led food projects in the Northern Territory.

⁷⁰ ‘Karkalla,’ *Agriculture Victoria*, accessed 10 April 2020, at http://vro.agriculture.vic.gov.au/dpi/vro/vrosite.nsf/pages/water_sss_karkalla.

⁷¹ ‘Australian Native Food and the man who wants to bring it to the masses’, *The Orana Foundation*, accessed 28 September 2020, at <https://theoranafoundation.org/australian-native-food-and-the-man-who-wants-to-bring-it-to-the-masses/>.

⁷² Kirsten Bradley, ‘Snacks for Salty Sea Dogs: Foraging pigface’, *Milkwood Permaculture*, 30 January 2014, at www.milkwood.net/2014/01/30/snacks-for-salty-sea-dogs-foraging-pigface/.

⁷³ Barbara Santich, *Bold Palates: Australia’s Gastronomic Heritage* (Kent Town: Wakefield Press, 2012), 60.

3.3 Galiwin'ku: Communities and self-directed alternative food networks redeveloping Indigenous communities' food access and knowledge⁷⁴

I previously discussed the potential industrialisation of endogenous crops for mainstream consumption and focussed on the operation of non-Aboriginal organisations in that space assessing their inclusion, or lack of, Indigenous ecological Knowledge holders in their processes. In the following section I highlight how one Aboriginal community continues to use their cultural knowledge to develop alternative food networks. I focus on the Yolngu community on Galiwin'ku in the Northern Territory a landmass off the coast of Arnhem Land. Established as a mission in 1942, it is home to around 2,000 Yolngu people (many of whom seek to rediscover, redevelop and retain their cultures). The median age was 24 years old in comparison to a national median age of 37.⁷⁵ These demographics highlight the declining population older residents and correlates to the disruption of, and consequent impact on, the generational inheritance of knowledge and traditional cultural activity on the Island. Nationally, Aboriginal people have a lower life expectancy for a multitude of reasons including, but not limited to, access to nutritional education and varied, healthy foods.⁷⁶ Galiwin'ku is vulnerable due to geographic isolation, being 520 km from Darwin. Food deliveries by barge occur once a week and, as such, provision of even agri-farmed fresh food is comparatively inaccessible.

The Galiwin'ku community has hosted several nutritional and dietary studies. In 2014 twenty Yolngu women attended a two-week retreat at Living Valley in Kin Kin, Queensland to learn about therapies and nutrition with the aim to take that experience back to their community and create a local retreat to share their new skills and knowledge surrounding nutrition and physical and mental health. Established in 1990 Living Valley holds Australian not-for-profit

⁷⁴ Galiwin'ku is an area of the Elcho Island landmass. Some documentation may refer to the broader area of Elcho Island rather than differentiating.

⁷⁵ The latest ABS demographic information for Galiwin'ku is from the 2016 census. At <https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2016/SSC70106>. The national average is from the 2019 ABS census. At [https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/0/1cd2b1952afc5e7aca257298000f2e76#:~:text=The%20median%20age%20\(the%20age,remained%20steady%20at%2037%20years](https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/0/1cd2b1952afc5e7aca257298000f2e76#:~:text=The%20median%20age%20(the%20age,remained%20steady%20at%2037%20years).

⁷⁶ Indigenous life expectancy in males is 10.6 years lower than non-Indigenous males and is 9.5 years in females. Endocrine, metabolic and nutritional disorders are attributed to 9% of deaths and digestive diseases are attributed to 10%. 'Mortality and life expectancy of Indigenous Australians: 2008-2012,' *Australian Institute of Health and Welfare*, accessed 20 August 2019, 4, 13, at <http://www.aihw.gov.au/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=60129548468>.

status and seeks ‘to relieve sickness, suffering and distress and to educate about life, health and self-preservation.’⁷⁷ I focus on the collaboration between Living Valley and the Galiwin’ku community but it would be remiss to not disclaim that Living Valley has a problematic statement on its website listing a range of ailments that the team had experience in ‘treating disease and restoring health’ including ‘multiple sclerosis, heart disease, tumours and even cancer.’⁷⁸ Nutritionists Michelle Luxford and Jessica Gaunt visited Galiwin’ku in 2015 to follow up with the residents that had attended a health retreat at Living Valley in 2014. Luxford and Gaunt were privy to various cultural practices including a seasonal hunt for oysters. The beginning of the season is marked by the presence of Turkey bush flowers.⁷⁹ Gaunt stipulates that Western demonisation of fats, from the 1980s to the present day, has affected the way Aboriginal groups view their traditional foods.⁸⁰ The Yolngu, whose diet contained a great deal of fats from oysters and other seafood and meat sources had started to disconnect with their natural food source introducing new products such as low-fat foods that are high in simple carbohydrates.⁸¹ Gaunt notes that soon there was a market and taste for these products. This conflicts with an existing cultural understanding that fat or *duyu* is sacred and prized for its life-sustaining powers.⁸²

Yolngu community action group Hope for Health believe that changing a community’s diet is an achievable process and will improve the quality of life in Aboriginal communities.⁸³ Self-directed social change is the most powerful and lasting method of community development. This group of older residents lead the way, encouraging younger generations to include more Yolngu foods in their diets. Their actions have been sparked by concerns over the levels of chronic lifestyle illnesses in the community. Several of the women in the Hope For Health

⁷⁷ ‘About Us’, *Living Valley Springs*, accessed 20 June 2018, at <https://lvs.com.au/about/>.

⁷⁸ ‘About Us’, *Living Valley Springs*. I would like to acknowledge the problematic history of the wellness industry claiming to treat diseases such as cancer while also acknowledging that Living Valley uses careful language (in this instance ‘restoring health’) and that improvements in health through nutrition and mental health strategies are very clearly effective in many cases.

⁷⁹ ‘Kimberley Ranger Network’, *Balanggarra Healthy Country Plan*, accessed 20 July 2020, at <http://www.klc.org.au/docs/default-source/Ranger-Fact-Sheets/balanggarra-healthy-country-plan-2012-2022?sfvrsn=4>.

⁸⁰ Jay Rayner, ‘The war on fat is over and I won’, *The Guardian*, 16 July 2014, accessed 19 August 2020, at <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2014/jul/16/the-war-on-fat-is-over-and-i-won-jay-rayner>.

⁸¹ Jessica Gaunt, ‘Part 3: The Real Educators in Health and Wellness’, *Living Valley*, 20 August 2015, accessed 15 September 2018, at <http://www.lvs.com.au/part-3-true-educators-health-wellness/>.

⁸² Pete Evans, ‘Kama Trudgen’, *Recipes for Life Podcast*, published 20 May 2019.

⁸³ Hope For Health, accessed 20 June 2018, at <http://www.hopeforhealth.com.au/>

group suffer from diabetes.⁸⁴ However, a year after seriously pursuing a diet higher in Yolngu foods and a lifestyle that included hunting their own produce, the group reported many of the women were taken off their respective prescriptions by medical professionals.⁸⁵ The group shares skills related to sourcing, preparing and consuming native plants and animals as well as information on nutritious western diets. The group established an alternative food network in their community subversively bypass programs like the Australian government's food card schemes and reduce community reliance on imported, processed products. In May 2016 Hope for Health set up a food stall selling lean kangaroo stew and began to run cooking workshops in their homes to increase the skillsets of their community. The ABC reported that Hope for Health continued to search for a suitable and remote location to open a healing retreat where they plan to help their community regain their health and wellbeing.⁸⁶ On 24 June 2016 Hope For Health launched a crowdfunding campaign for the Aboriginal community-led traditional health retreat, which aims to stop the devastating consequences of diet related chronic health issues using traditional foods and medicines with the support of medical professionals. The goal of \$80,000 was reached on target and work to establish the retreat began almost immediately at the site in Dharwarr at the northern end of Galiwin'ku.⁸⁷ As of 2020 the program was fully established in the community and a review of their activity in 2022 showed the program continues to be active. The Yolngu participants involved in the program were joined by some Balanda participants. The management team are predominantly Yolngu women invested in their community's future health. This case study provides a concrete example of contemporary Indigenous

⁸⁴ The Australian Bureau of Statistics notes that a study of Australian Diseases revealed that diabetes accounts for approximately 9% of disease amongst Aboriginal people and that diabetes related death rates are three times higher in Indigenous people. The most recent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey of 2012 to 2013 reported 8% of Aboriginal and Indigenous people experienced consistently high blood sugar or diabetes and the disease was more common in females. These statistics increased in correlation to age: 39% of Aboriginal and Indigenous people over 55 were diabetic. These statistics are nationally significant, demonstrating the magnitude of lifestyle illnesses in Indigenous communities.

'Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health survey: updated results, 2012-13 - Australia: table 21:3,' *Australian Bureau of Statistics*, 6 June 2014, accessed 29 November 2018, at [http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/subscriber.nsf/log?openagent&472705500621.xls&4727.0.55.006&Data%20Cubes&166861F2585F8D85CA257CEE0010DAE7&0&2012%9613&06.06.2014](http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/subscriber.nsf/log?openagent&472705500621.xls&4727.0.55.006&Data%20Cubes&166861F2585F8D85CA257CEE0010DAE7&0&2012%9613&06.06.2014;);

'Diabetes,' *Australian Institute of Health and Welfare*, 24 June 2020, accessed 25 September 2020, at <http://www.aihw.gov.au/diabetes/>.

⁸⁵ 'The Story', *Hope for Health*, accessed 20 June 2018, at <http://www.hopeforhealth.com.au/the-story/>.

⁸⁶ Nadia Daly, 'Aboriginal health retreat using bush foods and medicines a 'promising' model for improvement', *ABC*, 29 June 2016, accessed 30 August 2016, at <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-06-29/elcho-island-health-retreat-promising-model-for-improving-health/8661344>.

⁸⁷ Hope For Health, Arnhem Land, 'After a long week of community regrouping and retreat planning, following our amazing crowdfunding success last week, resources are now in physical movement...' Facebook, 9 August 2016, at <https://www.facebook.com/ourhopeforhealth/posts/1738938799727503>.

communities working with edible flora and fauna to develop contemporary cultural practice. I therefore demonstrate the value of the possibility for mutually beneficial collaborative work between non-Indigenous knowledge holders (in this case in the roles of allied health practitioners) and Indigenous knowledge holders.

The following information was extracted from a podcast interview with former COO of Hope for Health, Kama Trudgen with controversial celebrity chef Pete Evans.⁸⁸ I chose to include this for the opportunity to assess Trudgen in conversation. Evans speaks to Trudgen about her professional journey and the development of the Galiwin'ku Hope for Health project. Much of Trudgen's interview is discussion on ways of understanding and communicating knowledge. Trudgen focuses on communication through embodying information which she cites as a way to communicate a sophisticated framework on how to live well through song, rhythm and movement. She cites movement as a powerful expression of spirituality, vitality, joy and a performance of hope against a 'catastrophic epidemic' of chronic disease that exists in many Aboriginal communities including the Yolngu. Trudgen utilises the phrase 'dominant culture' regularly, referencing the uneven cultural power dynamics that exist in Australian society. Trudgen focuses on the importance of self-determination, encouraging programs like her own which provide the information people need to navigate dominant culture. In Arnhem land the Yolngu are living on Country despite living on Country there is an external culture that forms the structures and powers that dictate their lives and consequently alters the way in which they organise and relate to the world. This is the dominant culture. Equipping Aboriginal groups like the Yolngu with information about how that dominant culture operates aims to empower them to navigate, and hopefully alter, decision making processes instead of being caught in a cycle where the dominant culture

⁸⁸ Pete Evans, 'Kama Trudgen,' *Evolve with Pete Evans*, 20 March 2019, at <https://podtail.com/podcast/recipes-for-life-with-pete-evans/kama-trudgen/>

I do not seek to analyse the wellness industry, but equally do not support the idea that challenging of conventional thinking or medicine is inherently negative, as this would be at odds with the importance of recognising the value of knowledge in many forms. However, I eschew the exploitation and manipulation of vulnerable people with deliberate, or irresponsible, misinformation. I seek to point out that the roots of resistance in wellness have been linked, especially in America, to a resistance to the white pharmaceutical and medical sectors by groups and communities that have typically been excluded for reasons of race or socioeconomic status from accessing, or being acknowledged by, said sectors. Dr Natalia Petrzela writes that women embrace the idea that it is their turn to take control of their health and have autonomy over their wellness. Wellness is an industry in which majority programs and facilities primarily serve the middle classes. Pete Evans is a problematic figure, utilising material produced by him requires me to acknowledge his personal and public investment in various conspiracy theories and status as the poster boy for 'dark wellness,' the latter being a moniker for facets of the wellness industry deemed to be deceitful, fraudulent and having stepped too far from conventional medicine, rendering it 'dangerous'.

narrative reinforces a sense of inferiority within Aboriginal peoples and their practices and knowledge. Trudgen reflects those communal memories of living in harmony with the environment demonstrate a series of kinship systems in which the relationship web includes animals and plants, and that this system involves obligations of reverence and respect for both. This framework is passed through generations as a narrative of interconnectedness.

Trudgen discusses the structured approach to land care based around different harvesting grounds, which were prolific in different seasons and required careful resource care. For instance, different seasons dictated what estate they operated on and had clear practices for resource care. Foods were cultivated in ways that ensured an ongoing supply; for example, avoiding fishing in breeding areas by living with harmony in the environment, and paying respect and reverence when food is hunted. The Merne Altyerre-ipenhe Reference Group explain these concepts as follows:

Within Aboriginal knowledge systems, specific plants play a central role as ‘relations’ to humans through their membership skin groups and roles in Altyerre epics and stories. These connections contribute to the spiritual dimensions with which plants are associated. One species can be a ‘sister’ to a human individual who then paints themselves with designs that represent that species. These same people have the right to paint that species or give other people permission to do so.⁸⁹

Trudgen identifies that many dominant culture people misjudge Aboriginal Australians because they do not understand how structural inequalities impact communities. Sociologists refer to this as stigma theory.⁹⁰ This stigma is layered on top of health and social struggles that are, in some cases, compounded by a lack of accessible knowledge to shed clarity and understanding over why the communities’ health and life expectancy are declining. Trudgen found that the Yolngu felt disempowered, and hope was missing from people’s lives despite a communal memory of health existing. Experiential learning is the key to re-empowering the community as existing materials are frequently less effective as they do not embrace local language or custom in the communication of knowledge. Trudgen is clear that Hope for

⁸⁹ Merne Altyerre-ipenhe Reference Group, Douglas, Walsh, ‘Aboriginal people, bush foods knowledge and products from central Australia’, 17.

⁹⁰ See Erving Goffman, *Stigma: Notes on the management of spoiled identity* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1963); Stephen C. Ainsley, Gaylene Becker, and Lerita M. Coleman, *The Dilemma of Difference: A Multidisciplinary View of Stigma* (New York, NY: Springer US, 1986).

Health is not asking communities to return to traditional foods but simply to increase nutritional understanding to incorporate traditional foods alongside the dominant culture foods that have become part of the community.

Trudgen expresses the need for dominant culture researchers and educators to do the work to engage appropriately with Aboriginal communities instead of expecting, for example, ‘Yolngu to give more to the dominant culture.’ She engages with the issue of labour, an issue that has informed my own methodology for this dissertation as I sought to avoid demanding further labour from Indigenous Australians by working with the existing, daily expanding, public record rather than obtaining my own data through field research. My reasoning for this is explored in detail in Chapter One in the methodology section. This approach allowed me to obtain existing, and developing, narratives while seeking to minimise my own impact on the presentation of those narratives. Concern around emotional and intellectual labour and energy has become an issue at the forefront of the 2020 global iteration of the Black Lives Matter movement, which has come to encompass Blak/Black, Indigenous and People of Colour.⁹¹ Many commentators request a reprieve from the demand for information or intellectual and emotional knowledge from those communities. They frequently point to the wealth of resources and materials already in production and call for White allies and White people more broadly to ‘do the work.’ These are examples of extensions of the movement to decolonise information and methodological practices.

Like Bruce Pascoe, Trudgen calls for the broader community to ‘change our view of success’ as there are not quick and easy fixes for systemic challenges. The speed at which the global community processes information through the growing digital knowledge web has increased expectations for change to keep up with that pace. Galiwin’ku is an example of collaborative work between Yolngu and non-Indigenous Australians.⁹² The Hope for Health Group on

⁹¹ In Australia the Black Lives Matter movement is sometimes stylised as Blak or Bla(c)k Lives Matter to refer specifically to Indigenous Australians. Blak is considered an Aboriginal English word and is used to assert cultural identity. Yadira Perez Hazel, ‘Bla(c)k Lives Matter in Australia,’ *Transition* 126 (2018), 59.; Faye Ginsburg, ‘Peripheral Visions: Blak Screens and Cultural Citizenship’ in *Cinema at the Periphery*, eds. Dina Jordanova, David Martin-Jones, and Belén Vidal (Detroit, Michigan: Wayne University Press, 2010) 85.

⁹² A similarly isolated community in the Northern Territory which has been changed through community foodspace creation is Milingimbi. Henry Zwartz, ‘The remote NT community of Milingimbi faced a shortage of fresh food. Now, it has found a solution’, *ABC*, 23 July 2020, at https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-07-23/nt-food-security-fixed-at-milingimbi/12475930?fbclid=IwAR2_cBlZfbq1zQwka_ObfzAF8fYtP4ID1a_K74YpT53BepkmAWIGvj4KVzE.

Galiwin'ku has sought out several avenues to strengthen autonomous action and subversively bypass programs like the Australian government's food card schemes in place in other areas and reduce community reliance on imported, processed products. This initiative provides an excellent example of cross-cultural alliances which ensure that goal setting and organisation building is managed by Aboriginal people who are supported in solidarity by non-Aboriginal allies.

3.4 Granular progress: Redefining future wheat belts



Figure 4. L to R: Chris, Bruce, Terry, Kate at Mallacoota preparing to work with kangaroo grass. Isabella Moore for *The Guardian*.

I previously explored Yolngu-led Hope for Health project, which addresses food systems, native foods and cultural practice in a community setting. I now explore a project with similar aims (to engage with Australian food systems, native foods and cultural practice) but with a national, commercial focus. Yuin and Bunurong man Bruce Pascoe is fighting for increased

respect of Indigenous histories, skills and recognition of the value of Indigenous plants.⁹³ The dearth of research on these plants does not infer a lack of evidence, but rather a lack of interest and willingness to explore Aboriginal knowledge of the plant life of Australia in mutually beneficial ways.⁹⁴ Like many stakeholders in the native food industry, Pascoe sees a currently undervalued environmental, cultural and economic benefit of developing native Australian crops. Organisation Gurandgi Munjje and horticulturalist Annette Peisley research the yam daisy (murnong) and promote native millet and kangaroo grass (mandayan nulluk) grains, which do not need fertiliser and have low water needs. Pascoe articulates these would be advantageous crops for the Australian agricultural industry. He addresses one of the central questions explored in this research; whether this knowledge and produce will be utilised with due respect to the first peoples of the land. At the 2016 University of Melbourne Lin Onus Oration Pascoe said, ‘you cannot have our food without swallowing our history.’⁹⁵ This powerful challenge encompasses the viscerality of consumption combined with the necessary acknowledgement of the pain of colonisation in Australia.⁹⁶ Pascoe hopes that

⁹³ It would be amiss to conclude this section without some reference to the identity challenge launched against Pascoe in 2019. The primary actors were Wiradjuri lawyer Josephine Cashman and Anglo-Australian right-wing journalist Andrew Bolt. The latter’s primary concern seemed to centre on a perceived revisionist history and ‘the rise of an anti-western fantasy.’ The former was primarily concerned with her understanding that Pascoe was falsifying his connection to various First Nations groups. The disagreements were heavily publicised in part due to Bolt’s public position and Pascoe’s literary success. Bolt was joined by various conservative critics but as the case escalated, their arguments continuously lost ground. There was a failed request for the Australian Federal Police to investigate Pascoe (on the grounds of receiving financial benefit from a fraudulent identity), culminating in a series of bizarre reveals including an apparently falsified letter that decried Pascoe’s Aboriginality. Bolt and Cashman’s fight faded into the annals of right-wing websites such as *Quadrant*, ‘dark-emu-exposed.com.au’ and the personal website of free market engineer and mining family member Ron Manners. See Peter O’Brien, ‘A Dark Emu Ally flips the bird and truth’, *Quadrant Blog*, 1 December 2019, at <https://quadrant.org.au/opinion/qed/2019/12/a-dark-emu-ally-flips-the-bird-at-truth/>; ‘Dark Emu Exposed’ declares its mission is ‘Scholarship over politics’ and is apparently a collaborative project of independent citizen contributors, many under pseudonyms; one female contributor can be identified Ellen Tucker-Moore who identifies as a Kuwarra woman. *Dark Emu Exposed* at <https://www.dark-emu-exposed.org/>; Ron Manners, ‘Yet Another Fraud Exposed’, *Mannwest.com*, 11 December 2019, at <https://www.mannwest.com/yet-another-fraud-exposed/>.

At the height of these tensions Yolngu Elder Terry Yumbalul denied having written a damning letter which had been published by journalist Andrew Bolt in which he, Yumbalul, supposedly denounced Pascoe. Yumbalul denied consenting to Josephine Cashman using his name in relation to the letter and declared Cashman was the true author. Cashman later accused NITV (National Indigenous Television Network) of running a scaremongering campaign to get Yumbalul to change his message and ‘intimidating our Elders.’ See Hannah Cross, ‘Cashman raises allegations of community corruption...’, *National Indigenous Times*, 29 January 2020, at <https://nit.com.au/cashman-raises-allegations-of-community-corruption-and-uluru-statement-leadership/>. This was in response to NITV investigating the letter and finding large sections were lifted from various academic papers written in the 1990s. As a result of these developments Cashman was relieved of her position as an adviser to Indigenous Affairs minister Ken Wyatt. See Hannah Cross, ‘Cashman raises allegations of community corruption...’

⁹⁴ Pascoe, *Dark Emu*, 36.

⁹⁵ Bruce Pascoe, ‘Lin Onus Oration,’ delivered as part of Wilin Week at the University of Melbourne on 5 April 2016, at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pg632Ewbp8M&feature=youtu.be>

⁹⁶ Bruce Pascoe, ‘Lin Onus Oration.’

when, inevitably, large agricultural companies patent and take advantage of these crops, that the Australian people do not forget the Aboriginal people who gave their knowledge and produce and fought to keep that knowledge alive against the erasure of their food history both by sheep flocks and politicians. Pascoe hopes that, in line with moves towards regenerative agricultural practice in Australia, the oldest culture in the world will be utilised and Australians will witness ‘an awakening of the nation to the land itself.’⁹⁷ Academic Charlotte Craw argues that non-Aboriginal interest in native foods has played a role in colonisation. Craw argues that if the Australian environment has been transformed by settler dietary practices, non-Aboriginal interest in native foods has also played a role in the colonisation of the Country and there are more resonances between past practice and current consumption than have been acknowledged.⁹⁸ However I believe efforts to complicate this narrative must be met with efforts to introduce practical guidelines to avoid negative impacts of language or business structure which may inadvertently further the colonial project. Certainly, the area of wild harvesting is one rife for inadvertent, or unnoticed, colonial practice.

Pascoe uses his farm in Mallacoota, East Gippsland, Victoria as a research facility to grow and process dancing grass, known by its Yuin name mandayan nalluk. Pascoe reflects that Aboriginal culture existed for at least 120,000 years and cultural practice was developed over that time before it was disrupted by colonisation, so ‘if we have some failures in the first eight days, you’ve got to put it in perspective.’⁹⁹ Pascoe and his team engage with crop development and ceremonial practice. This is the repatriation of knowledge and culture in action. Efforts towards food sovereignty amongst Indigenous communities in Peru and New Zealand have similarly affirmed the importance of ritual practice. Mariaelena A.

Huambachano writes

Food rehydrates cultural memories; ...each year the activities associated with foods—
such as harvesting ceremonies...dances ... and communal food festivals ... renew

⁹⁷ Pascoe, ‘Lin Onus Oration.’

⁹⁸ Charlotte Craw, ‘Tasting Territory: Imagining Place in Australian Native Food Packaging’, *Locale: The Australasian-Pacific Journal of Regional Food Studies* 2 (2012), 20.

⁹⁹ Lorena Allam and Isabella Moore, ‘Time to embrace history of country,’: Bruce Pascoe and the first dancing grass harvest in 200 years,’ *The Guardian*, 13 May 2020 at <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2020/may/13/its-time-to-embrace-the-history-of-the-country-first-harvest-of-dancing-grass-in-200-years>

family, community, cultural, political and social relationships that connect Indigenous peoples with all extended relatives (human and non-humans).¹⁰⁰

Huambachano suggests that food systems act to connect humans to cultures and patterns of living in local ecosystems and that they reflect a trove of knowledge that contributes well-being and health. Indigenous food sovereignty movements and programs therefore reaffirm the right to self-determination and responsibilities with the natural world.

Quadrant magazine in house press published the work of retired military officer, *Quadrant* magazine contributor ‘and enthusiast for the diaries of Australian explorers,’ Peter O’Brien.¹⁰¹ *Bitter Harvest* is O’Brien’s extensive criticism of Pascoe’s scholarship, particularly his use of quotation and amateurism, despite O’Brien himself admitting a lack of professional training and not openly discussing any rigorous editing or assessment of his own work.¹⁰² *Bitter Harvest* and O’Brien’s online citizen research project ‘Dark-Emu-Exposed’ performs an investigation of the historical records Pascoe accesses. Some criticisms raised are warranted, if pedantic, primarily the use of some seemingly untraceable statistics regarding numbers of people dwelling at campsites as supposedly recorded in settler diaries. *Quadrant* press describes *Bitter Harvest* as ‘a forensic but highly readable examination which reveals that Bruce Pascoe omits, distorts or mischaracterises important information to such an extent that, as purported history, *Dark Emu* is worthless.’¹⁰³ *Quadrant* has had a long history in the Australian conservative community and has been the platform for many conservative contributors, overwhelmingly male, including former prime minister Tony Abbott and disgraced Cardinal George Pell, and has a history of opposing Aboriginal affairs, including the 1997 report on the systematic removal of Aboriginal children now known as the stolen generations. *Quadrant* notably criticised the methodology of the *Bring them Home Report*. Recent iterations of the magazine ethos have claimed to disrupt ‘the love of anti-democratic dictators [that] still survives among many intellectuals, as does their determination to impose

¹⁰⁰ Mariaelena A Huambachano, ‘Indigenous food sovereignty: Reclaiming food as sacred medicine in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Peru,’ *New Zealand Journal of Ecology* 43, no. 3 (2019): 4.

¹⁰¹ *Quadrant* Press has published other texts in a similar vein to O’Brien’s including Keith Windschuttle, *The Breakup of Australia: The real agenda behind Aboriginal reconciliation* (Balmain: Quadrant, 2016); and Mervyn Bendle, *Anzac and its enemies: The history war on Australia’s national identity* (Sydney: Quadrant, 2015)

¹⁰² ‘*Bitter Harvest*,’ *Quadrant*, at <https://quadrant.org.au/product/bitter-harvest/>

¹⁰³ ‘*Bitter Harvest*,’ *Quadrant*, at <https://quadrant.org.au/product/bitter-harvest/>

their own strange beliefs on the population.’¹⁰⁴ Most recently the magazine has presented itself to be the most open-minded publication in Australia, which simply seems to engender a haven for conspiracists and climate deniers. For all O’Brien’s efforts to take on Bolt’s abandoned mantle and ‘forensically’ analyse the quality of Pascoe’s scholarship, his publication, under the banner of a magazine which in its most recent iterations has been proven to fail at effectively reviewing submissions for accuracy, significantly undermines his intention.

I believe that at the centre of this furore is tension over the role of narrative, the creation and presentation of knowledge, the right to individual identity, and, more perplexingly, a confused and anxious preoccupation with truth. Pascoe considers that he ‘took solace from the number of Australians who want their children to learn a better history, a more true history.’¹⁰⁵ This expression is twofold, acknowledging the importance of narrative for communities, and nodding to the way in which identity and history is formed of said narratives and that includes the creation of a colonial narrative for Australia. Pascoe adds to, and alters, this narrative, aiming to make it ‘more true.’ This suggests that which scholars of Studies in Religion have understood for many years to be the true form of the truth: a narrative which is in flux, buried, shifted and altered by communal memory.

Pascoe and many Indigenous leaders wade through generations of grief every day as they re-seek to strengthen their communities and restore and record knowledge. Pascoe reflects that:

The emotional toll of reviving this knowledge is in understanding how much has been lost. While there’s grief, there’s also triumph. It’s very easy to despair. So, we try not to use words like ‘lost’. We try to use words like ‘found’ and ‘recovered’. And that’s what I’m looking at. I’m looking at recovery.¹⁰⁶

The hospitality industry showed interest in mandayan nulluk. Production is the goal when processing and milling techniques are perfected. Meanwhile, the team at Mallacoota

¹⁰⁴ Martin Krygier, ‘The Usual Suspects: *Quadrant* at 50’, *The Monthly*, December 2006, at <https://www.themonthly.com.au/issue/2006/december/1165812126/martin-krygier/usual-suspects#mtr>.

¹⁰⁵ Allam and Moore, ‘Time to embrace history of country.’

¹⁰⁶ Allam and Moore, ‘Time to embrace history of country.’ Pascoe has also spoken of the personal pain he felt while his cultural background was investigated and challenged and noted that a positive by-product of this was an increase in book sales that then produced increased funds to be spent in his local community.

experiment with extraction, milling and baking. The team and their consulting bakers have discovered a heavy, rich, spicy and aromatic profile which makes a dense rye-like bread.¹⁰⁷ The potential for the grass crop could be significant. Much like the teams working on the saline vegetable industry, mandalayan nulluk represents a potential healing for degraded land, a process of engaging in the intimate aspects of land management. The complex and wide-reaching root system holds the soil together and assists to retain moisture in the soil. It has the potential to be a common, recognisable crop grown on degraded land. Similarly, research into native Australian rice (a nitrogen and phosphorous rich plant) is being funded by industry giant Sun Rice as well as federal funding in the Northern Territory through The Future Food Systems Cooperative Research Centre.¹⁰⁸ The latter project has seen trial plantings on Northern Territory government land as well as land owned by Padakul Aboriginal Cultural Tours.¹⁰⁹ Dr Sean Bailler describes native rice as ‘an ancient grain, it’s a unique product with cultural significance to the Northern Territory.’¹¹⁰ Fellow rice researcher Dr Penny Wurm accepts limitations for the commercialisation of native rice and expects that it ‘will always be a niche, specialist, culturally-identified product’ not available at grocery stores. This will restrict access for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians.¹¹¹ Larrakia woman Lorraine Williams, who works with Wurm, expresses her disappointment that she did not receive more inherited knowledge as a child, saying, ‘In the old days people would have harvested it by canoe - hand-harvesting it...But I’m sad, because had I asked old people 20 years ago about how to prepare wild rice, we may have had more answers.’¹¹² Pascoe believes the demand for consistency and reduced costs will take precedence in farming strategies as marginal or degraded land in Australia increases due to changing climate patterns and overuse. Pascoe posits that perennial grains are one way to face these challenges while re-engaging local Aboriginal communities in ritual practice and healing activity.

¹⁰⁷ I was fortunate to taste one example of this product during Good Food Week on Tuesday 9 October 2018.

¹⁰⁸ Matt Brann, ‘Rice farming returns to Humpty Doo using Australia’s own native grains,’ *ABC Rural*, 2 April 2019, at <https://www.abc.net.au/news/rural/2019-04-02/native-rice-trials-set-for-the-northern-territory/10959786>.

¹⁰⁹ Brann, ‘Rice farming returns to Humpty Doo using Australia’s own native grains.’

¹¹⁰ Brann, ‘Rice farming returns to Humpty Doo using Australia's own native grains.’

¹¹¹ Caddie Brain, ‘Researchers go wild for Australian native rice,’ *ABC Rural*, 15 May 2014, at <https://www.abc.net.au/news/rural/2014-05-15/native-australian-wild-rice-indigenous/5455764>

¹¹² Brain, ‘Researchers go wild for Australian native rice.’

3.5 Animal agriculture: Mascot or meal? Colonial attitudes towards native game

The previous section focused on the use and development of native flora in the emerging native foods industry. I introduced case studies which demonstrated the care necessary to develop effective cross-cultural alliances in line with ethical business practices such as benefit sharing policies. I now pivot to focus on native game and its role in the native foods industry in Australia. I assess how approaches to land management and relationships between humans and animals have impacted the acceptance of native game and the tension surrounding conservation and land management practices. As with Chapter Two, this section concludes with a close analysis of a playscript; here, *The Season* written by Trawlwoolway playwright Nathan Maynard, which focuses on the wild harvesting of native fowl.

Blake Singley characterises colonial attitudes towards native game as transactional relationships of sustenance; ‘Necessity obliged the settlers to engage gastronomically with the strange creatures and plants that inhabited the landscape around them.’¹¹³ However, ‘Once the food supply was stable and the fear of starvation no longer loomed, the need and desire for native wildlife began to wane.’¹¹⁴ Writer Colin Bannerman suggests that in essence bush foods represented failure, the depletion of stores and separation from home.¹¹⁵ I believe there are elements of all of these concerns in the inconsistencies of colonial and settler approaches to native foods are well documented. One particular reflection stands out in the words of pastoralist Robert Dawson:

He [the Australian Aboriginal] can eat either the kangaroo or the lizard, the oyster or the grub, all of which exist the greatest abundance around him. We can join him in the kangaroo and oyster, while we recoil at the lizard and the grub. Where is the difference? The latter are as tender and as wholesome as the former. The black eats the grub without cooking; do we not do the same with the oyster...I would therefore recommend those who place the Australian natives on the level of brutes, to reflect well on the nature of man in his untutored state in comparison with his more civilised

¹¹³ Blake Singley, ‘‘Hardly Anything Fit for Man to eat’’: Food and Colonialism in Australia’, *History Australia* 9, no. 3 (2016): 28.

¹¹⁴ *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, 3 February 1805, 2, in Singley, ‘Hardly Anything Fit for Man to eat’, 31.

¹¹⁵ Colin Bannerman, ‘Indigenous Food and Cookery Books: Redefining Aboriginal Cuisine’, *Journal of Australian Studies* 30.87 (2006), 20.

brother, indulging in endless whims and inconsistencies, before they venture to pass a sentence which a little calm consideration may convince them to be unjust...¹¹⁶

What Dawson does, which many other settler writers fail to, is highlight the ignorance of negative perceptions of Aboriginal people which were directly related to their varied diet. Other settler writers acknowledge hunting techniques, perhaps even praise food preparation, but few speak bluntly of the reactions and criticisms levelled by their fellow colonists. Clement Hodgkinson wrote:

Induced by curiosity, I have on several occasions tasted the flesh of every one of the reptiles just mentioned, and although nothing but the most extreme hunger could make me conquer my aversion, so as to dine on them, I must nevertheless own, that not one of them possessed any disagreeable taste. The flesh of the black snake in particular was rich and juicy, somewhat resembling in flavour the flesh of a sucking pig, whilst that of the guana was whiter and drier, and more approximated to fowl.¹¹⁷

This extract encapsulates the underlying reluctance many settlers had to the consumption of certain wild meats. Stating ‘nothing but the most extreme hunger could make me conquer my aversion.’ The following quotation from Penelope Selby expands on the nature of this reluctance:

Station on the Yarra Yarra 26 January 1841 - I have not tasted kangaroo yet, but I have a piece a man brought in my safe now, and I intend to broil a piece for breakfast tomorrow - Mrs Dawson had some this morning and said it was delicious. There is an animal here they call the Kangaroo rat, about the size of a rabbit, feet like the Kangaroo and head like a rat. They are very nice and eat much the same as rabbit. We call them Bush rabbit, not liking the idea of eating a rat, but the nicest wild animal I have tasted here is the opossum. It is larger and has a finer flavour than the rat ... The most delicious bird is the bronze winged pigeon...They are very scarce...We eat black

¹¹⁶ Robert Dawson, ‘The Present State of Australia 1830’, in *Bold Palates*, ed. Santich, 38.

¹¹⁷ Clement Hodgkinson, ‘Australia from Port Macquarie to Moreton Bay 1845’, in *Bold Palates: Australia’s Gastronomic Heritage*, ed. Barbara Santich (Adelaide: Wakefield, 2012), 38.

magpies, cockatoos and paroquets all in their turn as we can get them, always a change from the salt meat ... ¹¹⁸

I have selected this domestic communication to highlight barriers to taste formed by the use of language to describe native game. The power of language is demonstrated by the use of different terminology used to describe the kangaroo rat. As 'rat' is a linguistic trigger, likely due to European associations with disease and pestilence. Once the name is changed the physical reaction to the taste of the meat is positive. This trend can be observed throughout the history of the native food industry from early colonial examples such as this to later examples such as the success of the macadamia industry which has distanced itself from its origins as a native food. The use of language in branding practices has been embraced by industry players as a form of 'nudging,' a technique designed to acclimate consumers to the unfamiliar.¹¹⁹ In Australia this has been complicated, and entrenched by the subtext of cultural cringe, the need to disguise, or dilute culture that doesn't 'live up' to Eurocentric fashions. I would suggest this is an example of attempts to combat food revulsion as discussed by Zane Ma Rhea which is a negative reaction to food I argue contributes to cultural cringe in Australia.¹²⁰ The previous examples display consistent, lingering stigma, so discourse surrounding knowledge of Indigenous diets leapt cyclically from confusion to distrust, to intrigue. This cycle is borne from ignorance or distrust.

The earlier words of Penelope Selby are an example of domestic history. So too are cookbooks one of the source genres used by food historians to track food consumption trends. As published texts they are easier to trace than the, more telling, domestic records of households. Colonial cookbooks served multiple purposes: firstly, to educate about styles of preparation suited to their audience, and secondly to adapt familiar recipes using unfamiliar produce. While the previous excerpts showed a consistent current of distrustfulness surrounding some game meat (primarily reptiles and insects), it did become increasingly accepted as substitute for familiar British meats. This was primarily due to the efforts of the authors who educated settlers in preparation methods and flavour combinations. The same is

¹¹⁸ Penelope Selby in Lucy Frost, 'No Place for a Nervous Lady (1984)', in *Bold Palates: Australia's Gastronomic Heritage*, ed. Barbara Santich (Adelaide: Wakefield, 2012), 41.

¹¹⁹ Vermeir Vandebroele, 'Nudging to Get Our Food Choices on a Sustainable Track', *Proceedings of the Nutrition Society*, 79, no. 1 (2019): 134; Joanna Guthrie, 'Nudging Consumers Toward Better Food Choices: Policy Approaches to Changing Food Consumption Behaviors', *Psychology & Marketing* 32, no. 5 (2015): 501.

¹²⁰ Ma Rhea, 'Towards an Indigenist, Gaian pedagogy of food: Deimperializing foodScapes in the classroom', 3.

not true in the current relationship between endogenous produce and domestic cooking. While kangaroo is broadly accepted, other native game (crocodile, turtle, goanna and various birds) is only now slipping onto the plates of experimental restaurants. Native flora is more accessible for the average diner or cook. The relationship of colonial culture, both then and now, and Australian native flora and fauna is one of swings and roundabouts.

