

**Southern Cross University**

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**Grubs with gusto: imagining recipes for change**

Abstract:

It is hardly a matter of contention that the cultural processes informing eating habits and food choices have always had ethical, economic and environmental implications; eating is both political and personal. Australian culinary thought and practice over the past 50 years has been widely influenced by ‘celebrity chefs’ who, through challenging and effecting their audience, can be seen to have broad social impact and profound modifying influence upon individual, community, and national eating habits.

One of the most important Australian culinary figures is Margaret Fulton whose 1968 *Cookbook* has gone on to sell almost 2 million copies. This paper imagines that *The Margaret Fulton Cookbook* included a selection of recipes that used Indigenous Australian insects as their main ingredients and that Fulton’s intention in providing these recipes was to promote not only cultural understanding but also some wider ethical considerations of nature and Australian eating habits. That this scenario is *almost unimaginable* is both important and interesting enough for it to be ‘played with’, albeit in a critical manner. This paper therefore constructs a new *Cookbook* and deconstructs the socio-cultural meaning and the new culinary history it might make possible. Imagining one particular recipe to be especially influential in this ‘history’ allows us to think critically about food norms and the ‘otherness’ of insects which, for most Australians, are a part of nature that should not be eaten or be ‘made’ part of the self. This paper asserts not only that food is a window on the political, but that we embody our ethics through our food choices and practices, and that what we don’t eat may be even more telling than what we do. Among the disciplinary perspectives used here is Foucault’s ‘technologies of the self’, which can be seen to provide ways for individuals to rationalise and justify their beliefs, understandings and practices. In using imagination to help understand the complex ways in which social norms, cultural meanings and economic realities underlie food habits, this paper is posited as an ethical intervention in, and of, itself.

Biographical note:

Nigel Hayes is a PhD candidate at Southern Cross University who dropped out in 1975 and moved to Nimbin, NSW. He came to academia as a mature age student after working in the orchard, nursery, plantation, retail and alternative medicine industries. His academic credentials include completing a BA at SCU in 2002, Honours in 2004 and the Graduate Certificate in Higher Education in 2009. Nigel won the Australian Cultural Studies Prize in

2002, was awarded a University Medal in 2004 and was granted an Australian Postgraduate Award scholarship in 2007. He has been working as a Sessional Staff member at Southern Cross University School of Arts and Social Sciences since 2007. His research interests are in the cultural controls on perception especially as they relate to food and food choices. The prism through which he is researching/exploring his PhD contention that humans 'eat with the mind and not with the mouth' is entomophagy or the human consumption of insects.

Keywords:

Ficto-criticism – entomophagy – Australian cuisine – ethical imagination

*The 'little ten-year-old boy' who suggested in 1968 that his mother should buy Margaret Fulton's Cookbook so the family could 'all be in the kitchen and cook good things' (Fulton 1999: 160) is now a grown man with a family of his own. His family continues to cook and enjoy some of those same 'good things' today. In fact, Fulton's recipe for Grubs with Gusto is considered by the family to be amongst their favorite dishes and the one they are most likely to serve at, or supply for, special occasions. While sourcing grubs in the past was dependent on the family's wild harvesting efforts and techniques, many good delicatessens and most large supermarkets in their area can now be relied upon to have plentiful and regular supplies of either fresh or frozen cockchafer on hand at all times.*

That the major details of this paragraph are a product of (my) storytelling and ficto-critical 'imagination' should be obvious, or at least made very clear at the outset. This paper and the project it describes begin with the (Kantian) notion that imagination implies intellectual and rational fertility. It suggests, after Foucault, that 'productive imagination' is an important faculty for understanding the human condition and how we *are* or *might be* in the world. It also suggests, and is developed upon an understanding, that the 'cultural work' of imagination might actually produce perceptions that help create new forms and arrangements of material existence. This 'understanding' is crucial in terms of my authorship and ficto-critical 'intentions' and to my view of this writing as an ethical intervention in and of itself. While I will elaborate upon this and more fully 'locate' myself within the 'intention' and the ficto-critical *imaginary* below, it is important to note here that I am almost the same age as the 'boy' described above, and the re-writing of his and Margaret Fulton's history is, in part, a response to and a re-writing of, my own past as a product of White Australia.

