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Whiteness, space and alternative food practice

Rachel Slocum

St. Cloud State University, Department of Anthropology and Sociology, 720 4th Ave. South, St. Cloud, MN 56301, USA

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Abstract

The paper demonstrates how whiteness is produced in progressive non-profit efforts to promote sustainable farming and food security in the US. I explore whiteness by addressing the spatial dimensions of this food politics. I draw on feminist and materialist theories of nature, space and difference as well as research conducted between 2003 and the present. Whiteness emerges spatially in efforts to increase food access, support farmers and provide organic food to consumers. It clusters and expands through resource allocation to particular organizations and programs and through participation in non-profit conferences. Community food's discourse builds on a late-modern and, in practice, 'white' combination of science and ideology concerning healthful food and healthy bodies. Whiteness in alternative food efforts rests, as well, on inequalities of wealth that serve both to enable different food economies and to separate people by their ability to consume. It is latent in the support of romanticized notions of community, but also in the more active support for coalition-building across social differences. These well-intentioned food practices reveal both the transformative potential of progressive whiteness and its capacity to become exclusionary in spite of itself. Whiteness coheres precisely, therefore, in the act of 'doing good'.

Keywords: Race; Whiteness; Space; Alternative food; Feminist; Farmers' market

1. Introduction

This paper explores how racial difference is produced through geographies of food. Specifically, I look at how whiteness is embodied within the spaces of US alternative food practices. These practices aim to change how people eat, farm and purchase food and to promote human and nonhuman wellbeing, social justice and the economic viability of places. The paper is a reflection on the project of changing race and changing food.

The literature on food and racial difference is growing. I would like to briefly outline the field here in order to acknowledge the significant work being done.[1] This is not an exhaustive review. One body of work addresses the racial politics of certain foods (DuPuis, 2002; Domosh, 2003; Bobrow-Strain, 2005). Additionally, there is work on food, identity and nationalism (Appadurai, 1988; Narayan, 1995) and representations of difference via food (Inness, 2001a,b). The roles of racialized groups in food production (agricultural knowledge, labour) is another broad area (Mintz, 1985; Mitchell, 1996; Henderson, 1998; Carney, 2001; García, 2001). Race and food or agriculture are considered in work on neo-colonialism (Heldke, 2003), colonialism and settler society (Rowse, 1998; Anderson, 2003) and colonialism and global food circuits (Freidburg, 2003; Alvarez, 2005). A key text in cultural geography is Bell and Valentine's (1997) book, a compelling account of the meanings of food consumption for differently located people in the spaces of body, home, community and nation. Finally, research on alternative food practices has indicated that there are raced aspects to organic food production (Guthman, 2004) and to the social movement promoting these practices (Allen et al., 2003; Allen, 2004; Slocum, 2006). The importance of this scholarship is in the intricacies of race, power and food it reveals. In adding to this literature, I situate my contribution closer to those works that are interested in embodied accounts of race and food. Additionally,

E-mail address: rachel_slocum@hotmail.com

[1] I would like to note here that in October 2005, Melanie Dupuis convened a workshop called White Food at UC Santa Cruz that brought together some of the authors engaging in questions around race and food.

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I offer a few ideas for thinking about alternative food and race that emphasize neither institutionalized racism (but see Slocum, 2006) nor only critique alternative food practice.

Most interesting for my project are works that theorize difference, ethics, and politics (e.g. Whatmore, 2002). Elspeth Probyn's recent work (Probyn, 2000, 2001, 2005) is particularly useful. For instance, in the chapter 'Eating in Black and White' (*Carnal Appetites*) Probyn points out that explorations into aboriginal and other racialized groups' foods in Australia potentially open a door into knowledge of raced history. Probyn (2005:114) also offers a concept of shame that is useful in acknowledging historical injustices without resorting to the "two solitudes" of oppressed and oppressor. I will elaborate on these ideas in detail below.

This is a theoretical paper that is not designed to present a case study or detailed ethnographic research. Instead, I contribute to the literature on race and food by discussing how whiteness forms materially in alternative food practices. I use the term 'whiteness' to refer to bodies with pale skin colour, the changing tendencies of those bodies to do certain things in a particular context and the socio-spatial processes with which those tendencies are linked. I will elaborate on this definition in Section 4. The paper considers the questions, what do white bodies do in alternative food practice and how do they shape its spaces? To address the question it is important to know the tendencies of whiteness and the means by which whiteness becomes visible and coherent. Whiteness can be understood as expanding through alternative food practice but also changing through it. I suggest ways of seeing hopeful possibility in raced connections through food. Thus while it should be said that there is something white about alternative food practice, that 'something white' is not equivalent to 'something negative'. This paper works towards the question of what politics, what ethics can move this divided nation, the US, collectively, toward joy through food.

This paper is informed by an ongoing study, begun in 2003, of groups involved in the Community Food Security Coalition (CFSC) and the broader effort that I refer to as 'community food'. Participant observation of the work of an anti-racism group within the CFSC, the Outreach and Diversity Committee (ODC), as well as participant observation of three community food annual conferences, various meetings, anti-racism trainings, and interactions in food co-ops and farmers' markets form the basis of my arguments. I did 80 interviews with community food leaders in the North East US and observed the comfood-l and nefood-l list serves as well. The co-ops and farmers' markets are located in Massachusetts and Minnesota. The conferences were in Milwaukee, Boston and Atlanta. Preliminary research was conducted in Syracuse, NY and upstate New York generally.

In this paper, I first discuss a few methodological points and then explore 'food potential'. Next I move into a discussion of useful work in whiteness and white spatiality and present evidence of white food spaces. This paper uses alternative food nodes, community food meetings and places to buy food, as evidence. How whiteness forms, falters and flourishes—how it seeks to change, or does not, in ways that thwart racism—is my interest.

2. Methodological considerations: why whiteness?

Some might claim that my argument about whiteness as a constitutive element of community food has been biased by the fact that I studied it in places that are heavily white. Whiteness is hegemonic in the US; it is dominant regardless of the number of bodies in a certain place. Studying whiteness, for this paper, is not about counting all the whites and arguing that whiteness is 'more' or 'less' in places with greater or fewer of them. I study whiteness in community food spaces like a farmers' market or co-op in the state of Minnesota because it helps me to understand *what whites do* in these places. The physical way that whiteness works in the spaces of community food can tell me things about how whiteness both embraces difference and works transformatively as well as how it excludes difference, perhaps simultaneously and maybe unwillingly. But these places are not only white, so I can observe, in interaction, whiteness and brownness. Whether some place is all white or not, white bodies remain in relation to everything else.