British sociologist Adrian Franklin joined the ranks of foreign-born researchers and professionals fascinated with Australian environment and culture publishing *Animal Nation: The True Story of Animals and Australia* (2006). Franklin explores domestic attitudes towards animals in Australia.¹²¹ Franklin purports that both endogenous and introduced animals have been mythologised when incorporated into Australian culture. Franklin's key argument is that Australian animals and plants play an integral role in the development of a sense of national identity. He writes early anthropologists and intellectuals assumed that, due to what they termed as totemism, in which 'the boundary between animality and humanity...was dissolved and fluid,' Aboriginal people were automatically at the lowest stage of evolution.¹²² Totemism can be defined as a special religious and social association between human groups (especially clans and lineages) and natural species (predominantly animals). Aboriginal people may understand themselves to derive power from certain animals and thus take on an intimate liminal connection to that species; for example, a human can be a human and a kangaroo while still existing within a human body.¹²³ In this way living people may describe themselves as belonging to the same species as their animal ancestor.¹²⁴ These approaches indicate different understandings of time and space. The boundaries of the physical body are complicated in this relationship between animal and human. Ngangkari Sam Wimitja Watson reflects on similar disruptions to the boundaries of the body in the following discussion of the impact of landscape physical and spiritual health: 'Sometimes if you sleep in a place that was an old living place for others...you can also get sickness that way...spirits float about...and the rocks nearby can all make you sick because of that place.'¹²⁵ This quotation addresses the impact of landscape on the individual and suggests that individuals belong to the landscape and continue to have a presence in it after they have

¹²¹ Adrian Franklin, *Animal Nation: The True Story of Animals and Australia* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2006).

¹²² Franklin, *Animal Nation*, 50.

¹²³ Franklin, *Animal Nation*, 51.

¹²⁴ Franklin, *Animal Nation*, 52.

¹²⁵ Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women's Council Aboriginal Corporation, *Traditional Healers of Central Australia: Ngangkari* (Broome: Magabala Books Aboriginal Corporation, 2013), 90.

moved away. Watson also discusses the importance of consumption as a method of traversing the boundaries of the body in his spiritual healing practices. For example, Watson describes consuming the liver of an animal which was simultaneously being consumed by a mamu (spirit). In doing so he was able to access the ‘spiritual world...working through a spirit and spirit world to save stolen spirits.’¹²⁶ Franklin suggests that totemism is not, as it is often portrayed, a framework only utilised by particular Indigenous nations, but is a crucial part of the power of environmentalist organisations which are regularly active in conversations about the consumption of wild animals.¹²⁷ I understand that early colonial settlers’ attitudes to wild meat, or native game, were shaped by both the species themselves (reptiles and insects were contentious), and descriptive language and racial judgements towards Indigenous people across Australia and the Torres Strait.

3.5.1 Culling and conservation: Native game and kangaroo farming

Once the food supply was stable and the fear of starvation no longer loomed, the need and desire for native wildlife began to wane. As early as 1805, kangaroo was already becoming scarce around Sydney and its price was only marginally lower than that of pork.¹²⁸ I previously provided historical references to colonial attitudes towards game meat, the following section explores the commercial kangaroo industry, to address the complex relationship between wild harvesting, domestic and international food markets and conservation and land management. I discuss conflicting narratives about the role of kangaroos in the national psyche, and the relationship between humans and animals as it impacts the development of the native foods meat and livestock industry.

Conservationist Rosie Cooney notes that in many places in the world, bans on trophy hunting and selling have exacerbated major threats of habitat loss and overexploitation as it reduces the incentive for local people to conserve wildlife and live alongside the danger and risk presented by wild animals.¹²⁹ Cooney extends her criticism to the Irwin family, Australian

¹²⁶ Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women’s Council Aboriginal Corporation, *Traditional Healers of Central Australia*, 91.

¹²⁷ Franklin, *Animal Nation*, 51.

¹²⁸ *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, 3 February 1805, 2, in Singley, ‘Hardly Anything Fit for Man to eat’, 31.

¹²⁹ Cooney is the head of the International Union for Conservation of Nature.; Emily Smith, ‘Northern Territory Crocodile harvesting a ‘world-leading’ model for helping poor communities via conservation’, *ABC Online*, 26 January 2019, at <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-01-26/crocodile-management-plan-northern-territory-conservation-poor/10729500>.

Zookeepers who use their public platform to speak out against hunting. Cooney argues these public figures do not look ‘at the broader dynamic...how you get long term sustainable species conservation and how do you get local people happy to have those species in the landscape.’¹³⁰ Communities may warm to regulated kangaroo farming given the impact of drought. Replacing annual pasture grasses with drought-proof, year-long, perennial plants such as kangaroo grass would increase the amount of viable feed for kangaroos and livestock. This may address the perspective of kangaroos as a pest threatening livestock feed. The fraught relationship between farmers, agriculturalists and Australian native animals could improve. The kangaroo meat industry cannot pivot to more typical methods of livestock farming (factory farming or paddock farming) because kangaroos need to be free range game to reduce any possibility of muscle wastage which impacts the quality of meat once they are killed and butchered.¹³¹

Journalist Jane Cowan explored kangaroo harvesting in 2018 for the ABC. The following content is taken from that piece.¹³² Kangaroos are used for their skin and meat the latter of which is used for pet food as well as human consumption.¹³³ The industry is largest in Queensland and New South Wales but may yet develop in Victoria where legislation means native animals can only be shot when considered pests. Uncle Eric Craigie of the Australian Alliance for Native Animal Survival objects to the use of Aboriginal traditional hunting to justify native animal markets or culling programs, saying ‘We have harvested animals, but we have only ever taken what we needed. We are not into mass slaughter.’¹³⁴ Craigie’s comments were made in response to trade negotiations to increase kangaroo meat export to China and Russia. Russia was Australia’s largest customer in the kangaroo meat export trade, but as recently as 2009 exports were stopped as Russia raised concerns about harvesting

¹³⁰ Smith, ‘Northern Territory Crocodile harvesting a ‘world-leading’ model for helping poor communities via conservation.’

¹³¹ Anna Salleh, ‘Where do kangaroos come from, why do they hop, and should we kill them?’ *ABC Science*, 26 January 2019, at <https://www.abc.net.au/news/science/2019-01-26/where-kangaroos-came-from-why-they-hop-and-should-we-kill-them/10735352>.

¹³² Note: Cowan is the guest of non-Aboriginal man Glenn Cole; Jane Cowan, ‘From dusk to dawn: A night in the life of a roo shooter’, *ABC News*, 4 July 2018, accessed 20 December 2018, at <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-07-04/kangaroo-shooting-night-in-the-life/9790636>.

¹³³ ‘Prices paid by dealers to harvesters for kangaroo carcasses reached record levels in late 2020 with \$1.30–1.40 per kilogram being paid’, Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, Annual Report New South Wales Commercial Kangaroo Harvest Management Plan 2017-21. At <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/-/media/OEH/Corporate-Site/Documents/Animals-and-plants/Wildlife-management/Kangaroo-management/2020-annual-report-nsw-commercial-kangaroo-harvest-management-plan-2017-21-210166.pdf>

¹³⁴ Malcolm Brown, ‘Plan to lift roo exports prompts legal threat’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 August 2011, accessed 20 September 2016, at <https://www.smh.com.au/environment/conservation/plan-to-lift-roo-exports-prompts-legal-threat-20110807-1ihnp.html>.

practices and the presence of *E. coli* and salmonella in kangaroo meat.¹³⁵ Craigie raises a central tension in the adaptation of traditional ecological management and hunting practices into industry practice as scaling up operations in order to increase revenue, the intention behind a practice is altered. Bodies such as the Muurdi Paaki Regional Aboriginal Assembly (MPRA) are represented as having different perspectives on the kangaroo industry. The Muurdi Paaki Regional Aboriginal Assembly Chairperson William (Sam) Jeffries penned an open letter on behalf of the Assembly throwing their support behind the commercial utilisation of kangaroos writing; ‘The kangaroo industry provides substantial job opportunities for Aboriginal people. Many Aboriginal people are currently employed either processing or harvesting kangaroos.’¹³⁶ MPRA perceives the commercial kangaroo industry as an employment opportunity for the communities they represent. MPRA declares that without culling, kangaroos would die as a result of the drought and therefore culling is more humane; ‘The MPRA believes utilising these animals shows them the respect they deserve and is consistent with Aboriginal thinking.’¹³⁷ One example of the important role the kangaroo industry can play for remote communities is Warroo Game Meat (WGM), a Gunggari owned business in Surat, Queensland. WGM employs approximately ten percent of the town residents and a majority of employees are Indigenous Australians.¹³⁸ Warroo Game Meat is a second-generation business in the kangaroo industry which has pivoted from handling pelts, to pet meat, to meat for human consumption. Owners Lesley and Betty Mickelbrough see first-hand the opportunities the kangaroo industry has provided for their family and community working on the land in Queensland as a land and animal management practice.

Cowan’s article provides an important discussion about engagement between conservation and the native game industry. Kangaroo hunter Glenn Cole advocates for professional shooting in Victoria, most kangaroo culling is undertaken by non-professional shooters who

¹³⁵ Virginia Tapp, ‘Russia bans kangaroo meat due to unacceptable levels of *E.coli*’, *ABC Rural*, 14 August 2014, accessed 20 September 2016, at <https://www.abc.net.au/news/rural/2014-08-18/kangaroo-meat-ban/5677656>.

¹³⁶ William (Sam) Jeffries, Correspondence on behalf of the Muurdi Paaki Regional Assembly, 31 August 2015, accessed 20 September 2016, at <http://thesustainablekangaroo.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/CaliforniaforwebsiteMurdi.pdf>.

¹³⁷ Jeffries, Correspondence on behalf of the Muurdi Paaki Regional Assembly.

¹³⁸ Bron Maxabella, ‘Indigenous business Warroo Game Meats keeps an outback town hopping’, *SBS*, 11 October 2018, accessed 10 January 2019, at <https://www.sbs.com.au/food/article/2018/10/11/indigenous-business-month-warroo-game-meats-surat>.

do not need to prove skill or accuracy to hold a licence.¹³⁹ Cole notes that while non-professional shooters are encouraged to adhere to ethical shooting standards, there is no binding requirement for them to do so. Cole believes ‘That’s why the animal libbers get up in arms and I don’t blame them for that.’¹⁴⁰ There is a culturally lasting attitude towards kangaroo culling on private farmland that is based on the perceived competition between kangaroos and livestock.

When Cole claims that kangaroo populations have increased over time, Cowan challenges the suggestion:

Roo numbers fluctuate with the seasons, affected by drought. Whether the animals are “in plague proportions” or at risk of being eradicated in certain areas can depend on who you ask and how you interpret the available data.¹⁴¹

Estimates from aerial surveys suggest the Australian kangaroo population is at least 41,000,000 million of which 1,000,000 million are shot for commercial purposes and 500,000 killed in private and public cull programs annually. Joeys are not always counted in these official tallies but are killed if the shooter is engaged in ethical hunting practices. A dead mother will result in starvation for her dependents.

Kangaroo farming exists within a narrative of identity which impacts Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians. For some Aboriginal people the kangaroo is a spiritual totem for themselves and/or their community. This should not be a difficult concept to translate for non-Aboriginal Australians. The kangaroo is mythologised and celebrated in non-Aboriginal culture. The marsupial is featured on the Australian passport, is a key part of major tourism campaigns, is housed in zoos, can be greeted across the Country, and is a symbol of strength. International campaigning undertaken by the Australian Wildlife Protection Council, including the screening of documentary *Kangaroo: A Love-Hate Story*, has been credited with halting the sale of kangaroo meat in Belgium and the discontinuation of kangaroo pelt in

¹³⁹ Cowan, ‘From dusk to dawn: A night in the life of a roo shooter.’

¹⁴⁰ Cowan, ‘From dusk to dawn: A night in the life of a roo shooter.’

¹⁴¹ Cowan, ‘From dusk to dawn: A night in the life of a roo shooter.’

fashion houses Diadora and Versace.¹⁴² I will not draw conclusions about the ethical harvesting of kangaroos, but simply highlight the dominant narratives and complexities within the industry and turn attention back to the role of language in shaping narratives about, and reactions to, native food in Australia. The Kangaroo Industry Association launched a competition in 2005 to provide a culinary name for kangaroo meat in order to improve public perception and alter the patterns of relation associated with the term kangaroo. The name *Australus* was settled upon but has never been commercially utilised in the sale of kangaroo meat.¹⁴³

The work of Euan Ritchie, an ecological researcher at Deakin University, Victoria overlaps with the previously referenced work of Adrian Franklin, which addresses the divide in attitudes towards native and feral, introduced animals. Ritchie highlights the potential for consumption of wild game including introduced, now feral, livestock.¹⁴⁴ Eating feral and native animals may provide an opportunity to develop a more ethical meat industry due to the free-range nature of most of these populations. Ritchie writes that native wildlife and some feral animals have a lighter footprint on the environment than intensively produced livestock.¹⁴⁵ Kangaroos and goats place one third of the pressure of sheep on grazing land.¹⁴⁶ These advantages indicate significant benefits for future sustainable meat production in Australia, especially in arid areas. Ritchie suggests there is potential for the consumption of feral goats, camels, deer, rabbits, pigs, buffalo, native emu and kangaroo.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴² The Australian Wildlife Protection Council is separate to the Australian Wildlife Management Society, which is in support of the industry. Australian Wildlife Protection Council. 'Europe is Rejecting Kangaroo Meat and Skins', *Australian Wildlife Protection Council*, 24 January 2020, accessed 5 April 2020, at <https://awpc.org.au/europe-is-rejecting-kangaroo-meat-skins/>

¹⁴³ In this example we see the same issues of naming, narrative and linguistic nuance that challenged colonial Australians reflected again with the difficulty of naming the flesh of the kangaroo for consumption. Orietta Guerrero, 'Australas: a palatable name for our skippy', *The Age*, 20 December 2005, accessed 20 September 2016, at <https://www.theage.com.au/national/australus-a-palatable-name-for-our-skippy-20051220-ge1gf7.html>.

¹⁴⁴ Euan Ritchie and Adam Munn, 'Eat locals: swapping sheep and cows for kangaroos and camels could help our environment', Euan Ritchie, 24 May 2016, accessed 20 September 2016, at <https://euanritchie.org/2016/05/24/the-conversation-eat-locals-swapping-sheep-and-cows-for-kangaroos-and-camels-could-help-our-environment/>.

¹⁴⁵ Ritchie and Munn, 'Eat locals: swapping sheep and cows for kangaroos and camels could help our environment.'

¹⁴⁶ Ritchie and Munn, 'Eat locals: swapping sheep and cows for kangaroos and camels could help our environment.'

¹⁴⁷ Ritchie and Munn, 'Eat locals: swapping sheep and cows for kangaroos and camels could help our environment.'

The previous section explored how the narrative surrounding the developing native game meat industry has been coloured by both the symbolism of animals for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians and the relationship, both historical and spiritual, between animals and humans. I explored changes within the latter relationship, specifically the importance of job creation by Aboriginal led business within Aboriginal communities. I have assessed conflicting perspectives between Aboriginal organisations which complicate cultural review processes. I will now explore the representation of the native game industry within the arts sector.

3.6 *The Season* (2017): cultural foodscapes in the arts

In this research I focus on the power of narrative; of storytelling as a form of expressing a voice and identity. Theatre is one such way to explore this power. Chapter Two explored how *The Cake Man* functions as a conduit for memory and biography of playwright Robert Merritt as representative of his community, the impact of segregationist practices and cultural stereotyping on Aboriginal people, and the influence of Christian mythmaking on storytelling in the mid twentieth century. Nathan Maynard's play *The Season* (2017) explores food as cultural history, practice and as part of the living environment. Maynard utilises foodspace as a setting to explore the intersection of family connection, hereditary community narratives and relationship with place.¹⁴⁸ *The Season* addresses animal agriculture, and its marine setting provides a thematic link to this chapter's final section on marine aquaculture.

The Season was developed as part of the Tasmania Performs residency program at the 2015 *Yellamundie* Festival, and was performed at the Sydney Festival, Ten Days on the Island and Melbourne Festival in 2017.¹⁴⁹ The script was published in 2017 by Red Door, an imprint of the Australian Script Centre. I saw a September 2019 performance of *The Season* at Parramatta, NSW and this live performance will be treated as a secondary version of the text.¹⁵⁰ Maynard is a Trawlwoolway man from North Eastern Tasmania with a professional background in land management.¹⁵¹ *The Season* follows the Duncan family as 'they come

¹⁴⁸ Nathan Maynard, *The Season* (Hobart: Red Door/Australian Script Centre, 2017).

¹⁴⁹ Yellamundie is a two-week intensive creative development of six First Peoples scripts chosen from across Australia. Liza-Mare Syron, 'Transnational connections: First nations conversations through making performance', *Australasian Drama Studies* no. 73 (2018), 111.

¹⁵⁰ Nathan Maynard, *The Season*, performed by Tasmania Performs at Riverside Parramatta, at <https://riversideparramatta.com.au/show/the-season/>.

¹⁵¹ 'Nathan Maynard,' *Australian Plays*, accessed 21 May 2020, at <https://australianplays.org/playwright/ASC-4224>.

back to roost for mutton bird season, and have done for as long as anyone can remember... the family reunites with a country and culture still very much alive [in]...their long memories...' ¹⁵² The Duncan's foodspace is the environment in which Maynard situates his narrative. They talk over the campfire, argue over cups of tea and pass on generational practical skills over the preparation of wild fowl.



Figure 5. Scene from Tasmania Performs staging of Nathan Maynard's *The Season*. Photo by Prudence Upton.

The imagery in *The Season* is clear and accessible. Foremost, the family are paralleled to the muttonbird flock echoing totemic connections amongst Aboriginal communities. The migratory patterns, connection to specific lands and seasonal gathering are further analogous to the Duncan family. Ben Duncan, the gatherer and grandfather, reflects his own narrative in the story of the birds, saying he convinced his wife to join him 'for a walk around to this side of the island... and next to the wind-blown she-oak tree, is where I managed to convince her that I was the one she wanted to flap her wings with, to the end of the earth and back.' ¹⁵³ Of particular poignance is the symbolism of the 'pilot birds.' Ben muses on them regularly, describing the pilot bird, the white bird, as:

¹⁵² Maynard, *The Season*, performed by Tasmania Performs at Riverside Parramatta.

¹⁵³ Maynard, *The Season*, 25.

...the spirit bird that guides them on their migration all way up to Alaska and past Japan, down to New Zealand and back home again. It connects us with those traditional mobs. If you catch it, you'll get good luck but if you kill it...¹⁵⁴

By the conclusion of the play *Clay*, the youngest Duncan, whose neglectful White father is the unseen villain of the narrative, and who is fresh on his first birding trip eager to understand his heritage, catches the white pilot bird. The symbolism is multi-layered, suggesting Clay will have good luck and simultaneously demonstrating his now solid connection to his own pilot birds, his grandparents. Ben opens the play alone reflecting, 'But what if you lose your pilot bird? Then how do you find your way? How do you keep flying if you lose a wing?'¹⁵⁵ This mirrors Ben's knowledge that he is aging and seeking to hand over the harvesting management to his children, and forms a reflection on the loss of generational knowledge and connection that threatens many Aboriginal families negatively impacted by colonial erosion of social connections.

Tensions between legal frameworks, identity and ritual practice are situated in the character of Dicky. Dicky, an Aboriginal man, is employed as senior ranger responsible for Flinders Island and the surrounding islands, including Dog Island where the Duncan's are birding. Tensions between Dicky and the families birding on the island are navigated through a dialogue centred on the performance of identity. Ritchie Duncan, Dicky's peer, who accuses him of going 'from white to black and then back to white,' struggles with his perception that Dicky has somehow sided against his family and community.¹⁵⁶ When Dicky tells Richie he is 'more about preservation,' Richie launches into the following statement challenging the balance between preservation and traditional land management:

What do you think would happen if us coes [the family] stopped birding and left the island? Look over here at Vansittart Island, leased to the white fellas and their cattle destroyed the rookeries, story gone. Simple preservation, that is. Anyway, don't you look the part in your flash uniform, I bet your mum would be proud of ya.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ Maynard, *The Season*, 35.

¹⁵⁵ Maynard, *The Season*, 6.

¹⁵⁶ Maynard, *The Season*, 14.

¹⁵⁷ Maynard, *The Season*, 38.

It is a short-lived confrontation, not explored in any great depth. Like many of the tensions in this play Maynard does not seek to provide analysis or answers; he simply lets the issues sit within the dialogue and linger in the minds of the audience. Indigenous ranger programs are key roles in which employment on Country is possible. Rangers are uniformed custodians, the centre of relationships between an area's residents, traditional custodians (some of whom may no longer live in the area), state and federal authorities, and environmental organisations.¹⁵⁸ The role requires consistently reshuffling parts of identity to navigate the influence of policy, professional responsibility, community membership and cultural practice. A further exploration of Dicky's difficulty navigating this role would have been a thematic boon to the narrative.

Maynard's tendency to move quickly over key issues is almost naïve in style but is likely a combination of the script being his first work as a playwright, and a deliberate technique to retain the comedic tone while working to challenge the audience and 'dispel the myth Tasmania's Indigenous community was decimated by European invasion.'¹⁵⁹ For example, alongside the themes of community are references to other traditional practices (notably Lou Duncan's ability to dive for abalone) and the role played by the native foods and hospitality industries.¹⁶⁰ Ben and Ritchie discuss their birding goals for the season, aiming for '15,000 in the barrels' but planning to tell their rival birders the Watsons they're only after 10,000. The Watsons, Ritchie says, 'reckon they have a big order from a flash restaurant up in Sydney.'¹⁶¹ Again this is a brief reference, aimed to provide a subtext for the birding process, and answer the unspoken audience question of where the thousands of mutton birds go once they are harvested.¹⁶² The imaginary restaurant in one of Australia's biggest cities is described as 'flash,' a far cry from the rustic plucking sheds and blustery shores of the island the Duncan's and Watson's harvest on.

Like *The Cake Man*, *The Season* incorporates the playwright's personal history into a narrative which utilises foodspace as a physical and liminal setting in which to explore the

¹⁵⁸ 'Aboriginal Ranger Program,' *Department of Biodiversity Conservation and Attractions*, 21 September 2020, accessed 14 November 2020, at <https://www.dbca.wa.gov.au/parks-and-wildlife-service/aboriginal-ranger-program>

¹⁵⁹ Rhiannon Shine, 'The Season: New Tasmanian play with all-Aboriginal cast set for Opera House premiere', *ABC*, 11 January 2017, at <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-01-11/new-tasmanian-play-the-season-set-for-opera-house-premiere/8173334>.

¹⁶⁰ Maynard, *The Season*, 55.

¹⁶¹ Maynard, *The Season*, 55.

¹⁶² Maynard, *The Season*, 15.

intersection of family connection, hereditary narratives and relationship with place. *The Season* provides a contemporary example of oral history and storytelling portraying the empowering nature of connection to land, animals and cultural practice. In this section I have explored native game, which is often side-lined in discussions of the native foods industry due to myriad reasons, including the significant logistical ease of establishing a flora-based business compared to managing animals/livestock. Animal agriculture introduces alternate conservation perspectives and ethical questions. Different approaches to land management and relationships between humans and animals have impacted the acceptance of native game and the tension surrounding conservationism and land management practices. This has been explored primarily through case studies focused on the kangaroo industry in Australia and Nathan Maynard's play *The Season*. My assessment of native game returns in Chapter Four, which focuses on the use, and representation, of edible native flora and fauna in the hospitality and grocery industries.

3.7 Marine and riverine aquaculture

The preceding section explored colonial attitudes to native game and contemporary attitudes towards wild harvesting of game. Nathan Maynard's *The Season* led my research to the shoreline of coastal Tasmania. The following section moves into the marine and riverine environment. Contemporary Australia is famous for its surrounding marine environment and the variety, and quality, of seafood to be found in Australian waters. In 2018 the Australian Bureau of Statistics determined that more than ninety percent of the Australian population lived within 100 km of a coast, making Australia one of the world's most urbanised coastal dwelling populations.¹⁶³ Fishing is a central part of the identity of many coastal communities, from the hobby level through to commercial operations. Additionally, marine aquaculture has been influenced by Indigenous ecological knowledge holders in coastal Aboriginal nations for generations.

The following section explores how built examples of marine engineering, specifically Baiame's Ngunnhu, and built topographical spaces, specifically midden mounds, provide visual narratives and play an important role in the Australian foodscape by retaining, and

¹⁶³ 'Interesting Facts about Australia's 25,000,000 population,' *Australian Bureau of Statistics*, 7 August 2018, accessed 19 September 2019, at <https://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/D3310114.nsf/home/Interesting+Facts+about+Australia%E2%80%99s+population>

communicating, the history of a geographical area and the cultural practice of its inhabitants. In addition, this section explores how changing market dynamics and demand for native foods impact Aboriginal communities' access to, and engagement with, native foods.

A large portion of Pascoe's *Dark Emu, Black Seeds: Agriculture or Accident* seeks to identify specific instances of innovative agricultural methods used by Aboriginal people before White arrival, in an attack on the concept and myth of *Terra Nullius*. One example of these methods still visible today is the Brewarrina fish traps in central northern New South Wales. The traps are thought to be the oldest human construction in existence. This chapter investigates how the practice of marine and riverine aquaculture has left visible and invisible marks on coastal and inland landscapes. The following section explores how Aboriginal people have long engaged with riverine and marine management and how evidence of cultural practice and narrative can be found in specific geographical sites which form a crucial part of the Australian foodscape. Discussion then turns to how the rise in market value of certain seafoods has triggered a series of policy changes that have damaged the relationship between government bodies and communities who hold Indigenous ecological knowledge. In this way government agencies have failed to work with and celebrate the custodianship and skill held within past and current Aboriginal communities. These are examples of a legacy of food violence that has coloured the relationship between Aboriginal communities and the colonial project in Australia.

3.7.1 Fish traps: Baiame's Ngunnhu

Archaeologist Duncan Wright reaffirms Bruce Pascoe's thesis that innovative, and visible, agricultural methods challenge the myth of *Terra Nullius*, stating that structures such as the Ngunnhu (the Brewarrina Fish Traps) 'are a "remarkable example" of Aboriginal innovation, an ability to understand and exploit the natural landscape and form one part of a growing body of work that challenges how hunter-gatherer Australian societies have long been perceived.'¹⁶⁴ Wright says that despite a lack of reliable radiocarbon dating, archaeological data suggests the traps are more recent than local claims that they are 40,000 years old. The environment of the river, with its constant movement modifying the shape of the traps and

¹⁶⁴ Monica Tan, 'The fish traps at Brewarrina are extraordinary and ancient structures. Why aren't they better protected?' *The Guardian*, 10 July 2007, accessed 14 April 2019, at <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/jul/10/fish-traps-brewarrina-extraordinary-ancient-structures-protection>.

resulting in a need for regular maintenance and alterations to the original trap shape, has meant that dating the structure is near impossible.

The engineering of the Brewarrina fish traps significantly impacted the ecological structure of the Murray-Darling basin area. River ecologist Paul Humphries writes that the fish traps were part of a system which had, ‘gaps in riverbanks to allow fish to move on to floodplains [and showed] evidence [of] a form of fish culture by creating small impoundments in which small fish could live and grow in normally ephemeral tributary streams away from predatory larger fish.’¹⁶⁵ The traps are made from a careful arrangement of river stones that direct fish into the traps, which form a net of linked weirs and ponds along 500 metres of the river, operating at varying water heights and with the potential to be altered to suit seasonal changes. This stone locking system fixed the trap to the bed of the stream, allowing the passage of breeding stock upstream. The series of hunting ponds were managed by families, who worked collaboratively to ensure families up and down stream had adequate supply. In this way it was a sustainable harvesting initiative.¹⁶⁶ The availability of food provided by the traps made Brewarrina a meeting point for groups to trade and share.

The ngunnhu are a series of weirs and ponds that form stone net complexes along the length of a 400-metre rock bar, where the water is ‘fast flowing and shallow...over a set of four...rapids.’¹⁶⁷ The engineering and construction of the ngunnhu was analysed by Hope and Vines in 1994. They identified that the tightly woven construction of the rocks created strength and stability. This stability was further enhanced by the addition of large cap stones and the curved forms of each individual trap. The teardrop shape ‘arches against the weight of the water with the tail sections following the lines of the currents.’¹⁶⁸ The Department of Environment provides detailed information on the alterations made to the Barwon River at the Brewarrina Weir.¹⁶⁹ The weir was opened in August 1971 to provide a domestic water supply for the township of Brewarrina.¹⁷⁰ Brewarrina lies on the banks of the Barwon River

¹⁶⁵ Paul Humphries, ‘Historical Indigenous use of aquatic resources in Australia's Murray-Darling Basin, and its implications for river management’, *Ecological Management and Restoration* 8, no. 2 (2007): 106.

¹⁶⁶ Pascoe, *Dark Emu*, 57.

¹⁶⁷ Sam Rando, *Looking after Baiame's Ngunnhu, Conservation management Plan for the Brewarrina Fishtraps* (NSW: National Parks and Wildlife Service, 2007), 21.

¹⁶⁸ Jeanette Hope and Gary Vines, in Rando, *Looking after Baiame's Ngunnhu, Conservation management Plan for the Brewarrina Fishtraps*, 32.

¹⁶⁹ The Weir is a 1.2-metre-high fixed crest structure built at the head of the rock bar upon which the fish traps are situated.

¹⁷⁰ The weir was opened on 20 August 1971. Rando, *Looking after Baiame's Ngunnhu*, 55.

in Northern, New South Wales. The bioregion is semi-arid characterised by hot, dry conditions, and the clearing of large swathes of land as a result of alterations made by European settlers in the early nineteenth century has degraded the land. Other degradation is the result of pastoral practices, including stock movement, the spread of weeds and changes to fire maintenance coupled with increasing droughts.¹⁷¹ The Barwon River flows from the Great Dividing Range and its tributaries include the Macintyre River and the Culgoa River, which becomes the Darling River. Rando reports that the Barwon River aquatic community is listed as an endangered ecological community.¹⁷² The Barwon River is a controlled river due to the extraction of water for agricultural purposes. It has high concentrations of agricultural pesticides and high salinity.¹⁷³ The impact of the weir on the river system (including ecology, water flow and the ngunnhu) has been significant in the changes in rates of sediment erosion, transportation and deposition. Where the flow of the Barwon River was low flow following the channels (associated with Baiame and the black fish), the introduction of the weir resulted in a steady rate of flow, which created silt banks covering parts of the ngunnhu.¹⁷⁴ The weir has also increased blue-green algae and has resulted in a stiller water environment, which benefits introduced fish like carp. Brewarrina Cooperative member Bradley Hardy identifies the weir as a source of environment chaos that has impacted both river and traps, arguing that ‘If the water was up more, we wouldn’t have so much trouble with the bulrushes. The water would wash the mess away from the traps.’¹⁷⁵ Additionally, native fish—which swim upstream—would not struggle so much in the face of the aggressive population of European carp that has overrun the river system.¹⁷⁶ Indeed, the effect on native species was so great that in 2012 a fishway was installed that was specially designed to allow Australian fish species to access the length of the river. That the original weir was constructed without this in mind demonstrates the disconnect between conservation and engineering, including a lack of collaboration with the custodians of the area.

¹⁷¹ Rando, *Looking after Baiame’s Ngunnhu*, 43.

¹⁷² Rando, *Looking after Baiame’s Ngunnhu*, 55.

¹⁷³ Crabb (1997) in Rando, *Looking after Baiame’s Ngunnhu*, 44; Breckwoldt et. al. 2004 in Rando, *Looking after Baiame’s Ngunnhu*, 54-55.

¹⁷⁴ Mallen-Cooper 2002; NSW DPI 2006 in Rando, *Looking after Baiame’s Ngunnhu, Conservation management Plan for the Brewarrina Fishtraps*, 55.

¹⁷⁵ Tan, ‘The fish traps at Brewarrina are extraordinary and ancient structures. Why aren’t they better protected?’

¹⁷⁶ Tan, ‘The fish traps at Brewarrina are extraordinary and ancient structures. Why aren’t they better protected?’

The Australian Bureau of Statistics recorded the population of Brewarrina as 1,143 people in 2016, of which 26.6% identified as Australian Aboriginal. This is a comparatively high percentage of the population when compared to state statistics, which reported 0.3% of the population as Australian Aboriginal and 0.5% nationally.¹⁷⁷ Brewarrina is a small town and is most well-known for the ngunnuh stone aquaculture systems, the fish traps. These impressive systems of river hydrology were inscribed onto the National Heritage Register in 2005.¹⁷⁸ The New South Wales Office of Environment and Heritage estimates that Indigenous peoples in the region, prior to European settlement, numbered approximately 3000.¹⁷⁹ Ngemba Elder and oral history custodian Feli McHughes has expressed a desire for a greater amount of tourism investment as an alternative to the practice of welfare supplements, which, as was explored earlier in my analysis of the work of Tim Rowse, is a policy stemming from ration practices. McHughes believes welfare dependence is ‘sterilising the spirit of the Aboriginal people.’¹⁸⁰ He believes heritage conservation represents an opportunity to create more culturally appropriate work in Brewarrina, which had a 2016 unemployment rate of 18.5%.¹⁸¹ Some funding has been secured for regional tourism, with the recreational and educational centrepiece of the precinct being the Brewarrina Aboriginal Cultural Museum. The design of the Brewarrina Aboriginal Cultural Museum precinct by Olga Kosterin is empathetic and commensurate with the significance of the place: the red soil and granite rocks within the precinct were installed in order to establish a bush tucker educational area.¹⁸² This is an outward demonstration of recognition of the local foodscape and history. However, while Australian academics are finally acknowledging the scientific and engineering ingenuity evidenced by Aboriginal heritage sites such as the traps, McHughes is unsure mainstream Australia will recognise their value, expressing that he feels Australia is ‘embarrassed’ by it in context of the historical debasement of his people. McHughes thinks the National Heritage

¹⁷⁷ ‘2016 Census Quick Stats: Brewarrina’, *Australian Bureau of Statistics*, accessed 19 December 2019, available from

https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/SSC10563.

¹⁷⁸ ‘Commonwealth of Australia Gazette Notice’, *Department of Environment and Heritage*, Commonwealth of Australia, 3 June 2005, accessed 14 October 2019, at

<http://www.environment.gov.au/system/files/pages/ba18eab5-1a30-4f5d-af0d-d3f555f56b83/files/105778.pdf>

¹⁷⁹ ‘Brewarrina Aboriginal Fish Traps / Baiame’s Ngunnuh’, *Office of Environment and Heritage*, NSW Government, accessed 1 September 2020, at

<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/heritageapp/ViewHeritageItemDetails.aspx?ID=5051305>.

¹⁸⁰ Tan, ‘The fish traps at Brewarrina are extraordinary and ancient structures. Why aren’t they better protected?’

¹⁸¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Brewarrina 2016 All person QuickStats, accessed 14 November 2021, at <https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2016/SSC10563>.

¹⁸² Rando, *Looking after Baiame’s Ngunnuh, Conservation management Plan for the Brewarrina Fishtraps*, 44, 57.

register and New South Wales Department of Heritage ‘couldn’t give two hoots’ about the condition of the fish traps. ‘It’s the oldest manmade structure in Australia. To see the dilapidated state they’re in – it’s a disgrace to the nation. Would someone just let the Opera House go like that? And how much more important are the traps to the heritage of this country?’¹⁸³ Allowing shame to overwhelm positive change can become part of the suppression of Aboriginal peoples, contributing to a dismissive national narrative which becomes an excuse to relinquish the responsibility to create positive social change.

These traps are situated on the traditional land of the Ngemba, Muruwari and Yualwarri peoples and are thought to have also been maintained collaboratively by the Wonkamurra, Wayilwan and Gomolaroi peoples as part of their custodianship of Country. The Ngemba Wayilwan are a river people connected with the land around Brewarrina.¹⁸⁴ The impact of drought has damaged traditional practice; significant rainfall in February 2020 allowed rain to flow down through the Barwon Riverbed and facilitated the opportunity for Aboriginal children (primarily Ngemba children) to perform the important cultural rite of their first river swim.¹⁸⁵ However, sudden change caused chaos for thousands of fish at Four Mile bend. Ngemba Elder Trish Frail tried to rescue fish who were drowning in the silty, de-oxygenated water; community members saved many native fish, but thousands died.

Many traditional landowners, particularly the local people the Ngemba, Muruwari and Yualwarri, recognise the design of the ngunnhu as the work of the ancestral figure Baiame. Baiame is a figure well known across western and northern New South Wales and numerous sites are associated with him and his travels across Country. Aboriginal nations and peoples that are associated with Baiame include Ngemba Wayilwan, Morowari, Walkwan, Wongaibon, Ualarai, Kamilaroi and Wiradjuri. Other important figures include the kurrea serpent of the Boobera Lagoon (part of the Barwon River system), the warrior Toolalla, Yooneera and the eagle Mullian.¹⁸⁶ In 2005 The New South Wales Department of

¹⁸³ Tan, ‘The fish traps at Brewarrina are extraordinary and ancient structures. Why aren’t they better protected?’

¹⁸⁴ ‘Brewarrina Aboriginal Fish Traps/ Baiame's Ngunnhu’, NSW Government, Office of Environment and Heritage, accessed 17 May 2019, at <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/heritageapp/ViewHeritageItemDetails.aspx?ID=5051305>.

¹⁸⁵ Jessie Davis, ‘Outback joy as rains restart Barwon River running through Brewarrina to Menindee Lakes’, *ABC Western Plains*, 18 February 2020, accessed 18 February 2020, at https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-02-18/locals-overjoyed-as-barwon-river-runs-at-brewarrina/11975344?fbclid=IwAR0fVwG9uVfftnnnl5tcbrL9gwQoEmnIY7qR3LBbmssd6Mxr_AnXTx_lwQ

¹⁸⁶ Rando, *Looking after Baiame's Ngunnhu, Conservation Management Plan for the Brewarrina Fishtraps*, 8.

Environment commissioned a video recording of Auntie June Barker telling a young generation of Brewarrina residents the story of Baiame's journey up the East coast to form the ngunnhu.¹⁸⁷ I have transcribed Auntie June Barker's oral retelling below:

For thousands of years we have been told many stories about how the world came to be...the flat red ground was the beginning of the dreamtime. Baiame created the land of the moon and the sun... Baiame took giant steps from Hobart...and on to Brewarrina. Baiame stopped at the water hole and he was hungry, he saw a large black fish, raised his spear and struck the fish. The fish took off crashing through the rock wall and the water came out and filled the space, the fish burrowed into the ground and as Baiame chased the fish he cut into the ground making large holes in the earth and the rushing water filled in the holes, the fish was chased and the fish made bends in the earth. The black fish got away from Baiame, but they had created the mighty river and so for a while life for the people was good.

Later, the sun was scorching the earth and the waters and our people faced famine with no water there is no food. When Baiame found out he returned with his two sons. They were strong and scattered large stones and created the shape of the fish nets. But still there was no water. That evening the people held a corroboree for Baiame and he taught them how to do a coolamon to bring the rains. While the old men slept the dust clouds covered the moon and brought rain down to earth and the water rushed in to cover Baiame's ngunnhu (fish traps).

There were thousands of fish and the people were fed. This is our dreamtimes story about the special place.¹⁸⁸

It is vital to note that as with all oral histories, there are multiple versions of the creation story. It was important that the first narrative referenced in my research was the oral retelling in the voice of Aunty June Barker, who had a long-lasting reach in her role as storyteller and activist. The following version is that recorded by The NSW Department of Heritage:

¹⁸⁷ 'Baiame's Ngunnhu', 'Ngunnhu', 'the Brewarrina fish traps' and 'fish traps' may be used interchangeably in this chapter to refer to the stone aquaculture system at Brewarrina.