Of course, Margaret Fulton did not include a recipe for 'Grubs with Gusto' in her 1968 *Cookbook*. In fact, none of her dishes included any ingredients that could be considered indigenous or native to the lands and landscape of Australia. There are, for example, no recipes for wallaby, wombat or warrigal greens. There is certainly none for witchety or other cockchafer grubs, for bardee or cossid moths, or any of the many other edible insects that thrive amongst us. Terrestrial indigenous foods, including insects, are conspicuous for their absence from her *Cookbook* (and almost all other contemporaneous Australian cookbooks) or, at least, that absence seems conspicuous from certain, contemporary vantage points.

In more recent times, of course, many Australian cookbooks have included (some limited) recipes that use crocodile, emu, kangaroo, lemon myrtle, warrigals and other native Australian ingredients. These, and some other native plants and animals have become more acceptable, and hence, more 'commercial'. Insects, however, remain *absolutely* absent from the recipes and the supermarket shelves; to 'see' cockchafer (or any other grub or insects) as popular and readily available through 'ordinary' Australian food outlets clearly takes an act of imagination. Of course, it is easier to imagine that Margaret Fulton's *Cookbook*

contained recipes for kangaroo, for example, than imagining that they contained recipes for cockroaches.

This is due, in part, to the fact that kangaroo consumption, though rather limited, has become quite ‘normalised’; small amounts of ‘healthy choice’ and ‘gourmet’ cuts of kangaroo meat are readily available from most large supermarket delicatessens. If there was once a colonial fear of ‘turning native’, of nurturing the ‘savage within’ through the consumption of indigenous foods and their incorporation into the body, it has clearly diminished—although it must be said that indigenous foods continue to be only a miniscule part of overall Australian food consumption. Insects, on the other hand, are not, and never have been, considered as ‘normal’ food by the vast majority of Australians. Our ‘cultured’ view of nature is generally to see insects as abnormal or ‘other’ food items and as a part of nature that, as Power (2007) explores, should be controlled or eliminated from the environment rather than being embodied into the self.

Imagination, of course, allows travel through time and space, where the ‘other’ is no longer ‘exotic’, where any number of culinary journeys are possible and no outcome guaranteed. Imagining that Margaret Fulton’s *Cookbook* contained recipes using indigenous food items such as kangaroo and cockchafer grubs is one such journey or story. Although the ‘ten-year-old’ existed and was described by Fulton in her autobiography (Fulton 1999: 160), the family history of entomophagy or insects eating described above was not; it is a figment of my imagination. Stories, not least because they are the product of imagination can be seen to play a role in ethics, especially where, as in this case, the intention is to ‘seek out’ or create ‘unpredictable or disruptive moments of storytelling to ‘unsettle’ assumptions’ about, amongst other things, ‘eating from the so-called ‘mainstream’’ (Duruz 2005: 54).

The point here is to construct an *imaginary* vantage point in order to creatively re-view, rewrite, and explore some of the reasons why native ingredients in general, and insects in particular, are excluded from our diets and have been given such a marginal role in Australian cultural and culinary history. Of course, the reasons why Australian indigenous foodstuffs still play an almost miniscule part in providing nutrition while at the same time occupying a (more recent and) growing role in representing national identity and defining Modern Australian cuisine are complex.

While they are generally beyond the scope of this paper, the ‘normal’ public discourses attached to Australian cuisine and its historic antipathy towards insects and the indigenous should be noted. This antipathy was fueled, in part, by a cultural patterning and civilizing of the appetite programmed by western, Enlightenment notions of ‘progress’ and the ideological privileging of what it was to be European. Foucault’s notion that food choice at the individual and cultural level is actually part of the same system of thought or, in this instance, colonial *episteme* is pertinent here (Coveney 2000: 2).