An additional criticism proposes that by signaling community food's whiteness, I erase the non-whiteness that exists, albeit in the segregated food spaces of the US. The story of whiteness and alternative food is a partial account that does not bar the way for others to show that local, organic and good food is very much an interest or ideal of non-white groups. The desire for good and sufficient food and jobs and thriving economies is not white. It becomes white through what white bodies do in this effort. The presence of people of colour in white food spaces and their interest in alternative food practices does not make community food less white. Finally, the criticism relies on an understanding of race that does not invite its fuzziness into the conversation—something I address later in the paper.

The above criticism implicitly draws from the idea that studying whiteness, even using the term, is dangerous because it reinforces white privilege. But I argue that whiteness should be understood as part of race (Bonnett, 1996); it is a concept important to theorizing race, racism and anti-racism as well as space, nature and embodied difference (Kobayashi and Peake, 2000; Nayak, 2003). Ware and Back find that many scholars studying whiteness ("White People" as they call them) "have balked at the notion of doing away with all racial categories and have instead settled for the deceptively easier job of trying to remove the undesirable elements from whiteness without rocking the boat of raciaology that keeps the whole concept in motion" (Ware and Back, 2002:6). They support the argument that whiteness should only be critiqued, a claim that asks whites to be traitors to whiteness or argues, flatly, that "whiteness ain't pretty" (workshop participant, St. Cloud State University, April 5, 2006). Theirs is a politics too harsh to sup-

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port change. It asks, untenably, that whites act in anti-racist ways without any esteem for whiteness (Alcoff, 1998). It reduces whiteness to merely and only a destructive process. The position rests on an essentialist understanding of whiteness and shuts off possibilities of an anti-racist, non-essentialist future. Ware and Back's argument is part of a widely accepted position that says race itself should be abolished (see Saldanha, 2006 for critique and Alcoff, 1999 for discussion) because race is inextricably and inevitably linked to many forms of racism and cannot be excavated from that association. By denying race, a term one might say they conflate with 'races' (the Linnean taxonomy and its eugenicist and scientifically racist offspring), these authors undermine the possibility of understanding race in a great deal more complexity than they are willing to admit exists and finding more productive routes to ending all oppressions.

The interest of going beyond negative oppositional politics that I advocate above is echoed in the following section where I define alternative food practice. This is an important part of the argument in the sense that alternative food practices offer potentially useful ways of earthly, ethical being. These practices also offer a view of a different, progressive form of whiteness.

3. Food potential: the 'alternative' in alternative food practices

I define alternative food practices as those that advocate more ecologically sound and socially just farming methods, food marketing and distribution, and healthier food options across the US. These practices have historical antecedents and connections to a variety of progressive efforts but have gained momentum in the last 15 years. The target of these efforts is the conventional food system that privileges corporate agriculture, commodity subsidies, trans-continental shipping and foods high in fats, salt and sugars. The context for increased interest in alternative food includes a national preoccupation with obesity, WTO policy, anti-globalization activism and a desire to support more localized economic activities against big box stores and agribusiness. Those involved in alternative food tend to be economically and/or socially middle class. They have the wealth to buy organic, the inherited or schooled knowledge about nutrition or the environment and they are politically liberal to left. US alternative food efforts appear to be less motivated by fear of genetically modified and diseased food than those in Europe but personal health and quality are certainly a central part of interest in both places (Whatmore et al., 2003).

Back-to-the-land movements, environmentalism, pure food campaigns and appropriate production technologies, the four bases for organic farming (Guthman, 2004), provide a foundation for sustainable, smaller-scale and local food efforts as well. Social justice organizing and international hunger relief have also shaped alternative food. Central concepts of the movement include the community food system, food security[2] and sustainability. Alternative food projects can be categorized into four broad types. There are, first, those organizations that support local farmers using means such as farmers' markets, community supported agriculture, local sourcing by restaurants, buy local campaigns and agricultural policy change. Second, there are non-profits that work on nutrition education, cooking demonstrations, and obesity prevention. Third, environmental groups advocate for organic, free range, hormone and anti-biotic free meat and open space. They oppose concentrated animal feeding operations. Associated efforts aim to protect heirloom seed stock, native plants and soil fertility in addition to advocating in-season-eating and the promotion of groups' food heritage (e.g. corn, beans and squash in some indigenous cooking). Finally, there are organizations that advocate for social justice for oppressed groups, bifurcated into producer/worker rights on the one hand and hunger and food insecurity on the other. Some focus specifically on farm workers', global farmers' and black farmers' rights, a somewhat different focus than those advocating for smaller scale farmers. Organizations use urban gardening to strengthen neighbourhoods, work with youth, augment home consumption of vegetables and/or generate income for specific communities. Nonprofits may have projects in several of these categories, although some of these elements are in conflict. Community food as a movement aims to build a food system incorporating these four areas. In what follows, I use the terms 'community food' and 'alternative food practices' interchangeably to stand for this loose confluence of efforts.

There are important critiques of alternative food practice that others have made that I wish neither to discount nor to repeat here. Instead, I would like to focus on the progressive *possibility* in alternative food practices, following the approach of Julie Graham and Katherine Gibson-Graham (2006a). They adopt a stance of 'let's see where this goes and what it can do' that is neither celebration nor critique but is theoretically rigorous and ethical. At their *Progress in Human Geography* lecture (Gibson-Graham, 2006b), a member of the audience said she found it difficult to avoid critiquing neoliberalism as it so deeply requires critique in the context of her work. As part of her response, Graham said, "I'm just not 'there' anymore". I remember finding that idea strangely refreshing. I would like to see where alternative food practice can go—to see how racial difference and racial connection can be better understood through these practices.

Some scholars seem to find potential in alternative food practices as ways toward ethical relations or as a vehicle to think through what that might entail. I will provide a few examples. Julie Guthman (2004) gives a scintillating critique of organic discourse and production practices in California, but tells us,

[2] Food security is having safe, accessible, affordable, healthy, 'culturally appropriate' food.

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> The fact is that I do buy and eat organic food—with a good deal of conviction, at that. Despite the inconsistencies in what are considered allowable inputs, there is no question in my mind that, as a rule, organic producers are exposing farmworkers, neighbours, and eaters to far less toxicity than their conventional counterparts are (2004:22).