¹⁸⁸ I have transcribed this retelling myself.

According to legend, Baiame camped at a granite outcrop called Bai near present-day Byrock. A rock-hole located here was dug by him and the small depression nearby is where Baiame and his wives did their cooking. On the rock at Bai are impressions of a number of Baiame's weapons and utensils including his fighting club or bunid spear and dilly bag. He moved from here to Cobar where he camped in a large cave. The visible copper at Cobar is said to have been formed by the excrement of Baiame. From Cobar he travelled north.

Baiame reached the site where the ngunnhu now stands during a time of drought. The Ngemba Wayilwan people were facing famine as Gurrungga (the deep waterhole at Brewarrina upstream of the rock bar) had completely dried up. Upon seeing their plight, Baiame conceived of a gift for the Ngemba Wayilwan - an intricate series of fish traps in the dry riverbed. He designed the traps by casting his great net across the course of the river. Using the pattern of their father's net, Baiame's two sons Booma-ooma-nowi and Ghinda-inda-mui built the traps from stones.

Baiame then showed the Ngemba Wayilwan men how to call the rain through dance and song. Days of rain followed, filling the river channel and flooding Baiame's net which filled with thousands of fish. The old men rushed to block the entry of the stone traps, herding fish through the pens. Baiame instructed the Ngemba Wayilwan people in how to use and maintain the ngunnhu. Although they were to be the custodians of the fishery, Baiame declared that the maintenance and use of the traps should be shared with other cultural groups in the area. People from all of the groups that came to use and rely upon the fish traps had deep feelings of gratitude to Baiame.

Two large footprints made by Baiame remained at the ngunnhu. One was located opposite the rock called Muja, the other was some 350m downstream of the traps on the southern bank of the river. One of these imprints is still visible. It is a strong belief that wherever Baiame camped, some of his spirit remains at the site. This applies to the ngunnhu.

After creating the ngunnhu, Baiame's family group travelled further to the east. Their path is now the winding course of the Barwon River. The tracks of his spirit dogs who moved separately across the landscape formed the tributary streams of the Warrego,

Culgoa, Bokhara and Bogan Rivers. Before re-joining Baiame at a camp between Cumborah and Walgett, the dogs camped together on an arid plain, transforming it into Narran Lake. The Ualarai people call Narran Lake Galiburima which means Wild Dog Water.¹⁸⁹

The retelling above is taken from the heritage file on the Brewarrina fish traps, and it is therefore likely that the information accumulates many sources and voices into one narrative, for the purposes of presenting an in-depth source of culturally significant information.

Ngemba Elder Brad Steadman's retelling of the creation of the ngunnhu involves Baiame as an old man hunting fish by throwing spines and using them as spears. The fish escaped and its tail made a channel which became the river. 'The country dried out, kangaroos went away, plants died as drought came. The old man came back with his dogs and sons and said the drought was because people didn't know the law. He told them the songs to sing and the dances to dance so the rain would fall again and things would be as they are today'.¹⁹⁰ This retelling suggests a return to drought could be interpreted as a result the loss of, or weakened bond, of culture and knowledge related to management of climate. Similarly, Aunty June Barker's retelling of the story of the fish traps mentions Baiame teaching the local people how to summon rainfall at a corroboree.¹⁹¹

The Ngemba Wayilan were the custodians of the traps, but Baiame declared the use should be shared with others. Consequently, the traps became a place where people from many areas came to and relied on for sustenance a gratitude towards Baiame ran deep across the region.¹⁹² These links were maintained through regular travel routes and storytelling. Rivers provide routes for travel, and where people gather and pass each other spaces for trade inevitably open. While the people of the area had territories over which they held custodianship, marked by recognisable geographical features (including features such as hills and creeks), there was movement between regular campsites for different seasons and to access areas like the fish traps. Rando notes that 'archaeological remains are concentrated along riverine corridors, reflecting the intensive occupation of these areas.' In addition,

¹⁸⁹ 'Brewarrina Aboriginal Fish Traps / Baiame's Ngunnhu,' Office of Environment and Heritage.'

¹⁹⁰ Pascoe, *Dark Emu*, 56.

¹⁹¹ NSW Aboriginal Land Council, 'Legends and Landrights: Aunty June Barker', *YouTube*, 25 June 2012, accessed 15 April 2019, at <https://youtu.be/tekXieA1pCk>

¹⁹² Rando, *Looking after Baiame's Ngunnhu, Conservation management Plan for the Brewarrina Fishtraps*, 20.

settlers Charles Sturt and Thomas Mitchell both identified large encampments along the Darling River in 1829 and 1835 respectively.¹⁹³ These remains are varied from stone arrangements and burial grounds to scarred trees.

Rando writes that the Cainozoic basin of the Barwon River is coated by floodplain sediment deposits which have buried most of the bedrock.¹⁹⁴ Traces of yellow and red iron oxide are present in the low-lying cliffs alongside the southern banks of the Barwon River, ‘this clay exposure was an important source of ochre for bodily decoration [for the] Ngemba people.’¹⁹⁵ The connection of Country and identity in the area is articulated by Ngemba man Feli McHughes told *The Guardian* that the mood of the town is deeply connected to the state of the river flow. ‘We’re river people. When the water is running again it creates a good vibe.’¹⁹⁶ Use of the ngunhu was controlled in a form of environmental resource management. This often took the form of consumption similar to crop rotation, with evidence found of layers of different fish in middens around the riverbanks.¹⁹⁷ These layers demonstrate a rotation of consumption to allow for the maintenance of different fish populations. This control is evidence of active custodianship for the environment. McHughes explains the ingenuity of the traps lay in how they did not disrupt the flow of the river. ‘It could be left there permanently—when the gate wasn’t closed the fish could come back out if they wanted.’¹⁹⁸ The Department of Heritage also notes that Brewarrina has a heavy concentration of sites such as:

...axe grinding grooves, burial grounds, open campsites, knapping sites, scarred trees, ceremonial sites, middens and stone quarries. Prior to European disturbance, both banks of the river at the fish traps were lined by almost continuous middens with an accumulation of shells and other objects more than a metre deep.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹³ Rando, *Looking after Baiame's Ngunhu, Conservation management Plan for the Brewarrina Fishtraps*, 9.

¹⁹⁴ Rando, *Looking after Baiame's Ngunhu, Conservation management Plan for the Brewarrina Fishtraps*, 43.

¹⁹⁵ Rando, *Looking after Baiame's Ngunhu, Conservation management Plan for the Brewarrina Fishtraps*, 44.

¹⁹⁶ Tan, ‘The fish traps at Brewarrina are extraordinary and ancient structures. Why aren’t they better protected?’

¹⁹⁷ I would like to clarify that although I discuss middens in a riverine environment, middens are found in coastal environments as well.

¹⁹⁸ Tan, ‘The fish traps at Brewarrina are extraordinary and ancient structures. Why aren’t they better protected?’

¹⁹⁹ ‘Brewarrina Aboriginal Fish Traps / *Baiame's Ngunhu*,’ Office of Environment and Heritage.’ Some middens have been impacted by the harvesting of shells for lime production.

The number of sites around Brewarrina indicate that thousands of people utilised the fish traps for large meetings and celebrations. Baiame's ngunnuh at Brewarrina are excellent examples of built land management, sustainable harvesting and the role of spiritual narratives in everyday cultural practice. The oral and visual narratives of the fish traps provide a history of place and identity that tells a story of how the local foodscape operated. These sites remain important for the Ngemba people and have been identified by Elders as ideal locations for the Ngemba to utilise their instinctive custodianship skills.²⁰⁰

3.7.2 Value added abalone: When traditional practice impacts a bottom line

Fish traps were just one of the traditional fishing methods used by Aboriginal groups. Amongst some coast-based groups diving was a primary fishing method, particularly diving to harvest seafood including abalone. While community tastes differed, some European settlers shunned abalone meat, giving it the moniker 'mutton fish.' Pascoe suggests this dislike may have been due to the European cooking technique of preparing the flesh by boiling it - abalone should be quickly cooked over coals or seared to retain a delicate texture and avoid the chewy, 'mutton'-like texture.²⁰¹ It was the Australian Chinese community that started to make profits from the export of abalone meat in the twentieth century.²⁰² As a result of growing popularity abalone fishing quotas were introduced.²⁰³ From an ecological perspective these quotas prevented overfishing, something which had already decimated abalone populations in Japan. However, this has resulted in Aboriginal fishing being represented as poaching because abalone is so valuable. When it was 'mutton fish,' there were no restrictions of harvest loads, but since the export trade has increased the value, and 'mutton fish' has been.²⁰⁴

Increased discontent and division exists in seaside communities that harbour abalone. In 2016, an interview was conducted on ABC Radio National's *Backyard Briefing* with

²⁰⁰ Heather Goodall and Jodi Frawley, 'Upper Darling: Oral History of Feli McHughes', *Dharmae*, 12 January 2010, accessed 1 September 2020, at <https://dharmae.research.uts.edu.au/items/show/317>

²⁰¹ Pascoe, *Dark Emu*, 68-89.

²⁰² Pascoe, *Dark Emu*, 69.

²⁰³ See Department of Primary Industries, 'Abalone Fishery', accessed 5 January 2023, at <https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing/commercial/fisheries/abalone>

²⁰⁴ Pascoe, *Dark Emu*, 69.; Zane Ma Rhea also writes of the competition between Aboriginal communities and colonists in coastal waters. Zane Ma Rhea, *Frontiers of Taste: Sustainability and Indigenous-Settler Relations in Australia* (Singer: Verlag Singapore, 2016), 187.

Aboriginal fisher Wayne Carberry, a Walbunja man. Residents had seen Carberry going into the water and called Fisheries officers.²⁰⁵ Carberry remarks that this is a regular occurrence Aboriginal families are observed at the beach and often searched once they have finished fishing. Carberry articulates these experiences instil apprehensiveness and challenge connection to place.²⁰⁶

Aboriginal fishermen are often unable to afford lawyers that will fight the charges. They either represent themselves or plead guilty with an Aboriginal Legal Aid lawyer. Fisher John Carriage thinks the Fisheries are so belligerent because they know Aboriginal people have no one to stand ‘beside us, to help us in court.’²⁰⁸ The complexities of cultural fishing rights are shackled by inequitable legislation, social disruption and a disconnect between restrictions and rights.

A Native Title Claim is the only concrete approach to ensure communities are no longer regularly penalised for undertaking cultural fishing practice. Lawyer Kathy Ridge started a Native Title Claim in the Batemans Bay area and noted that the only barrier to the award of Native Title was that the communities cannot afford the \$80,000 they need to take the claim to court.²⁰⁹ Essentially the State is in an ethical bind, whereby they are prosecuting Aboriginal people who may have a yet to be recognised Native Title right to the waters on Country where they have fished for generations. Cultural fishing was recognised under New South Wales law in 2010 but so far, the process is restrictive.²¹⁰ The state delayed Section 21AA, which legally acknowledges the right of Aboriginal abalone fishing. Solicitor Kathryn Ridge says the state government needs to provide certainty for Aboriginal people by commencing cultural fishing legislation 21AA immediately rather than extending the six-year

²⁰⁵ Bronwyn Adcock, ‘Aboriginal Fishing: when Culture goes Criminal,’ *Backyard Briefing with Bronwyn Adcock*, ABC Radio National, 21 February 2016, accessed 19 May 2020, at <http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/backgroundbriefing/aboriginal-fishing:-when-culture-becomes-criminal/7180772#transcript>

²⁰⁶ Adcock, ‘Aboriginal Fishing: when Culture goes Criminal.’

²⁰⁸ Adcock, ‘Aboriginal Fishing: when Culture goes Criminal.’

²⁰⁹ Adcock, ‘Aboriginal Fishing: when Culture goes Criminal.’

²¹⁰ Cultural fishing permits can be applied for. The permit process is detailed requiring exact dates, names and addresses of any participants and the method of fishing. These permits treat cultural practice as one-off events and not part of a lifestyle. This speaks to a narrow departmental attitude towards Aboriginal identity performance. Department of Primary Industries, Application for an Authority to take fish for Aboriginal cultural fishing purposes, accessed 10 May 2022, at https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/631788/Form-24-Application-for-an-Authority-to-take-fish-for-Aboriginal-cultural-fishing-purposes.pdf

delay in its finalisation.²¹¹ This is really a question of ethics, of what is owed to the constituents of a state in terms of transparency and concrete knowledge of their rights. Associate Professor Stephan Schnierer, notes that fishing is a cultural practice and acknowledges that he is unsure whether the New South Wales government intended to use fisheries management to stop Aboriginal people from their cultural practices, but remarks that the fisheries management has blocked that cultural practice thereby impacting the maintenance of traditional knowledge and the ability to pass on traditional knowledge.²¹²

The middens around Bateman's Bay on the South Coast of New South Wales are full of abalone and shellfish remnants, evidence of at least hundreds of years old tradition of fishing. Carberry feels connected to this place. 'My ancestors roamed this part of the country, and I still continue to practice what I was taught...it's who I am, it makes me the person I am today.'²¹³ Carberry notes that some of his brothers are diabetic and insulin dependent and this physical barrier impacts their ability to fish for their own abalone catch. When this challenge is combined with the fisheries restrictions (which restrict access to traditional food) we see the damage caused, or at least triggered by, introduced foods contributing to development of diabetes in Indigenous communities as a form of violence.

The Department of Primary Industries established a temporary provision allowing Aboriginal people a fishing limit of ten abalone. This was an attempt to recognise the cultural connection Aboriginal people have to fishing practices and the harvesting of abalone. Speaking to Bronwyn Adcock at the ABC, Carriage discusses the kind of catch he looks to make when harvesting abalone and his experience with the Fisheries Office:

I'll get 30 or 40 abs. I've got six kids, me partner, then I look after me mother and father, they're an elderly couple now, 63 and 64 so when I go to the beach I just get what I can and feed my mum and dad and me sister, and my family..... As soon as they [Fisheries Officers] see an Aboriginal family at the beach, they sit there and

²¹¹ Mark White, 'Catch of Cultures', *SBS*, accessed 17 October 2019, at <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/feature/catch-cultures>.

²¹² Stephan Schnierer, *Aboriginal fisheries in New South Wales: Determining catch, cultural significance of species and traditional fishing knowledge needs* (Final Report to the Fisheries Research Development Corporation, Southern Cross University, November 2011), accessed 17 October 2019, at http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0018/423207/Aboriginal-fisheries-in-NSW-determining.pdf.

²¹³ Adcock, 'Aboriginal Fishing: when Culture goes Criminal.'

watch us all day, as soon as we finish they wait for us to get out on the highway and then they'll search the car and take our food off us.²¹⁴

Carriage has previously been imprisoned for partaking in cultural practice. His statement demonstrates the issues of racial profiling and tensions between the law and its representative bodies, and communities striving to retain their cultural practice and diet. Wayne Carberry cites the loss of traditional practice as a threat to community coherence. Adults, scared of prosecution, have stopped fishing and collecting not only abalone, but also bimbaldas and periwinkles, creating a barrier to the generational inheritance of knowledge of skills and identity. This results in a lack of pride in those identities and connections. The complexities of establishing satisfactory and consistent regulations around traditional fishing are exacerbated by recreational non-Aboriginal fishing communities such as the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers party a successful and influential minority political party.²¹⁵ In 2021 they had six elected MPs, a number which brings significant political clout.²¹⁶ The possibility of differing rules on non-commercial fishing quantities between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal people has the potential to cause civil upset amongst many constituents.

Professor D. K. Schrieber points out that the threat of overfishing (should Aboriginal people be given unchecked cultural fishing rights) is unlikely as Aboriginal people fished for thousands of years prior to European arrival. At that time fish were still plentiful, indicating that overfishing was not a problem. This correlates to the controlled fishing measures found in the riverine environment at Brewarrinna. In addition, the free diving practised by many Aboriginal divers rarely allows for a catch large enough for a wholesale market, effectively restricting the catch to community consumption. In this scenario there is a clash between perceptions of fishing as a harvesting process for culture and consumption, and an industry for consumerism and consumption. Schrieber does not raise an equally important point, that much of the contemporary Aboriginal population is also far smaller and more static than pre-colonisation and therefore their impact has a far smaller potential reach than ever.

²¹⁴ Adcock, 'Aboriginal Fishing: when Culture goes Criminal.'

²¹⁵ Prior to 2016 the party was known as The Shooters and Fishers Party.

²¹⁶ Robert Borsak (NSW), Robert Brown (NSW), Jeff Bourman (VIC), Daniel Young (VIC), Nigel Hallett (WA), and Rick Mazza (WA).

International demand for abalone has forced Aboriginal people out of easily engaging in traditional harvesting practices. Policy changes have soured relations between Aboriginal people and Fisheries Officers thereby creating what may become a tainted history for future Aboriginal owned fishing businesses. A now established cycle of criminalisation, penalisation and incarceration for cultural practice has impacted the generational inheritance of knowledge. These issues are raised to illustrate the need for agencies to work to support and celebrate the significant efforts made by Aboriginal communities, organisations, land councils and family groups to retain lived cultural heritage and land management practices.

3.7.3 Middens: The formation of a narrative landscape

The previous section discussed how marine and riverine fishing practices are lived cultural practice examples of custodianship of waterways, Country and community sustenance and particularly covered the narrative preserved by Baiame's ngunnu. Similarly the following section explores how middens are built narratives preserving the history of land and people.

Middens are spots where the deposits of meals have been made indicating a meeting and eating site for groups of people, they may also have been used for burials and for other ceremonial activities.²¹⁷ They are an example of a visual narrative, a built symbol formed to communicate aspects of the symbiotic relationship between humans and their environment. By failing to consult and work with Aboriginal peoples with regards to agricultural resources, colonisers committed large scale theft of aquatic produce, with species like abalone at the centre of this theft. Virtually all rivers in the Murray-Darling Basin have evidence of Aboriginal occupation, either through the presence of middens, scar trees, or artefacts.²¹⁸ Now largely classed as archaeological sites, middens are dotted around the coastal and river environments of Australia, particularly near estuaries, dunes and riverbanks. A large number remain clearly visible to this day and are labelled by the various state governments as 'relics' a term which, although it stamps the markings of history on the structures, does also apply an

²¹⁷ 'Shell Middens', NSW Office of Environment and Heritage, accessed 19 June 2016, at <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/nswcultureheritage/ShellMiddens.htm>.

²¹⁸ Scar trees are trees that have dried and scarred from the removal of bark, there are numerous reasons why Aboriginal people took bark from trees, as versatile and plentiful material it was used for a wide variety of tasks, including the construction of shelters, watercraft and containers; Andrew Long, 'Aboriginal Scarred Trees in NSW: A field guide', Department of Environment Department of Environment and Conservation NSW, accessed 4 August 2018, at <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/-/media/OEH/Corporate-Site/Documents/Aboriginal-cultural-heritage/aboriginal-scarred-trees-in-new-south-wales-field-manual-050054.pdf>, 6.

important category of heritage protection which makes it an offence to interfere with, remove, deface or conceal any site that may be culturally important.²¹⁹ The size of deposit sites varies depending on how regularly that particular site was used; some may be close to surface level and others may be a few metres deep in areas where consecutive generations utilised the same spot for their waste disposal. The site is usually the best spot in the area meaning it is a place that is easy to access, attractive, close to sheltered or calm water and a spot which is abundant with fish or shellfish. In some ways the midden was a reactionary structure to solve logistical issues including the weight of shellfish which required that the bulk of meat would need to be processed from the shell if it was being transported far from the harvesting site.²²⁰

Middens are an example of a form of food disposal as well to manage the impact of that disposal. Middens act as an effective way of preserving many shellfish shells, and therefore alter the levels of compaction in the soil layers. Shellfish shells, particularly oyster shells, have high levels of calcium carbonate, and this calcium has an impact on changed soil properties. The CSIRO has found that this source of calcium alters the microhabitats of the area and remedies saline soils. Today salinity is one of the major challenges in Australian soil quality. Similarly, the charcoal from fires used to open the bivalve molluscs and improve efficient meat extraction would also have contributed to the soil environment. Eventually the middens form either large mounds or bands of sediment and contribute to the changing formations of the landscape. Kombumerri ranger Clinton Brewer speaks about a midden in the Burleigh Heads National Park and the history of his ancestors' use of the site, saying, 'when they heavily used an area like this, for all the lovely resources, they bring their food back then cook it all and eat it all and put it back into a pile, to keep the area nice and clean. Part of Indigenous culture is obviously to look after the environment.'²²¹ In this way the midden is a form of ecological management. The top layer of the midden pile would indicate to those fishing what patterns of 'seasonal species exploitation' had occurred, including what was most recently consumed.²²² A different species would be selected for harvest and therefore the resources would have time to replenish. This demonstrates an established

²¹⁹ 'Aboriginal Shell Middens', *Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania*, published 4 September 2017, at <http://www.aboriginalheritage.tas.gov.au/cultural-heritage/aboriginal-shell-middens>

²²⁰ 'Aboriginal Shell Middens', *Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania*.

²²¹ Candice Marshall and Peter Brewer, 'Shell midden provides insight into indigenous life', *ABC Local*, 1 June 2012, accessed 16 May 2018, at <https://www.abc.net.au/local/audio/2012/05/25/3515206.htm>

²²² Marshall and Brewer, 'Shell midden provides insight into indigenous life.'

pattern of sustainable harvesting, shared resources and a sense of value for the maintenance of the ecological makeup of the location.

Middens reveal dietary patterns and the technology used to hunt and process food. They are often rich in oyster or cockle shells (especially in the Greater Sydney region) but also may contain animal bones, pollen samples and the remains of charcoal and ash from cooking fires. Occasional bird skeletons found in midden piles can demonstrate the season during which middens were occupied; the bones of shearwaters for example communicate that the midden was used in spring, which was when shearwaters were harvested during their migration.²²³ The most fascinating role of the midden is the midden as a text; as a method of communication through landscape. Landscapes, both natural and built, have always told stories; whether people pay attention as they pass by is an entirely different question. In *The Catch*, Anna Clark identifies that most federally archived visual art and written texts provide a distinctly colonial perspective of Aboriginal practices. In contrast, changes to the landscape—sometimes subtle, sometimes dramatic—communicate a different story. Clark refers to scars on tree trunks, engravings into sandstone and piles of middens as the Indigenous ‘archives.’²²⁴

Ecologist Paul Humphries calls for scientific investigation into the potential effect of the reduced interaction of Aboriginal peoples on the biotic and abiotic components of river systems to understand how and why freshwater ecosystems have changed, how best to restore them, and what conditions ultimately are desirable. Indigenous groups continue to utilise and modify the freshwater environment in many parts of Australia and want to be, and in some cases are already, actively involved in the management of freshwater resources.²²⁵

Settler records of established fishing methods are common. Charles Sturt noted the presence of scaffolding and weirs for catching fish in the Macquarie Marshes and on the Darling River and stated that the Indigenous peoples ‘main. . . food is fish, of which they have great

²²³ Atholl Anderson, John Head, Robin Sim, and Darrell West. ‘Radiocarbon Dates on Shearwater Bones from Beeton Shelter, Badger Island, Bass Strait’, *Australian Archaeology*, no. 42 (1996): 17–19.

²²⁴ Clark, *The Catch*, 17.

²²⁵ Humphries, ‘Historical Indigenous use of aquatic resources in Australia's Murray-Darling Basin, and its implications for river management,’ 108.

supplies in the river; still they have their seasons for hunting their emus and kangaroos.’²²⁶ Settler Mary Gilmore describes the use of fish ‘balks’ and traps in tributaries of main rivers, which allowed fish to move upstream, but hold them back when the flow in the streams subsided. Gilmore reported that the once abundant balks were destroyed by settlers or replaced with permanent and much larger dams. Gilmore claims that ‘. . . the conservation of fish in streams depended on them [the balks]; and that (as the Aborigines taught) without them the great fish would devour the smaller varieties and the end would be loss—a loss that the years since have proved fact.’²²⁷ Gilmore’s description of conscious fish farming schemes operated by Aboriginal people demonstrates ethics and a desire to live with the waterways and land, not on the land.

3.8 Conclusion

In this chapter I have used a food systems approach to address the production and processing stages of the Australian food system. I found that harvesting and cultivation had significant impact on the development of the native foods industry and this is explored in the first section of this chapter. I address the erasure of Indigenous agricultural history in Australia. I established that contemporary intellectual property legislation has had significant impacts on First Nations’ access to cultural practices, and also challenges access to self-determination. Extending this line of investigation, research and development of native plants, particularly the developing saline vegetable industry and native grains, were examined. Through case studies of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal led programs, this section assessed the different ways in which stakeholders engaged Indigenous ecological knowledge holders and the success with which they established benefits for those individuals and communities. The Yolngu Hope for Health program on Galiwin’ku demonstrated that the leadership of Yolngu women in developing food education and cultivation opportunities amongst their community is key to the improvements both in physical health and cultural and spiritual wellbeing and in the successful longevity and growth of the program. Bruce Pascoe’s research into mandayan nulluk native grains demonstrated how Aboriginal-led research and development provides the opportunity for cultural upskilling while reiterating a need for the broader industry to adapt to

²²⁶ Anthony Scott, *Historical evidence of native fish in the Murray-Darling Basin at the time of European settlement — From the diaries of the first explorers* (Cooperative Research Centre for Freshwater Ecology, 2005), 25.

²²⁷ Humphries, ‘Historical Indigenous use of aquatic resources in Australia’s Murray-Darling Basin, and its implications for river management,’ 109.

the slower pace of research and development that may be necessary for an ethical approach to developing the native food industry. Non-Indigenous led ventures in the space of Country and the native food industry have experienced difficulty in engaging community and traditional owners in long term projects. This was demonstrated in the case study of saline vegetable development in the Katanning area of Western Australia.

The central section of this chapter explored how the native game industry is perceived to be in keeping with, or in conflict with, conservation management. I determined that colonial narratives about native foods have had a longer lasting influence over attitudes towards native fauna than flora. These tensions were explored through case studies focused on the kangaroo industry in Australia. I then explored how commercial acceptance developed into international demand for native food products such as abalone, which has impacted the ways in which Aboriginal people can legally engage in cultural practice. Policy surrounding fishing licenses and catch limits has created tension between government bodies and Aboriginal communities.²²⁸ These tensions will likely reduce the appeal for future generations to work within a fishing industry perceived as hostile and which seems to reinforce a legacy of colonialism. The criminalisation of cultural practice, and therefore the state and federal obstruction of the generational inheritance of Indigenous ecological knowledge, is a negative result for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians. These examples serve to reiterate the need for agencies to work to support and celebrate the significant efforts made by Aboriginal communities, organisations, land councils and family groups to retain lived cultural heritage and land management practices.

Marine and riverine aquaculture has been shaped by Indigenous ecological knowledge holders in Aboriginal coastal nations for generations. Fishing has become a central part of an Australian narrative of identity, spanning Aboriginal, settler, and migrant cultures. Fishing as cultural practice for many contemporary Australian migrants has been a valuable tool for social acclimation as recreational engagement with land and waterways has served to establish a sense of place and belonging. Historical examples of riverine engineering and management, such as the Baiame's ngunnhu at Brewarrinna, provide visual symbols of food

²²⁸ Scott Hannaford, 'Cultural Fishing: Amid rising tensions between Indigenous fishermen and bureaucrats over catch limits, lawyers on both sides are beginning to square off', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2016, accessed 20 July 2017, at <https://www.smh.com.au/interactive/2016/cultural-fishing-fight/> See also discussion of Maningrida Seafood, Chapter Four of this dissertation.

management and sustainable harvesting. I found that the accompanying oral and visual narratives preserved by these sites highlight the role of spiritual narratives in everyday cultural practice and provide a history of place and identity that tells a story of how the local foodscape operated. I have explored the ways in which narrative, identity and history can be embedded in place and Country, and in doing so, reinforce the need to listen to alternate forms of knowledge presented in ways that may be different from typical academic or political communications. In the next chapter I address consumer interaction with the native food industry through the narratives constructed by the media and hospitality industries.

Chapter Four: Failures, successes, futures: Representation of Indigenous foodscapes in the hospitality and media industries

‘I like the idea of one of the oldest foods in the world becoming one of the newest food trends in the world.’

Clayton Donovan¹

4.1 Introduction

Expanding on the previous chapter’s discussion of agriculture, aquaculture and native foods, I determine that government and consumer supported schemes are necessary to ensure that commercialisation of native foods is led by, and retains space for, Aboriginal groups and individuals. This should safeguard the flow of benefits to traditional knowledge holders and ensure that Indigenous stakeholders are assured a platform to actively shape the industry. I explore how domestic and international media engage with the topic of Australian native foods. Media narratives contribute to existing bodies of knowledge and philosophies, including some that prop up a legacy of colonialism, although the gradually amplified voices of Indigenous media resists this. I argue the media industry should demonstrate greater awareness of this legacy. Academic publishing and newspapers are major agenda setters; therefore, a diverse variety of peer reviewed media platforms are needed to provide opportunities for diverse voices to be heard by broader audiences.²

In the second half of the twentieth century, journalists who wrote about food broke free from the limitations and boundaries of lifestyle publications. This transformation of the textual sites in which food was, and is, discussed highlights the importance of non-academic texts as well as the broader appeal of analytical and investigative discussions of food. These texts

¹ ‘Australia’s first and only indigenous hatted chef shares his passion ...’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 8 July 2016, accessed 16 August 2016, at <http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/lifestyle/aotd/australias-first-and-only-indigenous-hatted-chef-shares-his-passion-about-the-food-of-his-youth/news-story/fcfd8d1260f568099283404da47c16fb>.

² Francesc Fusté-Forné and Pere Masip, ‘Food in journalistic narratives: A methodological design for the study of food-based contents in daily newspapers’, *International Journal of Gastronomy and Food Science* 14 (2018): 14.

contribute to my discussion of food; therefore, culinary products become intellectual products.³

Interdisciplinary researcher Alana Mann advocates a food studies research perspective which entertains the idea of food citizenship that considers the eater as a citizen, rather than a consumer. The food citizen is able to recognise the role of food as a ‘mediator of relations within social networks.’⁴ I choose to retain the term ‘consumer’ but find that there is a need for increased organisational and individual engagement in consumer choices that is in line with concepts of responsible citizenship. Mann explores the digital foodspace which includes digital food activism as part of the role of the food citizen. Throughout this dissertation I have utilised digital media publications. Digital media is a publishing genre which provides the greatest platform for hospitality industry. This is because hospitality is an industry in which effective growth is closely linked to effective consumer and business exposure through digital networks.⁵ In the following section I investigate the experience of the consumer (or ‘citizen eater’) in the contemporary native food industry and address how the media and hospitality industries influence engagement with Australian native foods.

Key challenges faced by marginalised groups within the food industry include equity of access, representation, and benefits. Chef, researcher and woman of colour Jenny Dorsey posits that only privileged segments of the population - often affluent White men - can feasibly start a food business, acquire publicity and media support, and be rewarded (especially financially) for their work.⁶ Dorsey writes that scrutiny is warranted when an individual is utilising the foods of another culture, particularly a marginalised group, to reap a level of success and profit that is either unattainable or far more difficult to obtain for the people from that group.⁷ While Indigenous chefs are, and have always been, leaders in the

³ Pilar Opazo, ‘Discourse as driver of innovation in contemporary haute cuisine: the case of el Bulli restaurant’, *International Journal of Gastronomy and Food Science* 1, no. 2 (2012): 83. In this text Opazo paraphrases the work of Priscilla Ferguson on gastronomy in nineteenth century France. I utilise this source as I find the reflection on the culinary (domestic and material) can become an intellectual product through the transference of value via accepted knowledge holders and disseminators.

⁴ Alana Mann, ‘Hacking the Foodscape: Digital Communication in the Co-design of Sustainable and Inclusive Food Environments’, in *The Local and the Digital in Environmental Communication. Global Transformations in Media and Communication Research*, eds. J. Díaz-Pont, P. Maesele, A. Egan Sjölander, M. Mishra, and K. Foxwell-Norton (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 184.

⁵ Mann, ‘Hacking the Foodscape’, 187.

⁶ Jenny Dorsey, ‘Why can’t I just cook what I want and like? and other common sentiments in the food industry, examined’, *Instagram Post*, published 4 July 2020, accessed 7 July 2020.

⁷ Dorsey, ‘Why can’t I just cook what I want and like?’

native foods space the Australian hospitality sector is dominated by non-Indigenous professionals, indicating the need for Dorsey's critical approach.⁸

Dorsey's key analytical questions are as follows and provide a useful base for the case study analysis in this section:

1. Why is this person the right person to be disseminating their interpretation of this cuisine?
2. Is this person paying respect to, and representing properly, the ideas/ flavours/ principles of the cuisines they are drawing upon? If a consumer is interacting with this ingredient/ dish/ cuisine for the first time, are they receiving an education that is helpful or harmful?
3. If this person is profiting from the cuisine of a certain group of people, how is he/she uplifting that community so everyone in it has improved access to opportunities in the future?⁹

Dorsey determines that the nature of fusion is increasingly less significant as globalisation diversifies ingredients used in culinary environments. Instead, Dorsey stipulates not all fusion is equal; 'Some foods have evolved through migration or trading routes, others have changed under instances of colonialism, imperialism and war.'¹⁰ Dorsey advocates for a nuanced approach to education, and the framing and presenting of food, which acknowledges how past political and social tensions remain ingrained in culture. Dorsey resolves that chefs, and amateur cooks, who want to cook outside of their own culture need to engage in responsible practice, be conscious of the other cultures customs and experiences and assist that community to achieve equity. Dorsey's critique aligns with Mann's advocacy of citizen eaters, and my focus on individual and corporate ethical engagement with multiple foodscapes. This is a key theme in the following sections assessment of restaurants, chefs, and suppliers working with native foods, in particular the work of chef Jock Zonfrillo who provides an example of professionals navigating alliance and identity as an expert.

⁸ Aboriginal chefs Mark Olive, Ali and Mitch Torres, and Clayton Donovan are well known, but probably less so than non-Indigenous chefs Jock Zonfrillo, Kylie Kwong and Ben Shewry. Programs such as the National Indigenous Culinary Institute (NICI) may see that trajectory change but NICI is only a decade old, so graduating students are still considered early career chefs.

⁹ Dorsey, 'Why can't I just cook what I want and like?'

¹⁰ Dorsey, 'Why can't I just cook what I want and like?'

After extensive exposure to, and analysis of, Zonfrillo's expression and use of language, I feel he has moved to substitute the term 'fusion' with 'Australian' as he seeks to identify an 'Australian' cuisine. In doing so he denudes the term of much meaning. However, as with most terminological issues, the usage of fusion is more complex and interesting.

Experimental psychologist Charles Spence narrows the interpretation of fusion, observing that any non-South-East Asian dish involving, for example, citrus, could be considered a fusion food. Spence reflects:

All too easily, new fusion cuisine can end-up leading to 'con-fusion', especially if the consumer doesn't know how to 'read' the new culinary creation. Meanwhile other, apparently new, creations turn out, on closer inspection, to have older (often forgotten) roots.¹¹

I appreciate Spence's use of 'read' which implies the citizen consumer will automatically engage with, and interpret, their meal. Spence argues that fusion foods are symbolic of a broader issues in socio-cultural transaction. I demonstrate this by discussing how the native food industry and related Australian foodscapes provide an important cultural commentary on the dissemination of narrative identities within colonial Australia.

Spence ascertains that contemporary interest in fusion foods exists 'independent of any deeper concern for social/cultural/historical issues' and is instead aligned more with 'an interest in novelty in cuisine and... in experimenting with food than with anything else.'¹² This concern for potential disregard of social, cultural, and historical issues highlights the importance of one of my key questions: What are the responsibilities of hospitality businesses and consumers regarding innovative business models and modes of interacting with Indigenous communities and their cultural knowledge? That is to say, who is responsible for 'nudging' the consumer towards respectful engagement with native foods?

Dorsey's concerns find footing in an assessment of cultural capital in the culinary environment. Other scholars investigating and writing on parallel topics have endeavoured to

¹¹ Charles Spence, 'Contemporary fusion foods: How are they to be defined, and when do they succeed/fail?', *International Journal of Gastronomy and Food Science* 13 (2018): 101.

¹² Spence, 'Contemporary fusion foods: How are they to be defined, and when do they succeed/fail?', 102.

empirically test associations of socioeconomic position with cultural capital and food choices and found that ‘cultural capital may be a promising determinant for [socioeconomic inequalities in] food choices.’¹³ Carlijn Kamphuis et al. stress that cultural capital may be a ‘potentially powerful explanation for inequalities in food choices’; they specify that cultural capital is a form of currency that can be inherited (for example the dominant cultural capital in contemporary Australia is usually White and middle to upper class).¹⁴ The transference of White cultural capital onto endogenous foods may increase their value and move them out of the reach of lower socio-economic groups and large swathes of the Australian population. This may include Aboriginal people, some of whom have a more distant relationship with their culture as a result of forced removal or assimilation practices and may seek to strengthen that relationship. Furthermore, ‘Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous food is symbiotic, both exist because food is a manifestation of culture by acts of harvesting and consumption.’¹⁵ This is typical of many regions and kinship groups globally though some, frequently those living in urbanised areas have, for myriad reasons, not retained these practices. Aboriginal cultural practices of consuming, hunting, and cooking native foods are integral aspects of the culture of kinship groups and nations catalogued in oral traditions and reflecting the stories and identities of Country, land and the people that reside there. I argue that as endogenous food become celebrated in contemporary Australian food culture the media, hospitality, and agriculture industries must take on a social responsibility for the appropriate communication and handling of traditional ecological and cultural knowledge.

4.2 Restaurants as food networks

A restaurant is an extension of the kitchen and family dining room. Across many cultures the kitchen is a space of gathering, a domestic temple, a space of provision and a space of discussion. The restaurant encompasses all of the above: gathering, cooking, provision and discussion, while adding elements of excitement and luxury to appeal to their desired customer base. The contemporary restaurant is a space in which the consumer can experiment safely and put their trust in the chef’s ability to expand their culinary experience in a way they

¹³ C. B. M. Kamphuis, T Jansen, J. P. Mackenbach, and F. J. van Lenthe, ‘Bourdieu’s Cultural Capital in Relation to Food Choices: A Systematic Review of Cultural Capital Indicators and an Empirical Proof of Concept’, *PloS One* 10, no. 8 (2015).

¹⁴ Kamphuis et al., ‘Bourdieu’s Cultural Capital in Relation to Food Choices’, 16 and 3.

¹⁵ Danielle Logue, Alexandra Pitsis, Sonya Pearce, and John Chelliah, ‘Social enterprise to social value chain: Indigenous entrepreneurship transforming the native food industry in Australia’, *Journal of Management & Organization* 24, no. 2 (2018): 318.

would not otherwise attempt.¹⁶ The emergence of the restaurant did not simply change the spaces in which food was prepared (with an increase in eating out of the home) but also influenced tastes within the home. As urbanisation in Australia accelerated in the twentieth century so followed a growing disenchantment with native foods. This was a departure from a lingering consensus in the early twentieth century that native foods were considered part of what historian Barbara Santich considers to be ‘Australianness’.¹⁷ Santich references a gamut of twentieth century texts, including particularly the *Kookaburra Cookery Book* (1911), the 1957 edition of *Oh for a Man who Cooks* which provided recipes for kangaroo steak, roast kangaroo, wild rabbit, and ducks, supplementary printed material like the 1955 South Australian Country Women’s Association calendar of meat and fish recipes featuring recipes for roast galah, baked wild duck, wallaby pie, kangaroo steaks and pigeon pie. It is possible that Santich is overstating the revelations of a few cookbooks which had started to contribute to a wider cultural phenomenon which would become known in the latter half of the twentieth century as ‘Australiana’ - a trend now considered by many as dated and geared only toward the tourist market.¹⁸ Despite a decline in interest in these recipes in the home kitchen, there has been a contemporary resurgence of interest in the hospitality industry. The following section forms a brief review of some key restaurants that have been invested in the native foods industry since the late twentieth century.