This notion frames the food choices and assumptions of Australians in a more historically nuanced manner, as more than just a reflection, assertion or construction of collective identity or individual agency. Rather, food, and our perception of what is and is not edible, can be seen to pre-position us as cultural beings, where our colonial cuisine is viewed

through a window carefully placed to exclude most of the ‘other’, edible landscape (Kingston 1994, Bourdieu 1984). This ‘normal’ view generally continues a cultural pattern of deliberate-not-looking, where food preferences and aversions are generally discussed in terms of individual reaction to food items or in notions of (seeming) qualities inherent in the thing itself. The strategy of my storytelling approach is, on the other hand, to help ‘make’ us see specific *imaginary* possibilities especially in regards what might loosely be termed an Australian ‘ethics of eating’. The story outlined here might remind us that, as Friedberg (2007) notes for example, the consumption of food and the social context in which it takes place are tools for the expression of, and resistance to, power.

Food, and specific (exotic or iconic) food items such as cockchafer grubs especially, thereby become ‘narrative ingredients’ that help provide an ‘edible’ dynamic and an almost visceral lived, daily link between the personal and the political. The *imagining* that drives my story should not be seen here as ‘a passive mode of perception’ but as one which ‘through conscious will ... actively creates ‘objects’ that can have ‘a shaping or modifying power’ (Dawson 2005: 31). In this project, constructing a ‘reasonable’ (if deeply political) *imaginary* and picturing an alternative reality where agency, identity and culinary hegemony can begin to be interrogated is central.

In this light, the suggestion by Wray-Bliss (2002: 11) that Foucauldian ethics ‘encourages us to pay attention to what is created through our actions’ and draws out the connections between the ‘personal, ethical everyday’ and the ‘political issues and effects’ of ‘our embodied behaviours’ is important. Characters within our/my stories might also be ‘constructed’ to ‘embody’ ethics and/or to help problematise various power relations and to un-pack possibilities and potential. In fact, I argue the ‘capacity of creating and spreading imaginative narratives that communicate in terms not only of rational priorities, but also of emotions, desires and fantasies’ should not be underestimated in terms of [either] their ‘impact on reality’ (Paresecoli 2008: 150) or their ability to help delineate (and shape) the competing (food and other) cultures of the future.

If ‘everyday life in its mundane detail confronts, mediates and is mediated by dominant meanings’ then imagining everyday life might provide even more ‘spaces to see things differently’ (Duruz 2002: 374). It is ‘reasonable’, at least in the sense of having ‘creative license’, therefore, to suggest that Fulton might have been so influenced by the 1967 Referendum result that when she published her *Cookbook* less than one year later it included a selection of recipes that featured native foodstuffs. It is also reasonable to think more than one individual or family amongst the hundreds of thousands who purchased and read her book might have cooked and eaten some of these dishes. Likewise, it is reasonable to imagine that, for one family, one dish was so enjoyed it became a family favorite, part of their normal diet, and their ‘signature’ party dish. And given that the production, processing and distribution of various indigenous foodstuffs already exists to one degree or another today, it is not *totally* unreasonable to imagine that insects such as cockchafers grubs might simply be another product of these ‘normal’ food pathways.

Exploring these (rather improbable) narrative nodes or imaginary kernels of (reasonable) possibility (and the reasons for their un-probability and/or reasonableness) might, amongst other things, ‘help us to understand the new notions of identity and the re-birth of nationalism’ (Watson and Caldwell 2005: 2) inherent in contemporary discussions of (Modern) Australian cuisine. While there is much recent interest in and debate about what might constitute Australian cuisine, if there is indeed such a thing, the one point generally agreed upon is that ‘using an indigenous product must qualify a dish as Australian’ (Alexander 2004: 505). Kangaroo, the ‘icon meat’, has certainly ‘been embraced as a way of eating Australian’ (Craw 2008: 82) and several contemporary Australian cookbooks include recipes for them and other Australian ingredients such as macadamias, lemon myrtle, native pepper, rosellas, finger limes, crocodile, emu and bush tomatoes (Bannerman 2006).