Lucy Jarosz (2006) finds that 22% of farmers in organic agriculture nationwide are women, double the percent who are conventional farmers (see also Trauger, 2004). This figure is even higher in urban alternative agriculture. Framing her work within a politics of care, she explores what inspired mainly white middle class women to start organic gardens in Seattle. The love of growing good food for others and desiring a work/life balance were among the key reasons her respondents provided. The women were expressly not relying on paid labour and some felt more comfortable with the practice of giving the food away or engaging in barter. J.K. Gibson-Graham (2006a) provide examples of growing food in Holyoke, US (Nuestras Raices) and Melbourne, Australia (Ceres) as cases of intentional community economies that enlarge the commons and create a space for negotiations about interdependence. Sarah Whatmore (2002:162), in outlining possible 'geographies of/for a more than human world' notes that [f]ood is one of the most potent vectors of 'bodily imperatives' that enmesh us in the material fabric and diverse company of 'livingness'...". Whatmore finds that as a consequence of food scares, more people are choosing organic or free range foods suggesting there has been a shift of "inter-corporeal sensibilities" toward other modes of eating. This trend marks a change toward more livable worlds and relational ethical possibilities with "manifold others" (Whatmore, 2002:162–164). These examples suggest that alternative food practices might open avenues of embodiment and ethical relations within different economies and in connection to human and nonhuman others.

In these and other accounts it is clear that alternative food practice employs a universal—a sense that there is a more just way of producing, distributing and eating food. Anna Tsing advocates seeing universals as practical projects engaged in a time/place context whose work is to form bridges but which will never fulfil their promises of universality. These universals have to make sense to people in their location. It is "[t]hrough friction [that] universals become practically effective". Friction is "the awkward, unequal, unstable, and creative qualities of interconnection across difference". It can lead to new arrangements of culture and power. Friction is vicissitudinal—what happens in these encounters may be compromising or empowering, may make or unmake hegemony (2005:4, 8). What potentially emerge from alternative food practices, then, are embodied ecologies: situated, corporeal ways of connecting across differences through engaged universals. Embodied ecologies would build on a global sense of place, enact ethical relations with nonhuman life, and devise a politics out of the friction of difference. The questions of how and what and whom, like the outcomes, are open.

The possibilities of alternative, engaged food practices complement the following discussion on whiteness. The theoretical framework on race and spatiality, in combination with the possibilities of alternative food proposed above, are both critical to enabling other ways of being raced bodies that eat.

4. Changing race: progressive whiteness, space and embodiment

Whiteness is an embodied process in the constellation of race. It is versatile and spread unevenly. It is a "location of structural advantage" and involves cultural practices that have come to be understood as normal (Frankenberg, 1993:1). Whiteness has been explained as something achieved—a grouping that bodies are admitted into (Saldanha, 2006) yet often do not recognize their admittance or their privilege (Roediger, 1991; Frankenberg, 1993; Lipsitz, 1995). Whiteness is not recognized as race and therefore is able to exceed its corporeality (Dyer, 1997:25). It is something non-white people aspire towards without hope of attainment (Fanon, 1952). There is no essence to it, but there are tendencies of whiteness that enable its stability (Saldanha, 2006). Whiteness, a spatial process of engagement with other bodies in different spaces is, moreover, capable of transforming itself over and over (Saldanha, forthcoming). It has progressive, transformative potential in addition to, and sometimes simultaneously with, its more known knack for oppression. Finally, whiteness and brownness need not be seen as existing in constant opposition (Alcoff, 2003).

Arguing that the epistemological dimensions of whiteness are important to understand prior to defining whiteness in practice, Dwyer and Jones point to three socio-spatial moments that predate but serve whiteness and masculinity: ocularcentrism, Cartesian perspectivalism and the epistemology of the grid (Dwyer and Jones, 2000). Whiteness forms in unacknowledged social and spatial relation to non-whites. The surveillance of subjects assigned to grid-defined, segregated spaces and the easier mobility of some whites through these spaces—into wild landscapes (Braun, 2005, see also Saldanha, forthcoming) and nowhere near toxic, dangerous or blighted ones for instance—are key facets of white socio-spatiality (see McCann, 1999; Pulido, 2000). Extreme distance from other racialized groups is what whiteness achieves (Dwyer and Jones, 2000:212). Paradoxically perhaps, whiteness also builds its own close spaces—the comfortable proximity obtained through the white food spaces of co-ops, health food stores and upscale food markets that I will discuss in the next section. But far from simply producing distance and cordoned off spaces, whiteness is also a process of reaching out toward brownness via efforts, in this case, to bring this good food to others.

Whiteness is created through a dense proximity that may have nothing to do with grids or ocularcentrism, but works,

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instead, through trying to be closer (physically, affectively, in solidarity, in appreciation, in embrace, in networks or in the imagination) to others in meaningful ways. A world music concert, the annual May Day parade in Minneapolis or an ethnic food festival are examples of whites in dense proximity to non-white others, trying to be a little closer, and perhaps more positively in relation. At the 2006 May Day celebration, In the Heart of the Beast theatre company had a Spanish-language translator just in case some Latinos might be in the audience. As part of the celebration, some hippies had erected a teepee, which, as my friends noted, could be seen as an indigenous gift to the world, so appreciated is its form. The Artistic Director of In the Heart of the Beast, speaking of the Midtown Farmers' Market located in a racially diverse part of Minneapolis, is quoted as saying: "This Market is deeply important in building the wholeness of our community". In other words, protect this space—it brings us into proximity. And what to make of those whites who stop to talk with the one black man at the Minneapolis Farmers' Market selling the basics of soul food trucked up from Mississippi? Finally, non-profit staff of a food charity in Massachusetts told me a story of Caribbean greens that they found a farmer discarding as a weed. Remembering a West Indian woman who had been searching for just this food, they brought it to her local food pantry. There is evident happiness and effort in the connections across difference that people have made via food, music and celebration. This desire for proximity can also be a part of white spatialities. To connect is to "work with other possibilities, not already given"; to make connections one "needs a trust that something may come out" without certainty of what it will be (Rajchman, 2000:6,7).

These examples may or may not be successful attempts at closeness and they may or may not be attempted on white terms, but they cannot be written off as the same old oppression or summarily dismissed as 'feel good' acts that do nothing against racial injustice. In some activist circles this would be called appropriation by whiteness of the things admired about brownness—oppressive, full stop (Anti-racism trainer, June 10, 2005). Similarly, one could argue that an act may not have domination in its heart, but nonetheless works to alleviate guilt in a way that fails to be accountable to history (hooks, 1992). But these are not the only possibilities. Whites are continually reaching out in appreciation, curiosity and hopefulness (among other reasons). Such opening to otherness has been explained as an attempt to escape elements of white modernity (Saldanha, forthcoming). It can also be an effort to shape more ethical relations. Of course, without vigilance, efforts to change dominant whiteness that use progressive social ideals can end up reinforcing it (Saldanha, forthcoming).