The introduction of native foods into the contemporary Australian hospitality scene has been led predominantly by White chefs and restaurateurs. It is an uncomfortable reality that the efforts of Indigenous chefs to introduce their own foods have charted a far slower journey than White colleagues pursuing the same path. Well-respected Aboriginal chef Clayton Donovan left Australia after he was unable to succeed working with native foods. In 2008 he returned and discovered that same cuisine had been spearheaded by predominantly White chefs. Donovan is a Gumbayaggir man from the mid north coast of New South Wales, Australia and is Australia’s only hatted Indigenous chef.¹⁹ Donovan has since become a household name, successfully running his restaurant Jaaning Tree and presenting an ABC

¹⁶ The restaurant is a space which only became accessible to a broader spectrum of socio-economic groups in Australia in the twentieth century, although public houses, canteens, dining rooms and so on have been a feature of cities since urbanisation began.

¹⁷ Barbara Santich, *Bold Palates: Australia’s Gastronomic Heritage* (Adelaide: Wakefield, 2012), 16.

¹⁸ Santich, *Bold Palates: Australia’s Gastronomic Heritage*, 16.

¹⁹ Karina Marlow, ‘Meet the Mob’, *SBS NITV*, 7 October 2016, accessed 29 November 2022, at <https://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/article/meet-the-mob-chef-clayton-donovan/3dct5eska>

series called *Wild Kitchen* (2014).²⁰ Donovan has lent his name to a collaboration on a native cider and has stepped up to regularly discuss the potential of Australian food with the media.²¹ Donovan's mission is similar to that of Jock Zonfrillo at Orana in Adelaide: to bring native foods firmly into mainstream culinary appreciation. Contemporary Australian cooking is a fusion of bistro and Asian foods (a reflection of a modern, initially migrant, now multicultural community). Zonfrillo and Donovan seek to create a fusion of existing modern Australian cuisine and native foods to complexify that culinary narrative and bridge cultural gaps. While Zonfrillo calls for an Australian cuisine, Donovan, goes further declaring 'Australia is my restaurant' in reference to the great abundance of natural produce and varied plant life.²² Donovan was one of the first chefs to promote the concept of reconciliation on a plate: 'We are governed by the need to eat; it's the oldest ritual and there's chemistry that happens around a table that people take for granted.'²³ Donovan's approach is an example of advocates from within the hospitality industry utilising their skills to create food networks to promote broader experiences of reconciliation and cultural learning. There has been increased acceptance and understanding of native foods in Australia. Native foods are now understood to be a mark of culinary distinction. These approaches are bolstered by positive reception of fine dining experiences particularly Ben Shewry's Attica in Melbourne and Jock Zonfrillo's Orana in Adelaide. The fine dining environment is an environment steeped in concepts of artistic patronage and the high prices allows for chefs to experiment with unusual ingredients and techniques.

One of the earliest commercially successful restaurants serving native foods was Sydney based Edna's Table which opened in 1981 and was the brainchild of siblings Raymond and Jennice Kersh, working class Australian Jews from inner city Sydney. Their interest in, and appreciation, for native foods was not borne simply from a fascination with, and desire for, novelty, but from a gradual exposure to, and consumption of, native foods that occurred

²⁰ Simon Portus and Claire Lindsay (dir.), *Wild Kitchen* (2014), Australian Broadcasting Corporation. at <https://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/the-screen-guide/t/wild-kitchen-with-clayton-donovan-2014/33898/>

²¹ 'Donovan uses native flavours in new cider range', *Coffs Coast Advocate*, 27 March 2016, accessed 20 October 2016, at <http://www.coffscostadvocate.com.au/news/donovan-uses-native-flavours-in-new-cider-range/2975819/>; The Daily Telegraph, 'Australia's first and only indigenous hatted chef shares his passion ...', *The Daily Telegraph*, 8 July 2016, at from <http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/lifestyle/aotd/australias-first-and-only-indigenous-hatted-chef-shares-his-passion-about-the-food-of-his-youth/news-story/fcfd8d1260f568099283404da47c16fb>

²² John Donegan, 'Indigenous Chef Clayton Donovan is an evangelist for bush food', *ABC*, 9 July 2015, accessed 7 March 2016, at <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-07-09/indigenous-chef-clayton-donovan-is-an-evangelist-for-bush-food/6606444>.

²³ Donegan, 'Indigenous Chef Clayton Donovan is an evangelist for bush food.'

while travelling the country working as chefs. The Kershes worked in the West Australian Kimberley region, eating with White and Aboriginal stockmen, and residents of remote communities. The Kershes employed business and community approaches in line with those advocated by the Merne Altyerre-ipenhe Reference group: they sought to ensure lasting benefit schemes were established for Indigenous Australians, their most lasting contribution being their involvement in Yaama Dhinawan, the hospitality centre at the North Eveleigh Training Centre. In their cookbook *Edna's Table* (1998), the Kershes write that they believed 'Australians would start to look at what we have in this country and use what grows here naturally, instead of always trying to grow what comes from another land.'²⁴ They discuss the 'unnecessary struggle' of farmers, who attempted to utilise European methods of farming when alternatives existed including plentiful produce growing successfully in shallower topsoil with limited irrigation.²⁵ Raymond Kersh reflects that this is linked to a communal disconnect with land, 'Most Australians have no idea what the bulk of this country really looks like.'²⁶

Social researcher Rebecca Huntley interviewed Jennice Kersh, who expressed her desire to see children 'take sandwiches to school filled with warrigal greens, kangaroo prosciutto and wild Davidson plum chutney.'²⁷ What was Jennice Kersh's hope then is still the hope of many involved in the industry today. This hope is for acceptance rooted in the potential of endogenous foods to unite Indigenous and non-Indigenous people through shared taste. Consumption as reconciliation is a concept that is contentious. It is accessible and palatable, yet Jennice Kersh observed that a 'Western Australian sitting down for bush tucker in a restaurant [is] a thin, fairly shallow version of reconciliation', a commercially inspired reconciliation.²⁸ Kersh is not alone. Scholars continue to question the 'putative positives of cross-cultural consumption asking to what extent – if at all – 'experiences of otherness through food' ... contribute 'to positive relationships across difference'.²⁹ Lara Anderson and Heather Benbow conclude that 'a mainstream enjoyment of ethnic cuisines is not a panacea

²⁴ Jennice Kersh and Raymond Kersh, *Edna's Table* (London: Hodder Headline, 1998), 22.

²⁵ Kersh and Kersh, *Edna's Table*, 22.

²⁶ Kersh and Kersh, *Edna's Table*, 18.

²⁷ Barbara Huntley, *Eating Between the Lines: Food and equality in Australia* (Melbourne: Black Inc Books, 2008), 101.

²⁸ Huntley, *Eating Between the Lines*, 102.

²⁹ Lara Anderson and Heather Merle Benbow, 'Cultural Indigestion in Multicultural Australia: Fear of 'Foreign' Foods in Australian Media,' *Gastronomica* 15, no.1 (2015): 42.

for long-standing xenophobic discourses.’³⁰ Charlotte Crow determines that native food consumption is valorised as a corrective rejection of colonialism, food and politics.³¹ Crow argues that this attitude entertains the idea that colonisation is finished business. While Crow’s analysis is thorough, clear and well-grounded, I disagree with the conclusion that these ideas assert colonisation as finished business; rather, there is space for both ‘enlightened’ (although I prefer to term this ‘informed’) consumption of native foods and increased economic support for Indigenous food businesses within a cultural awareness of the continual impact of colonisation. Jennice Kersh thought that collaboration between Western Australian and North Queensland farmers with Indigenous communities in an export industry would inspire a reconciliation based on economic desires which have a strong cultural hold in the Australian psyche and form the basis for survival in our consumerist society.³²

I conclude this review by profiling a contemporary restaurant working to ensure Indigenous people are at the forefront of the customer facing native foods industry. Charcoal Lane, a modern mission kitchen on Wurundjeri Country (in Fitzroy, Victoria), has cultivated a strong customer base and developed a diversified image. Journalist Marian Digges identifies the restaurant as a multi-use space offering lessons in ‘culture and connection to land’.³³ Charcoal Lane is funded, and run, by Mission Australia. The Mission Australia website describes Charcoal Lane as ‘a social enterprise’ delivered by ‘Mission Australia, Victorian Aboriginal Health Service, and the William Angliss Institute.’³⁴ Charcoal Lane combines its restaurant arm, with a menu specialising in native flavours, with ‘a comprehensive training program for young people who have experienced barriers to employment.’³⁵ The program provides training for up to twenty-four Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal young people. The work is supported by case workers and incorporates ‘community mentoring and career

³⁰ Amanda Wise, ‘Moving Food: Gustatory Commensality and Disjuncture in Everyday Multiculturalism’, *New Formations* no 74 (2012), 85.; Anderson and Benbow, ‘Cultural Indigestion in Multicultural Australia,’ 42.

³¹ Charlotte Crow, ‘Tasting Territory: Imagining Place in Australian Native Food Packaging’, *Locale: The Australasian-Pacific Journal of Regional Food Studies* 2 (2012), 16.

³² Huntley, *Eating Between the Lines: food and equality in Australia*, 101.

³³ Marian Digges, ‘Melbourne’s Charcoal Lane is plating up more than just bush tucker’, *SBS Australia*, 25 January 2018, accessed 25 Jan 2018, at https://www.sbs.com.au/food/article/2018/01/25/restaurant-run-indigenous-youths-tells-stories-behind-plates?cx_navSource=related-side-cx#cxrecs_s.

³⁴ ‘Charcoal Lane Program’, *Mission Australia*, accessed 23 July 2018, at <https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/servicedirectory/188-education-training-employment/charcoal-lane-program>.

³⁵ ‘Charcoal Lane Program’, *Mission Australia*.

planning guidance.’³⁶ The result is professional training and an industry recognised certificate in Hospitality Operations or Commercial Cookery.

Troy Crellin, project manager for Charcoal Lane, describes the dining experience as follows:

Charcoal Lane’s diners are treated to a journey of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander food and culture at every sitting... It offers a unique, positive dining experience that unites Aboriginal heritage with Fitzroy’s stylish gastronomy experience while providing a supported, hands-on traineeship program for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander aspiring chefs and hospitality stars. The success of the program relies on customers choosing to dine and spend their money on not only a unique, Australian dining experience but to invest in the futures of young people.³⁷

Charcoal Lane seeks to provide an experience that moves the diner beyond experiences based simply on taste and look. Digges writes that certain dishes are brought to the table by a chef or staff member who introduces themselves, talks about their community and explains why the food served is important or meaningful. The manager describes the experience for the guest as ‘powerful’ and for the employee ‘empowering.’³⁸ I personally attended a dinner at Charcoal Lane in 2018 and experienced the depth of information the staff shared about the food, the tasting notes they highlighted, and their personal preferences which were expressed openly and enthusiastically.³⁹

Digges writes that the menu ‘far surpasses bush tucker.’ I suggest Digges attempts to distance Charcoal Lane from a cultural cringe hangover that associates ‘bush tucker’ with either a supposedly unappealing diet of grubs and leaves or the self-titled ‘Bush Tucker Man,’ television presenter Les Hiddins.⁴⁰ Each plate at Charcoal Lane is ‘a celebration of Aboriginal culture in the past, present and future ... a reminder of a culinary story spanning

³⁶ ‘Charcoal Lane Program’, *Mission Australia*.

³⁷ ‘Charcoal Lane Program’, *Mission Australia*.

³⁸ Digges, ‘Melbourne’s Charcoal Lane is plating up more than just bush tucker.’

³⁹ I visited *Charcoal Lane* on 16 March 2018 and some of this section is based on my experience there.

⁴⁰ I would note that the cultural cringe is applied by white Australian attitudes, bush tucker is a well-used phrase in Aboriginal English. Digges, ‘Melbourne’s Charcoal Lane is plating up more than just bush tucker’; Les Hiddins, ‘Bush Tucker Man,’ *Australian Broadcasting Corporation*, 1990.; Les Hiddins, ‘Bush Tucker Man: Stories of Survival with Les Hiddins’, *Australian Broadcasting Corporation*, 1996.

hundreds of generations.’⁴¹ In addition, restaurant manager Nick Temple believes serving native Australian foods allows a finer concentration on, and knowledge of, each step of the sourced ingredients supply chain. Temple told *Matters Journal* that a dish like ‘wild culled kangaroo with some foraged warrigal greens and native thyme [allows the restaurant to] ... serve a meal which is organic, sustainably grown and has relatively low food miles.’⁴²

Charcoal Lane contributes to the emerging native foods market and Indigenous communities by encouraging public investment in Indigenous youth. Their model creates a cycle of interaction with, and financial support of, Indigenous business and knowledge. The food traditions that isolated residents of Brewarrinna mission now hold value that is recognised across a broader cross section of society. I do however continue to reflect that to achieve this Indigenous knowledge and food had to twist itself to fit into a western ideal of ‘valuable’ culture.

I have regularly referenced cultural cringe in Australia, Charcoal Lane restaurant manager Nick Temple touches on this disconnect:

People talk about Australia not having a cuisine, and cuisine and culture are so linked...A lot of Australians don’t get taught about the Indigenous heritage of our country and don’t personally seek more information.⁴³

Temple identifies fear as a primary factor for consumer’s reluctance to experiment but notes that an environment which is totally unfamiliar can also push people to question and learn. Temple believes dining at Charcoal Lane ‘makes people recognise how much they don’t know about the country they live in.’⁴⁴ The significance of place is at play at Charcoal Lane. The large imposing building at 136 Gertrude Street, Fitzroy previously housed the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service.⁴⁵ I suggest that medicine ceding the space to make way for a different form of community service imbues a valuable history of health and community

⁴¹ Digges, ‘Melbourne’s Charcoal Lane is plating up more than just bush tucker.’

⁴² Samantha Alleman, ‘Indigenous Foods: Swallowing Our History’, *Matters Journal*, 30 May 2018, accessed 24 December 2018, at <https://mattersjournal.com/stories/swallowingourhistory>

⁴³ Alleman, ‘Indigenous Foods: Swallowing Our History.’

⁴⁴ Alleman, ‘Indigenous Foods: Swallowing Our History.’

⁴⁵ The Victorian Aboriginal Health Service moved to 136 Gertrude Street and remained there from 1979–1993. Yarra City Council, *Aboriginal History of Yarra*, 2022 at <https://aboriginalhistoryofyarra.com.au/sites-of-significance/ml7-victorian-aboriginal-health-service-229-gertrude/>

support to the site and fosters a site-based connection between medicine, health and food. The building wall is adorned with imagery, a large mural completed by a team led by Gunnai Waradjeurie man Robert Young features Bunjil the eagle, the creator spirit of the Kulin nation.⁴⁶ The faces of the Aboriginal people depicted are left blank. This mural was created for the Aboriginal people of Australia (rather than as a commentary to all people), and the blank faces allow older, younger and future generations to mentally project their own family and friends into the blank space.⁴⁷



Figure 6. Duke and Duchess of Sussex at *Charcoal Lane* Restaurant Melbourne. Photograph by Penny Bradfield.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ ‘A Mural Worth a Thousand Words’, *Charcoal Lane*, 14 August 2017, accessed 07 July 2018, at <https://www.charcoallane.com.au/news/19-a-mural-worth-a-thousand-words>.

⁴⁷ The mural was designed by Young and completed by artists Heeka and Mika Maka with funding procured by Yarra City Council: <https://arts.yarracity.vic.gov.au/arts-programs/public-art/celebration-dreaming-at-charcoal-lane>.

⁴⁸ Mission Australia, ‘Mission Australia’s Charcoal Lane plates up native cuisine for The Duke and Duchess of Sussex’, 18 October 2018, accessed 12 September 2020, at <https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/media-centre/media-releases/mission-australia-s-charcoal-lane-restaurant-plates-up-native-cuisine-for-the-duke-and-duchess-of-sussex>

4.3 The amateur anthropologist, friend and foe: the evolving role of alliance, advocacy and solidarity with a case study of chef Jock Zonfrillo

This section explores the career of chef Jock Zonfrillo to discuss differing approaches to information gathering, relationship building and benefit sharing. Amateur anthropological work has caused controversy in Australia since the 1800s. Texts containing Indigenous knowledge, frequently made public or stored at Universities, have been criticised as damaging to the very cultures they recorded by transferring the power of Indigenous ecological knowledge into non-Indigenous institutions. Retrospective usefulness has been found for these volumes as the process of repatriating the knowledge recorded continues. Relationships between early anthropologists and Australian Indigenous communities provide contemporary scholars with local examples of the relationship between the wider academic community and Indigenous communities. In contemporary Australia anthropology is a discipline with clearly demarcated ethical boundaries and parameters. There is tension surrounding non-Indigenous people using the platforms and knowledge networks they are privileged enough to have access to even if their intention is to preserve Indigenous heritage, I find this to be the case in Zonfrillo's career. This tension has developed after generations of institutional damage to Indigenous knowledge pathways and communities.⁴⁹ It is an uncomfortable half solution, invaluable for future generations, yet also a non-Indigenous band aid for a wound for which non-Indigenous people are responsible.

It is here that I turn to the concept of the ally. Adam Barker writes in depth about the complexities of allyship in the Canadian context.⁵⁰ This context is similar to Australia's own colonial and neo-colonial power structures. Barker identifies passive understandings of 'normal' alongside psychological and emotional barriers, as handicaps for settlers who lean towards ally action.⁵¹ Barker uses the term settlers in place of the term non-Indigenous

⁴⁹ Sorrel Moseley-Williams, 'How Chef Jock Zonfrillo Is Helping Bring Back Australia's Indigenous Food Culture', *The Independent*, 31 August 2018, accessed 10 September 2018, at <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/food-and-drink/jock-zonfrillo-scottish-chef-australia-aboriginal-food-culture-orana-restaurant-a8513231.html>.

⁵⁰ Adam Barker, 'From Adversaries to Allies: Forging Respectful Alliances between Indigenous and Settler Peoples' in *Re/Envisioning Indigenous-non-Indigenous Relationships*, ed. Lynne Davis (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010).

⁵¹ Barker, 'From Adversaries to Allies: Forging Respectful Alliances between Indigenous and Settler Peoples', 380.

throughout his work thereby including contemporary generations in the settler narrative. This is deliberate, Barker stipulates that to be an ally an individual or company must recognise that the need for action in a real and present struggle. Narrative applications of the past are often pasted over institutional violence towards Indigenous people as a way to absolve contemporary leaders. In the same vein Australians must consider what benchmarks success, for example Ma Rhea argues many Indigenous Australians are food secure but do not have food sovereignty.⁵² Barker stresses that theories of alliance must be fluid to retain usefulness. I have a working understanding of effective allyship and hence, positive Indigenous and non-Indigenous alliances, as ideally rooted in non-interference, relationship building and dynamic alliance.

Academic James L. Cox casts early anthropologist T.G.H. Strehlow in the role of a translator who provided the ‘outside’ world with information about Aboriginal communities and rituals while sitting with the Arrernte peoples as an ‘insider,’ one who was trusted with secrets and stories.⁵³ Cox provides an opposing perspective to criticisms of Strehlow as someone who may have exploited the trust of the Arrernte people. Cox places Strehlow in the role of necessary ally and preservationist of language and ritual noting that Strehlow’s work preserved cultural traditions that were under siege from secularisation before his projects even began. I suggest that Cox’s approach to Strehlow aligns with my approach in this chapter as I assess public perception of non-Indigenous chef Jock Zonfrillo who works with traditional Indigenous knowledge. Where Cox notes that Strehlow found that the Arrernte had become outsiders because they had ‘forgotten their ancient traditions’ I find that the establishment of The Orana Foundation (dedicated to the preservation of knowledge of endogenous foods) is Zonfrillo’s attempt to assist in mitigating that same risk of cultural loss.⁵⁴

I posit that Scottish emigrant chef Jock Zonfrillo and his work across various industries and platforms including television, hospitality and more recently not for profit and research

⁵² Ma Rhea, *Frontiers of Taste*, 187. To further complicate this, Ma Rhea purports that Indigenous food sovereignty is widely regarded as incommensurable with the modern nation-building project Australia engages in. Ma Rhea, *Frontiers of Taste*, 185.

⁵³ James L. Cox, *Restoring the Chain of Memory T.G.H Strehlow and the repatriation of Australian Indigenous Knowledge*, (Sheffield: Equinox, 2018).

⁵⁴ Cox, *Restoring the Chain of Memory: T.G.H Strehlow*, 137.

pushes him into the space of an insider-outsider. Zonfrillo is, by his birth and life experience, an outsider to Indigenous communities but he is also an insider to a number of Aboriginal people with whom he has built relationships around the practice of shared food and knowledge. Zonfrillo's relationship is coloured by an intention to provide alliance and advocacy to the communities with whom he works. Zonfrillo is a chef and television presenter (*Nomad Chef* [2014], *Restaurant Revolution* [2015], *Chef Exchange* [2016-2018], *MasterChef Australia* [2020-]) whose charisma and confidence has garnered attention from media outside of the realm of lifestyle media to which food is usually relegated. Restaurant Orana was the cornerstone of Zonfrillo's efforts to support the preservation of Aboriginal knowledge through community research, and to create an authentic Australian cuisine by merging his own fine dining culinary training with the produce and techniques of Australia's First Nations. Zonfrillo describes his purpose as, 'to preserve and evolve Australian food culture, advocate progressive policies for Australian ingredients, assist Indigenous enterprise, and create and innovate through research and development.'⁵⁵ Orana operated 2013 - 2020 and its reputation maintained a steady upwards trajectory.⁵⁶ Orana featured a menu of native ingredients, the fare was recognisably 'fine dining' and often likened to New Zealand chef Ben Shewry's Melbourne restaurant Attica. However, where Attica retains a sense of humour in its food (including playful dishes that refer to modern Australian food culture, such as Gazza's Vegemite Pie), Orana's menu was described as 'something from a Roald Dahl book' focusing on unfamiliar combinations, clusters of complementary ingredients served to support native foods, for example Coorong mullet with Geraldton wax and watercress.⁵⁷

South Australian newspaper *The Lead* reported Orana as having thirty-four ingredients unique to Australia on the menu at any one time.⁵⁸ Although this dedication might be expected from an Australian born (or raised) chef, Zonfrillo emigrated to Australia as an adult. It is, perhaps, his initial cultural distance that can be credited with his instantaneous identification of the disconnect between the food served and eaten by the majority of

⁵⁵ 'The Board', *The Orana Foundation*, accessed 3 November 2017, at <http://theoranafoundation.org/board/>

⁵⁶ Zonfrillo announced the closure of Restaurant *Orana* shortly after the launch of The Orana Foundation in late 2020: Annabelle Cloros, 'Jock Zonfrillo closes Restaurant *Orana*', *Hospitality Magazine*, 8 October 2020, accessed 10 October 2020, at <https://www.hospitalitymagazine.com.au/jock-zonfrillo-closes-restaurant-orana/>

⁵⁷ Zane Lovitt, 'Jock Zonfrillo: Outback to the Future', *Fools Magazine*, accessed 15 October 2020, at https://www.fool.se/from_the_foolarchives/#dearflip-df_1071/1/

⁵⁸ Mark Chipperfield, 'Jock Zonfrillo forages across the globe for *Nomad Chef* TV series', *The Lead*, 5 September 2014, at <http://theleadsouthaustralia.com.au/lifestyle/jock-zonfrillo-forages-across-the-globe-for-nomad-chef-tv-series-2/>.

Australia, and the country's long history. This was hardly a new revelation; Barbara Santich references this very confusion, quoting the reflection of an American tourist who, half a century earlier noted, 'Murray River cod, Sydney oysters ... Australian lamb are unrivalled in flavour and quality, but no hotel seems to serve them in any way that may be considered characteristically Australian.'⁵⁹ Zonfrillo's search to 'realise' an Australian cuisine began from this struggle to encounter uniquely Australian ingredients and flavour profiles. Zonfrillo gives an example of his experience across Australian kitchens speaking about opening a 'pantry and being faced with many Japanese and Asian ingredients and wondering 'Where are all the Aboriginal people and Indigenous ingredients?'⁶⁰ Zonfrillo has travelled to many communities both urban and remote to learn from different Aboriginal peoples across Australia and he reflects that through his discussions he learned that contrary to western perceptions of Aboriginal foods as survival resources, food was actually about pleasure, seasons, and flavour.⁶¹ This new understanding was contrary to the opinion of chefs he met in urban kitchens, who he felt demonstrated dismissive attitudes towards native foods. Zonfrillo notes many of those chefs were of the opinion that Aboriginal communities would 'just chuck stuff in the fire, they just eat to sustain life, basically they just eat because they have to eat.'⁶² Zonfrillo claims that when a White person was asked about Aboriginal culture he found they were abrasive, avoidant or simply ignorant and reflecting the attitude he encountered suggested that 'this Indigenous ingredients culture and food doesn't exist, forget about it.' He 'went back to London and kept thinking about the oldest surviving culture in the world and I didn't see any of it and that screwed with my head.'⁶³ Zonfrillo's later experience with Indigenous communities taught him that regardless of their disparate geographic locations, there was a clear understanding of the science of cooking, flavour and the impact technique has on flavour.

Correcting outdated perceptions is crucial to change the discourse surrounding native Australian foods. Zonfrillo used his personal and professional platform to share and inform others. Zonfrillo frequently tells interviewers about his first experience learning about the

⁵⁹ Barbara Santich, *Bold Palates: Australia's Gastronomic Heritage* (Adelaide: Wakefield, 2012), 18.

⁶⁰ Hannah Koelmeyer, 'Australian Native food and the man who wants to bring it to the masses', *Cooked*, 22 January 2015, accessed 14 September 2018, at <https://www.cooked.com.au/thefeed/2015/01/22/11/03/jock-zonfrillo-australian-cuisine-native-ingredients>.

⁶¹ Koelmeyer, 'Australian Native food and the man who wants to bring it to the masses.'

⁶² Koelmeyer, 'Australian Native food and the man who wants to bring it to the masses.'

⁶³ Basque Culinary Center, 'Jock Zonfrillo Winner of the Basque Culinary World Prize 2018', *YouTube*, 5 December 2015, at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gRFAizvYYsQ>

narratives embedded in native foods, a memory that was shared with him by ‘Jimmy,’ a busker at Sydney’s Circular Quay. ‘Jimmy’ shared the following vivid memory:

...a stingray caught when a particular flower is in full bloom, signifying the time of year the stingray have engorged livers...and that when the tide reaches a certain point on the hunters shin ... and is on the way out ... for 10-15 minutes they’re plentiful and can be speared...Jimmy and I talked for four hours and it was a turning point in my life and career: he talked about fishing for mangrove jack (red snapper) and how they only cooked it on fallen dried mangrove wood because ‘it’s right’. As a chef, I liked that: it’s salt-of-the-earth stuff.⁶⁴

These highly specific symbiotic flora and fauna relationships are identifiable in many communities. For example, to return to my discussions of marine aquaculture, people(s) living along the Victorian coast knew that when the tea tree blossoms that the skates are fat enough to eat.⁶⁵ The exacting nature of these memories highlights a food culture which marries ecological awareness, and ecological-human connectivity, with flavour. The understanding of food portrayed in these visceral ‘rememberings’ meshes together body (both human and animal) and environment, both the seasonal environment and the exact geography of an area. This relationship with ‘food’ has a series of complex mental and physical interconnections. The land, quite literally, touches the hunter and communicates that a particular prey is ripe to be harvested, the flora blooms and indicates the same thing, it is as if the earth celebrates the perfect timing of the ecosystem. Important bush food plants all have an Altyerre (a Dreaming story) story. For example, a story about conflict between a Bush Turkey and an Emu over Yakajirri teaches the need to share resources but also describes preparation methods.⁶⁶

Zonfrillo reflects on time spent in Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) lands in central Australia and speaks about the reaction of the communities on his initial visits:

⁶⁴ Koelmeyer, ‘Australian Native food and the man who wants to bring it to the masses.’

⁶⁵ Moseley-Williams, ‘How Chef Jock Zonfrillo Is Helping Bring Back Australia’s Indigenous Food Culture.’

⁶⁶ Merne Altyerre-ipenhe Reference Group, J. Douglas and F. Walsh, ‘Aboriginal people, bush foods knowledge and products from central Australia: Ethical guidelines for commercial bush food research, industry and enterprises’, *Desert Knowledge CRC Report Number 71* (2011), accessed 28 August 2020, at https://www.nintione.com.au/resource/NintiOneResearchReport_71_BushFoodGuidelines.pdf, 16.

There's a White guy who's a chef and wants to know about your culture. The Elders, who interview you, were like 'who the f**k is this guy?'. It took 30 hours to drive there and seven minutes to wait, talk to someone then be turned away. It was a sobering drive back to Sydney.⁶⁷

Zonfrillo's retelling of his attempts to earn the trust of the communities he visited appears to be candid. He emphasises the investment necessary to developing relationships, and is careful to be clear that it took many visits to communities in order to be accepted as a trustworthy connection saying 'I spent weeks at a time, zipped my mouth and absorbed and learned and tried to understand the cultural complexities.'⁶⁸ I suggest that the decision to travel to remote Australia carries with it a history of exploration that has a problematic impact on the shape of the relationship between those who wish to be allies, and the people they want to be allies for. Gumbainggir man, academic Gary Foley, notes that 'the issue with people who 'run off to Country to find "real" Aboriginal people' is exactly that expression of a need to seek out some sort of exotic authenticity and exclude from their perception the communities of Aboriginal people living in urban and regional centres.'⁶⁹ Foley continues to reiterate that when those seeking allyship return to urban and regional centres they are often privileged as experts on Aboriginal culture due to their systematically perceived racial or socio-economic status.⁷⁰ Certainly, Zonfrillo has benefited from the endowment of the status of 'expert' by media and hospitality organisations and in his broadcast role.

Zonfrillo says of his work with Aboriginal communities that:

Over the years we at Orana have been able to assist communities in setting up micro businesses mainly in wild harvest contracting various Indigenous communities to provide the produce his restaurant needs. A central drop off point in communities allows anyone to be involved in the harvest and to be paid per kilo. The model is transferable which is ideal for its implementation in the different regions of Australia

⁶⁷ Moseley-Williams, 'How Chef Jock Zonfrillo Is Helping Bring Back Australia's Indigenous Food Culture'.

⁶⁸ Michael McGuire, 'Chefs are going back to nature, but is foraging just a fad?', *The Advertiser*, 29 April 2016, accessed 18 August 2016, at <http://www.adelaidenow.com.au/lifestyle/sa-lifestyle/chefs-are-going-back-to-nature-to-give-their-food-a-distinctive-edge-but-is-foraging-still-just-a-fad/news-story/8f8f365ac33e67be79c0421503955299>.

⁶⁹ thejuicemedia, 'Gary Foley: Advice for pro-Indigenous white activists in Australia', *YouTube*, 5 September 2010, accessed 16 October 2020, at <https://youtu.be/uEGsBV9VGTQ>.

⁷⁰ thejuicemedia, 'Gary Foley: Advice for pro-Indigenous white activists in Australia.'

with their different produce. Wild food is a commodity we are happy to trade in, to understand and tell our customers the story of an ingredient including its history, traditional uses and its cultural significance to the land from which it came.⁷¹

Zonfrillo's purpose was to create 'Australian' flavours and work towards a recognition of the knowledge and history that has been ignored and in the worst cases, erased, since White Australia was established. Zonfrillo's success has come from his willingness to learn, discuss, understand and, most importantly to recognise the valuable knowledge of Aboriginal people. He has also benefited from his identity as a White, male professional and the social advantages of this privilege. In his research Zonfrillo worked with people who have not been asked to speak about the nuances of this aspect of their culture for some time or perhaps ever. As Nyul Nyul Elder Bruno Dan remarks in a short film made for Orana's website; 'We got bush food and tucker out here but never been recognised much by anybody.'⁷² Orana was the first step of Zonfrillo's attempt to use his position to begin to challenge customer perception of native foods: 'My staff hate me saying it but I don't really give a **** about the restaurant. It was a vehicle to get people to understand and get on board with what we're trying to do with the foundation – and it's worked!'⁷³ Zonfrillo aimed to create a cyclical process to communicate narratives, empower communities, create business and expose more of Australia to native food. Orana and the Orana Foundation were designed to facilitate that circle. In developing the Foundation, linking with wild harvesting communities, and serving native foods to the Australian audience an alternative food network has formed with the potential to become a major system of knowledge and variety across the Australian palate. Zonfrillo owes a great deal of his professional success to the Aboriginal communities, particularly the Nyul Nyul community, with whom he works. This debt of success is something he refers to frequently in interviews: 'seventeen years of going into the community, pulling together knowledge and I now have a duty of care.'⁷⁴ This effort towards personal responsibility translates into a valuable corporate responsibility and is an example of efforts towards an effective public alliance within the hospitality sector.

⁷¹ McGuire, 'Chefs are going back to nature, but is foraging just a fad?'

⁷² Jock Zonfrillo, 'Orana – The Journey', video on 57 Films, 19 November 2014, accessed 12 January 2018, at <http://www.57films.com.au/orana-restaurant.php>.

⁷³ Moseley-Williams, 'How Chef Jock Zonfrillo Is Helping Bring Back Australia's Indigenous Food Culture.' NB the closure of Orana in 2020 came on the heels of the launch of The Orana Foundation's biggest project an Indigenous Foods Database.

⁷⁴ Moseley-Williams, 'How Chef Jock Zonfrillo Is Helping Bring Back Australia's Indigenous Food Culture.'

4.3.1 The Orana Foundation and Basque Culinary World Prize

I would suggest that, despite Zonfrillo's good intentions, the Orana Foundation encapsulates ideas of mercantile evangelism in various forms.⁷⁵ Firstly, Zonfrillo himself is portrayed as a pioneer and spokesperson evangelising the importance of a national connection with food and appreciation of Aboriginal culture. Secondly the Foundation, the work of which includes a series of food business projects, developed with communities (utilising traditional knowledge) in which the produce is purchased as surety by the Foundation and sold on and in doing so Zonfrillo and Board Director Norman Gillespie can be said to follow in the steps of the Lutheran missionaries as merchants.

Zonfrillo's research can be characterised as an intentional allyship.⁷⁶ As I have detailed Zonfrillo has benefited from generations of mistakes made before him by anthropologists and scholars. The difference is that Zonfrillo's skill with, and passion for, food has a digestible authenticity that fosters strong relationships. His commitment to community and understanding of duty of care is the outcome of years of networking and the creation of practical support systems which aim to facilitate respect and recognition of traditional knowledge. This work formed the foundation of Orana and, later, The Orana Foundation. The vision of The Orana Foundation was to create a database entirely of native Australian foods. Earlier work in this area was completed mainly in private collections and botanic gardens although some examples of record keeping included the Environs Kimberley seedbank programme in Broome (run in collaboration with the Country Needs People Indigenous Rangers programme) which works to preserve biological data, the early work of explorer-botanists like Joseph Banks, Alan Cunningham and colonial-scientists including Reverend William Branwhite Clarke, along with a number of books notably Margaret-Mary Turner Neale's *Bush Foods* (1994) which catalogued the foods of the Arrernte people, *The Biggest Estate on Earth* (2012) by Bill Gammage and more recently *The Oldest Foods on Earth*

⁷⁵ I discussed mercantile evangelism in greater detail in Chapter Two.

⁷⁶ Since 2021 Zonfrillo does not spend as much time advocating for the native food industry, instead he is focussed on his new endeavours as the host of Australian *Masterchef*. I think this does his career a disservice, however, I would posit that his increased notoriety as a public figure exposes him to a greater level of criticism than he was previously receiving. The reduction in his targeted content could reflect a reluctance to engage with this criticism.

(2016) by John Newton.⁷⁷ However, a project focused on function and with the aim to be, in its final form, an easily accessible, live database dedicated to native edible plants, meats and grains has yet to emerge. This is the gap The Orana Foundation hopes to fill.⁷⁸ The foundation consolidates data from both anthropologists and communities into one central record. Sub-categories will include the native produces core cultural purpose, medicinal properties, method of preparation, nutritional information, toxicity reports, edibility and growing conditions including soil types, seasons and how long before a plant produces. The Orana Foundation contracted The University of Adelaide to undertake four primary projects:

1. To build a native food database to collate knowledge of Australian plants (native and introduced) that have been used for food by a range of communities
2. To conduct food quality assessment to provide knowledge of the nutritional profile of plants
3. To conduct food processing and flavour assessment to improve knowledge of the specific use and preparation of plant products and derivation of specific ingredients for culinary use
4. To conduct plant production assessment to improve knowledge of the horticultural practices for growing specific ingredient plants and identification of superior landraces that may better form the basis of improved plant varieties and better production systems.⁷⁹

The Orana Foundation database collates information for horticulturalists, providores, chefs and restaurateurs, preserving invaluable cultural memory and history for Aboriginal communities. This is an example of benefit sharing: this partnership should serve both parties during the process and outcome. Zonfrillo hopes resulting resources will be used in Indigenous studies at schools therefore educating young children about endogenous produce and instil a sense of pride which will ‘connect kids back into their culture and onto the

⁷⁷ In addition to the publications see also Robert Young, *This Wonderful Strange Country: Rev. W.B. Clarke, Colonial Scientist*, (Thirroul, NSW: Robert Young Publishing), 2015.

⁷⁸ ‘Building a Kimberley Community Seedbank’, *Environs Kimberley*, accessed 20 October 2020, at https://www.environskimberley.org.au/seedbank_project; Margaret-Mary Turner Neale, *Bush Foods* (Northern Territory: IAD Press, 1994); Bill Gammage, *The Biggest Estate on Earth: How Aborigines Made Australia* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 2011); John Newton, *The Oldest Foods on Earth* (Sydney: New South, 2016).

⁷⁹ ‘Indigenous Food Database’, *The Orana Foundation*, accessed 20 December 2020, at <https://theoranafoundation.org/projects/indigenous-food-database/>.

land.’⁸⁰ Zonfrillo regularly infers the value of knowledge when interviewed. His rhetoric carefully and consistently places attention and worth on the Indigenous communities his products are sourced from. Using intentional language he speaks of ‘owing’ Indigenous people. Zonfrillo occupies a middle ground, he does not situate himself in opposition to all changes brought by colonialism or multiculturalism, in fact, in an interview with *Cooked* he is quoted saying:

I think [native ingredients] should really be at the heart of what an Australian cuisine is, but also encapsulate what happened at settlement, and what came from settlement, which obviously was some amazing ingredients – lamb included.⁸¹

I criticise the suggestion of settlement as the improvement of Australian culture: it is problematic. I do however acknowledge that by distancing himself from a perceived polarising opinion Zonfrillo seeks to demonstrate a bridge between western agriculture and Indigenous product.