There are, however, very, very few (if any) ‘mainstream’ and commercially successful Australia cookbooks that include insects of any sort in their recipes or lists of ingredients. In fact, Mina Rawson’s *Antipodean Cookery Book*, which was published in 1885, is, apart from some recent ‘survivalist’ or ‘bush tucker’ cookbooks, almost alone in her advice ‘to experiment and try ... new dishes with primitive materials’ such as various plants, game animals, reptiles and insects like the ‘white wood grub that the blacks are so fond of’ (as quoted in Bannerman 2006: 19). She argued there was ‘nothing nasty or disgusting in these soft white morsels, any more than there is in an oyster. It is all a matter of taste’ (as quoted in Bannerman 2006: 19-20).

This paper, however, does not focus at this time on why people of Western heritage generally find the eating of insects ‘distasteful’. It is enough here to simply suggest again that insects are the exemplar of the culinary or gastronomic ‘other’. The reasons for this are many, varied and complex, but in the Australian context, certain Western, Enlightenment notions of progress, civilization, and nationalism have historically had particular and peculiar effect on ‘constructing’ Australian tastes to be adverse to not only insects but also to the indigenous more generally. It is true that, as Santich notes, many, if not most, colonial cookbooks by the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century offered recipes for a few distinctively Australian ingredients. However, the inclusion of a few recipes using native animals, birds and fish should not be taken to mean that ‘native foods occupied a significant place in non-Aboriginal food culture’ (Bannerman 2006: 20). In fact, as Bannerman points out, recipes that included ‘bush foods virtually disappeared from cookery books and most tables’ by the 1950s (2006: 20).

Eating, and especially commensality, or eating together at the same table, can be seen as one of the ‘places’ where power and the differentiating of self from other is embodied. The ‘other’ to most citizens of 1950s White Australia was black, and the specifically designed political and cultural processes of ‘assimilation’ that sought to ensure indigenous black erasure from, rather than incorporation into, the national body was generally accepted by them. The imperial knowledge systems (or episteme) that produced ‘White Australia’ also traveled beneath Australian food pathways to define food in culturally specific ways that actively suppressed traditional, local, indigenous knowledge about food and the edibility of

insects (Freidberg 2007: 321). The epistemological assumptions of this knowledge system and the very geography of its travels both draws on and contribute to our colonial and culinary history. The various colonial techniques employed to advance colonial ambitions and imperial assumptions in order ‘to, in their own words, improve the world’ (Freidberg 2007: 321) were still very much in play at this time. There was certainly a sense that ‘improvements’ in post-WW2 Australia would not be served by ‘going native’ in our eating habits.

That food should not only sustain but be part of an Australian search for ‘progress’, of improvement, of affluence seems especially apparent in the years following WW2 and especially so in the late 1950s and the 1960s. This was not just an age of new kitchen technologies and advances in the industrialisation of food production. It was also a time when Australian families began to leave old food conventions behind. Immigration and a new form of economic and cultural globalisation allowed ingredients to travel further and further from their areas of production and exploring new foods became easier. However, while the new lifestyles that developed post WW2 ensured new foods were fitted into daily life, dietary change was still reasonably slow; it takes consumers some time to embrace new foods and new ingredients.

Celebrity chefs and other arbiters of culinary taste certainly play their part in speeding up this process. However, a cookbook that sought in the 1950s to place the indigenous back on the table is hard to imagine. It is easier to imagine this in the 1960s, and even more so after the Referendum that was held on 27 May 1967. An overwhelming majority of Australians voted on this day to amend the Constitution so that the Commonwealth Government and not the States had jurisdiction over Aboriginal people and that people of Aboriginal descent should be counted in the national census. I suggest this vote signaled that the ‘ordinary’ Australian’s desire for material and aesthetic progress was, at this time, matched by a general desire to ‘do the right’ thing and to re-align Indigenous non-indigenous relationships.