Recent work proposing to re-ontologize race calls for further research on the materiality of racial clusters and the spatial emergence, in more and less dense forms, of whiteness (Saldanha, 2006). Rather than focus on representations based in the Self/Other distinction that circulate in the realm of discourse, race should be understood as emerging out of the physical clustering of bodies in which phenotype matters in its connection to material objects and processes. Phenotype in this sense is not "the outward expression of the interior design"; phenotyped people "extend along the multiple pathways of their involvement in the world" that is "incipient and forever on the verge of the actual" (Ingold, 2006:11–13). Bodies can be "distinguished by characteristic patterns of activity or movement signatures" (Ingold.:14). Saldanha notes that

> …the phenotype of humans can be shown to play an active part in the event called race. When understood as immanent process, it becomes clear that though contingent, race cannot be transcended, only understood and rearranged…Far from being an arbitrary classification system imposed *upon* bodies, race is a nonnecessary and irreducible effect of the ways those bodies themselves interact with each other and their physical environment… (2006:11,10).

What is important is what happens to bodies, what they do and the fact that they tend to be white in certain places, not that bodies are deploying representations of others.

The "sticky connections of property privilege and paler skin" enable white bodies to stick and flow, opening spaces to some, closing them to others (Saldanha, 2006:18). Exclusion occurs through this massing of bodies that may or may not desire this effect. Certainly community food advocates and co-op shoppers would not want to exclude by their bodily presence and the way that presence links with wealth, cars, location, leisure time and specific knowledge. Exclusion occurs in many little and larger ways that work to make people uncomfortable in a neighbourhood, financially unable to purchase organic fruit and not part of the right networks to get employment at a community food non-profit. It is an exclusion that cannot be overcome by inclusion on the terms of a white dominant society.

To think "in terms of space demands that [people] think of themselves in relation to others…" (Grossberg, 1996:187, n19 cited in Massey, 2005:188). Observers can notice what whiteness and brownness do in specific contexts and derive from that, not only a better understanding of race as it exists outside familiar patterns (oppression, subordination, complicity), but also how relations among whiteness and brownness could be otherwise. "Understanding how phenotype matters in social formations and interactions can be the first step towards a situation in which phenotype can be appreciated outside of the entrenched racist configurations now in place" (Saldanha, forthcoming) and "outside common sense taxonomies" (Saldanha, 2006:21).

Meaghan Morris points to feminism's tendency to "know in advance that any event is just more of the same old story, more of the *same* patriarchy, the *same* racism, the *same* form of class exploitation" (1998:199 original emphasis cited in Pratt, 2004:167). This may also be a tendency found in other oppositional politics. Argues Pratt, "it is too knowing, too cynical to presume in advance that whiteness and the production of difference will inevitably go on in the

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same old ways" (Pratt, 2004). Not only is it too knowing and cynical, but whiteness and brownness *should change* and, in fact, multiply (Saldanha, 2006). Change and proliferation of race might take place through "miscegenation, openness to strangers, exoticism in art and experiments with whiteness" (Saldanha, 2006:22). It might include adopting practices outside the norm of an identity and promoting non-essentialist but positive aspects of raced identities. Some may not be able to proliferate race through means other than naïve multiculturalism or a conversation with someone different, but that's a start. There need to be different possibilities for change because people are located differently in their brownness and whiteness. Embracing not pride but shame and confusion is a fruitful avenue (Probyn, 2005). For Howard Winant, changing whiteness and brownness might mean that racism and anti-racism are not the things he is watching for and thinking about all the time (workshop communication, April 5, 2006). Overcoming the white/black dichotomy that frames practices of racism, anti-racist policy and social imaginaries in order to make cross difference alliances more possible is another option (Alcoff, 2003). Elspeth Probyn (2001) proposes "eating skin well" such that she acknowledges her family's part in white settlement and keeps open the hope of a meeting place with others. Skins, she writes, "may be made to breathe with the possibility of coexistence, respect and maybe even care" (Probyn, 2001:88). Of her lover, Probyn says,

> My desire for her skin, for its shades of history and difference, her desire for mine: as my skin eats hers, and her skin eats mine, could we find a way of desiring that does not erase my whiteness, her blackness, but that through osmosis lets us learn to be together differently? (Probyn, 2001:89).

Proliferating race without erasing phenotype is ultimately a spatial process that requires new forms of connection.

Race "becomes interesting", and perhaps more open to change "where it becomes fuzzy"—when disrupted by gender, age and nationality (Saldanha, forthcoming). In her coruscating text, *Working Feminism* (2004), Geraldine Pratt provides illustrations of the complexity of race through the example of a Chinese Canadian woman cast as white in relation to Filipina women and the refusal of the Philippine Women's Centre to advocate for all Asian women. Pratt proposes that establishing clear groups—Filipinas as third world women and Chinese Canadians as white—is "both right and wrong, but certainly productive" (Pratt, 2004:150).

In the project of changing race and moving toward politico-ethical community, Moira Gatens and Elspeth Probyn have offered, respectively, the Spinozist concept of imagination and an affective reading of shame. Both are thinking about acknowledging the past in the present. For Spinoza, imagination is central to the creation of shared meanings and values. It is a "confused awareness of one's own body along with the body (or bodies) by which it is affected or affects" that sticks in the memory and can be communicated thereby creating collective imaginings that provide people with a sense of identity. The way that individuals endure is through interaction with others that will mean experiencing hate, love, fear and hope (Gatens, 2002:167,168). In her analysis of George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*, Gatens argues that Eliot seeks to work through the way the past comes into the present, a strategy that both transforms the present and "opens the future to new possibilities" (Gatens, 2002:173). Knowledge of the past affects their capacities and knowledge of the relations in which they are embedded frees them. Eliot's characters have varying degrees of understanding of "their part *in relation to* the whole", the relationship of their identities in relation to others; the extent of that comprehension enables them to act ethically (Gatens, 2002:173, her italics). Gatens notes that feminist theory has grappled with how to acknowledge embodied difference and, at the same time, how identity can be open to transformation via encounters with others. The embodied being of which she and Genevieve Lloyd speak requires "an immanent embodied and ongoing negotiation between multiple forms of sociability" (Gatens and Lloyd, 1999:149).