Early funding for The Orana Foundation was bequeathed by American philanthropist Dena Kaye who paid the salary of Norman Gillespie, former Chief Executive of UNICEF Australia, as Executive Director.⁸² In 2016 The Orana Foundation was awarded a grant of AUD\$1.25 million by the South Australian government. Prior to this the foundation operated on tight margins made possible by Zonfrillo himself, and Restaurant Orana.⁸³ Premier Jay Weatherill said the South Australian government saw the funding as of benefit to Indigenous communities and to position South Australia as a centre for food innovation. Weatherill said ‘losing...knowledge about native foods held within Indigenous communities would be a tragedy.’⁸⁴ The foundation collaborated with The University of Adelaide’s Waite Research Institute and staff are primarily University of Adelaide academics pursuing the following areas of investigation: Food Flavours, Food Quality, Plant Production, the Indigenous Foods

⁸⁰ Moseley-Williams, ‘How Chef Jock Zonfrillo Is Helping Bring Back Australia’s Indigenous Food Culture.’

⁸¹ Koelmeyer, ‘Australian Native food and the man who wants to bring it to the masses.’

⁸² Dena Kaye is trustee of the Danny Kaye and Sylvia Fine Kaye Foundation.

‘Norman Gillespie, Executive Director at The Orana Foundation’, LinkedIn profile, accessed 8 May 2020, at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/norman-gillespie-00b5a717/?originalSubdomain=au>.

⁸³ Suzie Keen, ‘SA Foundation gets \$1.25 million grant to expand native foods industry’, *In Daily*, 15 December 2015, at <https://indaily.com.au/news/local/2016/12/15/sa-foundation-gets-1-25m-grant-to-expand-native-foods-industry/>.

⁸⁴ Keen, ‘SA Foundation gets \$1.25 million grant to expand native foods industry.’

Database and Ethnobiology. One potential result of the foundation's work may be the knowledge to allow lobby groups to put pressure on retailers to stock Native Australian foods.⁸⁵ The foundation's primary aims are:

To assist Indigenous communities by stimulating Indigenous enterprise through supporting communities to research, document, commercialise and promote native Australian foods.

To support the development and demand for native Australian food supplies.

To alleviate Indigenous social and economic disadvantage through skills training and employment opportunities in growing, cultivating and harvesting native Australian foods.

To preserve the unique cultural heritage of traditional Indigenous food culture as a bridge to greater cultural recognition and understanding among all Australians.⁸⁶

Foundation funds were used for the salaries of the research team who conducted trials, including toxicology, on various flora and fauna. Zonfrillo claims the Australian government had completed in depth testing on fewer than twenty ingredients in period between the 1990s and 2018 and the Orana Foundation was able to test 1,444 ingredients in twelve months due to funding and a dedicated research purpose.⁸⁷ The database looks to the future including categorising the potential impact of climate change on each ingredient.⁸⁸

In addition to the database The Orana Foundation recorded numerous other projects including a native beekeeping which may capitalise on the high market value of native Australian honey (approximately 150 AUD a kilogram).⁸⁹ With relatively little outlay to construct the hives this project aimed to provide economic engagement for women and learning opportunities for children. Each project at the Orana Foundation is focused on addressing the specific interests of communities encapsulated in a sustainable business model. A second project incorporated physical infrastructure; mainly the construction of bamboo packing sheds designed to have a low impact on the environment and to prevent them from rotting in

⁸⁵ Koelmeyer, 'Australian Native food and the man who wants to bring it to the masses.'

⁸⁶ *The Orana Foundation*, accessed 6 December 2020, at <http://theoranafoundation.org/>

⁸⁷ Basque Culinary Center, 'Jock Zonfrillo Winner of the Basque Culinary World Prize 2018.'

⁸⁸ Basque Culinary Center, 'Jock Zonfrillo Winner of the Basque Culinary World Prize 2018.'

⁸⁹ Basque Culinary Center, 'Jock Zonfrillo Winner of the Basque Culinary World Prize 2018.'

the wet season (bamboo is a tough building material).⁹⁰ This packing shed, built off the ground would allow storage and work during the lengthy monsoon seasons of the Northern Territory.⁹¹ The third project is the development of commercial production of the giant native freshwater prawn which can grow up to eight inches in length in grow ponds. The prize money from the Basque Culinary Prize (100,000 EUR/162,562 AUD) was to be invested into a snap freezing system to allow communities to freeze fresh produce and engage with the restaurant market.⁹² The Foundation model co-develops and provides micro finance with the intent that each project would be 100% Indigenous owned and administrative support to be externally funded. Zonfrillo identifies success as communities feeling a sense of pride, recognition and achievement. While the projects will be Indigenous owned, the foundation operates as a guarantor of success, committing to purchasing product and assisting with the development of fair trade supply chains.

These three projects introduce active and economic components to culture. An informational video produced about the foundation includes testimonies of Indigenous Australian people over the age of fifty.⁹³ Disappointingly they are not credited in the video. Interviewees discuss their concerns about the inheritance of knowledge citing social dislocation as a nexus of pain and concern interviewees speak of mission living and a resultant lingering sense of lack of purpose or independence. Discussion focuses on living within a society based around the protestant ethic of work, social pressures and shame that accompany high rates of unemployment and a sense of ‘frustration, it’s the business of not being able to do anything.’⁹⁴ A mix of social exclusion and dislocation has exacerbated mental health issues and rates of Indigenous suicide are high. In 2017 the Australian Bureau of Statistics identified suicide as the second leading cause of death amongst Indigenous males, suicide numbers

⁹⁰ Basque Culinary Center, ‘Jock Zonfrillo Winner of the Basque Culinary World Prize 2018.’

⁹¹ ‘Nyul Nyul Community Packing Shed’, The Orana Foundation, accessed 19 December 2020, available from <https://theoranafoundation.org/projects/nyul-nyul-community-packing-shed/>; Basque Culinary Center, ‘Jock Zonfrillo Winner of the Basque Culinary World Prize 2018.’

⁹² As of 2018: Basque Culinary Center, ‘Jock Zonfrillo Winner of the Basque Culinary World Prize 2018.’ In 2020 *The Australian* published an article suggesting the funds had been misused and did not benefit the snap freezing project. Zonfrillo launched legal defamation proceedings against the newspaper and on 19 December 2020 an apology was issued by *The Australian*.

⁹³ Jock Zonfrillo, “The Orana Foundation,” *YouTube*, 28 February 2017, at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xIM9rd-Rhxg>.

⁹⁴ Zonfrillo, ‘The Orana Foundation.’

have accelerated since the 1980s.⁹⁵ The loss of each community member causes a break in the chain of knowledge. Fears are shared with the camera that ‘in thirty years’ time our lingo and culture will be completely wiped out, you lose it forever.’⁹⁶ Zonfrillo agrees saying, ‘I’m finding a lesser connection culturally when I visit communities now, because there is a disconnect,’ this disconnect has filtered down and the gap has been widened by social exclusion.⁹⁷

The Orana Foundation is an incorporation of ‘Jock’s ideals and his hopes for Australian cooking’; the centralisation of Zonfrillo in this statement can be read as problematic as it decentralises Aboriginal voices.⁹⁸ The Orana Foundation aims to be ‘a hub for communities, researchers and chefs; to share knowledge, to preserve it, and to develop it in perpetuity.’⁹⁹ Zonfrillo hopes this ‘will make native food, and the body of research surrounding it, available to all.’¹⁰⁰ This declaration regarding freedom of access to information about native food should be problematised. The public record has simultaneously increased knowledge about, advocacy for the use of, and celebration, of native foods while potentially paving the path for a further exploitation of Indigenous ecological Knowledge. Would such a database reduce the need for interaction, for example, of non-Aboriginal chefs wishing to utilise native foods, and Indigenous ecological knowledge holders? This would signal a step backwards in cross cultural relations and appreciation and would cut many Indigenous ecological knowledge holders out of discussions they should be consistently involved with. Can, and should, the Orana database really be open to all? It is important to ask these questions and listen to the

⁹⁵ ‘Leading causes of death in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’, *Australian Bureau of Statistics*, 23 October 2020, accessed 9 November 2020, at <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/causes-death/causes-death-australia/latest-release#leading-causes-of-death-in-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-people>.

⁹⁶ Zonfrillo, ‘The Orana Foundation.’

⁹⁷ While many non-Indigenous Australians relegate the damage of the stolen generations to the history books the removal of children from Indigenous families is still rampant. Grassroots groups such as Grandmothers Against Removal (active 2014 - 2021) are vocal about the intergenerational and cultural damage caused by the separation of families and cultures. See <https://www.facebook.com/GMAR.GrandmothersAgainstRemovals/>. Nakari Thorpe, ‘Number of Indigenous children being removed from homes increasing at ‘staggering rate’, new report says’, *ABC News*, 9 December 2021, accessed 10 May 2022, at <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-12-09/family-matters-report-indigenous-children-removed-from-homes/100685932>. This article refers to the *Family Matters* report released by Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care.; see also Catherine Chamberlain, Paul Gray, Debra Bennet, Alison Elliott, Marika Jackomos, Jacyntha Krakouer, Rhonda Marriott, et al. ‘Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Families to Stay Together from the Start (SAFeST Start): Urgent Call to Action to Address Crisis in Infant Removals.’ *The Australian Journal of Social Issues* 57, no. 2 (2022), 252–273.

⁹⁸ Zane Lovitt, ‘Jock Zonfrillo’s all-consuming quest for an Australian cuisine’, *Australian Financial Review*, 1 November 2014, accessed 2 December 2016, at <https://www.afr.com/life-and-luxury/arts-and-culture/jock-zonfrillo-s-all-consuming-quest-for-an-australian-cuisine-20141101-11fatn>

⁹⁹ Lovitt, ‘Jock Zonfrillo’s all-consuming quest for an Australian cuisine.’

¹⁰⁰ Lovitt, ‘Jock Zonfrillo’s all-consuming quest for an Australian cuisine.’

answers already provided by communities and industry leaders. Patricia and her fellow Naiuyu Elders are concerned about the continuation, and inheritance, of cultural knowledge. The Orana Foundation allows for the importance of Intellectual Property Protections and the foundation sees the database as a way to protect this property. Zonfrillo says;

Every Elder that we've ever worked with is excited about information being in a safe environment that their grandkids and future generations are going to be able to connect with – in a way that's scientifically-backed and protected. The effect benefit-sharing can have on communities all across the country is huge.¹⁰¹

The desire to preserve knowledge in a manner that does not rely on oral tradition is important. Simultaneously, triggering a cycle of storing, and possibly later repatriating, knowledge should be avoided.¹⁰² Critics, including First Nations critics, must acknowledge the rights of those Indigenous ecological knowledge holders who have made the autonomous decision to pursue this alliance and share their knowledge with this cross-cultural project. This approach acknowledges the differing responsibilities amongst different communities, for example in some central Australian Aboriginal countries (or language regions), there were both *kirda* (commonly translated as 'owners' of the land) or *kurdungurlu* ('managers' of the land) for the plant species.¹⁰³ In customary practices, the people in partnership had the right to make decisions associated with these plants and were responsible for the actions that maintained them. It is these individuals whom senior reference group members have said need to be consulted in relation to the commercial development of any specific plant species.¹⁰⁴ I suggest that this case study can be read alongside James L. Cox's discussion of Indigenous agency. Cox suggests Indigenous agency was excluded in initial criticisms of the relationship between T.G.H Strehlow and the Arrernte people particularly regarding the records of knowledge which was traditionally not shared with outsiders, women or uninitiated boys. Cox suggests that there has been a lack of focus on the autonomous choice,

¹⁰¹ Lisa Goldapple, 'Jock Zonfrillo: Australia's top chef builds database for native flavours', *Atlas of the Future*, 14 June 2019, accessed 8 August 2020, at <https://atlasofthefuture.org/futurehero-jock-zonfrillo-australias-top-chef-builds-database-for-native-flavours/>

¹⁰² This has been seen in the impact of the work of early anthropologists such as T.G.H. Strehlow who worked with, and wrote about, the Arrernte people in Central Australia.

¹⁰³ Merne Altyerre-ipenhe Reference Group, Douglas, Walsh, 'Aboriginal people, bush foods knowledge and products from central Australia', 19-20.

¹⁰⁴ Merne Altyerre-ipenhe Reference Group, Douglas, Walsh, 'Aboriginal people, bush foods knowledge and products from central Australia', 19-20.

or agency, shown by Arrernte Elders in sharing that knowledge with Strehlow.¹⁰⁵ I suggest we may see a similar pattern in the criticism of Zonfrillo.

While the context of the following quotation, lifted from an interview about Zonfrillo's personal career, is important, I choose to include it here as an example of Zonfrillo demonstrating responsibility for decentering his own character in the rhetoric he provides to the media who then in turn contribute to the archive of narrative reference for this topic.

I know that, if I do this properly, many people will start looking at these ingredients with a fresh pair of eyes. Chefs who are much better cooks than I am will make even better things, make even more connections, start visiting these communities and making new dishes. And eventually you'll have a really amazing, unique cuisine in this country...You know, I'm not going to bring this journey to a point and say, "Here's Australian cuisine." That's going to happen long after I'm gone. And that's really what the foundation is all about, to make sure that happens, whether I'm here or not...This will continue long after I'm dead.¹⁰⁶

Tension exists between two paths of action which could be taken by The Orana Foundation. Firstly, The Foundation forges a path within a currently legitimated approach. This is the path illustrated by Zonfrillo working within a legitimated knowledge system at the University of Adelaide.¹⁰⁷ The second example is the combined support of The University of Adelaide (an organisation dedicated to the protection, and development, of bodies of knowledge) and the South Australian government. The second path would see the Foundation embrace the contribution of many land councils and Aboriginal-owned and led businesses and the development of a First Nations development industry body.¹⁰⁸ The former is perhaps the

¹⁰⁵ James L. Cox, *A Phenomenology of Indigenous Religions: Theory and Practice* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022), 139, 153.

¹⁰⁶ Lovitt, 'Jock Zonfrillo's all-consuming quest for an Australian cuisine.'

¹⁰⁷ I acknowledge the complex layers of structural privilege that have made this collaboration and process easier for The Orana Foundation than for other organisations.

¹⁰⁸ A body has been established as of 9 August 2020: the First Nations Bushfood and Botanicals Alliance. At the time of this dissertation's conclusion there had been limited information distributed by, or about, this organisation, however, they have gained traction throughout 2022 planning an inaugural conference. At the Table: Bushfood and Botanicals Conference 2023 scheduled to be held at Mparntwe (Alice Springs, NT). Scheduled speakers include Wuthathi/Meriam woman and Indigenous cultural and intellectual property expert Terri Janke, Indigenous business advisor Darren Godwell, Indigenous businesswoman Rayleen Brown, Bunorong and Yuin author Bruce Pascoe and Ben Shewry (Attica Restaurant) see <https://www.fnbaa.com.au/bushfood-and-botanicals-conference-2023>

faster track to meet the Foundation goals, but the latter will celebrate Indigenous Australian initiatives and have a significant longer-term impact on Australia despite a need to redefine what progress within industry and communities may look like. It is important to note that Zonfrillo and The Orana Foundation have endeavoured to navigate that struggle contracting Dr Terri Janke and Co to undertake a best practice review of the Indigenous Food Database in line with Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property obligations. Dr Janke will then make recommendations on suitable Indigenous entities to be custodians of the database moving forwards.¹⁰⁹

Complications were compounded by a legal struggle between The University of Adelaide and The Orana Foundation whereby the Foundation struggled to gain access to the data which had been categorised and researched by teams within The University of Adelaide. In July 2020 Zonfrillo told *The Australian* newspaper that the completed native plant database, containing scientific and cultural information on thousands of plants, had been handed over by the university to his charity after a nine-month legal mediation which cost the Orana Foundation \$50,000. Zonfrillo states ‘Personally it was a very difficult time because we’d set out to do this for all the right reasons, for Indigenous people and the preservation of their knowledge.’¹¹⁰ A legal mediation between two non-Indigenous organisations over the Indigenous ecological knowledge is not without irony given the themes of narrative identity and the control of knowledge that I have explored in this.

Zonfrillo has succeeded where myriad structural barriers have denied others from success in the same space. The distribution of funding opportunities is significantly impacted by privilege and existing access. The Orana Foundation successfully lobbied for funding with recognised philanthropists on the board and a ‘proven’ platform; an easier journey than many community projects would have. I understand this to be evidence of the privileging of specific way of working and specific knowledge. The legalities and restrictions around funding are problematic; funding is still treated as an investment and therefore central

¹⁰⁹ ‘Indigenous Food Database,’ *The Orana Foundation*, accessed 20 December 2020, at <https://theoranafoundation.org/projects/indigenous-food-database/>.

¹¹⁰ Victoria Laurie, ‘Masterchef judge Jock Zonfrillo in a stew over bush food charity the Orana Foundation’, *The Australian*, 6 July 2020, accessed 20 November 2020 at <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/nation/masterchef-jock-zonfrillo-in-a-stew-over-bushfood-charity-the-orana-foundation/news-story/66d26a38748b8ae6af04aecabc7f3f3f>

questions include what project will give the most effective, visible and quickest return to that investment and social return is often secondary.¹¹¹

Zonfrillo was inspired by the experience of studying with Brazilian chef Alex Atala in Sao Paulo. Atala's restaurant D.O.M features a profile of its executive chef and details his professional ethos as follows,

...to explore all the gastronomic possibilities of domestic ingredients, combining classical basis with current techniques ... with boldness and vision, Atala surpasses the boundaries of cuisine and acts as a responsible citizen, valuing the small producer, encouraging young professionals, and supporting the third sector...¹¹²

This is a translation into English. However, there are some linguistically interesting aspects of this translation. Firstly, the use of the term 'domestic' in place of Indigenous, or native, terms more commonly used in the Australian context. I am also drawn to the reference to 'boundaries of cuisine'. The work of Mary Douglas, whose theoretical repertoire focuses on the Durkheimian concept of symbolic boundaries popular among cultural sociologists, is central to many aspects of Religious Studies. Linguistic choices, such as the selection here of 'boundaries of cuisine' must not be overlooked. Certainly, the centrality of language as the medium of communication is some of the most interesting data that can be analysed. In this case, 'boundaries of cuisine' speaks to the restrictions of established codes for fine dining. Atala is heralded as someone who 'surpasses' boundaries, that is, he is not simply a rebel destroying the codes of the kitchen but someone who improves the boundaries of fine dining cuisine through his experimentation and new concepts of personal and professional foodscape citizenship.

Zonfrillo's foundation allowed him to surpass the boundaries of his restaurant, and his personal social media platforms heavily feature the work of the Foundation and highlight

¹¹¹ In an attempt to define value, the concept of SROI (Social Return on Investment) has been developed and used in the non-profit space. SROI helps determine the cost of what would happen if a non-profit did not exist by valuing the social impact of the organisations work. See Malin Arvidson, Fergus Lyon, Stephen McKay, and Domenico Moro. 'Valuing the social? The nature and controversies of measuring social return on investment (SROI)', *Voluntary Sector Review* 4, no. 1 (2013): 3-18, accessed 10 June 2022, at <https://bristoluniversitypressdigital.com/view/journals/vsr/4/1/article-p3.xml>.

¹¹² 'Alex Atala D. O. M,' *D.O.M Restaurante*, accessed 20 July 2020, at <http://domrestaurante.com.br/en/alex.html>.

connections to Indigenous communities, businesses, and individuals. Zonfrillo's attempts to be an active ally to the Indigenous partners with which he has established relationships, and his connections to the people and communities he works with are personal, borne from social relationships rather than research relationships, this approach develops trust and aligns more effectively with Indigenous community values. Orana won *Gourmet Traveller's* Restaurant of the Year (2017) and *The Good Food Guide's* Restaurant of the Year award (2018). These awards signalled a turning point for native foods in the fine dining industry, to quote Zonfrillo;

A lot of native ingredients got pretty tarnished going through the 'bush tucker' era ... there were a couple of good restaurants but an awful lot of awful things occurred during that time and I think it just got a bad taste in people's mouths. That's why, categorically, people get facial neuralgia when you say, 'native ingredients.'¹¹³

In addition to awards granted to the restaurant, Zonfrillo won the international Basque Culinary World Prize (2018). The Basque Culinary World Prize (BCWP) describes the work of the Orana Foundation as 'giving back more than you receive', supporting Indigenous communities in the production and fair marketing of their products and the documentation of more than 10,000 native ingredients and the investigation of new uses.¹¹⁴ The Prize rewards those who are 'transforming society through gastronomy.'¹¹⁵ The Prize notes that the chef's role has a sphere of influence that transgresses the boundaries of the kitchen or restaurant and rewards chefs that use their platform, knowledge, leadership, entrepreneurship and creativity to facilitate positive change in the areas of culinary innovation, health, nutrition, education, environment, food and agribusiness and social or economic development.¹¹⁶ Zonfrillo's work was described as;

preserving the memory of native peoples of Australia through their food. He has dedicated the last 17 years to discovering and defending this aborigine culture, excluded from the national culinary identity.¹¹⁷

¹¹³ Moseley-Williams, 'How Chef Jock Zonfrillo Is Helping Bring Back Australia's Indigenous Food Culture.'

¹¹⁴ 'Basque Culinary World Prize,' *Basque Culinary World Prize*, accessed 15 January 2020, at <https://www.basqueculinaryworldprize.com/#intro>.

¹¹⁵ 'Basque Culinary World Prize,' *Basque Culinary World Prize*.

¹¹⁶ 'Basque Culinary World Prize,' *Basque Culinary World Prize*.

¹¹⁷ 'Basque Culinary World Prize,' *Basque Culinary World Prize*.

In promotional material for the CCWP Zonfrillo is interviewed about the importance of global gastronomies recognition of his work. Zonfrillo reflects that the BCWP came as a ‘reminder that sometimes what you’re doing isn’t popular. But feels right... and is the right thing.’¹¹⁸ Speaking to an audience at the Basque Culinary Centre Zonfrillo discusses his imperative to change the world in his chosen career path. He tells his audience that he opened Orana and made it world class to garner exposure and funding for the foundation. Zonfrillo says he wanted to make it delicious so everyone would feel ‘a bit embarrassed’ by their ignorance and become invested in finding out more about the origins of the food and therefore open conversations and wallets.¹¹⁹ As of June 2022, the video of Zonfrillo’s address, posted to *YouTube* by the Basque Culinary Centre, has under 170 views. This is a tiny audience in comparison to articles published in *Good Food Australia* and *Australian Financial Review*. However, it is also the clearest discussion of the Restaurant and Foundation I have found. He frames his migrant curiosity as an attempt to find some sort of cultural connection between Australians and the land that would be represented in a cuisine which while varied and demonstrative of Australia’s multicultural diversity, failed to represent that connection, a connection he only found strongly held in Australian Indigenous communities.

Zonfrillo discusses the sophistication of Aboriginal culture describing how it is ‘closely linked to nature and the land.’ Addressing his peers, he draws links with the direction responsible gastronomy is now headed in, a direction shaped by ‘sustainability, organics, ethics’ which Australian Aboriginal people have practiced for at least ‘60,000 years.’¹²⁰ Zonfrillo presses, ‘yes there is great food, and it’s delicious but ... no it’s not enough.’¹²¹ The implication is that gastronomy is a step further than cooking, a step further than the edible storytelling of a professional chef.

Many of the sources I have drawn on are news media. Journalists writing about food must make space for First Nations voices in their reporting. Very few articles written about, or

¹¹⁸ Basque Culinary Center, ‘Jock Zonfrillo about Basque Culinary World Prize,’ *YouTube*, 27 March 2019, at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i9G4i2zHcX0&list=WL&index=3>.

¹¹⁹ Basque Culinary Center, ‘Jock Zonfrillo about Basque Culinary World Prize.’

¹²⁰ Basque Culinary Center, ‘Jock Zonfrillo about Basque Culinary World Prize.’

¹²¹ Basque Culinary Center, ‘Jock Zonfrillo about Basque Culinary World Prize.’

featuring commentary from, Zonfrillo (with the exception of materials produced by the Orana organisation itself) include commentary from the traditional knowledge holders he works alongside. This lack of exposure, alongside government funding allocations, is likely the subtext for a range of criticisms aimed at The Orana Foundation. The Murdoch-owned paper *The Australian* ran this headline in 2020, ‘Bush tucker mafia are walking alone’, based on interviews with Indigenous owned organisation Red Centre Enterprises. Red Centre Enterprises (RCE) criticised the application of funding, arguing it should have been assigned to an Indigenous owned business.¹²² Evidence of RCE’s own funding application is publicly available on the South Australian Governments website.¹²³ In it RCE references the significant export value of ‘biota such as abalone and lobster’, encouraging the South Australian government to consider the same potential value in the native plants industry. RCE pitches research and development of the native food industry as central to the future profile of the South Australian food sector and export market. RCE posits that a lack of investment into native foods has created a waste product (whereby edible produce rots or is mulched). RCE states ‘knowledge of native foods will allow this waste product to be taken and turned into a valuable commercial opportunity based upon our knowledge and the authenticity of our products.’¹²⁴ RCE estimated approximately one tonne of product could be harvested within the City of Playford, SA. While the value was approximately \$200 per tonne, RCE estimated ‘application of our value-adding process will result in an authentic, high quality, bioactive product that is conservatively estimated at \$20,000.’¹²⁵ This framework could be replicated across multiple council areas or other land holdings and target a wide range of native foods. While this criticism is in line with the issues I have raised in the previous section (that bureaucratic systems and grant processes still privilege non-Indigenous approaches and institutions), The Orana Foundation avoids claiming ownership over any knowledge collated and the primary project, the Indigenous Foods Database. will be handed over to an Indigenous organisation for management after a selection process overseen by Dr Terri Janke and Co.¹²⁶

¹²² Victoria Laurie, ‘Bush Tucker Mafia are walking alone’, *The Australian*, 7 July 2020, at <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/life/food-drink/bush-tucker-mafia-are-walking-alone/news-story/392feffe84abd9a2ecae66bfa74d7b2d>.

¹²³ ‘Red Centre Enterprises’, *Share: South Australia’s Collaborative Economy Challenge*, accessed 9 January 2020, at <https://share.yoursay.sa.gov.au/rounds/share/ideas/red-centre-enterprises>.

¹²⁴ ‘Red Centre Enterprises’, *Share: South Australia’s Collaborative Economy Challenge*.

¹²⁵ ‘Red Centre Enterprises’, *Share: South Australia’s Collaborative Economy Challenge*.

¹²⁶ ‘Indigenous Food Database’, *The Orana Foundation*.

In Australia foraging without a pickers licence is illegal.¹²⁷ However, global interest in foraging has seen this practice move from niche interest to a focus of mainstream attention. Consequently, there is an increase in risk to delicate plants and ecosystems. To provide a global example, the following data engages with Natural England, the environmental advisory body for the British government.¹²⁸ In 2015, Natural England commenced actions against a company called Forager Ltd, alleging they removed too much sea kale from England's south coast thus destroying valuable plant habitat. As of 29 January 2018, court proceedings and appeals had concluded and Forager Ltd's activities were halted.¹²⁹ A spokeswoman for Natural England told Australian news outlet *SA Weekend* that whilst it supports foraging, there are limits: 'Natural England encourages the public to get out into the countryside and sample its delights — collecting autumn fruits or gathering elderberries for summer cordial are great activities that connect people with nature — but we also want to ensure that foraging activities avoid damaging sensitive habitats and species.'¹³⁰ The defendant Miles Irving, owner of Foraging Ltd, said he was fighting the restrictions placed on him by Natural England primarily in defence of 800-year-old common land law.¹³¹ Though it is a stretch, and not intended to suggest a similarly lengthy depth of connection to land, the concept of the commons in England may be compared to the fights for native title in Australia. These comparisons can be drawn from the enclosure processes from the twelfth to the eighteenth centuries in England. The enclosure of communal fields, meadows and arable lands restricted community access, thereby providing manorial lords with control over the area preventing self-sufficient farming or communal grazing.¹³² In a similar manner, but with a greater impact on social structure, the theft of Aboriginal native lands divested Aboriginal communities of livelihood, culture and sustenance. Foraging of Australian native plants has not yet caused major issues, although some producers, such as Mike Quarmby, have expressed safety concerns over foragers' ignorance when selecting produce.¹³³ Forms of traditional gathering have been outlawed: for example, the introduction of caps on abalone

¹²⁷ This discussion understands foraging to mean foraging in national parks, reserves and bushland not urban areas.

¹²⁸ 'Natural England', UK Government, accessed 15 March 2018, at <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/natural-england>.

¹²⁹ 'Further tribunal decision in Forager v Natural England', *Landmark Chambers*, 2 February 2018, at <https://www.landmarkchambers.co.uk/further-tribunal-decision-in-forager-v-natural-england-environmental-civil-sanctions-stop-notice-appeal-proceedings/>

¹³⁰ McGuire, 'Chefs are going back to nature, but is foraging just a fad?'

¹³¹ Daniel Butler, 'Has foraging gone too far?' *The Land UK*, accessed 8 March 2020, at <http://www.thelandmagazine.org.uk/articles/has-foraging-gone-too-far>.

¹³² James Alfred Yelling, *Common field and enclosure in England, 1450-1850*, (London: Macmillan, 1977).

¹³³ McGuire, 'Chefs are going back to nature, but is foraging just a fad?'

harvesting restricts the ability of Aboriginal amateur fishermen and women to freely harvest from their Country.¹³⁴

Foraging has become a hospitality buzzword used to reference the act of harvesting from a food space which is not specifically for the production of food (i.e. farm or market garden). Zonfrillo interprets the ‘trend’ of foraging as indicative of consumers ‘paying more attention to the origin of what they were eating...a desire for more connection to the food. Tuning in to what it was, where it came from and what connection did it have to the chef, or the place that they were. Was it healing for them? Was it healthy?’¹³⁵ This desire for knowledge about the food system has been reflected in the popularity of food centric media. The chef transitions from providore of a luxury meal to one who controls and, or aids, the consumer’s interactions with their meal and food. Preparing a dish involves more than flavour profiles and plating decisions, the dish must feed a desire for information and engagement communicate the values of the business be sustainability, local produce, an ethical supply chain or the cultural stories of its owners and staff. The psychology of food starts to take on a conscious role in the mind of the diner. The mainstream popularity of books on food politics and such as Michael Pollan’s *In Defence of Food* and Charles Spence’s *The Perfect Meal: The Multisensory Science of Food and Dining* indicate the growing consumer desire for engaged eating.¹³⁶ Lovitt writes; ‘[Zonfrillo’s] modest objective is the realisation of a wholly new cuisine’; the use of hyperbole is contentious, as this concept of newness is misleading.¹³⁷ The cuisine is not new, given centuries old Indigenous food practices, but also the recipes using colonial and native that left a consistent, lingering, albeit small, impact on menus since colonisation. Lovitt describes community art centres as the hub of community culture. ‘When Jock arrives somewhere for the first time, that’s where he goes. He can use the artwork to familiarise himself with the local foodstuffs: paintings of turtles and cherubin, silkscreen prints of crocodile eggs and barramundi.’¹³⁸ This is a crucial interaction: art has been a way to both communicate but also to hide and preserve secret knowledge for millennia, from ancient religious cosmological stories to Christian iconography to the secret symbolic language buried in the work of Dutch masters who explored circumnavigated Calvinist bans on

¹³⁴ See Chapter Three of this dissertation.

¹³⁵ McGuire, ‘Chefs are going back to nature, but is foraging just a fad?’

¹³⁶ Michael Pollan, *In Defence of Food* (London: Penguin, 2009); Charles Spence and Betina Piqueras-Fiszman, *The Perfect Meal: The Multisensory Science of Food and Dining* (London: John Wiley & Sons, 2014).

¹³⁷ Lovitt, ‘Jock Zonfrillo: Outback to the Future.’

¹³⁸ Lovitt, ‘Jock Zonfrillo: Outback to the Future.’

creating religious art through a visual language.¹³⁹ Aboriginal Australian art frequently incorporates visual storytelling containing many symbolic languages based in geography and cultural groups.

Patricia Marrfurra McTaggart AM is a skilled Ngen'giwumirri hunter, artist and linguist who has contributed to reference books on flora and fauna, and to dictionaries for the Ngan'gikurunggurr and Ngen'giwumirri languages.¹⁴⁰ McTaggart's art primarily focuses on bush tucker.¹⁴¹ Lovitt tends towards romanticism in his writing, declaring: 'You hear this and you wonder if, in those dictionaries, there's a translation for the phrase, 'Renaissance Woman.'¹⁴² While intended as recognition of McTaggart's diverse skillset, I think it is a jarring theoretical comparison to consider whether renaissance humanism, with its central tenet that man is centre of the universe, is the appropriate descriptor for a woman so invested in her community and environment. Lovitt references a landscape which shows the signs of fire-based land management and the ease with which the women in the group identify edible sprouts of bush carrots amongst the blackened landscape. Lovitt describes the preparation of the sprout; peeled, eaten raw by chewing the flesh and leaving the fibrous core. The article focuses on Zonfrillo, so the narrative returns to his reaction, his surprise that it is 'sweet when the ground is...dry [and] fibrous but juicy.'¹⁴³ While bush carrot is eaten raw, chewed and parts disposed of, if it was to be added to the menu at Orana the plant would need to be processed differently for their customer and the restaurant environment. The foodscape in which the native food would be presented would also be altered and the experience of the eater is therefore further removed from the plant.

Zonfrillo hopes appropriate financial remuneration for products will improve as the native food industry develops. He reflects;

¹³⁹ See variously: Melanie Zurba and Fikret Berkes, 'Caring for country through participatory art: Creating a boundary object for communicating Indigenous knowledge and values', *Local Environment*, 19:8, 2014, 821-836; C. Frieman and S. K. May, 'Navigating Contact: Tradition and Innovation in Australian Contact Rock Art', *International Journal of Historical Archaeology*, 24, (2020), 342-366.; National Gallery of Art Washington, *Painting in the Dutch Golden Age: A Profile of the Seventeenth Century* (National Gallery of Art Washington: Washington, DC), 2007.

¹⁴⁰ 'Territory Stories: Patricia Marfurra McTaggart,' *Northern Territory Government*, accessed 16 August 2020, at <https://hdl.handle.net/10070/218061>.

¹⁴¹ 'Patricia Margurra McTaggart AM', *Merrepen Arts, Culture and Language Aboriginal Corporation*, accessed 16 August 2020, at <http://crossart.com.au/images/stories/exhibitions/xap96/PatriciaMarrfurra-Bio2015.pdf>.

¹⁴² Lovitt, 'Jock Zonfrillo: Outback to the Future.'

¹⁴³ Lovitt, 'Jock Zonfrillo: Outback to the Future.'

There's a whole financial aspect...to help fight for land rights, to help with schooling for the kids, buying textbooks, crayons, pens, pencils. There are a number of medications that are required in communities that they have to pay for. So, there's a huge reason to purchase from a community. But above all else, it's an act of honesty. It's an act of breaking bread. It's one step closer to unity, to celebrating this place together. As opposed to them and us, you know?¹⁴⁴

This approach is in line with the reasoning behind the ethical guidelines developed by the Merne Altyerre-ipenhe Reference Group.

This section concludes with an analysis of the formal launch of key Orana Foundation project, a native foods database, in early October of 2020. I decided to use the launch as a concluding section rather than integrate the material gathered into earlier discussions. This decision was made because I felt it was important to preserve a chronological sense of the development of perspectives on the foundation. In line with social distancing practices, an online panel discussion was held for the launch of The Orana Foundation database. The panel was hosted by Whadjuk Nyoongar woman, newsreader Narelda Jacobs, panellists were Larrakia man and owner of food business *Something Wild*, Daniel Molton, Jock Zonfrillo and cultural awareness advocates Woka Woka Elder Auntie Jo Wilmott and Minyunbal woman, lawyer, Arabella Douglas.¹⁴⁵ The discussion raised a number of key points, the first being the changing shape of cultural practice. Douglas discusses that the importance of cultural practice has evolved as federal and state governments have interfered with Indigenous lives noting that governmental requirements on the maintenance of cultural practice being required to retain land rights, and sometimes even cultural identity, add a different dimension and urgency to cultural practice.¹⁴⁶ Discussion included technical assessment of the database and future operation including management processes by The Orana Foundation. Firstly, Zonfrillo comments on the impact of not-for-profit status on the Foundation: 'In my naive thinking I thought not-for-profit status would be a transparent approach, so it wouldn't be

¹⁴⁴ Lovitt, 'Jock Zonfrillo: Outback to the Future.'

¹⁴⁵ The Orana Foundation, 'Introducing the Indigenous Food Database - Part 1', *Instagram*, 30 September 2020, accessed 1 October 2020, at <https://www.instagram.com/tv/CF9RpWYD8SU/>

¹⁴⁶ The Orana Foundation, 'Introducing the Indigenous Food Database - Part 1.'

‘Jock’s doing this for himself or the restaurant.’¹⁴⁷ Zonfrillo’s intention was to use the restaurant to bring attention and acknowledgement to the native foods industry which he perceived as ‘hidden’ within the Australian foodscape. Zonfrillo understands the success of the restaurant to be an undeniable indicator of the prestige, quality, and importance of native foods, for people to leave feeling they had a taste of Australia flavoured with information and understanding. Further technical aspects of the foundation include safety nets for the dissemination of information. Those involved with the foundation were concerned with designing impactful safety nets to control the distribution of knowledge contained within the database. After speaking to experts, a system of red flags was devised which separated data into sections: thus, knowledge that was gender specific, kinship group specific or even language group specific could be controlled appropriately.¹⁴⁸ This requires the Foundation to become sensitive custodians of knowledge. I have suggested Zonfrillo’s exposure, and his decision to act as a brand representative brand, invites analysis of public figures whose exposure invites criticism. While this sort of exposure is often useful criticism Arabella Douglas remarked that, ‘Jock is taking a lot of the pressure’ because his database has gained national traction and attention.¹⁴⁹ Douglas remarks that many Universities already keep databases on Indigenous knowledge which allow non-Indigenous people access in a way that circumnavigates engagement with community. Douglas refers to this as ‘hidden’ work.¹⁵⁰ Distributing information and knowledge invites, rightly, criticism, but it can also derail or taint positive efforts towards change. Douglas notes that there are multiple markets which utilise this ‘hidden’ work and therefore do not engage in benefit sharing with communities.

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Jock Zonfrillo is selected as a case study of non-Indigenous engagement with the developing native foods industry in Australia because significant source material exists on his life and work, his public facing roles, and his seeming openness to criticism. To answer two key questions posited by Jenny Dorsey I find that Zonfrillo is paying respect to the ideas, flavours of various endogenous foods and food traditions. The education provided in the former Restaurant Orana fostered a positive relationship between non-Indigenous people,

¹⁴⁷ The Orana Foundation, ‘Introducing the Indigenous Food Database - Part 1.’

¹⁴⁸ This chapter has already noted that The Orana Foundation will be handed over to an Indigenous organisation who will be its custodians. The organisation will be selected by Dr Terri Janke and Co.

¹⁴⁹ The Orana Foundation, ‘Introducing the Indigenous Food Database - Part 1.’

¹⁵⁰ The Orana Foundation, ‘Introducing the Indigenous Food Database - Part 1.’

¹⁵¹ The Orana Foundation, ‘Introducing the Indigenous Food Database - Part 1.’

endogenous flora and fauna and Aboriginal food culture. I find that while Zonfrillo did profit from the development of Restaurant Orana and The Orana Foundation (if not in a monetarily then at least professionally) that the intention of the Orana Foundation was to provide benefit sharing opportunities in a manner that aligns with the Nagoya Protocol.¹⁵² I conclude that overall Zonfrillo's advocacy intends to engage in solidarity practices and aligns with the Merne Altyerre-ipenhe Reference Group's guidelines for benefit sharing practices and conscious engagement with existing community projects.