It is in this light that I imagine *The Margaret Fulton Cookbook* includes a selection of recipes that use insects and other Australian indigenous foodstuffs as main ingredients. I also imagine that the author’s intention in including these recipes was to help foster cultural understanding, address Aboriginal economic disadvantage and advance discussions on more ethical aspects of Australian consumption. It is, of course, hardly a matter of contention today that there are ethical dimensions to, and various cultural controls on, food choice and consumption. As Ashley *et al* (2004) point out, whether the individual knows it or not, the cultural processes informing eating habits and food choices have always had ethical, economic and environmental implications: eating is both political and personal, public and private.

However, an understanding that ethics are socially and historically patterned rather than being ‘invented’ by the individual, (Foucault 1989: 11) allows specific ‘moments’ of both national and individual historic importance to be imagined as having specific ethical and other long-term effects on representative characters. While Margaret Fulton is not generally

recognised as a ‘political’ figure or as an activist for Indigenous rights, she is clearly an enduring and important cultural figure who has made a considerable and celebrated contribution to Australian food culture. Given this, the inclusion of indigenous ingredients in her *Cookbook* rather than any other recipe book of the that time, therefore, more easily ‘allows’ the imagining of possible political, social and cultural ramifications their inclusion ‘might’ have generated. That this *imaginary* is, in fact, easily developed from the facts of Fulton’s life and the actualities of her *Cookbook* are further reasons why (without her consent or knowledge) I have - respectfully, I hope - co-opted parts of her life-story as the basis on which to develop my ficto-critical one.

Margaret Fulton was 3 years old when, in 1927, her family left Glasgow ‘to settle in a small country town on the other side of the world’ (Fulton 1999: 6). That small country town was Glen Innes, NSW and that small girl would go on to be thought by many to have had ‘more impact on the Australian kitchen than any thing or person since the refrigerator’ (Ward, 1982: 16). Her food writing has, without doubt, been integral to many of the dramatic shifts (both real and imagined) in Australian eating practices that have occurred in the past 50 years. Her first book, *The Margaret Fulton Cookbook* was published in 1968 by the ‘socialist millionaire’ Paul Hamlyn (Fulton 1999: 153). While he asked Fulton ‘to produce a cookery book ... that appealed to a mass market’ he was also ‘one of the most innovative and successful publishers of all time’ (Fulton 1999: 153, 154) and might easily be imagined as approving the inclusion of some indigenous Australian ingredients and recipes in her manuscript.

Even without such inclusions, the *Cookbook* sold out a then record first run print of 100,000 and reader demand has kept it in print ever since. Given her 24 cookbooks have sold more than 4 million copies it is no wonder that Fulton is considered ‘the first and greatest of the Australian celebrity cookery writers’ and the one ‘who showed the nation how to cook in new and exciting ways’ (Smith 1997: 2). She is often ‘credited with being one of the first people to bring international cuisine to the Australian table’ (Smith 1997: 2) and of making a substantial contribution to Australian culinary heritage. However, like most food writers/presenters/cooks of her era, it seems that terrestrial indigenous food products were simply not on the menu. The active promotion of indigenous Australian produce as part of (some/any sort of) ‘food reconciliation’ with Indigenous Australians and/or with the Australian natural environment was not, in fact, a significant part of the Australian culinary landscape until the small and stuttering rise of ‘bush tucker’ foods in the early 1980s.

That Fulton did not include insects and other indigenous ingredients in her *Cookbook* is not, therefore, really all that surprising, but the fact she and her husband ‘spent time’ with their ‘friends Faith and Hans Bandler, who were building a house in French’s Forest’ (Fulton 1999: 79) is a kernel of *imaginary* possibility. Faith Bandler was a woman of Pacific Islander heritage who, in her time, was at the forefront of the Indigenous Rights movement in Australia. Fulton herself describes Bandler as a ‘civil rights activist and a very old and dear friend’ (Fulton 1999: 260). That friendship, which began more than 50 years ago, alerted Fulton ‘to what was not right about the life ... [she] was enjoying in Australia compared with that experienced by Aboriginal Australians’ (Fulton 1999: 272).