In *Blush*, Probyn suggests that shame begins with 'interest'. With this, she turns shame on its head. One outcome of this move is that she creates a space for whiteness to get unstuck from its constant association with oppression (but not its continuing and complex association). Shame is productive of ethical relations because it results from passionate desire for connection that is, for whatever reason, not possible. "The innate activator of shame is the incomplete reduction of interest or joy" (Probyn, 2005:14). Furthermore, there may be a biology to shame that should not be dismissed, reactively. Commenting on the relationship of shame and interest, she writes:

> A truly embodied attachment to the world is impossible without the force of interest…That interest made unavoidable in our shame, speaks of the intricacy with which our bodies operate in the world. In shame, our habitus becomes reordered, shaken up, it admits other possibilities and in turn allows for more interest to be registered (2005:72).

Shame matters because "shame promises a return of interest, joy and connection" and it is necessary to deal with shameful pasts (Probyn, 2005:xiii). Shame has to function as a means toward ethical relations among all. Probyn argues that coexistence between indigenous and non-indigenous people can succeed only with an acknowledgement of different types of shame and interest.

Pointing out that we are much more alike than different, she says, "[w]hen we deny shame or ignore it, we lose a crucial opportunity to reflect on what makes us different and the same (Probyn, 2005:xiv). This seems a means to talk about race and the raced past, acknowledging it in grounded ways without detouring off into unhelpful por-

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trayals of white Australia. She mentions a colleague who finds nothing redeemable in white middle class Australia, with whom she cannot agree. Probyn also recounts the story of her colleague's (Fiona Probyn) research on the white men who fathered the Stolen Generation[3]. Someone castigated this colleague for her "uncritical presumption of privilege as a white feminist" which sent said colleague into a "tailspin of angst and self doubt". Elspeth's colleague interpreted the question of privilege as meaning that unless she undid her privilege as a white woman, she would be complicit in the history of oppression that she was documenting. Elspeth Probyn told her to write about how her privilege detracts or adds to her project and why she's interested in the white fathers. In 500 words, she made the "emptiness of 'white privilege' into a moving and motivated account of why it's important for white feminists to engage with a history of white abuse" (Probyn, 2005:17).

In the work of these feminists, writing from the fraught place of being white, women feminists in 21st century Australia, is an evident desire for connection and the knowledge that this is a risky *and* necessary thing to want. They ask with Helen Verran, "How can people rooted in different knowledge practices 'get on together' when cultural relativism is not an option…? How can general knowledge be nurtured in postcolonial worlds committed to taking difference seriously?" (Verran cited by Haraway, 2003:7). Significant otherness is implicated in both disparate inherited histories and "barely possible but absolutely necessary joint futures" (Haraway, 2003:7). The musings and uncertainties of these feminist academics are kin to the halting efforts of alternative food advocates to be white differently.

Whiteness exists within racial formations that further segregation and discrimination, but whiteness cannot be reduced to racism or to privilege. Desirous proximity—a hope for connection—is important to understand for its potential. The dense spaces of whiteness that can exclude with or without intent are also present. The spatiality of whiteness in community food has exclusionary and progressive potential and the fuzziness of race, visible in alternative food practices, is a site of possibility.

5. White food space

Whiteness emerges spatially in efforts to increase access to healthy foods, support farmers and provide organic food to consumers. While the ideals of healthy food, people and land are not intrinsically white, the objectives, tendencies, strategies, the emphases and absences and the things overlooked in community food make them so. Whiteness coheres in alternative food practice in the act of 'doing good', a productive moment, that should not be condemned outright.

Community food thrives on a culture of food that has been made white. How this food is produced, packaged, promoted and sold—engages with a white middle class consumer base that tends to be interested in personal health and perhaps in environmental integrity. White, wealthier bodies tend to be the ones in Whole Foods, at co-ops (e.g. in Syracuse's Real Food Co-op, the Wedge in Minneapolis), the people attending CFSC conferences, those making certain purchases at the St. Paul Farmers' Market and the leaders of community food nonprofits. Here, whites come together, stick together and then become impenetrable to others despite their desire to be otherwise (Saldanha, 2006) (see Fig. 1). Their white dietary obsessions body forth in the fetishization of fresh, local, sustainable, '5 (fruits and vegetables)-a-day', non-processed, whole grain, small-scale or organic and in the sort of healthier, thinner body that such a diet could produce. Alternative food is shaped by knowledge gained at home and on National Public Radio, by being petitioned by advocacy groups and reading co-op bulletins.

The connections among property, privilege and paler skin are evident in alternative food practice. There is a physical clustering of white bodies in the often expensive spaces of community food—conferences, farm tourism, community supported agriculture and alternative food stores—as well as the location, in the feminist sense, of nonprofit staffer vis à vis food insecure person. Whiteness is produced in connection with owning a car, having money, living in some places and comfortably traversing the space of the Wedge and the St. Paul Farmers' Market.

Nodes of liberal whiteness form around these spaces of organic, local and specialized foods across the Twin Cities. Those who comprise the staff and membership of the Wedge Co-op would undoubtedly not desire an exclusively white place to shop, but that's what it ends up being. In Lunds, a more upscale Minneapolis supermarket, the effects of whiteness and property are clearly visible in that almost every cashier and bag clerk is a person of colour while the vast majority of the clientele is white. The small organic section at Cubs, a low-cost conventional food chain in Minneapolis, stands quietly empty as the Mexican, Somali, European and African American clientele shop in other aisles. Whole Foods and Trader Joes are also good examples of white food spaces. In my informal observations of the latter over the years, customers are almost entirely white. In one Trader Joes on the West side of Chicago, I overheard clerks on break talking about why they liked working at Trader Joes. One said, "I'm 42 and I have no need for a large salary and hectic job—I have enough with what I make here". There is a certain privilege in his choice and an evident comfort he has in his place of work. Minneapolis-St. Paul's thriving food co-op culture works, in part, because there are lots of people who want to and who can buy organic, who don't want recombinant bovine growth hormone in their milk, who want animals raised well before they're killed and so on. Notes the Wedge Co-op website, "the crowning achievement of [the Minneapolis] co-op movement [is] that, challenged by some of the nation's best

[3] The Stolen Generation refers to mixed white Australian and Aboriginal children forcibly removed from their families and re-located into white families by the Australian state beginning in the early 1900s and ending in the 1970s.

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Fig. 1. St. Paul Farmers' Market, MN, September, 2006.

mainline grocers, [it] evolved beyond marginalia and dogma to real relevance" (Minneapolis St. Paul Magazine, 2001).