4.4 Representation on the screen

The previous section investigated the impact of one 'celebrity chef', Jock Zonfrillo, on the native foods industry in Australia. I explored an example of a non-Indigenous ally taking on responsibility for the dissemination of Indigenous ecological knowledge and the spiritual and historical narratives that accompany it. The impact of chefs on the foodscape is therefore demonstrated to be significant. I now investigate the dissemination, and representation, of knowledge of endogenous plants focusing on the use of television media to do so. In this section I explore how visual and aural presentation contributes to the formation of persuasive texts.¹⁵³

National Indigenous Television's programme catalogue's first major food show was cooking show *Kriol Kitchen*. *Kriol Kitchen* which premiered in 2014 presented by hosts Yawuru and Gooniyandi women Ali and Mitch Torres. Channel Manager Birri and Guugu Yimidhirr woman Tanya Orman added *On Country Kitchen*, hosted by Bundjalung man Mark Olive and

¹⁵² The questions are: 1. Is this person paying respect to, and representing properly, the ideas/ flavors/ principles of the cuisines they are drawing upon? If a consumer is interacting with this ingredient/ dish/ cuisine for the first time, are they receiving an education that is helpful or harmful? 2. If this person is profiting from the cuisine of a certain group of people, how is he/she uplifting that community so everyone in it has improved access to opportunities in the future. See Dorsey, 'Why can't I just cook what I want and like?'

¹⁵³ Meriel Bloor and Thomas Bloor, *The Practice of Critical Discourse Analysis: An Introduction* (Abingden, UK: Routledge, 2013), 40

Noongar man Derek Nannup in 2017.¹⁵⁴ These programs react to the philosophy that ‘Storytelling is integral to the way Indigenous people share, eat and experience food.’¹⁵⁵ On *Kriol Kitchen* the Torres explore the diverse cuisine of Indigenous Australia (primarily in northern Western Australia and the Northern Territory) and the multicultural heritage that can be found in the food of geographically disparate communities.¹⁵⁶ Mitch Torres reflects,

There are a few proponents who are trying to make a full-time living out of [the native food industry], make an economy out of it. But most of the food is grown now in big masses by non-Indigenous people, so it’s like another aspect of our culture that has been taken away from us...You can’t talk about the culture ... unless you are from that culture...You can have an appreciation for it.¹⁵⁷

Chef Mark Olive expands on this reflecting; ‘Yes there’s non-Indigenous chefs coming through, but they have to have the passion for it, not just seeing it as a curiosity factor...It breaks my heart when I see people coming in on the scene to make a quick buck from Aboriginal people to get them where they need to go.’¹⁵⁸ Olive, and his co-host Nannup travel the country in *On Country Kitchen* in a format that prioritises First Nations approaches, incorporates local Dreaming stories, traditional medicines and foods and provides a platform for local producers. In the following analysis I explore *My Bush Tukka Adventures* (2014), *Kriol Kitchen* (2014-) and *Flour, Sugar, Tea* (2007) as examples of on-screen representations

¹⁵⁴ BuzzFeed Oz has a series of videos in which First Nations people cook and share mob feeds including: BuzzFeed Oz, ‘First Nations Australians Swap Mob Feeds’, 9 April 2021, accessed 15 March 2022, at <https://youtu.be/AvMEo6SsPVw> and BuzzFeed Oz, ‘Maori and First Nations Aussies Swap Snacks’, 9 April 2021, accessed 15 March 2022, at <https://youtu.be/o0q2TpgpuIo> One video which does feature endogenous flora is BuzzFeed Oz, ‘I ate Aussie Native foods for 24 hours’, 20 December 2021, accessed 15 March 2022, at https://youtu.be/qaB_tNGMKYQ featuring *Gomeri Waliyan* man Joshua Thurston Toole. Toole cooks three meals featuring pigface, bottle brush flowers, strawberry gum, gumby gumby and quandong jam, stingray, lemon myrtle, warrigal greens, dianella berries, emu and murnong. Toole notes that murnong (the root of the yam daisy) is sacred because, after land clearing, it has become a rarity. This is a contemporary sacrality driven by scarcity rather than tradition.

¹⁵⁵ Tanya Orman, ‘Why fine diners need to hear the stories behind their bush tucker’, *Time Out*, 25 September 2016, accessed 20 February 2020, at <https://www.timeout.com/sydney/blog/why-fine-diners-need-to-hear-the-stories-behind-their-bush-tucker-092616>.

¹⁵⁶ Many of the Asian men married into the local Aboriginal families and the Kriol culture of Broome was born. They brought with them their cultures and shared this with their new families. Filipinos, Malays, Koepangers, Chinese, Japanese, Europeans, and West Indians, have left their cultural influences with the local families and over generations local Aboriginal families have added their unique twist to the wonderful dishes that we all celebrate. See ‘About Kriol Kitchen’, *SBS*, 29 June 2015, accessed 20 February 2020, at <https://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/article/2015/06/26/about-kriol-kitchen>.

¹⁵⁷ Styles, ‘Time for Australia to acknowledge forgotten food history.’

¹⁵⁸ Styles, ‘Time for Australia to acknowledge forgotten food history.’

of Australian foodscapes hosted and produced by Indigenous Australians.¹⁵⁹ I will then explore how non-Indigenous media in the Australian, and international, television industry engages with native Australian foodscapes. Selected case studies include two Australian programs *Restaurant Australia* (2015) and *MasterChef* (2009-) and two international productions *Chef's Table* (2015) and *Cooked* (2016). I will use this section to address the responsibility of producers and media professionals in navigating public perception of the Australian foodscape and its history. This section addresses the following key question: How is information on, and representation of, Indigenous foods disseminated by Australian and international media?

Wawili Pitjas Film Production company was contracted by NITV to create the *Kriol Kitchen* series which ran for four seasons. Wawili Pitjas is owned by the Torres sisters who also host the show, consequently *Kriol Kitchen* is Aboriginal owned, produced and hosted. *Kriol Kitchen* focuses on remote Aboriginal communities. Each episode features a guest, usually a guest with a remote business, either cultural tours, cooking or hospitality based. The Torres' use familial Aboriginal English with their guests referring to them as 'brother' or 'sis' creating an inclusive, communal narrative tone. The episode format includes storytelling over shared food preparation and the exploration of Country. I will provide a brief analysis of two episodes here. Firstly, Season Four Episode Five 'Ground Baked Kangaroo Tails With Damper, Kangaroo Curry, Steamed Barramundi Pockets & Bush Berries' and secondly Season Three Episode Nine 'Robbie Mills: Baked Marinated Magpie Goose, Blachan, Braised Kangaroo Steaks With Asparagus Mushroom.'¹⁶⁰

Season Four Episode Five begins in the community of Yakanarra on Walmajarri Country where Ali and Mitch Torres gather around hot coals with Beryl Henderson and young community members Georgette and Lucinda. Ali and Mitch talk about preparing food 'bush way', cooking on coals rather than gas or electric heat. Georgette and Lucinda assist in the preparation of damper and the inclusion of their generation demonstrates the inheritance of knowledge. As the kangaroo tail cooks under the coals Beryl shares the story of her

¹⁵⁹ Other programs include *On Country Kitchen* in which chef Mark Olive, and his co-host Nannup travel the country. *On Country Kitchen* in a format that prioritises First Nations approaches, incorporates local Dreaming stories, traditional medicines and foods and provides a platform for local producers

¹⁶⁰ Mitch Torres (dir.), *Kriol Kitchen*, Season 4 Episode 5, (2015), Wawili Pitjas Film Production Company.; Mitch Torres (dir.), *Kriol Kitchen*, Season 3 Episode 9, (2019), Wawili Pitjas Film Production Company.

Walmajarri Country, describing how the large monolith behind her is the body of an old woman, the surface craters representing spear wounds. In this way we understand that storytelling alongside the practice of cooking facilitates the preservation of place-based knowledge. In this episode the audience also sees the evolution of traditional hunting practice as Michael Henderson uses a car mirror to light snake burrows rather than smoking the reptile out. The depiction of current and evolving cultural practice situates traditional knowledge as contemporary and useful.

In Season Three Episode Nine the Torres' meet with Larrakia man Robbie Mills of Batji Tours. Mills uses his interview as an opportunity to discuss reduced diversity and availability of native game. Mills tells the Torres' 'I make a political statement not to fish or hunt...I want all Australians to let our native species regenerate and have a chance.'¹⁶¹ Mills chooses the recipes he shares carefully stating he would do an 'urban version' of his food as the 'law animal' (totemic animal) can be cooked with a certain 'methodology in the bush.' Mills shares a narrative of place, identifying that food exists in different ways in different foodspaces. Mills is also defining boundaries around the distribution of knowledge both with the viewer and with the Torres'. The format and production values of *Kriol Kitchen* privilege the voices of First Nations people and demonstrate the distinct nations and communities that make up Indigenous Australia.

My Bush Tukka Adventure (2014) was a project hosted and produced by Kija and Jiru woman Samantha Martin in collaboration with filmmaker and director Michael Butler. This documentary focuses on Martin's homelands in the Kimberley.¹⁶² The series was developed as a collaboration between Martin and Butler, Martin told the Daily Telegraph that while working in a diamond mine in Western Australia she watched Les Hiddins' *Bush Tucker Man* series. Butler posited that Martin could provide the Aboriginal perspective as *Bush Tukka*

¹⁶¹ Torres (dir.), *Kriol Kitchen*, Season 3 Episode 9.

¹⁶² Michael Butler (dir.) and Samantha Martin, *My Bush Tukka Adventure*, Sacred Oz Productions, 2014. SacredOz productions ceased operations between sometime 2016 and 2018. Access to some content from *My Bush Tukka Adventure* is still available via Michael Butler's YouTube Channel which he uses to catalogue his filmography see Michael Butler, *YouTube*, <https://www.youtube.com/user/sacredo2/videos>

Woman.¹⁶³ Martin leads the audience through the Kimberleys, on hunting journeys with her family as they fish in waterholes for black brim, catfish and barramundi, catch goanna or turtle or pick gubinge, boab nuts, and the sugar gum leaves. Martin, like the Torreses and Willis Ardler builds the show around connection, community and culture. I argue the inclusion of children in particular depicts the continuation of culture and identity. As will be seen in the following case studies, the non-Indigenous produced media I analyse focus primarily on the individual. This indicates a difference in intention where the individual is situated as expert knowledge holder as opposed to recognising shared ecological knowledge. Martin speaks to the camera about her sense of connection to Country and encourages the community members she interviews to do the same. Martin tells her audience:

I have come home to the ancestors, to the spirits...the culture could pass and die with the old people...the younger generation must take ownership of that...it is us that must regain the culture...if this gap fails it is gone forever, that is not fair to the next generation.¹⁶⁴

Much of the four-part series focuses on Martin's own efforts to educate the young children in the communities around the Kimberley's. Since the production Martin has published *Bush Tukka Guide* (2014) and worked with Butler to interview Aboriginal Elders, preserving their stories and knowledge, and showing the strong, proud, positive side of Indigenous people.¹⁶⁵

Wadi-Wadi man, journalist and filmmaker Lee Willis-Ardler's *Flour, Sugar, Tea* (2007) is framed by the loss of community leader John De Satge and the resulting grief of his mother Charlotte De Satge.¹⁶⁶ De Satge's death and the various illnesses he had during his lifetime. The twenty-seven-minute short film follows Willis-Ardler, at times joined by Charlotte De Satge, as he travels from the De Satge's hometown of Mount Isa, Queensland to Canberra, Australian Capital Territory to Wreck Bay, Jervis Bay Territory. Willis-Ardler confronts the

¹⁶³ I suggest that in their filmmaking endeavours on Martin's land Martin and Butler are engaging in what Jocelyn Bosse et al. terms 'worlding', whereby through film they explore possibilities of certain futures, while foreclosing other imaginable ones. Jocelyn Bosse, Xan Chacko and Susannah Chapman, 'The cosmopolitics of food futures: Imagining nature, law, and apocalypse', *Journal of Media and Cultural Studies* 34 no. 6 (2020), 840 – 857.

¹⁶⁴ Butler (dir.) and Martin, *My Bush Tukka Adventure*.

¹⁶⁵ Samantha Martin, *Bush tukka guide: identify Australian plants and animals, and learn how to cook them*, (Richmond, VIC: Explore Australia Publishing Pty Ltd, 2014).

¹⁶⁶ Lee Willis-Ardler, *Flour, Sugar, Tea* (Luminous Films, 2007).

poor mortality of Indigenous people in Australia and tries to get others to engage with the health crisis. Willis-Ardler constructs memorable scenes, particularly his protest outside Parliament House where he cooks kangaroo, pippis and damper to start a conversation around fresh versus processed food. Willis-Ardler's to camera discussions are frank, he says he does not believe politicians 'like us' (Aboriginal people), 'if they liked us, they would do something about the state of food in this country.' Willis-Ardler politicises his language by introducing feeling and emotion to contrast with the statistical figures which reoccur in the film.¹⁶⁷

Charlotte De Satge speaks to Willis-Ardler about her experience living in the remote community of Dajarra. She describes 'carefree days' where children could go to the river and 'grab wild bananas.' De Satge reflects that:

Bush foods plenty in the early days, not so much now, the fences that came in the places that used to be open you can't get into, [due to drought] trees are dying and not bearing the fruit they should.¹⁶⁸

De Satge goes on to detail her experiences while practicing traditional hunting. She feels non-Aboriginal people 'look at you as if to say well, you're civilised now, why don't you eat what everyone else eats?' De Satge's reflection infers that the bodily reaction (in facial expression) of others is designed to force shame onto her. This is consistent with reflections made by Fink Latukefu regarding shame in the consumption of goanna at Brewarrinna mission and Elders at the Wreck Bay community who tell similar stories that when they were young they were taught 'our ways wasn't the right way to live, our diet wasn't the right way to live.'¹⁶⁹

Willis-Ardler's film is punctuated by uncredited songs the lyrics of which play out over scenes of community: 'Mission man, your grand plan, he gave us diabetes, johnny cakes for everyone' and scenes are interspersed with images of Aboriginal children in front of a black background facing the camera as the voiceover tells the audience about the mortality and health of Aboriginal people in Australia. Willis-Ardler's investigative and directorial tone is serious, reflecting the pain and illness experienced by his community, friends and,

¹⁶⁷ Willis-Ardler, *Flour, Sugar, Tea*.

¹⁶⁸ Willis-Ardler, *Flour, Sugar, Tea*.

¹⁶⁹ Fink Latukefu, 'Recollections of Brewarrinna Aboriginal Mission,' 73.; Willis-Ardler, *Flour, Sugar, Tea*.

statistically, the wider Indigenous Australian population. Willis-Ardler's film demonstrates the impact of food violence on health and wellbeing. Willis-Ardler focuses on the impact of food on people first and foremost. The following case studies provide a more abstract focus on food.

4.4.1 Tourism Australia: *Restaurant Australia* (2015)

I have previously referenced restaurateur Jennice Kersh's hesitation about the impact that a restaurant can really have on social change.¹⁷⁰ These hesitations are seemingly not shared by many stakeholders in the hospitality industry including government body Tourism Australia which invested in the global branding of Australian gastronomy as being of superior quality, meaning that restaurants, food, and tourism are key arenas for local, national and global conversations about native foods. Tourism Australia funded the promotional documentary *Restaurant Australia* (2014), which followed chefs Ben Shewry, Peter Gilmore, and Neil Perry as they visited suppliers and producers across the country, and prepared a gala dinner in Hobart, Tasmania. Tourism Australia's decision to feature recognised dons of the Australian hospitality scene misses the mark, as it excludes Indigenous professionals. This directly impacts the narrative about Australia and Australian food that is communicated to the global audience. Much of this chapter deals with this tension, questioning whether the socially conscious consumer citizen or the 'foodie' has a responsibility to be aware of the tensions present in the industry they are consuming, for example the Australian abalone industry. Similarly, does the restaurateur, does the chef?

Restaurant Australia is not a critical text in the academic sense, but my discussion of the Australian food system and the relationship Australians have with land and produce calls for a wide range of source genres. *Restaurant Australia* was a campaign run by Tourism Australia which focused on Australian produced Food and Wine and culminated in a titular, high budget documentary spread across three episodes following three Australian chefs on a journey to create a menu which summed up 'Australia' on a plate.¹⁷¹ The documentary was available on streaming giants Netflix and Amazon Prime for their Australian catalogue. *Restaurant Australia* seeks to reframe Australian food, to effectively move away from the

¹⁷⁰ Huntley, *Eating Between the Lines*, 102.

¹⁷¹ 'Restaurant Australia', *The Precinct Studios*, accessed 25 March 2019, at <http://theprecinct.com/projects/restaurant-australia/>

international vision of Australia and Australian food previously shaped by the influential tourism campaign from 1984, featuring the famous line ‘I’ll slip an extra shrimp on the barbie for you’ by actor Paul Hogan.¹⁷² Campaign lead John O’Sullivan had only recently become managing director when he shifted the majority of the budget and attention of Tourism Australia towards the offerings of the national pantry, the producers that stock it, the table and the chefs that fill it. *Restaurant Australia* was designed to alter the attitude of those who had visited Australia and those who had not. Research in fifteen key markets showed travellers who had visited the country ranked it second for food and wine pleasure, behind France and ahead of Italy. Only twenty-six percent of people who had not visited Australia associated it with good food and wine.’¹⁷³ This was weighed against international tourism research that earmarked food and wine as the ‘third most important driver in picking a destination.’¹⁷⁴ *Restaurant Australia* has been a cross-media campaign, print, television, and event based. The first event was featured in the concluding episode of the documentary; the *Invite the World to Dinner* program drew eighty-six International food and wine ‘influencers; and media to an ambitious program of food focused research trips in November 2014 culminating in a dinner for 252 in Tasmania.’¹⁷⁵ The result, according to Tourism Australia, has been a global audience reach of 6.1 billion.¹⁷⁶ Opening with wide, panning shots of the Australian desert, rainforest and pasture land the *Restaurant Australia* documentary visually represents the dynamism and variety of the land and the voiceover audibly communicates that Australian produce is varied, far reaching and one of the most amazing things about the country and that ‘to tell an Australian story, you need to use things unique to the land.’¹⁷⁷

The second phase of the *Restaurant Australia* campaign focused on the renaissance of global interest in Indigenous foods and aimed to feature Australia’s unique produce and heritage through the eyes of celebrated Copenhagen based chef René Redzepi. Over 150 global media and culinary figures were hosted by Tourism Australia at Redzepi’s ten-week pop-up in Sydney in 2016. ‘The wildly inventive menu based on Indigenous produce - magpie goose,

¹⁷² Tourism Australia, ‘Shrimp on the Barbie’, (1983), *National Film and Sound Archive*, at <https://www.nfsa.gov.au/collection/curated/shrimp-barbie-paul-hogan>

¹⁷³ Helen Anderson, ‘Serving the Nation: Australia’s Future as a Culinary Destination’, *Gourmet Traveller*, 2 October 2016, accessed 15 May 2018, at <http://www.gourmettraveller.com.au/travel/travel-news-features/2016/10/serving-the-nation-australias-future-as-a-culinary-destination/>

¹⁷⁴ Anderson, ‘Serving the Nation: Australia’s Future as a Culinary Destination.’

¹⁷⁵ Anderson, ‘Serving the Nation: Australia’s Future as a Culinary Destination.’

¹⁷⁶ Anderson, ‘Serving the Nation: Australia’s Future as a Culinary Destination.’

¹⁷⁷ ‘Restaurant Australia,’ *The Precinct Studios*.

unripe macadamia nuts, fermented kangaroo and more - was developed by Redzepi and his team during research trips supported by Tourism Australia.¹⁷⁸ O'Sullivan said, 'From a marketing point of view, René's immersion in the Australian culinary landscape was priceless. Suddenly a global audience had their eyes opened to this unique pantry.'¹⁷⁹ All 5,500 places, at \$485 a head, were sold in four minutes, with a waiting list of some 27,000.¹⁸⁰ Excluding the customers who attended the \$485 a head Redzepi dinner, or the exclusive list of influencers and media invited by Tourism Australia, the world of *Restaurant Australia* is, primarily, only accessible through the screen. The featured produce is spread across the country with chef presenters traveling to the northern and southern tips of Western Australia, to Tasmania and inland, close to Alice Springs, to access the Australian produce they need. This a necessity of the production's purpose, to showcase variety and excellence. Part of this is borne from the ethos of these chefs. Gilmore tells the camera, 'nature drives me, its diversity and texture, produce creates the dish...what can I do with that particular beautiful vegetable to compliment everything on the plate.'¹⁸¹

These chefs celebrate small business and environmentally friendly agriculture, they promote businesses which operate in a way essential for Australia's future agricultural systems in which ethics of environmental impact, animal welfare and quality must become central pillars. However, the question of access remains, this is not a program built for imitation, at least not for the everyday chef or consumer, perhaps restaurateurs in Australia and overseas will pursue supply channels with the featured producers, they might hunt down the paperbark used by Ben Shewry or the Blue Marron used by Peter Gilmore, but, save the wines featured with each course, these products are not easily accessible.¹⁸² The dinner itself is exclusive, set in the giant halls of Tasmania's Museum of Old and New Art the interior space is transformed into a cavernous, cathedral to the name of food and guests move between the interior and the firelit exterior expanse of Glenorchy Art and Sculpture Park. Fire is central to cooking the fire pits around which the food critics and chefs from around the world gather centralise fire as elemental and universal but still distinctly Australian. In fact, Peter Gilmore identifies fire as 'an essential Australian experience'.¹⁸³ In Australia fire is representative of

¹⁷⁸ Anderson, 'Serving the Nation: Australia's Future as a Culinary Destination.'

¹⁷⁹ Anderson, 'Serving the Nation: Australia's Future as a Culinary Destination.'

¹⁸⁰ Anderson, 'Serving the Nation: Australia's Future as a Culinary Destination.'

¹⁸¹ '*Restaurant Australia*', The Precinct Studios.

¹⁸² Blue Marron is a crustacean endemic to a series of river systems in South-Western Australia.

¹⁸³ '*Restaurant Australia*', The Precinct Studios.

of survival, not simply cooking, but also as part of a cultural experience of bushfire. Parallels can be drawn with food writer Michael Pollan's four-part documentary series *Cooked* in which the opening scenes were of the Australian desert, following the Martu people as they use fire to hunt, and then cook, the hunted. *Restaurant Australia's* dinner setting is a far cry from the beaches and deserts which are typically chosen to showcase the country. The dinner was about presenting Australia to non-Australian residents, a grand showcase not dissimilar from dinners hosted by Emperors or Tsars or Royals. *Restaurant Australia's* culinary diplomacy is usually hidden from view in embassies or at trade shows. Choosing to preserve the event on film allows the Australian public to become voyeurs of an Australian foodscape they may never have seen and may never experience.

Chef and *Restaurant Australia* host Ben Shewry features regularly in this chapter. He is amongst the non-Indigenous chefs of the moment who use of Australian native produce to feature and showcase, rather than simply embellish.¹⁸⁴ These chefs (Shewry, Jock Zonfrillo, and Kylie Kwong, among others) take the place occupied by earlier non-Indigenous chefs working with native foods, like Jean Paul Bruneteau and Raymond and Jennice Kersh. Like Gilmore, Shewry tells the camera that his 'purpose as a chef is to display produce in the best way possible.'¹⁸⁵ Shewry's cuisine takes him to North-Western Australia as he sources pearl meat, similar but not the same as the more controversial abalone (pearl meat is dragged out of the deep and can be a byproduct of the pearl industry). Described as a 'high end restaurant meat', Shewry serves it up with King George whiting cooked and served in paperbark.¹⁸⁶ In contrast, Neil Perry reflects the Asian influence, appealing to the international market *Restaurant Australia* targets. Perry visits a wasabi root grower before travelling south to Tasmania to harvest the controversial abalone.¹⁸⁷ Shewry sources kangaroo meat for one

¹⁸⁴ I choose to focus on non-Indigenous chefs here to further explore two central questions of my research: How has the rise of momentary food trends and culture seekers impacted the emerging native foods industry and is Indigenous food at risk of colonisation rather than the subject of a productive, benefit-sharing relationship? What are the responsibilities of hospitality businesses and consumers regarding innovative business models and modes of interacting with Indigenous communities and their cultural knowledge?

¹⁸⁵ 'Restaurant Australia,' *The Precinct Studios*; This philosophy is in action in Shewry's Melbourne restaurant with chefs doubling as gardeners harvesting seventy-ninety percent off their edible herbs and ten percent of their vegetables in an effort to access fresh produce and to benefit the mental health of staff. and to solve an issue of access.

¹⁸⁶ 'Restaurant Australia', *The Precinct Studios*.

¹⁸⁷ I have referred to abalone in this research to discuss tension between production, primary industry, and culture theft. This supports the following line of questioning: How has the insidious experience of shame and stigma perpetrated by colonising forces on Indigenous and immigrant Australians impacted the development of the Australian foodscape?

dish: this is an important inclusion for an internationally geared production given there is a level of international discomfort with Australia's consumption of the national animal. This discomfort may be borne from a semi-totemic relationship established by elevating the kangaroo to the Australian crest and the perceived disparity between emblematic use on passports and government letterheads and the ready availability of butchered meat at supermarkets. Shewry is shown travelling to central Australia to learn about the process of commercial wild harvesting, travelling out at dusk when the kangaroos feed. The documentary references efforts to protect wild populations by harvesting male kangaroos rather than females who may have joeys. The wild harvesting method claims a similar ethos to free range farming; that the animal, when harvested correctly, has not been under strain or stress, and is therefore better-quality meat.

Restaurant Australia is an excellent example of government investment into the Australian foodscape. Tourism Australia utilised the campaign to reframe Australian food. This campaign, particularly the 2015 documentary series, is a valuable text for this research as it presents for analysis a contemporary, government sanctioned narrative about the Australian foodscape, including native foods. Sadly, the voices of Indigenous Australians are glaringly missing.

4.4.2 *MasterChef Australia (2009-)*

The previous case study explored an internationally geared representation of the Australian foodscape on screen. *Restaurant Australia* was intended as a commentary on, and advertisement for, the Australian foodscape. My next case study focuses on a commercial, privately produced television program geared primarily at a domestic market. *MasterChef Australia* has become a touchstone of the Australian hospitality scene as it is represented in popular culture and has even taken on a role as cultural export. The show has significant cultural responsibility for its portrayal of an Australian foodscape. Focused heavily on the identity of its contestant, and the representation of the identity through food, *MasterChef Australia* has opened itself up for critique over its lack of substantive engagement with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Australia.

Journalist Farrin Foster notes that in India, where Australia's reputation was damaged by a series of hate crimes targeting Indian students studying abroad, *MasterChef* has an audience

of millions of viewers per week.¹⁸⁸ Its impact has been so great that journalist Aarti Betigeri wrote ‘No longer was there a sense of antagonism about sledging cricketers or perceptions of racism. Rather, everyone wanted to talk about *MasterChef Australia*.’¹⁸⁹ Foster writes ‘This soft power potential has not gone unnoticed by the Australian Government. *MasterChef* is among a suite of TV programs that will screen in selected Pacific nations in a bid to promote Australian values and cultural exchange.’¹⁹⁰ Foster’s op-ed explores a number of issues I have raised including the exclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Foster writes that the multicultural celebration of food on *MasterChef* allows her to relax into its portrayal of Australia despite,

...the recent surge in racist attacks on people perceived to be of Asian descent. I feel buoyed by the fact that millions of people around the world are watching and embracing this vision of Australia—and I forget about how our media and political rhetoric stokes hatred of Muslim people. I forget the unacknowledged war our so-called justice system is waging on Indigenous people.¹⁹¹

Jock Zonfrillo is one of the few chefs working with Australian Indigenous ingredients to have been featured as a guest (and later host) on the cultural megalith *MasterChef Australia*. The television show’s production team introduced Zonfrillo on 24 June 2019 referencing his accolades including *The Good Food Guide*’s recognition of Orana as 2018 Restaurant of the Year in the Good Food Awards.¹⁹² The episode had a viewership of 581,000 city/metro viewers.¹⁹³ These numbers indicate the scale of exposure for this episode. Host Matt Preston referred to Zonfrillo as a man pursuing ‘a true Australian gastronomy... leading the pack...a

¹⁸⁸ Farrin Foster, ‘Why *MasterChef* is a Masterclass in Australian Propaganda’, *Kill Your Darlings*, 29 June 2020, accessed 3 July 2020, at <https://www.killyourdarlings.com.au/article/why-masterchef-is-a-masterclass-in-australian-propaganda/>

¹⁸⁹ Aarti Betigeri, ‘‘Oz Fest’ Brings Australian Culture to India’, *Wall Street Journal*, 15 October 2012, accessed 3 July 2020, at <https://blogs.wsj.com/indiarealtime/2012/10/15/oz-fest-brings-australian-culture-to-india/> in Foster, ‘Why *MasterChef* is a Masterclass in Australian Propaganda’.

¹⁹⁰ Prianka Srinivasan, ‘Questions raised over Australian Government’s new TV funding for Pacific’, *ABC Radio Pacific Beat*, 23 January 2020, accessed 28 August 2020, at <https://www.abc.net.au/radio-australia/programs/pacificbeat/australian-governments-pacific-broadcasting-deal-questioned/10738822>.

¹⁹¹ Foster, ‘Why *MasterChef* is a Masterclass in Australian Propaganda’.

¹⁹² Callan Boys, Gemma Cody and Scott Bolles, ‘All the winners and hats at the Good Food Guide Awards’, *Good Food Guide Online*, 9 October 2018, at <https://www.goodfood.com.au/eat-out/good-food-guides/all-the-winners-and-hats-at-the-good-food-guide-awards-20181008-h16d6h>.

¹⁹³ ‘Tuesday 25 June 2019’, *TV Tonight Ratings Tuesday*, 25 June 2019, at <https://tvtonight.com.au/2019/06/tuesday-25-june-2019.html>.

man with a mission.’¹⁹⁴ The episode featured Zonfrillo as visiting chef, challenging competitors to use Australian native ingredients, including: dorrigo pepper, white currants, lilly pilly, lemon tea tree, aniseed myrtle, longyam, and native basil. A telling exchange occurred when contestant Derek Lau broke down in tears after receiving criticism for his longyam centric dish of beef tartare. Host, chef and restaurateur George Calombaris took him aside to comfort him saying ‘these aren’t things chefs cook with only, a handful cook with them in Australia, and they get months to cook with them and work it out.’¹⁹⁵ The statement is not untrue, Australian endogenous ingredients are under-utilised in Australian kitchens and culinary schools and any recipe development takes time and practice. Despite the factual accuracy of his statement, there was no advocacy to encourage Lau to try again, to continue working with, and learning about Australian endogenous ingredients. Instead, Australian endogenous ingredients are dismissed as unusual or difficult. Other discourse during the episode included the claim that ‘you wouldn’t see these in a supermarket, they are so esoteric, out of the realm of our cooks.’ The *MasterChef* narrative plays it safe; it highlights without advocating. While ‘cooks’ here refers to competitors, by the nature of the show (‘regular’ Australians as competitors) the implication is that this encompasses all Australian cooks and in doing so distances competitors and viewers from the possibility of Australian endogenous ingredients playing a more central role in the Australian culinary scene.

MasterChef has a history of treating Australian endogenous ingredients with a tokenistic approach; this is a disservice to the show, the audience, and the Australian community. I do not seek to minimise the systematic nature of Australian resistance to celebrating Aboriginal culture or to suggest a television show is the leading vehicle for radical social and political change. However, the importance of storytelling and narrative is essential for bonded communities: Indigenous communities have at their heart stories and narratives which communicate facts and history through the art of narrative. Therefore, the opportunity to learn from these communities and showcase Australian Indigenous ingredients should become part of *MasterChef*’s narrative and lexicon in a significant way. The impact on the developing native foods industry would be substantial because the *MasterChef* trademark has an impact on the cooking patterns and conversations of its audience. While *MasterChef* does engage in corporate responsibility (for example a partnership with food rescue organisation

¹⁹⁴ ‘MasterChef Australia’, Season 11, Episode 40, directed by Richard Franc, aired 24 June 2019, on Network 10.

¹⁹⁵ ‘MasterChef Australia’, Season 11, Episode 40,

Second Bite was spearheaded by former host Matt Preston) the program has a valuable opportunity to integrate Australian Indigenous foods into corporate responsibility profile.¹⁹⁶ Television shows centred around food draw big audiences from a broad spectrum of demographics. This is part of their commercial value. Shows like *MasterChef* and its counterparts (including *Plate of Origin*, *My Kitchen Rules*, *The Chefs Line*) could challenge the domination of the culinary space by these sponsors and encourage them to embrace a more equitable range of both products and suppliers, particularly native food suppliers.

The introduction of Jock Zonfrillo, Andy Allen, and Melissa Leong as hosts of *MasterChef* in 2020 came hot on the heels of a series of controversies around the former host trio and their conduct in the hospitality industry.¹⁹⁷ Zonfrillo, Allen and Leong brought an fresh, new representation of Australia's changing hospitality scene. Leong and Zonfrillo, in particular, bring a host of cultural knowledge to the format. Leong, an Asian Australian woman working in a heavily white, male dominated industry, and Zonfrillo, with his wealth of knowledge of Australian native plants, set the tone for a possible new path for the show. The 2020 season regularly saw dishes featuring recognisably Australian native foods and it can be no coincidence that this aligns with the appointment of Zonfrillo as a judge. Native fruits were popular, for example, Davidson Plum featured in a number of dishes from an accompaniment to meat: Reece Hignall's 'Wallaby and Pepperberry pie' and Callum Hann's 'Chicken Liver Parfait with Davidson Plum gel') and in desserts (Laura Sharrad's 'Native Winter.') Other notable recipes that included native foods were Laura Sharrad's 'Bonito with LillyPilly and Saltbush,' Poh Ling Yeow's 'Fried Souffle, Hazelnut Praline and Wattleseed Custard.'

¹⁹⁶ Matt Preston is a board member of SecondBite; Michaela Morgan, 'This is what happens to all the leftover food on Masterchef', *10 Daily Online*, 28 June 2019, at <https://10daily.com.au/lifestyle/a190626rdxnj/this-is-exactly-what-happens-to-all-the-left-over-food-on-masterchef-20190628>.

¹⁹⁷ George Calombaris, in particular, faced a mammoth scandal as a result of widespread wage theft and poor standards of human resources within his restaurant group. See ABC, 'George Calombaris MaDe establishment backpacks underpaid workers', 18 July 2019, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-07-18/george-calombaris-made-establishment-backpays-underpaid-workers/11320274>.

¹⁹⁸ Reece Hignall, 'Wallaby and Pepperberry Pie', *MasterChef* Sunday, 7 June 2020 at <https://10play.com.au/masterchef/recipes/wallaby-and-pepperberry-pie-with-davidson-plum-ketchup/r200514usmdo>; Callum Hann, 'Chicken Liver Parfait with Davidson Plum gel', *MasterChef*, Tuesday, 7 July 2020, recipe not available; Laura Sharrad, 'Native Winter', *MasterChef* Monday, 13 April 2020 at <https://10play.com.au/masterchef/recipes/native-winter/r200325eurdq>;

¹⁹⁹ Laura Sharrad, 'Wallaby and Pepperberry Pie', *MasterChef*, 20 July 2020 at <https://10play.com.au/masterchef/recipes/bonito-with-lilly-pilly-and-saltbush/r200716kxrmd>; Poh Ling Yeoh, 'Fried Souffle, Hazelnut Praline and Wattleseed Custard', *MasterChef*, Monday, 22 June 2020 at <https://10play.com.au/masterchef/recipes/fried-souffle-stuffed-with-hazelnut-praline-custard/r200602lsexi>
The 2021 season saw an increase in the number of dishes utilising native ingredients, however, as of the time of writing the same trend was not yet visible in the 2022 season.

While native foods are featured, contestant commentary rarely references any cultural links, information or acknowledgements, with the surprise exception of one contestant on *Junior MasterChef Australia*, Ben, who, on presenting a dish featuring a variety of Australian native foods, announced;

When I think of my dream dish, I'm really inspired by Aboriginal culture, because it's the oldest living culture in the world! Australia's Aboriginal people have a lot of connection to the land through all this bush food. I think it should be something that we all recognise, and I really want to pay my respects to that in my dish today.²⁰⁰

Unfortunately, this commentary is an exception in the *MasterChef* franchise. *MasterChef* was developed firmly within the bounds of lifestyle, reality and game show television. There was no intention to engage with political topics, yet a narrative focus on heritage and authenticity, coupled with a global rise in amateur interest in food politics, has pushed *MasterChef* into a unique position.²⁰¹ Foster writes that the producers therefore 'have a responsibility to push past pseudo-progressiveness and turn *MasterChef* into something more constructive.'²⁰² Foster continues, encapsulating key points made in this chapter, that producers 'need to stop anointing White chefs as 'masters' of BIPOC cuisines and start realising that diversity means celebrating and including Indigenous people, people with disabilities, and all the varied communities who make up Australia.'²⁰³ These criticisms link well with the work of Jenny Dorsey. Dorsey's research into, and advocacy for, equity, particularly racial equity, in the hospitality industry is echoed in Foster's critique. This chapter posited a series of questions asked by Dorsey, as key anchors for this research. To conclude this case study one question is particularly important; 'Is this person paying respect to, and representing properly, the ideas/flavours/principles of the cuisines they are drawing upon? If a consumer is interacting with this ingredient/dish/cuisine for the first time, are they receiving an education that is helpful or harmful?' While the 2020 season of *MasterChef Australia* in particular increased

²⁰⁰ Ben Bolton on *Junior MasterChef Australia*, Season 3 Episode 6, directed by Jo Siddiqui, aired 20 October 2020, on Network 10.

²⁰¹ The 2021 *MasterChef* finale was a collaboration with Tourism Australia and Tourism Northern Territory. Filmed in Central Australia the two-episode series included welcome to Country, cultural engagement and an elimination challenge run by Rayleen Brown (Kungkaskan Cook). This was a positive development, the representation and engagement in these episodes should be more consistent throughout the season.

²⁰² Foster, 'Why *MasterChef* is a Masterclass in Australian Propaganda.'

²⁰³ BIPOC stands for Black, Indigenous and/or People of Colour. Foster, 'Why *MasterChef* is a Masterclass in Australian Propaganda'

its focus on the narrative, cultural profile of food as part of Asian Australian contestant's identity *MasterChef Australia* fails on these challenges by nature of falling short of actively engaging with the cultural, living history of native foods in Australia and the many disparate groups of Indigenous Australians for whom these foods form a significant part of cultural identity.

4.4.3 An international portrait: *Chef's Table* (2015): Season One Episode Five

I now build on previous discussions of narrative representation on screen with a close analysis of the profile of Ben Shewry, Chef at Attica on Yaluk-ut Weelam, Boonerwung Country (Ripponlea, Victoria) on David Gelb's *Chef's Table* (2015-). I previously argued that Australian television *MasterChef Australia* has an international reach; however, the reach of documentary series *Chef's Table* is significantly greater. The documentary series screens on all Netflix platforms and the episode profiling Shewry provides an important text for analysis of the portrayal of Australian native foods on a global stage. New Zealand born Chef Ben Shewry has a different relationship with Indigenous foods to many of his Australian counterparts. Growing up on the North Island of New Zealand instilled an 'acknowledgement and enjoyment of Indigenous culture [that was] ... a broader part of society.'²⁰⁴ Shewry has said:

...growing up with the hangi, the traditional cooking method of the New Zealand Maori, and growing up with the marae, the traditional meeting place of the New Zealand Maori, this was an everyday thing for me, learning the language at school, having Maori friends and a mother who spoke a lot of the language, and it was just what we did. When I moved to Australia it was a very stark contrast in 2002, I just didn't see culture here and I didn't see Indigenous culture, it's not a part of broader society really, and that was kind of shocking to me.²⁰⁵

Shewry's approach to the supply chain is ideal for the current shape of the native food market which has small crop yields and a wide variety of harvesters and suppliers. Shewry aims to

²⁰⁴ Alleman, 'Indigenous Foods: Swallowing Our History.'