While her desire for reconciliation and for the redressing of Indigenous injustice and oppression is obviously heartfelt, it is interesting that the use of indigenous plants and animals as (one form of) a means towards these ends has not (as far as I know) been taken up by her. I have made some, limited attempts to contact Fulton to ask if she has ever considered writing about indigenous menus and ingredients but at the time of writing have had no personal response. While this lack of knowledge about Fulton's attitude or 'position' in regard these issues and discussions can (or might) be seen as slightly problematic, I do not consider it overly limiting in terms of my critical or creative approach. I suggest, in fact, that if Fulton has considered writing about indigenous menus and ingredients, it is more likely to have been in the recent past rather than when she first began to write and publish in the 1960s.

One reason for reaching this conclusion is an understanding that it is only in the past 20 or 30 years that food has been studied more widely as a means of cultural expression, and that the ideas discussed here and the wider, cultural and ethical implications of cuisine and food choice are, therefore, being actively thought about; eating the 'other' is generally accepted now as a pathway to incorporating and accepting the 'other'. While acknowledging that this more cultural understanding of food is fairly recent, imagining that Faith Bandler introduced Fulton to 'other', indigenous ingredients such as wallaby, wombat and witchety grubs in the 1960s and that this 'other' eating had profound (positive) effect on her is not that far fetched (or un-ethical) to be 'un-imaginable' though unlikely. Given this, is it also, I hope, not too far-fetched to suggest that Fulton's *Cookbook* might have contained some 'Native Novelty' dishes alongside her selections of 'Favorites from Other Lands'.

Knowing 'that Australians were becoming interested in international foods' encouraged her to include 'Asian dishes ... dishes with a Spanish flavour ... and dishes from Scandinavia, France, Scotland and the Pacific' (Fulton 1999: 155). What might have encouraged her to include dishes with Australian indigenous ingredients is, of course, the subject of my imagination but is outlined by the above. That there was virtually no access to native foods in 1968 was obviously a problem for a food writer who wanted to provide exciting, interesting recipes that could not only be made from readily available ingredients but which also could be easily prepared by her daughter, her father and her husband. (Fulton 1999: 155).

This problem, of course, is exacerbated for those who want to consume such native foods, especially if they reside in cities and other urban areas. This is one of the reasons why I have changed my recipe from Termite Terrine (as described in the initial abstract for this paper) to that of Grubs with Gusto. While termites are found in most areas of Australia, the nesting sites of those species found in urban areas are generally subterranean, relatively scarce and not easily discovered. Cockchafer, white curl and other wood and solid plant feeding grubs are also found throughout Australia. They thrive in suburban lawns, under the bark of many Australian trees, and breed well in almost all types of leaf litter and garden waste. And, as noted above, they were highly spoken about by Mina Rawson in her 1885 *Antipodean Cookery Book*.

Despite this praise, ‘white wood grubs’ have never been readily available for purchase in Australia, so I imagine my ‘ten-year-old’ and his family made an ‘event’ out of gathering cockchafers in their suburban locale and that this ‘event’ grew out of the significance and the symbolism of the 1967 Referendum. As a watershed moment that signaled a recognition by white Australians that Indigenous Australians were (in one way or another) a part of the Australian ‘us’, one might easily imagine that indigenous foodstuffs and ‘our’ relationships to them and, by extension, the wider environment, would become invested with new ‘meanings’ more likely to see them imbibed, incorporated and re-colonised into the social body and national identity.

That the material ‘uptake’ of indigenous foodstuffs is slow, stuttering, ad hoc and somewhat lagging behind the symbolic appropriation of the Indigenous more generally is disappointing but, I suggest, not surprising. The meaning of certain, individual food ingredients is never ‘complete’ and the how, where, and why of their use and non-use is ‘not wholly a private, personal experience, being instead the product of shared systems of signification’ (Ashley *et al.* 2004: 7). The ‘meanings’ attributed to (any and all aspects of) ‘the indigenous’ and indigenous foods are constantly being contested, re-negotiated and re-positioned, so that their place within the national community and upon the individual table are not fixed or fully determined.