These places of white belonging are also clearly classed but not just in the sense of purchasing capacity, although I recently paid $2.15 at the Wedge for one California grown organic cucumber. My price surveys show that a few Wedge goods (bulk items) and some of Trader Joe's prices are lower than conventional supermarkets as are most prices at the Minneapolis Farmers' Market, with the exception of organic meat and eggs. Knowledge that farmers' market prices are lower and the ability to just get to the market is classed and raced. Thus some Euro-American, Hmong, Vietnamese and African buyers know about price and availability but lower income whites and African Americans may not judging from who I see at the market. But the soy milk, new age goods and aromatherapy candles in the Wedge and tie dyed peace t-shirts and exotic 'Indonesian' fruit juice at the Annex across from the Minneapolis Farmers' Market cater to the culturally middle class who might be some combination of bourgeois suburban, left, hippie, alternative, academic, non-profit urban or tourists out for a day in the market. I overheard a suburban white man say, as he wheeled his small child through the farmers' market, "we're going to see lots today". Shopping local is often shopping white. For instance, the St. Paul Farmers' Market draws Minneapolis residents who labour under the false impression that its goods are more local than Minneapolis' market. The capacity to shop in alternative food tends to be an economically and culturally middle class thing to do.

There is something in the production of the shopping experience at Lunds, the Wedge Co-op, Whole Foods and farmers' markets that aims at being calm, safe, comfortable, aesthetically pleasing and satisfying. The stores are clean, the vegetables are beautiful, the aisles are bright and the clerks are polite. The Minneapolis Farmers' Market is colourful, organized and sanitized. And almost no one shouts as they might in markets elsewhere. Couples and friends in pairs or small groups go to the market and walk through absorbed in looking; they smile or simply move through with peaceful expressions on their faces. The point here is to detail the elements of white food space that derive from the normalization of whiteness in the practice of alternative food. I do not wish to draw any essentialist equivalence here between being middle class and white and calm or beauty. The positive feelings expressed on the faces of vendors and customers at the market are important to highlight in this effort to see both exclusion and possibility in alternative food.

A white geographical imagination encompasses narratives of community and the conflation of community with things good, proximate, wholesome and local (for critiques see Born and Purcell, forthcoming; Dupuis and Goodman, 2005). Space is reduced to good and bad distances. For instance, community food disapproves of the fact that food destined for US consumers travels, on average, over a thousand miles between field and table. The St. Paul Farmers' Market requires that all food sold there originate from no further than 50 miles away and that no resellers participate in the market. As one grower at the Minneapolis market remarked, "Oh, the St. Paul market? Now *that's* a *totally* different thing" (his emphasis). A local honey vendor told me, "there (St. Paul), people care about how animals are treated, they care about their food". "Here", and the pro-

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ducer pointed to the reseller at the next stall and the customers at it, "food is from everywhere".[4] The 50 mile limit is a practice intended to strengthen regions by sourcing, processing and selling locally—keeping food dollars in the 'community'. Fifty miles becomes a somewhat arbitrary boundary for a wholesome space within which people should grow food and eat it. The wagons have circled at the fifty mile limit; inside is protected from the r(s)avages of global capitalism?

A "white imaginary" (Guthman pers. comm. April 9, 2005) is strongly constitutive of community food—what it is, what it does and what it dreams of. Gatens and Lloyd (1999) have written on the social imaginary as a forceful constitutive presence in societies. This imaginary "endures through time and so becomes increasingly embedded in all our institutions…our founding fictions, our cultural traditions" (Gatens and Lloyd, 1999:143). The imaginary enhances the power of action of some through entitlements and silences others. Some histories get left out in the process. This concept of the imaginary holds true in the context of what Donna Haraway calls companion species and encompasses food, animals, farmers and eaters. She writes,

> I know that the largely middle class, white people of Pyr and Aussie land have an as yet unarticulated responsibility to participate in re-imagining grasslands ecologies and ways of life that were blasted in significant part by the very ranching practices that required the work of these dogs. Through their dogs, people like me are tied to indigenous sovereignty rights, ranching economic and ecological survival, radical reform in the meat-industrial complex, racial justice, the consequences of war and migration and the institutions of technoculture (2003:97,98).

Haraway also tells us that she has taken her godson to Burger King, a fact that does not negate what she's written above; kids still like burgers. The opening of imaginaries towards one another that enable people to change identities can occur through encounters with others. Australians are collectively responsible for the way the "past endures in [their] present in the form of inherited practices and as memory" (Gatens and Lloyd, 1999:146). Because of this, people should take note, for instance, of how privilege adds or detracts from a project, and go on raising dogs, writing papers and growing plants in some manner that proliferates other ways of being brown and white people. Both remembering and the pursuit of these practices matter because through them, race changes.

Alternative food practice reproduces white privilege in American society. But the white imaginary is also a hopeful vision of changing communities, supporting farmers, preserving farmland, improving the welfare of nonhuman life and helping people get better food in their lives. It is an active stance; it takes time and effort to make the co-op thrive or enforce the rule that the food in the market come from 50–100 miles away. It is a perspective on how one ought to live—cooking at home, gardening, ensuring animals live better, keeping food dollars in one place. And if you have the yard and the time, why not grow something other than a lawn? In 'doing good' by planet, pigs, farmers, the hungry, the obese, whiteness coheres—a fact that should not be forgotten but cannot simply be condemned. In doing good, whiteness can repudiate or at least stumble away from its connections to hegemony.

6. Progressive possibility, race and food space

In the following two sections I use feminist theorists to make an argument for progressive potential in the white spaces of alternative food (markets, conferences, 'the local' discourse) and in the interaction of bodies that constitute those spaces. Reappraising standard positions about eating, otherness, and the location of food production, I suggest that these examples reveal the fuzziness of race and ways forward through alternative food.

6.1. Farmers, markets, women

Elspeth Probyn, a self described white migrant to a white settler nation from another white settler nation (2001), has much to say about race, food and space. Writing about Australia, Probyn notes that eating in 'invaded nations' is an intense business. The food of others is accepted (in multicultural celebration) before the "difference from which it comes" (2000:103). But that is not all there is to it. Eating can disrupt any ideas Australians might have about their tolerance. Indeed, the "discourses of Mod Oz [e.g. reconciliation, stolen generations] threaten to bring historical relations forward and to highlight our colonial past as a thing of the present with which we must now live" (Probyn, 2000:103). Further, eating ethnically cannot be completely written off as "liberal pretence" because culinary connections have the potential to show people the stakes involved in eating. At this historical juncture, "eating, its connections to the land and its histories, may highlight the (im)possibilities of coexistence" (Probyn, 2000:103).

In spatial connections among bodies with places lies potential for more ethical relations. But how *does* race become fuzzy and more open to change when disrupted by gender and age? How might race become different in these close, happy spaces of buying and selling food? Because race is emerging out of the material clusters of this particular food space, could whiteness and brownness be seen changing here? And how to think of space and race such that these possibilities might have room to breathe? In this section, I provide examples of the spaces in which race emerges and is made complex by the things with which it interacts: gender, youth, farmers' views and unknown vegetables.