²⁰⁵ Michael Canning, 'Life abroad in Melbourne with one of the city's most inspiring residents', *Exceptional Alien*, 15 August 2018, accessed 26 July 2020, at <https://exceptionalalien.com/ben-shewry/>.

engage directly with producers ‘paying them what they ask for and knowing that what we’re paying is going directly to them, to minimise any chance of exploitation.’²⁰⁶ This approach is political action, rebelling against colonial tendencies to absorb and re appropriate aspects of Indigenous culture in order to minimise the identity of Indigenous people. Bruce Pascoe declares;

I don’t want Australians to dispossess us a second time, by taking away our foods and the plants we domesticated all those years ago. I’m hoping they will remember where it came from and include Aboriginal people in the bounty that will flow from using Australian foods.²⁰⁷

Shewry takes a more understated route directly echoing the words of Pascoe and saying, ‘We can all understand something that’s delicious...we can show people that there’s so much value in our culture here. But you have to swallow the past as well.’²⁰⁸

The following material explores the representation of Australian native foods by international media and the impact of the chef, as a public persona on that representation. I will use Jenny Dorsey’s critiques of personal and professional responsibility when representing and utilising the food of cultures other than one’s own. Shewry was one of the first chefs featured in the first season of *Chef’s Table* (2015-). Created by David Gelb *Chef’s Table* burrows into the personal and professional lives of six world-renowned chefs per season. *Chef’s Table* has accrued such a following from across the world that Gourmet Traveller declared ‘In the history of food television, it’s fair to talk in terms of the period before *Chef’s Table* and the period after the series debuted...in 2015.’²⁰⁹ In 2020 Shewry spoke with journalist Michael Harry about his experience filming for *Chef’s Table* five years prior. Shewry expresses his initial discomfort with the process and resultant changes in clientele at his restaurant as the show catapulted Attica into a new position as a global food travel destination;

²⁰⁶ Alleman, ‘Indigenous Foods: Swallowing Our History.’

²⁰⁷ Alleman, ‘Indigenous Foods: Swallowing Our History.’

²⁰⁸ Alleman, ‘Indigenous Foods: Swallowing Our History.’

²⁰⁹ Emma Breheny, ‘Every episode of *Chef’s Table* ranked’, *Gourmet Traveller*, 17 August 2018, accessed 3 January 2019, at <https://www.gourmettraveller.com.au/news/food-and-culture/every-chefs-table-episode-ranked-16318>.

I didn't want to do that or be a part of that ... I'm quite a private person ... But people don't know the level of influence being on a Netflix show has on your restaurant ... They won't buy their flights till they have the restaurant booking.²¹⁰

Shewry's episode took place when the production team for *Chef's Table* was still experimenting, developing the visual style it is now famous for; a visual narrative of dramatic landscapes, long shots panning across impeccable plated dishes, camera angles which linger on the hands and foreheads and eyes of the chefs and their teams in crowded fast paced kitchens and all these backed with audio of a soaring musical score. The score tells a story, it is performed by an orchestra, a dramatic classical style jumping between fanfare and cascades of tumbling notes. The score serves to accentuate the drama of the presentation of food but also references a specific form of western art. Gelb's documentary is true to its pitch and focus, tightly capturing the profile of a chef, however, not a single Indigenous Australian is featured. The only interview commentary featured on the episode comes from *Gourmet Traveller's* Tony Tran and chef and restaurateur Matt Preston. This absence filters through to the ways which Shewry talks about native Australian ingredients;

...when we are working with native ingredients, they're very hard to harness. There's no information on the internet about them, there's no books that have recipes on what to do with them...one day I'm going to unlock the greatness of that ingredient...I'm going to find the most delicious and most natural way of cooking with it.²¹¹

This commentary leaves a lot to unpack. Perhaps most significant is the denial of available information surrounding native ingredients. Admittedly in 2005, when Shewry took helm of the kitchen at Attica, access to this information was not as easy as it is today, certainly not for a time poor chef. However, the information was still there, not only in many, many cookbooks (including the very first cookbook ever published in Australia Edward Abbott's *The English and Australian Cookbook* [1864] and perhaps the most revised cookbook the *Presbyterian Women's Missionary Union WMU Cookery Book* [1894]), in Australia's hospitality memory borne from restaurants like Sydney institution *Edna's Table*, but most

²¹⁰ Alleman, 'Indigenous Foods: Swallowing Our History.'

²¹¹ Ben Shewry in *Chef's Table*, Season 1, Episode 5, directed by Brian McGinn, released 26 April 2015, on Netflix.

importantly in the memories and lives of many Indigenous people.²¹² It is surprising Shewry does not acknowledge this. Perhaps the viewer should expect a more generous perspective than the one Shewry offers. However, this documentary is clearly the portrait of a man not a cuisine and so it may not be a surprise to hear the latter part of this statement, ‘I’m going to unlock the greatness of that ingredient...I’m going to find the most delicious and most natural way of cooking with it.’²¹³ While the phrasing here is likely meant to simply focus on technique, it translates as egocentric perspective, focused on the self and professional skill. It frames these ingredients, both animal and plant, as something to discover for the very first time rather than (in the case of most commercially available native foods) Indigenous ecological knowledge preserved by communities for generations. The price point of a meal at Attica, and the expectation of certain performative behaviours would still be prohibitive for most clientele, including many Indigenous clientele.

In one face to camera interview, Preston reflects on the role of the chef, ‘A chef has to be so much more than a cook they have to use colour, language, images, emotion in order to animate what’s on the plate. What makes Ben’s food special is a story, a history, there’²¹⁴ Here, Preston touches on the twenty-first century distinction between cook and chef, the latter who must take on a professional and aesthetic approach to culinary storytelling. Tony Tran expands on this narrative theme reflecting that at Attica, ‘the light focuses on the food on the table, it is pure theatre, eating there is like looking at somebody who has put their soul into their food.’²¹⁵ Shewry approaches food with a desire to tie it as close to the natural environment as possible, shots show him spraying dew on a cabbage to make it look like it was cut from the field. In other scenes it is clear how Shewry pursues the sensory experience and crafts that experience to depict something very specific. One dish is an invocation of how

²¹² Blake Singley, ‘Parrot Pie and Possum Curry: How colonial Australians embraced native food’, *The Conversation* published 26 January 2017, accessed 10 February 2019, available from <http://theconversation.com/parrot-pie-and-possum-curry-how-colonial-australians-embraced-native-food-59977>. See also Edward Abbott, *The English and Australian cookery book: Cookery for the many, as well as for the upper ten thousand by an Australian aristologist* (London: Sampson Low, Son, and Marston, 1864); and *WMU Cookery Book of Tried Recipes, in Aid of the Queensland Presbyterian Missions* (Brisbane: Muir and Morcom, 1894). I have not included it in my dissertation however historian Shannon Woodcock has contributed important work problematising the role of settler Wilhemina Rawson who authored many settler recipes. Woodcock approaches Rawson’s work as an example of Rawson’s food production exercising ‘violent colonial claims to sovereignty’ over the land and waterways of Butchulla Country in Queensland. See Shannon Woodcock, ‘Biting the hand that feeds: Australian cuisine and Aboriginal sovereignty in the Great Sandy Strait,’ *Feminist Review*: 114 (2016), 33-47.

²¹³ *Chef’s Table*, Season 1, Episode 5.

²¹⁴ *Chef’s Table*, Season 1, Episode 5.

²¹⁵ *Chef’s Table*, Season 1, Episode 5.

it might taste to drown. Shewry brings the story back into food, seeking to connect people to the land and in doing so increase an understanding of land management and guardianship. This aligns with the narrative foodscapes drawn by Aboriginal Australians. Shewry echoes the sentiment of many chefs who have started to work with Australian ingredients, ‘food didn’t invoke a sense of Australia to me when I moved here ... most people have never heard of 99.9 percent of these ingredients they are totally unfamiliar to the general public’²¹⁶

I apply Dorsey’s method of questioning engagement with minority cuisines and determine that *Chef’s Table* fails to present a full and true narrative due to the exclusion of Indigenous voices and a failure to properly acknowledge the traditional ecological knowledge holders of the food Shewry utilises. Furthermore, Shewry, by seemingly not advocating strongly enough to include the aforementioned, failed in this instance to share the benefits of his international exposure.

4.4.4 Michael Pollan’s *Cooked*, Netflix (2016)

In 2016 online streaming service Netflix premiered a four-part series called *Cooked* hosted by food writer Michael Pollan.²¹⁷ The opening scenes of *Cooked* are shot in Western Australia and the Traditional Owners of the land, the Martu, lead the storytelling. Displaced from their Country in 1963 to make way for a missile testing facility the Martu were one of the last Indigenous groups in Australia to have contact with colonial Australia. The Martu speak past the camera, this evokes a sense of the camera as an observer as opposed to an extension of the interviewer, positioned instead in an unobtrusive position at the edges of the group. The Martu appear to share what they want to, communicating only that which they are comfortable sharing about fire, food and Country, they are not audibly guided by direct questions as other subjects in *Cooked* are.

Pollan draws parallels between cultural practice and worship, observing that others; ‘go to church and to worship the Martu people are no different... On weekends they go out to the Country to reconnect to their land and traditions.’²¹⁸ Martu woman Kumpaya tells the

²¹⁶ *Chef’s Table*, Season 1, Episode 5.

²¹⁷ *Cooked*, Season 1, directed by Michael Pollan, released 19 February 2016, on Netflix.; Jenny Luna, ‘Netflix and Grill: Michael Pollan Takes His Food Evangelism to the Small Screen’, *Mother Jones*, 20 February 2016, accessed 7 August 2017, at <https://www.motherjones.com/media/2016/02/michael-pollans-cooked-netflix/>

²¹⁸ Pollan, *Cooked*.

camera; ‘We went away from this land, but we have come back.’²¹⁹ Pollan continues saying, ‘They burn the land to revive it and make hunting easier... they cook their catch in the most elemental way possible and celebrate the spirit of the flame with baptism by fire.’²²⁰ Pollan uses these parallels to connect the subjects with the audience but this is a contested strategy. Certainly, the work of Marion Maddox challenges the effectiveness of reframing the ‘other’ or unfamiliar, as something known or approachable as it can alter the core purpose or features, writing that the environment under which religions are received in Australia is one in which people impose their current knowledge (frequently this reference point is a cultural or spiritually Christian knowledge) on the unfamiliar.²²¹

Cooked follows the Martu as they burn the land and smoke prey out of their burrows; the goanna is pulled out by its tail and cooked overnight. Martu man Curtis Taylor tells the camera that after the land is burned the animals will come out to the open to travel away from the fire to scavenge. Kangaroos and bush turkeys come to scavenge rendering them both visible and usefully distracted.²²² The Martu tell the camera that all food is cooked on the hunt, therefore within a set foodscape, they never take anything back home that is uncooked. The shots focus always on depicting community featuring groups, partners, or the Martu in the landscape. There is community in the wide-open landscape dominated by sun and fire. Pollan determines that traditions survive because they are adaptive and keep people healthy and happy. He fails to acknowledge that survival can outweigh those traditions no matter how healthy and happy they make people. Australia’s public policies, grounded in a history of colonialism and assimilation, have destabilised many of the simplest traditions of Indigenous groups. The Martu have an advantage as their contact with colonial Australia is fairly recent, and their traditions and practices are remembered by many living members of their community. Tradition and practice of tradition is still normative for the Martu.

Pollan states that ‘Passive consumer’ is my least proud identity’ advocating for engaged ‘eaters.’²²³ As an example of this Pollan determines everyone who eats meat should hunt at least once to learn to treat the meat with respect. He introduces an alternate perspective to an

²¹⁹ Pollan, *Cooked*.

²²⁰ Pollan, *Cooked*.

²²¹ Marion Maddox and The Department of the Parliamentary Library Information and Research Services, *Indigenous religion in secular Australia* (Canberra: Department of the Parliamentary Library, 2000), 4.

²²² Pollan, *Cooked*.

²²³ Pollan, *Cooked*.

audience that may otherwise consider the traditional practice of hunting as ‘other,’ ‘cruel’ or ‘not civilised.’ That same audience likely regularly consumes meat from industrially farmed animals. This othering feeds into the distrust and exoticising of other traditions and cultures that is a feature of colonial social structures. The Martu women hunt the staple food the goanna and Nora Taylor an elderly Martu woman says being ‘out in the Country, hunting,’ makes her feel better.²²⁴ The process of burning Country and hunting after the fire teaches younger generations traditional practice. This process creates a space of suspended time as the fire must have time to burn and the animals must have time to cook through in the pit as uncooked animals cannot be taken off the land. This necessitates a slow food experience during which the Martu can teach their younger members about the dangers and beauty of fire and how fire was used by ancestral heroes to make the land.²²⁵

This case study provides an example of a second international screen production that has invested in the power of foodscapes to bridge boundaries and communicate culture. Pollan opens his documentary series with the Martu one of the oldest cultures in the world who speak their own narrative and truth about their foodscape. This contrasts with previous case study *Chefs Table* and *MasterChef* which engage with native Australian food but not the Indigenous nations those foods are connected to. Pollan’s *Cooked* edges closer to aligning with calls from Indigenous groups in Australia and globally, to properly acknowledge Indigenous groups and amplify their voices. Information about remuneration for filming is not publicly available but whether financial benefits were offered to interviewed communities, could be a key part of future research and more fully explore the benefit sharing elements of documentary filmmaking.

4.5 The state of the industry: Snapshots of producers and suppliers working with Australian native foods

This section provides a series of snapshots of producers and suppliers operating in the contemporary Australian native food industry. I provide an assessment on the ways in which these actors from within the food and hospitality industries engage with native food, ecological knowledge and how their self-perspectives shape the associated foodscape. Most

²²⁴ Pollan, *Cooked*.

²²⁵ Pollan, *Cooked*.

endogenous produce is ‘utilised as ingredients in chutneys, preserves, sauces, bread, flour and a variety of condiments.’²²⁶ The following material explores some of the difficulties faced by businesses working in research, development and supply of native foods. I used the database of Supply Nation Australia to select two of these businesses, *Indigiearth* and *Game Enough*. Supply Nation (established 2009) provides corporate relationship management between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses along with procurement teams from government and corporate Australia to shape the Indigenous business sector. Nineteen percent of Supply Nation employees identified as Indigenous Australians as of 2022²²⁷ Supply Nation certification aims to ensure all businesses listed on the Indigenous Business Direct directory are not only Indigenous owned but are also regularly audited for changes in company structure and ownership. Organisations like Supply Nation provide corporate presence that can harness and engage the Reconciliation Action Plans present in the corporate governance of many large businesses operating in Australia and secure portions of those investments for their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business members.

4.5.1 Non-Indigenous owned businesses

The following example explores challenges faced by one cross-cultural business working in remote regions. Peter Yates traded primarily bush tomato and wattleseed (specifically *acacia victoriae*, *acacia colei* and *acacia coriacea*) with funding from the National Heritage Trust and Coles Indigenous Food Fund.²²⁸ Yates has since published anthropological papers reflecting on his experience as a non-Indigenous person working in the native foods industry and his ‘loose partnership with Aboriginal people.’²²⁹ Yates’ work expounds on a key challenge I explore frequently: a disconnect between the understandings that Aboriginal people (Yates’ research speaks specifically of remote Aboriginal communities) may hold about traditional edible and medicinal plants and animals, and ‘the imperatives of successful commercialisation.’²³⁰

²²⁶ Northern Rivers Indigenous Reference Group, ‘Starting a Herb or Bush Tucker Business, a guide for Indigenous Communities’, *Northern Rivers Regional Development Board* (2006), 4.

²²⁷ This is down from 28% in data gathered from *Supply Nation*, on 18 August 2020. Reviewed April 2022, at <https://supplynation.org.au/>

²²⁸ Peter Yates has an Honours degree in Anthropology and has collaborated with Aboriginal communities in bush tucker enterprises around Alice Springs for the past eight years. Yates is associated with Charles Darwin University as of August 2020.’ Peter Yates, ‘The bush foods industry and poverty alleviation in Central Australia,’ *Dialogue* 28:2, (2009), 47-48.

²²⁹ Yates, ‘The bush foods industry and poverty alleviation in Central Australia,’ *Dialogue* 28:2, (2009), 47.

²³⁰ Yates, ‘The bush foods industry and poverty alleviation in Central Australia,’ *Dialogue* 28:2, (2009), 47.

Native products are developed using Indigenous ecological knowledge; however, it can be challenging when trying to apply conventional business models for product development while ensuring benefits will be felt by Aboriginal communities. Yates attempted to bridge wild harvesting and traditional small-scale agriculture. His team piloted a system which invited Aboriginal people onto farms to pick horticulturally cultivated bush tomatoes.²³¹ In doing so Yates altered the foodscape in which this practice usually took place. This was an attempt to facilitate collector livelihoods, and therefore ensure local community benefits, and simultaneously streamline production to allow for a reliable crop throughout good and bad wild growing conditions.

This experiment was not successful as Aboriginal collectors brought to work on site chose not to continue. It is clear adequate consultation with the workforce had not occurred. Yates records reluctance from community workers to work on the farm site citing a ‘possible deterrent’ as the formal nature of the research farm itself, with its rules and regulations.²³² Yates writes that ‘Bush tomatoes, as with everything else in the world, are supposed to be made through ceremony, not grown by people, so it is possible that rather than tapping into and resonating with the past, these captive plants may have seemed to the women to challenge to proper order of the world; in short, to be sacrilegious.’²³³

The bushfoods industry is frequently a cross-cultural space. However, Yates notes that for some groups of Aboriginal people, usually people still residing on Country, the idea that traditional foods could be ‘a mere commodity is almost beyond comprehension.’²³⁴ Yates affirms a key point which I have made throughout this dissertation and is key in discussions of the native food industry writing:

these are not just foods: they are bound up in stories of creation, in kinship, and in multiple layers of personal and collective memory, recalling people, places, times and Tjukurpa (Dreaming). For Aboriginal people, it is as though bush foods are an

²³¹ Yates, ‘The bush foods industry and poverty alleviation in Central Australia’, *Dialogue* 28:2, (2009), 49.

²³² Yates, ‘The bush foods industry and poverty alleviation in Central Australia’, *Dialogue* 28:2, (2009), 49.

²³³ Yates, ‘The bush foods industry and poverty alleviation in Central Australia’, 49.

²³⁴ Yates, ‘The bush foods industry and poverty alleviation in Central Australia’, 50.

inseparable part of themselves. For the ‘whitefellas’...such understandings – if they are held at all – are at best thought quaint and viewed as potential marketing tools.²³⁵

For the processors, who have invested large amounts of time and money to develop supply lines, facilities, products, labels and markets, the bottom-line consideration can only be continuity of supply, to appease a marketplace that cannot forgive the vagaries of nature (let alone of culture). In these differences lie both the strength and the weakness of the bushfoods industry in the alleviation of poverty in remote settlements.²³⁶

I previously explored the holistic approach to health taken by community groups Galiwin'ku where engaging in traditional harvesting practices saw improved physical and mental health.²³⁷ Similarly, Yates references the reflection of community nursing staff who observed ‘a significant lowering of blood pressure and blood sugar’ amongst women who had engaged in a three-week wild harvesting season at Barrow Creek, Northern Territory.²³⁸ The nurse concluded the improved health was due to ‘exercise, personal satisfaction and escape from the constant stresses of the community.’²³⁹ Engaging with the land through the impetus of the food industry, and therefore foodscape, had facilitated marked spiritual and physical health improvements.

Yates concludes that the state and federal Governments should take on risk associated with the developing industry and reframe government involvement as an investment in social inclusion ‘rather than the subsidisation of an industry.’²⁴⁰ This change in narrative would acknowledge the limitations for expansion in the industry and hopefully prioritise social inclusion over large profit margins. This should provide space for Aboriginal practices and community priorities.²⁴¹ Aboriginal owned and controlled processing facilities would be an essential part of the evolving industry. Yates’ vision for Outback Bushfoods, was that trade in bushfoods would make a significant contribution to incomes, health and wellbeing in, and around, remote settlements. While Yates’ business ventures were not successful in their

²³⁵ Yates, ‘The bush foods industry and poverty alleviation in Central Australia’, 52.

²³⁶ Yates, ‘The bush foods industry and poverty alleviation in Central Australia’, 50.

²³⁷ See Chapter Three.

²³⁸ Yates, ‘The bush foods industry and poverty alleviation in Central Australia’, 53.

²³⁹ Yates, ‘The bush foods industry and poverty alleviation in Central Australia’, 53.

²⁴⁰ Yates, ‘The bush foods industry and poverty alleviation in Central Australia’, 54.

²⁴¹ Yates, ‘The bush foods industry and poverty alleviation in Central Australia’, 54.

intended ways, the resulting learnings should add significant value for current and future stakeholders working within the industry.

In Tasmania's Southern Midlands non-Indigenous business owners Corinne Ooms and Chris Chapman collaborated to cultivate and harvest Tasmanian pepper berry for their business Wild Pepper Isle. Ooms has a background in food safety, quality assurance and biomedical sciences while Chapman has a background in Agriculture and a PhD in microbiology.²⁴² Ooms and Chapman practice foraging, or wild harvesting, but cite dry summers and increasingly regular bushfires as factors in the degradation of product and reduction of harvests. Chapman feels that 'Real food has a story; it comes from a particular place and has been harvested in a particular way. It's embedded within the landscape.'²⁴³ Chapman frames this reflection as a comment on the relationship between food and the landscape rather than a relationship between plant and the landscape. This may seem like a particularly close reading of text, however, by framing the pepper berry as food, humans (as consumers) are implicitly introduced into the sentence and, as such, a relationship between humans and the landscape is also present in the background of this comment. Wild Pepper Isle is a small business operating in a fairly small state specific market. While Wild Pepper Isle does acknowledge Indigenous ecological knowledge holders it is not evident how significant a relationship the business has. Chapman and Ooms work on private land meaning they pay landowners for what they harvest.²⁴⁴ The pair believe this encourages landowners to protect native bush and that farmers planted pepper bushes in order to future proof the industry. It could be argued that this engagement in land management is a form of benefit sharing as it invests in the custodianship of Country thereby benefiting future generations of Palawa, however, this should be an expected requirement for food businesses. Applying the Merne Altyerre-ipenhe Reference Group advice on operation within the native foods industry indicates that Wild Pepper Isle needs to increase their engagement with Aboriginal communities in Tasmania. An example of potential avenues could be consultation with Elders living in the community or implementing a 'pay the rent' scheme whereby a portion of profits is paid regularly to

²⁴² Corrinne Ooms and Chris Chapman, 'About us', *Wild Pepper Isle*, accessed 30 August 2020, at <https://wildpepperisle.com.au/about-us/#>.

²⁴³ Ooms and Chapman, 'About us.'

²⁴⁴ wildpepperisle, 'We love what we do and we look sexy as \$¥### doing it!', Instagram, 8 April 2019, accessed 30 August 2020, at <https://www.instagram.com/p/Bv-yYDkBRV8/>.

local Aboriginal organisations as an acknowledgement of traditional ownership of land.²⁴⁵ Wild Pepper Isle should also ensure that engagement and benefit sharing process is a central part of the narrative they share with customers (both in person and on their website) and with the legal owners of the land on which they harvest and be open to the criticism that may come from transparency, as a learning opportunity.



Figure 7. Harvesting pepperberries. *Wild Pepper Isle*, 20 May 2022, <https://www.instagram.com/p/Bv-yYDkBRV8/>

4.5.2 Indigenous owned businesses

Ngemba Wayilwan woman Sharon Winsor is one of Australia's leading Aboriginal entrepreneurs and founder of food business Indigiearth. Winsor utilised her knowledge of native foods, previous business experience (within cultural knowledge and catering company Thullii Dreaming) and childhood skills of 'wild harvesting' to develop Indigiearth.²⁴⁶ Indigiearth products include pantry staples such as lemon myrtle and sweet chilli sauce,

²⁴⁵ An excellent example of businesses implementing a regular 'pay the rent' process is the team at Shop Bao Ngoc, a Vietnamese restaurant run by second generation Vietnamese Australia Ngoc Tran see Rushani Epa, 'Talking Shop Bao Ngoc with Ngoc Tran', *Colournary*, 31 July 2020, accessed 14 August 2020, at <https://www.colournary.com/stories/talking-shop-bao-ngoc-with-cindy-tran>.

²⁴⁶ Sharon Winsor, 'About', *Indigiearth*, accessed 10 August 2020, at <https://indigiearth.com.au/pages/about>.

Davidson plum syrup, and cosmetics using ingredients such as Kakadu plum, emu oil, lemon myrtle and wild berry. Research conducted by Danielle Logue et al. explores issues Winsor faced as her business evolved, particularly in regard to increased opportunities for international expansion, and increased volume and scale from her rural operations.²⁴⁷ This research is valuable for its narrow focus, providing deep analysis of an Aboriginal owned business as a single case study. Logue et al. identify three key challenges for the future of Indigiearth: 1. How can Indigiearth achieve scale while maintaining profitability and social mission? 2. How can Indigiearth protect its competitive advantage in the face of increased local agricultural competition, as Indigenous crops increase in value? 3. How can traditional knowledge be both shared and protected for community development (jobs and wealth creation) and for future generations?²⁴⁸ This example has been selected because the three key challenges identified can be applied across a number of other businesses in this section.

Palawa man, Tim Sculthorpe, and his wife Nunami Sculthorpe Green operate Aboriginal food business Palawa Kipli (kipli meaning food). Sculthorpe views the business as an opportunity to bridge cultural divides and encourage sustainable food practices. Sculthorpe told *The New Daily* that ‘no one knows anything about Palawa people, I wondered how I can educate people... Travelling the world, I kept being asked what Australian food is and I would always say it’s Vegemite or meat pies, but then I realised, that is invaders’ foods.’²⁴⁹ In creating his business Sculthorpe began to navigate the challenge of altering social narratives. In his language Sculthorpe shows political confidence labelling White Australia as the invader. Palawa Kipli serves ‘kunzea, salt bush, wattle seed, smoked wallaby, pickled cunnigong and fried crickets, at markets across Tasmania.’²⁵⁰ Cunnigong is the Palawa word for pig face and kunzea is a sweet herb with citrus notes.²⁵¹ Sculthorpe aims to develop his business to be an Aboriginal owned supply chain and commercial garden not dissimilar to projects developed within The Orana Foundation. Palawa Kipli uses Palawa language in all its advertising and

²⁴⁷ Danielle Logue, Alexandra Pitsis, Sonya Pearce and John Chelliah, ‘Social enterprise to social value chain: Indigenous entrepreneurship transforming the native food industry in Australia’, *Journal of Management & Organization* 24, no. 2 (2018): 313.

²⁴⁸ Logue, Pitsis, Pearce and Chelliah, ‘Social enterprise to social value chain: Indigenous entrepreneurship transforming the native food industry in Australia’, 312.

²⁴⁹ Phoebe Hosier, ‘Tasmanian Aboriginal food business spreading culture’, *ABC Online*, 17 March 2019, accessed 20 May 2019, at <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-03-17/tasmanian-aboriginal-food-business-spreading-culture/10903856>.

²⁵⁰ Hosier, ‘Tasmanian Aboriginal food business spreading culture.’

²⁵¹ Paulette Whitney, ‘Tasmanian edibles’, *Provenance Growers*, 3 June 2013, at <http://provenancegrowers.blogspot.com/2013/06/getting-out-of-garden.html>.

signs, this is a departure from many organisations who used anglicised nominals or Latin categorisations from the plants they cook and sell. Sculthorpe Green told *The New Daily* that language ‘always gets people - they see this writing and they want to know what it is, how to read it and pronounce it.’ Palawa kani (palawa language) is a revived language, so incorporating language with food and culture creates a wholistic series of opportunities for the language to grow in terms of usage and exposure.



Figure 8. Tim Sculthorpe at the *Palawa Kipli* stall, 21 June 2019, https://www.instagram.com/p/By8_9DaBsbU/²⁵²

Something Wild is a native greens and wild meat trader based at the Adelaide Central Market. They are well known for harvesting and championing the commercial use of green ants including within the liquor industry. Something Wild has worked with Indigenous communities to create opportunities to sell native produce including paperbark, green ants, magpie geese and native greens such as boobialla, muntries and she oak nuts. Gunner also

²⁵² This image has been reproduced at the highest quality possible.

secured Australia's first commercial permit to harvest magpie geese.²⁵³ *Something Wild* supplied produce to internationally renowned pop ups by restaurant's Noma (Rene Redzepi) and The Fat Duck (Heston Blumenthal). *Something Wild* seeks to establish successful supply chains within the native foods industry in Australia noting that 'This new style of ownership works a lot better. Indigenous people have a collective approach to business; culturally, it's a more correct way to make it work.'²⁵⁴ Gunner says *Something Wild* will focus on using Indigenous harvesters and employees throughout their business and fosters positive relationships with communities to create economic opportunities. Motlop identified that the struggles his business encounters while working with communities are due to differing approaches to business relationships. Supply chains provide steady contracts however Motlop has found communities often prefer to work directly with chefs without a middle supplier. Motlop believes this does not benefit the communities it restricts the quantity they are able to distribute.

Nuanced discussion is needed when considering the distribution of native foods as cultivars across nation lines. Motlop is involved in cultivation of native plants but avoids removing cultivars from countries or nations that are not his own despite market demand, i.e., he does not cultivate Kakadu plum because it is not native to the South Australian area in which he works. Motlop does, however, press that it is a pivotal time during which it is essential for Aboriginal people to 'get on board...we need people to own it [the industry]... it's up to Aboriginal people to take control.'²⁵⁵

Maningrida Wild Foods was established to address existing needs within a local community particularly chronic ill health and a dearth of affordable fresh food in remote West Arnhem Land.²⁵⁶ As with many remote communities the cost and time associated with food freight impacts the accessibility and quality of produce brought into communities by water or road, in this case on barges over the Arafura Sea. Fresh fish provides an alternative to processed foods which dominate the Maningrida foodscape due to their long shelf life. Maningrida Wild

²⁵³ Mary Taylor, 'Central Market store scores Indigenous partnership deal', *In Daily*, 18 May 2016, accessed 20 June 2017, at <http://indaily.com.au/eat-drink-explore/the-forager/2016/05/18/central-market-store-scores-indigenous-partnership-deal/>.

²⁵⁴ Taylor, 'Central Market store scores Indigenous partnership deal.'

²⁵⁵ The Orana Foundation, 'Introducing the Indigenous Food Database - Part 1.'

²⁵⁶ Jon Daly, 'This Indigenous fishing venture is tackling food security in West Arnhem Land', *ABC Landline*, 18 October 2020, accessed 18 October 2020, at <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-10-18/indigenous-fishing-venture-tackling-food-security-arnhem-land/12768802>.

Foods is within the remit of Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation's enterprise development program and its aim is to address food security with the equally significant benefit of working on Country. Karl Dyason of the Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation says, 'They are out on Country, they're fishing, and they are feeding their families which is something they enjoy immensely.'²⁵⁷

In 2020 Maningrida Wild Foods made a commercial catch of wild barramundi under a lease holding arrangement of a portion of a commercial fishery licence.²⁵⁸ This new endeavour provides further employment and forms an addition to existing coastal fishing and mud crabbing. The lease followed a lengthy frustration over restrictions on Aboriginal coastal fishing licences. The NT Government and Northern Land Council have been negotiating commercial access since the 2008 High Court decision recognising Aboriginal rights to intertidal waters.²⁵⁹ Forty-two clan groups mobilised to challenge the Northern Territory Government with a three-year ban on commercial barramundi boats in coastal waters between Cape Stewart and Braithwaite Point if a deal about the conditions for access to Indigenous Territory coastal waters was not settled. This challenge was in response to restrictions which prevented Indigenous Traditional Owners in West Arnhem Land from engaging in the commercial barramundi market.²⁶⁰

Maningrida representative Stuart Ankin said, 'Instead of relying on the Government Centrelink ... we can put something on the table as well...' The traditional way when we catch fish, we just leave the guts in. But we are learning balanda [White person] way. Processing and filleting it is new for us.'²⁶¹ The processing facilities have been supported by the Northern Territory Government but were a community led initiative. Northern Territory Minister for Primary Industry, Ken Vowles said of this 'The community saw a real opportunity here to make their fishing activities into a commercial enterprise to get off the

²⁵⁷ Lydia Burton, 'Arnhem Land fish factory reels in training, job opportunities for remote Maningrida Indigenous community', *ABC Rural NT Country Hour*, 6 June 2018, accessed 6 Jan 2020, at <https://www.abc.net.au/news/rural/2018-06-06/arnhem-land-fish-factory-reels-in-opportunities/9835140>.

²⁵⁸ Daly, 'This Indigenous fishing venture is tackling food security in West Arnhem Land.'

²⁵⁹ Daly, 'This Indigenous fishing venture is tackling food security in West Arnhem Land.'

²⁶⁰ Burton, 'Arnhem Land fish factory reels in training, job opportunities for remote Maningrida Indigenous community.'

²⁶¹ Daly, 'This Indigenous fishing venture is tackling food security in West Arnhem Land.'

[Work for the Dole] program.’²⁶² Maningrida Seafood is evidence of a business established in, and lead by community which not only harvests the benefits of freshwater fish to support community health but will also continue to inject financial benefits into their community as they start to distribute product nationally.

Jesse Gurugirr is a Guringai man running his business on Gumbaynggirr Country in Bellingen, NSW. Gurugirr harvests and produces a range of teas and drinks under the Lore Australia branding. Gurugirr is passionate about sharing cultural history and Indigenous ecological knowledge. The Lore Australia website is not only a retail platform (‘Australian native bio-foods that enhance people’s quality of life and facilitate a connection with the land from which they are sourced’) but also a digital space on which Gurugirr shares his personal, and business, ethos based on concepts of Country, Community and Spirit. Gurugirr defines these as follows:

Country is where we live, but it also determines who we are. We respect Country as we respect ourselves. – Community is the basis of life and harmony – we are all responsible for each other. – Spirit is the essence of ourselves, encompassing the physical and the intangible.

Lore Australia primarily harvests and processes guradji leaves. These were ‘chewed to relieve toothache, steeped in water, sipped to relieve pain or nausea and made into a paste that was applied to wounds or injuries to reduce inflammation.’²⁶³ Gurugirr reiterates the role of practitioners in care for the community noting that Guradji men held the knowledge, tradition and rules and could dispense the leaf. In addition to healthcare the Guradji men were the first contact made by visitors who would seek permission to access the Country and share guradji as part of that welcome. Lore Australia has been selected as a company that prioritises communicate a clear philosophical intention behind their product to their consumer thereby retaining some control over the customers understanding and consumption.

Lastly, Yuin man Dwayne Bannon-Harrison and his partner Amelia have developed a fusion food business and have clear opinions over the use of language to describe their culinary

²⁶² Burton, ‘Arnhem Land fish factory reels in training, job opportunities for remote Maningrida Indigenous community.’

²⁶³ Lore Australia, ‘Guradji’, accessed 28 June 2022 at <https://loreaustralia.com/guradji/>

intentions; ‘I don’t call this bush tucker, it’s ‘Indigenous twist’’.²⁶⁴ ‘Indigenous twist’ here means a combination of Texan barbecue and Indigenous foodways. Bannon-Harrison sees this as a natural combination due the cultural shared history of cooking over fire. These elemental connections follow into a critique of a lack of Indigenous industry players in the native foods industry. Bannon-Harrison told hospitality ally Kylie Kwong that ‘For us as Indigenous people, and for Mother Earth and all the elements, we should be leading that space.’ I have stressed the need for deep engagement in the industry, Bannon-Harrison asserts that ‘these chefs are really serious about it, there’s a code of ethics, and that comes back to cultural protocol and practice... They’re going to have to dig into that world and do the work.’²⁶⁵ Expanding on this Bannon-Harrison points to increased Indigenous engagement, and particularly employment, as a significant part of the future industry.²⁶⁶

Exploring the profiles of various suppliers has allowed me to explore which aspects of the various narratives and debates surrounding native foods each business has chosen to communicate to their customer base. These have variably been acknowledgement of custodianship of Country, use of language and culturally significant employment opportunities for Indigenous people. In particular the key questions posed by Logue et al. for the future of Indigiearth can be seen to be applicable across all businesses and I restate them here: 1. How can Indigenous food businesses achieve scale while maintaining profitability and social mission? 2. How can Indigenous food businesses protect their competitive advantage in the face of increased local agricultural competition, as Indigenous crops increase in value? 3. How can traditional knowledge be both shared and protected for community development (jobs and wealth creation) and for future generations?²⁶⁷ Some organisations in this section, such as Maningrida Seafood, have demonstrated how scaling their business and accessing government grants allowed them to maintain profitability, their social mission within their community and challenge exclusionary fishing licences which were preventing them from engaging with fishery competition. Other businesses, including

²⁶⁴ Kylie Walker, ‘These Indigenous food trucks are serving up the best bush food flavours’, *SBS*, 20 January 2020, accessed 20 December 2020 at <https://www.sbs.com.au/food/article/2019/10/23/these-indigenous-food-trucks-are-serving-best-bush-food-flavours>

²⁶⁵ Kylie Kwong, ‘Meet Dwayne Bannon-Harrison: Yuin man, caterer and Indigenous culture educator’, *Gourmet Traveller*, 25 February 2020, accessed 7 July 2020, at <https://www.gourmettraveller.com.au/news/food-news/dwayne-bannon-harrison-18380>.

²⁶⁶ Kwong, ‘Meet Dwayne Bannon-Harrison: Yuin man, caterer and Indigenous culture educator.’

²⁶⁷ Logue, Pitsis, Pearce and Chelliah, ‘Social enterprise to social value chain: Indigenous entrepreneurship transforming the native food industry in Australia’, 312.

Lore Australia, invest in sharing traditional knowledge with the intention of shaping their customers responses to Indigenous foods and cultures. All these businesses pave the way for interested future generations to build on, and grow, these small businesses utilising their inherited traditional knowledge.

I have explored the restaurant as a food space in which a particular narrative is prioritised, and performed, by professionals. I questioned the level of responsibility held by hospitality professionals in the treatment of native foods and deem it to be significant in the portrayal of culture to a broad audience. This question of responsibility continues in this section which turns analysis to the question of access. I explore how the everyday consumer might access native foods, the information available to them and the challenges faced by those businesses involved in supply. The cost, and accessibility, of native foods restricts access to the wealthy. Many Aboriginal people, if not in a position to wild-harvest themselves, may not be able to afford to access traditional foods. Native foods are relatively difficult to access at mainstream shopping destinations, instead they are still firmly situated in the realm of farmer's markets, farm to restaurant providores and delicatessens. Access is central to a future equitable market. However, this issue is complex, reduction of costs is usually targeted at the raw product, this would have a significant impact on the harvesters (frequently women in remote communities) thereby having an adverse effect, negating efforts towards an equitable industry. Future research must address ways in which specialty foods, especially fresh foods can be affordable and accessible particularly to allow younger generations of Indigenous peoples living in cities who may not have, as a result of generations of displacement, as strong a food memory as their parents or grandparents, these products need to be accessible to the youngest generations to experience. The efforts of the small businesses highlighted in this section, particularly food truck business Palawa Kipli, are evidence of organisations trying to provide an alternative avenue to fine dining experiences which are often expensive with complex dishes.