At the Atlanta CFSC conference, those attending a session on global justice for farmers were almost entirely

[4] The Minneapolis Farmers' Market is far less clearly a white food space than the market in St. Paul, but I will elaborate on this in a future paper.

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women. They came to listen to three farmers (who were men) from South Africa, Colombia and Wisconsin talk about their efforts to bring attention to landlessness, low prices for their goods and unhelpful state policies. Much discussion (disagreement) was prompted by the black South African saying things were better for farmers under apartheid. Of the 35 attendees, there were 30 white women and most of these were in the 20–30-something age group. Equally, my survey of 66 North East community food organizations revealed that women comprised 59% of the Executive Director positions, 66% of the staff with authority positions, 87% of the non-authority positions and fifty percent of board members. The majority of these women are white. Combining these figures with those of Jarosz discussed earlier, there is a gendered dimension to alternative food practice that may be more than women's historical association with food, other than women's prospects in the labour market and less than any essential connection. One woman of colour, whose parents immigrated to the US wondered somewhat wistfully, in the context of Outreach and Diversity Committee mobilizing to bring people of colour into staff positions of authority within community food, "What will happen to all the white women?" What an interesting question.

My research project was intriguing to many community food advocates. A white, older woman was very taken with material I shared with her on race, racism and food security. This is an anecdote that she thought was relevant:

> "I had some family out from Montana last year. The subject came up where I mentioned that I was embarrassed for "our culture" on how they came to be here in America. I was saying this to my grand-niece who was about 12 years old. She knew exactly what I was talking about and said sometimes she felt the same way. The woman that adopted her thought that we were ridiculous to feel that way because the Native Americans never owned any land. I didn't argue but I thought *that* was a most closed-minded statement". (S___, pers. comm.).

Her embarrassment is an example of how shame is useful. Her interest in American Indians and in how her ancestors "came to be here in America" encourages her to have the conversation with her grand niece and with me about race. It makes her self evaluate and transform herself. The interest and concern of these different women might be described as them trying to put into practice a global, progressive sense of place (Massey, 1994) in recognizing their relationship to the unfinished stories making places and bodies. It can also be understood as whiteness and brownness becoming interesting and perhaps more open to change as they are disrupted by gender, age and nationality. "Difference within common cause", notes Anna Tsing, in which collaborators are not equal or the same and do not produce a communal good means that collaborators have to reach out towards one another more (Tsing, 2005:246).

Farmers' markets are spaces where the stickiness of whiteness as well as hopeful interactions across difference may be apparent. These markets are transgressive spaces, a space of difference (different commodities, bodies) and yet they are also understood as a comforting, common place (Stallybrass and White, 1986:27,28). Race is here too as phenotypically distinct and less distinct bodies congealing, flowing and making this space. Race is here in "how a vegetable is picked". My friend M___ writes:

> In A___, farmers sell cilantro *sans* roots, so they are selling a product only for honky summer salad consumers, not Indian or Thai cooks who want/expect the roots on. Race is embedded in the way a vegetable is picked! My friend M___ taught me another side to the farmers' market, about chickens: she expects a chicken that will have chewable bones, so she is looking for a specific type of (small) chicken, or only the chicken backs. There are many chicken sellers at our market, but only one seller that has chickens with proper chewable bones, so everyone eating in a Chinese way is buying their chickens from that one seller. I get pretty frustrated with the farmers' market here; it's almost all hippie farmers. I like hippies but the emphasis is on sustainability instead of...ummm...quality. Power to the people! Let them eat leathery spinach because it wintered over (M___, pers. comm. May 29, 2006).

Farmers' markets bring bodies together perhaps, into fleeting but meaningful relation across a small chicken, sweet potatoes grown in Mississippi or roots on vegetables. Growers see Chinese, Indian, Black, African and White and may know what people (of any kind) need who want to eat in those ways. My current ethnographic work in the Minneapolis farmers' market seeks insights into race and food in the vibrancy of the market and hopes to find some perhaps minute but consequential connections made because of or in spite of phenotypical difference.

In Fig. 2 (below) taken at the small farmers' market on the green in front of the Unitarian Church in Framingham, MA, you can see the young Euro-American woman and two Hmong American women. Another white woman is reaching for a vegetable she does not know much about and the young white woman is about to give her a recipe card. The conversation about the vegetable and what can be done with it takes place between the two white women. The spatiality of this exchange and the suburbs, wealth, time, strange vegetables, curiosity, gender and race that constitute it are also part of community food. The young woman acts as intermediary, often talking with the vegetable buyers, because of the growers' difficulties with English. Oxfam America, a nonprofit that works with Hmong American farmers, notes that of all refugee groups, their literacy rate is among the lowest (Canizares and Kristina, 2003).

The photo might make someone say, 'the young white woman should encourage them to speak!' Or 'why doesn't a Hmong person with better English act as intermediary instead of this white woman?' These questions establish a

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Fig. 2. Framingham Farmers' Market, MA, June 2005.

simple equation: a Hmong American should, on the basis of an assumed cultural connection, take the place of this white woman. While the white privilege of the young woman and her position to speak for the Hmong would be queried in typical oppositional politics, the relations of power and layers of identification within the Hmong American community might not. Intermediaries and allies, whether white or brown, are useful, as is hope. Anna Tsing writes of an alliance between middle class urban Indonesian environmentalists working with the Meratus Dayak and says, "[t]he only ones who still bother to struggle over these issues [total destruction of the forest and forest livelihoods] are activists, students and nature lovers—and the rural communities with which they interface. This seems a particularly bad time to use scholarly prediction to denigrate their efforts" (Tsing, 2005:266). "All of us", she continues, "need a little of the romanticism and commitment of these urban middle class young people" (Tsing, 2005:268).

In the North East US there are projects to encourage new farmers. Many new farmers are Hmong but there are other groups as well. The three women in the photo are part of the New Entry Sustainable Farming Project (NESFP), which is part of the New Immigrant Farming Initiative (NIFI), the white woman is staff and the two Hmong American women are growers. Another Portuguese American woman and farmer (C___) began the project, in an informal sense, by renting land to a group of Hmong farmers and then, as NESFP staff, by advocating on behalf of their interests. In an effort to understand Hmong culture, she told me she had read *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*, a book about a Hmong girl's sickness and her family's struggles with Western medicine. C___ did all this because she knew what it was like to want land and to wish to farm as well as what it meant to have darker skin, a non-white name and to be treated with less than full respect.

Hmong and other new immigrant farmers were the subject of discussion one night at a non-profit organization in Massachusetts. There was an effort from within NIFI to help participants understand that new immigrants face racism rather than only 'cultural and linguistic problems'. Women staffers, again a central presence, were *interested* in thinking about this. The chair of the Outreach and Diversity Committee later organized an anti-racism training for some farmers and NIFI staff. C___ mentioned to me that she thought such trainings are not all that useful mostly because she finds there is a lot of talk and head scratching but not much done for the farmers. Further, as Geraldine Pratt writes, to focus on the difficulties of migrants subsumes them in binaries of brown/white, wealthy and poor, and places the West as central to their subjectivity (2004:158). Census data show that between 1990 and 2000, Hmong Americans' median income has more than doubled and the percent living below the poverty line has been more than halved. Though organizations seem to be helping them in the area of farming, only 0.8% of the population is involved in agriculture down from 5% in 1990. It may be that the Hmong see their situation as defined by living in a racist US, experiencing the same old racism of white people against 'people of colour'—or not. But if not, it is as unjustifiable for anti-racists to attempt to fit others into their neat schema of oppression as it is for feminists to do so.

6.2. Proximities

Though the romanticism of community and the misunderstanding of the local are not necessarily white, these

ideas become white through community food practice. For example, an essay posted on the North East community food list serve suggested that high gas prices in the wake of hurricanes Katrina and Rita could be a boon for locally grown food. The author, Roger Dorion (2005) noted that his question of the impact of Katrina on food "…may sound like a frivolous consideration in the midst of the suffering that has been taking place in the Gulf Coast where people have been killing each other over warm soda and potato chips". Moving from disaster to war via local food, the author goes on to applaud WWII victory gardens. He also cites, favourably, evidence suggesting that, post 9/11, "Americans became culinary homebodies, dramatically reducing the number of meals purchased at restaurants and take-out joints in favour of home-cooking". The moral of the story seems to be that there is a silver lining to fear and disaster that is of use to local food advocates. Questions like who grew those victory gardens, is there something to fear, which Americans changed their eating-out habits or what has community food learned about race, class and state abdication of responsibility via Katrina are not asked. Personally, the idea of becoming a culinary homebody is repugnant. Not only does it buy into the idea that we should be very afraid, but there is much to be said for leaving the house. Eating out in the city puts us into contact with others. It opens our senses to what there is to eat and our eyes to the fact that the busboys are Latino and the wait staff, apart from McDonalds, is white (in Minneapolis). Alternative food advocates are quite capable of thinking through their attraction to the local in better ways than those demonstrated in Dorion's essay.

Jose Bové and François Dufour are famous, in part, for driving a tractor into a McDonalds and organizing French farmers and others around the idea and practice that 'the world is not for sale' (Bové, 2001). Doreen Massey cites them as taking an increasingly complex position on food, place and global trade when they might have appealed to people on the basis of an anti-American populism that fails to acknowledge the always already hybrid nature of French food (Massey, 2005:170). Massey's interest is in "*how* one is to be pro-local"; she is not simply arguing that being pro-local is a bad idea. She notes that Bové and Dufour, in defence of their local, have been careful not to resort to "nostalgia for an edenic past". Instead, they discuss the relationship between the farmer and the nonhuman world as having a geographical specificity and diversity that must be recognized and treated carefully. Massey points out that she is not interested in performing an intellectual critique of those political efforts that "resort to an a priori politics of topographies". She quotes Bové and Dufour to show, instead, how difficult these politics are to avoid, try as they might—but the key is to try. To avoid the claim "local is good because it's local" is productive because it requires alternative food advocates to think through their politics. As spaces and places are made, the flows and closures that characterize both will be temporary and partial but are best negotiated through questions attuned to the specificity of a context. Questions of which external influences will create the geographical identity of (French, US, New England, indigenous) food, on whose terms and who will benefit are central (Massey, 2005:171,172).

Probyn documents a 1998 conference in Sydney called 'Will Australia Have a Table Tomorrow? that emphasized local produce and regionality. In this context, one could pose the "all-abiding question where has it come from?" (2000:119), which is a central question of alternative food practice in the US. But Probyn sees a more important point raised by a small farmer and caterer Kim Currie, and agreed to by the vast majority—that "regionalism doesn't mean reactionary". Instead, this farmer offered that regionalism should "forefront, for the nation, the qualities of 'generosity and mateship'" (Probyn, 2000:119). Her comments signalled the importance of both the white and Aboriginal people's connections to the land. Her words indicated a rejection of the formulation of a racist political movement organizing pastoralists against Aboriginal land claims after a series of legal victories by Aboriginals. It is in the context of this struggle that food production becomes all the more important. Probyn (2000, 2005) writes against the tendency of some urban progressives to dismiss the white middle of Australia, particularly farmers, for their conservative voting practices and failure to talk of racism. What should be recognized, is that they have a love for, connection to and knowledge of the land.

7. Conclusions

In alternative food practice is the possibility to make food production more ecologically sustainable, just and humane and, more broadly, to enable thinking about ethical relations. But community food efforts currently also enable an intimacy that results in collective sadness because it is based on the closeness of similar people. Spinoza argued that collective joy has to do with bodies engaging with other bodies in good ways. Segregation of any sort makes for collective sadness because people are not engaging with each other. Collective joy is found and increased in the mixing of bodies. Community food reinforces those connections among property, privilege and paler skin, but it does not have to. The idea that the past continues in the present and 'local' places are made through connections to everyone and everywhere else are useful to many involved in alternative food, albeit useful differently in the way of engaged universals.

Whiteness is an organizing feature of alternative food practices. Race is about the phenotyped body in relation to other bodies and things. Most would argue that because of its historical associations race must be abolished. Some propose instead that race is embodied difference that should be multiplied, not erased. As multiplicity, race can change so that neither whiteness nor brownness results in supremacy or any other familiar, negative association that denies people their complexity and humanity. Being skin, we do not need to erase whiteness and brownness in desire

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(or in the absence of desire); race will change through desire or interest or mild curiosity. Whiteness, capable of endlessly transforming itself, can change its tendency to reproduce and enforce racial oppression. More than that, whiteness has progressive potential. White bodies stick together, thereby making food space exclusive. But these bodies need not be so cohesive, and in some places, as I have suggested, they are not. There is no utility to advocacy that dismisses whiteness and what it brings. What white farmers, feminists and foodies bring to writing, companion species, foodways, land care, regionalism and farmers' markets is imperfect and inarticulate but also productive and part of ethical relating.

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