4.5.3 Collaborative processes case study: Connoisseur

The following case study provides the opportunity to analyse cross cultural product development and marketing assessing the collaborative narrative promoted. Connoisseur Gourmet ice cream products developed in a range of flavours in collaboration with Bundjalung chef Mark Olive. The Connoisseur website features the following introduction:

Journey deep into our own backyard to discover the wild and intense tastes of Australia. Each flavour is artfully crafted with Australian native ingredients together with the passion and expertise of chef Mark Olive.²⁶⁹

While the message is confused there are important and revealing aspects of expression to be analysed. The first sentence is a statement of intention with the word ‘journey’ implying the investment of the consumer in a particular experience, the rhetorical twist leads that the journey is in the consumer’s backyard and is something familiar yet hidden. The rhetoric exoticises native foods seeking to make them palatable and approachable for the consumer. I analysed the visual language which forms the audio-visual marketing (advertising spots) using critical discourse approaches and found similar themes. A series of promotional videos feature Aboriginal people seeking out the fresh ingredient for each flavour narrating clips for Wattleseed and Hazelnut, Davidson Plum and Cocoa and Macadamia and Spice Lime:

It seems impossible but they keep on growing. Land like nowhere else creates flavour like nothing else.²⁷⁰ / They tell us when they are ready we wait. Land like nowhere else creates flavours like nothing else.²⁷¹ / They’re stubborn but they’re worth it. Land like nowhere else creates flavours like nothing else.²⁷²

These narratives present a story of survival, patience, symbiosis and value. These phrases communicate key aspects of land management and guardianship. The tagline mentions flavour the description of the fruit itself focuses on cultural history. The use of ‘they’ animates the fruit further fostering concepts of emotional connection with nature and guardianship of land.

While I could not find information on produce sources for Connoisseur’s Australian native range (prohibiting an in-depth analysis of community impact and benefit sharing) the role of Olive as ambassador and consultant demonstrates an element of First Nations consultation

²⁶⁹ ‘Australian Native Collection’, *Connoisseur Ice Cream*, accessed 15 August 2020, available from <https://www.connoisseuricecream.com.au/ranges/australian-native-collection/>

²⁷⁰ ‘Australian Native Collection,’ *Connoisseur Ice Cream*.

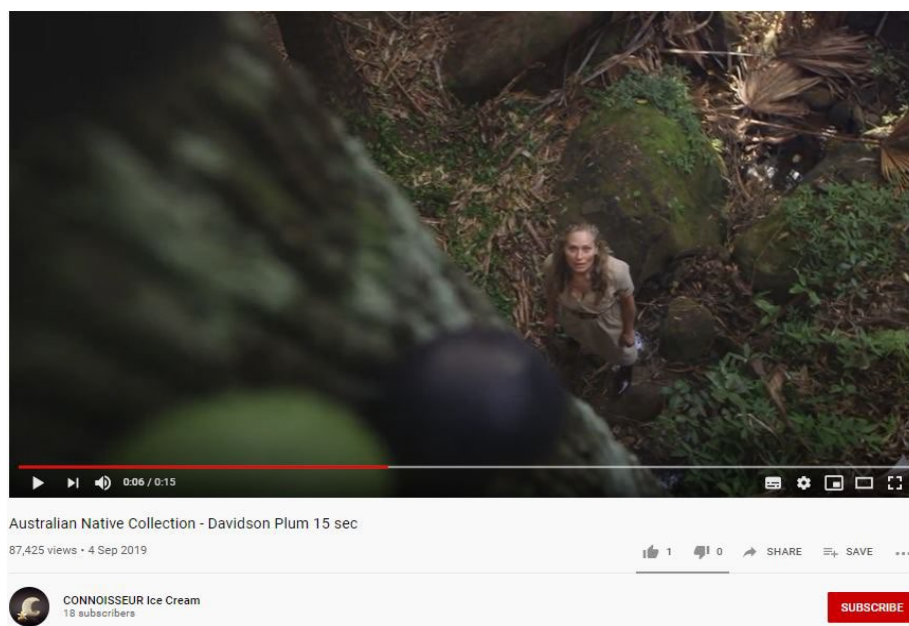
²⁷¹ Connoisseur Ice Cream, ‘Australian Native Collection - Davidson Plum’, YouTube video, published 4 September 2019, at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VQ5EEyyaxg>

²⁷² Connoisseur Ice Cream, ‘Australian Native Collection - Finger Lime 15 sec’, YouTube video, published 4 September 2019, at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fRueEENNa_8

and benefit sharing. Below are extracts of product descriptions for the Australian Native Flavours range:

Buttery, roasted Australian macadamias powdered in aromatic lemon myrtle. Combined with a zesty sauce of Australian Native Finger Limes and ginger, swirled in creamy vanilla flavoured ice cream. / A delicate cocoa ice cream infused with a sophisticated sweet & sour sauce featuring tart notes of Davidson Plum perfectly balanced with the sweetness of Caramelised Pear, for a truly indulgent experience. / A deliciously sweet bush honey and spicy cinnamon myrtle sauce combined with chocolate coated nougat pieces. / A delicately floral and rich berry coulis made from wild hibiscus flower, swirled through a smooth vanilla flavoured ice cream. / Roasted Australian wattleseed sauce featuring subtle nutty and chocolate aromas with a touch of sweet spice, swirled through creamy ice cream. Coated in our rich hazelnut White chocolate, this unique flavour combination creates harmony of both sweet & savoury, delivering an indulgent experience like no other.

This visual narrative focuses on indulgence, and exclusivity encouraging experiential consumership.



Figures 9 and 10. Connoisseur Australian Native Collection promotional shorts: Above: Davidson Plum. Below: Finger Lime.



This product was developed with Bundjalung chef Mark Olive. This demonstrates that Connoisseur wanted to ensure that Indigenous Australian perspectives were leading the development of this product. The language used embraces concepts of storytelling, mysticism and spirituality; however, it also fosters a sense of exclusivity and exoticism which has a complicated history with global settler, explorer narratives. This is an exceptionally close reading of the marketing material but serves to explore an example of collaborative processes.²⁷³

²⁷³ I undertook a review in 2022 of this sector and would like to reference a recent collaboration between ice cream maker Weis and the Australian Superfood Company. The result is the Weis Native Picks range which includes two options; ‘Davidson Plum and Raspberry’ and ‘Lemon Myrtle and Coconut Romance.’ Weis details that the packaging is designed by ‘Dixon Patten of Bayila Creative, a proud Yorta Yorta and Gunnai man, the artwork is inspired by traditional food-gathering practices by First Nations people. The wave patterns are leaves and represents...unique indigenous flora and our connection to Country and to each other. The different circles depict diverse people/community coming together to partake in ceremony and to eat together. This is universal to mankind – sharing food with others brings comfort, wealth and benefits.’ It is appropriate to have employed a First Nations graphic designer although it should be noted that Davidson Plum and Lemon Myrtle are endemic to North Eastern New South Wales and Southern Queensland not Yorta Yorta land which is Southern New South Wales and Northern Victoria in the Murray River region. The Australian Superfood Co is run by non-Indigenous dietitian Hayley Bleiden. However, the company website is transparent in its references to First Nations culture and profiles the First Nations growers they work with and detailing the not-for-profit they support and how they do so: ‘The Australian Superfood Co works alongside Red Dust in a number of ways, including providing financial support, product-based donations, promoting Red Dust to potential investors and working with Red Dust to implement new community-based initiatives.’ This transparency is a good example of ethical engagement with the native foods industry, Aboriginal communities and commitment to shared benefit systems. Australian Super Foods Co, ‘Commitment to Community,’ at <https://austsuperfoods.com.au/commitment-to-community/>

4.6 Conclusion

Anthropologist John Carty writes:

People felt the way about Aboriginal art that we do now about our native food... and in one generation, that perception has shifted so dramatically. We now consider it as being the most significant art movement Australia has ever given the world. Why not ... that mainstream shift, with food?²⁷⁴

I have addressed Carty's question, and focused this chapter on the industries leading the customer-facing part of that shift. Sydney chef Claire van Vuuren identifies difficulty navigating cultural sensitivity as one challenge arguing that, 'As a chef with no background in Indigenous foods, there's a feeling of being a little fraudulent in using ingredients you don't fully grasp. I guess it's about finding a comfort level of respect as well as playing around and building an understanding of the ingredient's capabilities.'²⁷⁵ Analysing the career of Jock Zonfrillo demonstrated the significant role media plays in the construction of an individual's success and the consequent personal responsibility that the recipient of success must embrace. I found Zonfrillo's Orana Foundation was willing to take on the complex journey of structuring benefit sharing at the core of programs and products. I utilised the work of the Merne Altyerre-ipenhe Reference Group, Jenny Dorsey and Logue et al to question the formation of, and brand identity of various chefs, restaurants, suppliers and producers. In doing so I have engaged with the consumer end of the food system (distribution and consumption). I have found that challenges are not necessarily negative if they shape a more equitable, benefit sharing industry which privileges the voices of Indigenous Australians respecting the nuance and taking the time to listen to these existing narratives rather erasing them with business or strategic narratives.

The Indigenous voices featured in this chapter reiterate a need to prioritise investment in social inclusion through foodspace, and a need for adequate representation and solidarity within the business world. While it is not commonplace for companies to list, or make available, details of their supply chain for product lines, I conclude that it must become part

²⁷⁴ Melissa Leong. 'Will Native Australian Food ever be mainstream?' *SBS*, 25 January 2018, accessed 30 January 2018, at <https://www.sbs.com.au/food/article/2018/01/25/will-native-australian-food-ever-be-mainstream>

²⁷⁵ Leong, 'Will Native Australian Food ever be mainstream.'

of equitable engagement with the native foods industry. Increasing supply chain transparency allows consumers and investors to support Indigenous owned businesses thereby creating accountability for benefit sharing processes. Bundjalung man Clarence Slooke is a guest presenter on the television show *Gardening Australia* and manager of Yerrabingin, Australia's first native rooftop farm located in Eveleigh, NSW on the border of Redfern, the urban centre of Sydney based Aboriginal community organisations. Slooke suggests that a potential negative result from the rise in popularity of wild harvested native foods may be that in remote communities the high value of native crops may incentivise communities to sell off the harvest rather than consuming it.²⁷⁶ These may be future problems in the industry. Dharawal woman Aunty Fran Bodkin sees the native food industry as a way to promote land protection 'I think that's the way our bushland is going to survive...Up until now, native plants have been seen as a nuisance. But if everybody starts using them, maybe they'll start to value them.'²⁷⁷

In this chapter I have explored the consumer facing stages of the food system; processing, distribution and consumption and associated components such as branding and advertising. I determine that creators of cultural products, such as cooking show *MasterChef Australia*, have a responsibility to engage appropriately with foods and food cultures. *MasterChef Australia* fails to engage meaningfully with the cultural, living history of native foods in Australia and the many disparate groups of Indigenous Australians for whom these foods form a significant part of cultural identity. In contrast Michael Pollan's documentary *Cooked* edges closer to aligning with calls from Indigenous groups in Australia, and globally, to properly acknowledge Indigenous groups and amplify their voices. Information about remuneration for filming is not publicly available but whether financial benefits were offered to interviewed communities, could be a key part of future research and more fully explore the benefit sharing elements of documentary filmmaking.

The final section of this chapter addressed the challenges facing various businesses operating in the Australian native foods industry and how they may or may not provide fair and benefit sharing access avenues to native Australian foods. I profiled a number of small businesses in order to analyse the narratives that Indigenous and non-Indigenous business owners used to

²⁷⁶ Drew Rooke, 'Growth Industry', *Kill Your Darlings*, 7 October 2019, accessed 8 January 2020, at <https://www.killyourdarlings.com.au/article/native-foods-and-white-australia/>.

²⁷⁷ Rooke, 'Growth Industry.'

communicate information about their food's history and their businesses ethos. These narratives focused on community engagement, sacred storytelling, philosophies of living and the land. I also questioned how growth and competitiveness can be achieved while maintaining social purpose (if applicable) and protecting traditional knowledge. I resolved that businesses must actively engage with traditional ecological knowledge holders and utilise the available publications on managing culturally valuable materials particularly in the development, production and sales stages.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

5.1 Review of chapters

I began the investigative body of this dissertation by exploring the impact of Christian missions on Aboriginal communities. In Chapter Two I determined that missions were conduits for colonial influence. Missions altered the Australian foodscape, primarily the foodscapes of many groups of Aboriginal people, through the use of food as a means of control and coercion. I also discussed how missions were the sites on which many communities and kinship groups had their first experiences of commercial agriculture and cross-cultural projects. Chapter Three delved further into food production in the Australian foodscape and focused on agricultural management across three sections: Flora and Wild Harvesting; Marine Agriculture; and Animal Agriculture. These sections focused on the development and preservation of identity and spiritual practice and the development and dissemination of narrative through the practice of land management and the production of food for personal use, domestic hospitality markets and international export. Chapter Four focused on contemporary consumption and the foodscape of contemporary hospitality. I explored how chefs wield an underestimated influence on the representation of native foods in Australia. I concluded with an assessment of the profiles of select businesses involved in the supply of native foods to domestic consumers. I analysed how these businesses represented themselves and create a brand narrative, I assessed this with benefit sharing protocols in mind. The three investigative chapters engage with aspects of food systems (put simply: production, processing, distribution, and consumption) and I tie all these together with careful assessment of the language of representation and the creation of food centred narratives.

5.2 Dissertation conclusion and key questions revisited

The importance of native food and plants to Australian culture and their potential to contribute towards reconciliation, efforts towards decolonization, and a positive environmental future must be recognised. The attempted erasure of Indigenous people has

been a central component of the nation-building narrative of contemporary Australia.¹ The primary challenge for developing a sustainable native food industry is the ability of ethically directed companies to maintain cultural sensitivity, benefit sharing practices, cultural acknowledgement and the involvement and support of Aboriginal people. This is essential to developing a ‘just’ native food industry in Australia.

It must be reiterated that any destabilising of Aboriginal food culture is not simply borne of a colonial history, but of the ongoing colonial undercurrent present in contemporary Australian social structures. This has hindered the efforts of Indigenous ecological knowledge holders to share, and potentially derive economic benefit from, their knowledge of place and food. By broadening the spectrum of socially valued forms of knowledge and facilitating increased First Nations leadership, Australians will benefit not from a new but an existing, albeit under-acknowledged, national identity embedded in a history of connection to place and land.

I have questioned which forms of knowledge are legitimated, and have addressed the creation, communication and preservation of knowledge. I determined that the inadequacy of Intellectual Property law when applied to Indigenous cultural knowledge is a risk factor for an equitable native foods industry. Art (as an example of cultural knowledge and practice) in the public domain can be reproduced and the reproductions copyrighted. These same principles do, and will continue, to impact the protection of knowledge about native foods including expressions of creativity in which food is the medium. The work of Robertson and Raven et. al. is focused on the development of appropriate policy to reduce the risks of biopiracy and intentional, and unintentional, cultural knowledge theft.²

I have focused on the impact of place and land, exploring how a colonial fear of unfamiliar land, bodies and foods has, in the Australian context at least, developed into a complex and

¹ See Tahlia Nelson, ‘Rewriting the Narrative: Confronting Australia’s past in Order to Determine Our Future’, *NEW: Emerging Scholars in Australian Indigenous Studies* 4 no. 1 (2018), 20-26; and Yann Allard-Tremblay and Elaine Coburn, ‘The Flying Heads of Settler Colonialism; or the Ideological Erasures of Indigenous Peoples in Political Theorizing’, *Political Studies*, June 2021.

² Daniel Robinson and Margaret Raven, ‘Identifying and Preventing Biopiracy in Australia: Patent Landscapes and Legal Geographies for Plants with Indigenous Australian Uses’, *Australian Geographer* 48, no. 3 (2017): 311–31.; other recent academic publications include Margaret Raven, Daniel Robinson, and John Hunter, ‘The Emu: More-Than-Human and More-Than-Animal Geographies’, *Antipode* 53, no. 5 (2021): 1526–45.; Daniel F. Robinson, and Margaret Raven, ‘Recognising Indigenous Customary Law of Totemic Plant Species: Challenges and Pathways’, *The Geographical Journal* 186, no. 1 (2020): 31–44.

performative rejection of Indigenous Australians.³ This rejection has been institutionalised through religion, mission environments, the protestant work ethic and colonial bureaucracy. Complex mazes of structural inequality are enforced by systems of law and policy that do not adequately engage with Indigenous communities. These inequalities, characterised by a lack of access to Country and other resources, and threatens Indigenous peoples' food systems and nutrition, undermine the resilience of individuals and communities. They also contribute to environmental degradation and the loss of biodiversity. This in turn heightens the competing demands for land and for the production of food or fuel that sometimes culminate in unsustainable, unhealthy consumption patterns and lifestyles, and the centralisation of power in market structures.⁴

I have explored how built examples of marine and riverine engineering, specifically Baiame's Nggunhu, and built topographical spaces, specifically midden mounds, provide visual narratives and play an important role in the Australian foodscape by preserving and communicating the history of a geographical area and the cultural practice of its inhabitants. These sites retain significant potential to enrich the lives and livelihoods and Traditional Owners and the wider local community. To conclude, as Somerville and Perkins explain-from the Gumbayangir perspective: 'in the intense engagement required to collect and eat food, people learn the intimate, embodied knowledge of their local places.'⁵ Concepts of place have been extended to include the human body as a site. The connection between the body as a site and the edible environment, through the conduit of food, has been a connection I returned to regularly. Discussion about the body as a site started in Chapter One with a selective history of missions in Australia, addressing how imported Food Cultures impacted the emotional and physical health of Aboriginal people on the east coast of Australia. A history of provisionalism has been fostered in Australian and national narrative from the very first observations of James Cook who declared that the people inhabiting the land had 'hardly

³ Kay Schaffer discusses suggests A. A. Phillips' understanding of a 'spiritual darkness emanating from the land itself, a sense of primeval cruelty fed by the sunlight' and a 'guilty sense that [European] man has forced his will upon the earth without the hallowing of ritual' uncovers repressed anxieties surrounding the ideal of the 'Australian bushman'. Kay Schaffer and Phillips cited in Kathleen Steele, 'Fear and Loathing in the Australian Bush: Gothic Landscapes in Bush Studies and *Picnic at Hanging Rock*', *Colloquy: Text Theory Critique* 20 (2010): 34.

⁴ Stephanie Lemke and Treena Delormier, 'Indigenous Peoples' food systems, nutrition, and gender: Conceptual and methodological considerations', *Maternal and Child Nutrition* 13, no. S3 (2017): 1.

⁵ Charlotte Crow, 'Tasting Territory: Imagining Place in Australian Native Food Packaging', *Locale: The Australasian-Pacific Journal of Regional Food Studies* 2 (2012), 17.

anything fit for Man to eat'.⁶ Christian mission spaces created environments in which the traditional knowledge and culture of Indigenous Australians was intentionally, and unintentionally, eroded through a combined process of restriction and assimilation. Food was a central tool in this process and built transactional relationships with communities and later to retain control. Christian missions had recognisable, intentional, community structures with language patterns based in kinship relationship: sister, brother, father, mother. These kinship terms assisted in recodifying transactional patronage as gift giving familial relationships which morphed into a mutually developed experience of kinship riding. Missions filled a need for institutional support which was created by the fragmentation of families and their separation from Country and community. Christianity, and missionaries, were then placed in the desirable position of being 'good' White people despite knowingly, and unknowingly, acting for the colonial project.

I posed a series of key questions of the relationship between Australia and the native food industry in order to identify and assess ethical and social challenges. I will now separate these questions into appropriate groupings and reference how this research has answered these questions:

1. How have past and contemporary Indigenous communities worked with edible flora and fauna as part of cultural and economic practice?
2. How has the shame and stigma perpetrated by colonising forces on Indigenous Australians impacted the development of the Australian foodscape?

Investigation of the significance of existing geographical engineering and inherited knowledge of land and marine management has identified ways in which past and contemporary Indigenous communities have worked with edible flora and fauna as part of cultural and economic practice. I introduced case studies which demonstrated the care necessary to develop effective cross-cultural alliances in line with ethical business practices such as benefit sharing policies. In particular, case studies of contemporary community projects including the Hope for Health food project and Maningrida Wild Foods demonstrated how self-directed alternative food networks play a key role in redeveloping Indigenous communities' food access and knowledge. Such community projects subversively

⁶ Blake Singley, "'Hardly Anything Fit for Man to eat": Food and Colonialism in Australia', *History Australia* 9, no. 3 (2012): 27.

bypass disempowering programs like the Australian federal government's food card schemes while reducing community reliance on imported, processed products.

I have focused on the use and development of native flora in the emerging native foods industry. I then assessed how different approaches to land management and relationships between humans and animals have impacted the acceptance of native game and the tension surrounding conservations and land management practices. This research identified that cultural history and oral narratives were the conduit for the communication, and preservation, of generations worth of food knowledge. These traditions strengthened the spiritual connection to foods, imbuing deep meaning which was consumed physically and spiritually. Geographical mobility, changing market dynamics and demand for native foods have impacted Indigenous communities' access to, and engagement with, native foods. Pressure from the high export value abalone industry has contributed not only to restrictions surrounding the freedom of cultural harvesting but also to the high rates of Indigenous incarceration due to criminal penalties associated with catch restrictions.

Australia is not a country which encourages the consumption of wild food. White Australia has a fear of land, a desire to control it and has used shame and stigma as a way to other its people. This fear was well documented in the Australian Gothic arts movement which represented a, 'real, palpable fear people... had of being swallowed up and consumed by the bush.'⁷ It has been cemented by the hangover of a colonial distrust of the expansiveness of the land and a society built on exile and the attempt to wield control over the land. Central to the Australian Gothic was an idea of the 'other', often silent or invisible. This 'other' is not just the perceived paranormal but is also the displaced Aboriginal people conveying a subconscious guilt. This fear, still palpable in modern Australia, stems not only from this built cultural mythology but from lack of knowledge and a taught, at times sensible, wariness of the environment. Children and adults alike are taught about the many and varied plants and animals that pose a danger to and it is not surprising that the broader community is suspicious of wild products.

⁷ Liza Power, 'Weird Melancholy: Exhibition probes fear at the heart of the Australian landscape', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 April 2015, at <http://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/weird-melancholy-exhibition-probes-fear-at-the-heart-of-the-australian-landscape-20150328-1m9uk2.html>.

I explored the use of theatre as a method of communicating wholistic approaches to food and preserving food knowledge. I included Trawlwoolway playwright Nathan Maynard's *The Season* (2017) and Robert J. Merritt's *The Cake Man* (1983). *The Season* provided a positive portrayal of the empowering nature of community connection to land, animals and cultural practice. *The Cake Man* explored the degrading impact of White paternalism on the social, familial and spiritual structures of Aboriginal families. Both these plays demonstrate how the insidious experience of shame and stigma perpetrated by colonising forces on Indigenous and immigrant Australian's impacted the development of the Australian foodscape by fracturing social bonds and committing food violence against Indigenous families by weaponising food access. The use of theatrical scripts as source material in this research has been an effort to provide contemporary, creative examples of Aboriginal oral history and storytelling. I consider my incorporation of plays to be innovative and that their integration as unconventional source material is successful in my multidisciplinary approach to my research.

3. How is information on, and representation of, Indigenous foods disseminated by media?
4. Is Indigenous food at risk of colonisation rather than the subject of a productive, benefit-sharing relationship?
5. What are the responsibilities of hospitality businesses and consumers in their interactions with Indigenous communities and cultural knowledge when developing business models?

Case studies exploring representation of native foods on screen examined six lifestyle media programs that engage with native foods: SacredOz's *My Bush Tukka Adventures* (2014), Netflix's *Cooked* (2016), NITV's *Kriol Kitchen* (2016), EndemolShine's *MasterChef Australia* (2019-2022), Tourism Australia's *Restaurant Australia* (2019) and David Gelb's *Chef's Table* (2015). I questioned the personal and collective responsibility of producers and media professionals in handling public perception of the Australian foodscape and its history finding that non-Indigenous led programs mostly struggled to allocate enough narrative space to discussions of Indigenous foods when they were included. This resulted in shallow engagement. Close analysis of an episode of the documentary series *Chef's Table* focused on the career of New Zealand chef Ben Shewry and provided an opportunity to assess the representation of Australian native foods by international media. Shewry's feature was

exclusionary, the absence of significant discussion of Australia's colonial history or the legacy of separation from cultural identity, including native foods, experienced by Aboriginal communities in contemporary Australia, was proof of a failure to research appropriate cultural approaches, and a reluctance to take responsibility over the communication of knowledge. Analysis of *MasterChef Australia* formed a strong link between the assessment of the role of chefs in standing in solidarity with Indigenous communities and the responsibilities of the media industry around culturally collaborative approaches to the discussion of Indigenous foods, as the former was explored through the case study of Chef Jock Zonfrillo who was a guest presenter, and then host, of *MasterChef Australia*. The show has a significant cultural responsibility due to its portrayal of an Australian foodscape. *MasterChef Australia* forms series and episodes arcs around the identity of its contestants, and the representation of their identity through food. Consequently, *MasterChef Australia* has opened itself up for critique over its lack of substantive engagement with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Australia.

I have determined that the native foodspace is at risk of further colonisation because of the speed of growth of the native foods industry. To expand; a lack of effective federal, community-developed regulation across a fast growth industry creates an environment which allows the intentional, and unintentional, exploitation of cultural knowledge. Public, and business education campaigns, should assist in shaping an industry which is based on benefit sharing principles. In doing so these actors will support existing, Indigenous led, efforts within the industry. A series of key challenges face the native foods industry in Australia, including the challenge of developing long-term accessibility to the industry for stakeholders and consumers. Challenges around access include: 'How to keep Aboriginal people involved when the industry development is so rapid?';⁸ 'How to make sure [the bush foods industry] is not taken over by people who want to make it bigger, faster?; and How to [allow local people] to keep control and not just it give it away?'⁹

The level of responsibility held by native foods industry players and hospitality professionals in the dissemination of narratives about native foods has been explored and deemed to be

⁸ Rayleen Brown in Merne Altyerre-ipenhe Reference Group, J Douglas and F Walsh, 'Aboriginal people, bush foods knowledge and products from central Australia: Ethical guidelines for commercial bush food research, industry and enterprises', 71, (2011) accessed 27 August 2020, at <https://www.nintione.com.au/?p=5597>, 26.

⁹ Veronica Dobson in Merne Altyerre-ipenhe Reference Group, Douglas, Walsh, 'Aboriginal people, bush foods knowledge and products from central Australia', 26.

significant in the portrayal of food culture to a broad audience. I have concluded that hospitality professionals must publicly advocate for an industry which works with, and celebrates the contributions of, Indigenous Australian communities and businesses to the Australian foodscape. Profiling several food and agribusinesses, restaurants and chefs working in the industry provided a select snapshot of some of the restaurants that are stakeholders in the Australian native foods industry in 2020. Discussing examples of organisational challenges and ethos from farm to flavour palate provides a commentary on the ways in which the narratives of the Australian foodscape are shifting and changing to shed a history of cultural and culinary cringe. Criticism of the native food industry often lingers on questions of low Indigenous participation; however, I determine that more onus should be levelled to journalism and media platforms and consumers to engage with the many Indigenous-led small businesses that are in operation. Celebrating these businesses increases the platforms of exposure open to them and assists representatives to share chosen knowledge and narratives as well as the development of the industry.

In my research, the impact of celebrity chef Jock Zonfrillo on the native foods industry in Australia has been a significant case study. The impact of chefs on the contemporary foodscape is significant and this case study has provided an example of a non-Indigenous ally taking on the onus for the dissemination of Indigenous ecological knowledge and the spiritual and historical narratives that accompany it. Zonfrillo has become a partially self-made, and partially media made, leader in the Australian native food industry using his public platform to advocate for increased recognition, celebration and utilisation of native foods and the communities who have retained knowledge about these foods for centuries. I have discussed the ways in which contemporary generations are included in colonial settler narratives. I have continually referenced the need for individuals and businesses that fit within that narrative to approach efforts towards alliance and solidarity starting with personal and professional recognition of the need for action in a real and present struggle. Narrative applications of ‘the past’ contribute towards dismissing continuing institutional violence towards Indigenous people.

The Orana Foundation formed a major case study for this research. In my analysis of the organisation, I questioned whether the control of an archive of knowledge by a non-Aboriginal not for profit is the best solution for the preservation and protection of cultural knowledge. I conclude that the work of Zonfrillo, the Orana Foundation and the University of

Adelaide's cataloguing of traditional knowledge forms an alliance with Indigenous peoples which subsequently has sought to celebrate the variety and diversity of native produce and preserve knowledge. I conclude that despite criticism from outside, and within, Australian Indigenous communities, it is crucial to respect the autonomous decision by Indigenous people who have collaborated with this project to share their knowledge.¹⁰

I have addressed the deep-rooted inequality demonstrated in the development of the foundation and highlighted the disparity borne from a narrow vision of success and professional legitimacy. The ability of Zonfrillo, a White chef with a public profile to leverage funding and industry support firstly for fine dining restaurant Orana and then for the foundation it was established to support, has been bolstered by the privilege inherent in his racial and cultural identity. Furthermore, the funding secured by the Orana Foundation from state and federal agencies was secured through a board of experts including Norman Gillespie, whose professional acumen was recognised from his work with global third sector organisation UNICEF.¹¹ The Orana Foundation board has majority non-Indigenous membership.¹² This is an unacceptable disparity for an organisation focused on working with Indigenous communities. This is an example of governments and funding agencies privileging a certain way of working and treating one understanding of knowledge as legitimate. These are significant challenges that threaten the progress of the native foods industry in Australia.

Finally, individual and communal perceptions of people, places and things is intentionally and unintentionally shaped by the language and narratives of others. This is why critical discourse analysis is important. I suggest it is especially important for non-Indigenous scholars to be reflexive when reading both academic and non-academic texts which speak about Indigenous peoples.¹³ Furthermore retailers, producers and marketers working in the native foods industry must be expected to undertake a self-reflexive approach and turn a

¹⁰ On 19 December 2020 *The Australian* newspaper issued an apology correcting previous articles on 9 and 10 August 2020 which had criticised the work of Zonfrillo and the Orana Foundation, including the use of funds from government grants and the Basque Culinary World Prize.

¹¹ 'Norman Gillespie, Executive Director at The Orana Foundation', *LinkedIn* profile, accessed 8 May 2020, at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/norman-gillespie-00b5a717/?originalSubdomain=au>.

¹² Wakka Wakka woman Jo Willmot is the only Indigenous board member at the time of writing, although Nyul Nyul man Bruno Dan is listed as an ambassador. see 'Our Team' *The Orana Foundation*, at <https://theoranafoundation.org/our-team/>

¹³ I suggest that the phenomenological approach (led in the Australian context by scholars such as James L. Cox) aligns with this thinking as phenomenology does concern itself with the human perceptions.

critical eye to their own oral and written communications demonstrating an awareness of the narratives they may impose and whether the knowledge they share is shared appropriately.

5.3 Future research directions

Future research in line with this work should consider the impact of the Orana Foundation's database as it begins to be utilised by a range of stakeholders and possible interstate changes in policy following the revision of Queensland's bio-discovery regulations.¹⁴ Minor projects of research interest would be a deeper and continued analysis of the presentation of, and narrative created by, surrounding Australian native foods in television media, particularly cooking and lifestyle programs and within the grocery industry.

More recent food content produced by Indigenous Australian's can be found on pop culture platforms including social media platform TikTok (Kooking with Koori) and YouTube.¹⁵ Both these platforms tend toward the representation of urban cultural foods including many curries and the inclusion of long-life products such as Devon meat. There is difference between these foods which have become part of the culinary vernacular of many Indigenous Australians and the bush foods which are part of the developing Indigenous food industry. This dissertation has explored how bush foods were (and sometimes still are) stigmatised throughout the development of colonial Australia, similarly many of the long-life products that are part of contemporary, urban Indigenous culinary vernacular are stigmatised in contemporary Australia which has developed a wealth based system of cultural and individual appreciation. This line of investigation could be a useful line of further study.

Engaging Indigenous communities, knowledge and histories and connecting the foods to place requires a decolonizing of culinary knowledge that acknowledges, rather than

¹⁴ Queensland Government Department of Environment and Science, 'Reform of the Biodiscovery Act 2004', 30 August 2021, accessed 8 January 2022, at <https://environment.des.qld.gov.au/licences-permits/plants-animals/biodiscovery/biodiscovery-act-reform>

¹⁵ Buzzfeed Oz has a series of videos in which first nations people cook and share mob feeds including: Buzzfeed Oz, 'First Nations Australians Swap Mob Feeds', 9 April 2021, accessed 15 March 2022, at <https://youtu.be/AvMEo6SsPVw> and Buzzfeed Oz, 'Maori and First Nations Aussies Swap Snacks', 9 April 2021, accessed 15 March 2022, at <https://youtu.be/o0q2TpgpuIo> One video which does feature endogenous flora is Buzzfeed Oz, 'I ate Aussie Native foods for 24 hours,' 20 December 2021, accessed 15 March 2022, at https://youtu.be/qaB_tNGMKYQ featuring *Gomeri Waliyan* man Joshua Thurston Toole. Toole cooks three meals featuring pigface, bottle brush flowers, strawberry gum, *gumby gumby* and *quandong* jam, stingray, lemon myrtle, *warrigal* greens, dianella berries, emu and *murnong*. Toole notes that *murnong* (the root of the yam daisy) is sacred because, after land clearing, it has become a rarity. This is a contemporary sacrality driven by scarcity rather than tradition.

marginalises, Traditional Owners. Research should assess how native foods business owners engage with, and employ, the recommendations of guiding documents written by Indigenous Australians, for example the Merne Altyerre-ipenhe Reference Group.¹⁶

5.4 Contributions and conclusions

I have contributed newness to interdisciplinary cultural and food studies work in Australia in two ways. Firstly, by working to challenge the forms of knowledge accepted by the academic canon by focusing much of my research on non-traditional sources which create narratives, primarily new media and digital journalism. Secondly, by furthering working concepts that are essential to discussions on the future food of Australia; food violence and foodscapes. I have introduced the term ‘culinary cringe’ to extend the idea of cultural cringe when specifically applied to food and diet. Culinary cringe can be defined by dated food trends. More subversively, culinary cringe is veiled racism channelled through a critique of diet. I have kept in the forefront of my approach the impact of culinary cringe and have let that lead when assessing attitudes towards native foods from missions to colonial settler kitchens to the contemporary commercial hospitality industry. Culinary cringe develops partly from a lack of confidence in, and knowledge of, Australian culture and history compounded by shame.¹⁷ Cultural educators like Arabella Douglas advocate for the use of education in combating shame and disconnect by improving local knowledge. The development of this connection with Country will develop spiritual connections that enable people to be ‘deeply satisfied’ with the plants and animals endemic to the land.¹⁸

I have structured the concept of food violence as akin to other sociological theories of violence. Food violence can be understood to be a subset of cultural violence. I have interpreted food violence to be an essential terminology for food studies, global Indigenous studies scholars and those working in the interdisciplinary humanities. It is also important for this terminology to be understood and used in non-academic spaces. I have explored how

¹⁶ Merne Altyerre-ipenhe Reference Group, J. Douglas and F. Walsh. ‘Aboriginal people, bush foods knowledge and products from central Australia: Ethical guidelines for commercial bush food research, industry and enterprises’, *Desert Knowledge CRC* Report Number 71, 2011. Accessed 28 August 2020.

https://www.nintione.com.au/resource/NintiOneResearchReport_71_BushFoodGuidelines.pdf; See also Zena Cumpston, ‘Indigenous plant use: A booklet on the medicinal, nutritional and technological use of indigenous plants’, (The University of Melbourne: Clean Air and Urban Landscapes Hub, 2020), accessed 5 July 2020, at <https://nespurban.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Indigenous-plant-use.pdf>

¹⁷ Helen Merrell Lynd, *On Shame and the Search for Identity* (New York: Science Editions, Inc., 1961), 19-20.

¹⁸ The *Orana* Foundation, ‘Introducing the Indigenous Food Database - Part 2’, *Instagram*, 6 October 2020, accessed 6 October 2020, at https://www.instagram.com/tv/CF9X5sijPW0/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link.

food violence is the weaponisation of food in order to control, introduce and reinforce power imbalances particularly in colonised countries. Transformation of the body using food as a tool has been an aspect of assimilation. I acknowledge the complex exploitation of large-scale foodscapes and how these impact communities, given food is an essential component of human existence and therefore regularly used to control others, introducing and reinforcing dominant power structures. In Australia, food violence has been committed as part of the colonial project through the creation of mission environments, the destruction of physical landscapes, flora and fauna and the systematic exclusion of Indigenous voices in industry and business creation.

I approach a working understanding of effective alliances and positive Indigenous and non-Indigenous alliances as, ideally as one of non-interference relationship building and dynamic alliance. This approach is based on the multitude of publicly available guidelines, both formal and informal, from Indigenous voices in Australia. I reject narratives that treat the past as separate from the present, arguing that the legacy of colonialism is alive in the structures and attitudes of contemporary Australia. I find it is the responsibility of stakeholders in the Australian foodscape including producers, suppliers, restaurateurs, chefs and consumers to publicly engage not only with the cultural history of produce but also the political nature of its consumption. I assert that narrative shifts surrounding native flora and fauna will drive positive change for the future of the native foods industry. In particular, I hope my research advocates for the celebration, not simply recognition or acknowledgement, of native foods and the Indigenous nations that have held, continue to hold, and still develop the Indigenous ecological knowledge that creates the unique Australian foodscape of the future. Diversifying the food system at every level will work to challenge the roots of racist food violence still permeating the Australian foodscape. Food can, and must, be a core part of efforts towards decolonising forms of legitimated knowledge and relationships.

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FIGURES

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Figure 1. Arrernte woman Brittany Krol at the memorial garden dedicated to her mother in Alice Springs. Photo: Samantha Jonscher

Figure 2. Saltbush. Photographer uncredited.

<https://www.farmweekly.com.au/story/6593588/native-shrub-is-now-on-the-menu>

Figure 3. Advertisement for TAFE WA Horticulture program in collaboration with Katanning Landcare. July 2019. <https://katanninglandcare.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Hort-course-724x1024.jpg>

Figure 4. L to R: Chris, Bruce, Terry, Kate at Mallacoota preparing to work with kangaroo grass. Isabella Moore for *The Guardian*.

Figure 5, Scene from Tasmania Performs staging of Nathan Maynard's *The Season*. Photo by Prudence Upton.

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Figure 6. Duke and Duchess of Cambridge at Charcoal Lane Restaurant Melbourne, Photo by Penny Bradfield; Mission Australia, 'Mission Australia's Charcoal Lane plates up native cuisine for The Duke and Duchess of Sussex,' 18 October 2018, at <https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/media-centre/media-releases/mission-australia-s-charcoal-lane-restaurant-plates-up-native-cuisine-for-the-duke-and-duchess-of-sussex>

Figure 7 Harvesting pepperberries. *Wild Pepper Isle*, 20 May 2022, <https://www.instagram.com/p/Bv-yYDkBRV8>

Figure 8. Tim Sculthorpe at the Palawa Kipli stall, 21 June 2019, https://www.instagram.com/p/By8_9DaBsbU/

Figures 9 & 10. Connoisseur Australian Native Collection promotional shorts: Figure 9: Davidson Plum. Figure 10: Finger Lime. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VQ5EEnyyaxgg> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fRueEENNa> 8