Situating the cockchafer grubs and the other indigenous ingredients used in the ‘Native Novelties’ amongst the suburban kitchen symbols of technology, progress and sophistication requires their ‘meaning’ to be *dis-located* from the primitive wilderness to a more properly civilised and controlled space. Margaret Fulton may have been able to do this, for she was, as Duraz reminds us, ‘constantly framed by symbols of modernity and consumerism and, situated as a playful ... example of consumer style ... [who charts] the escape to ‘real’ food and a leaner, more cosmopolitan sophistication’ (1999: 105). Of course, the commercialisation of native ingredients and the industrialization of native foods production continues to be limited and ad hoc, and this is an obvious impediment to their becoming normalised in terms of their taste and everyday domesticity.

Food production systems both reflect and produce food preference and availability, but until a product is readily available it is not ‘mainstream’. It is true that the shaping of food market trends and mainstream tastes is often unconscious and that supply and demand are usually linked in what Mennell describes as ‘an unplanned, unintended, vicious spiral’ (1996: 31). Those in powerful positions in the food industry do, however, in certain circumstances and with regard to certain products, actively set out to persuade people to need or like or use those products or ingredients in their daily diets (Meyer 2000). Of course, the diets of most Australians are, and never have been, obvious or inevitable; rather they are based on sets of choices by both producers and consumers. Arbiters of taste such as Margaret Fulton influence these sets of choices to some degree. Foods that are made familiar by celebrity chefs and food writers tend to be adopted faster and more readily than others, especially if the ‘meaning’ of those foods can be aligned with, or fitted into, pre-existing categories of preference.

An active intervention by Fulton to promote indigenous foodstuffs might, therefore, have encouraged ‘action’ by Australians if such conscious culinary action was situated in the context of ‘moral’ improvement and/or, of becoming more cosmopolitan and ‘civilised’. Following Foucault we can view the power of the celebrity food writer and other arbiters of culinary taste as part of the ‘*strategic games*’ of human interactions in that it signifies a structuring (and a re-structuring) of the possible fields of action of others. While the power to effect patterns of food choice can take many forms such as moral, religious and nutritional, it does not mean it is *necessarily* exercised against the interests of others. In fact, power relations such as those between Fulton and her legion of readers can be seen to result in (forms of) empowerment which, rather than lessening options, liberates culinary decision-making and ‘frees’ choices of action. Their decision to gather cockchafer grubs and to cook them with the ‘Gusto’ that Fulton describes is imagined as one of those ‘operations’ or ‘practices’ that people perform on ‘their bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct and ways of being’ (Foucault 1988: 18) in order to transform themselves.

While accepting that practices of self-fashioning ‘don’t exist without a certain regime of rationality’ (Foucault 1991: 79), it is beyond the scope of this paper to describe in any further detail the ‘kind of rationality’ (Foucault 1988: 226) behind the Enlightenment notions of progress, civilization and individualism that have already been mentioned to be at play here. What *is* at play here and in my general imaginings, however, is Foucault’s idea that ‘power has direct access to the body at an individual level through forms of ‘self-government’ or ‘self-surveillance’’ (Anderson 2008: 53). Like Foucault, I suggest through my storytelling that certain of these technologies of the self may provide an aesthetic escape from (some of) the grip of the power regimes that constrain and construct our perceptions of taste and what is and is not edible. The strategy with an ongoing project such as the one outlined here is to ensure the narrative threads are not too proscribed but reasonably open to the mutability of continued imagining.

Imagining ‘my’ ten-year-old growing into a ‘character’ who follows a trend to hunt and to fish and to kill, clean and cook his own food as an active opposition to industrialised food provision is, for example, one narrative possibility. Generally speaking, this narrative positioning, as with my general approach to this particular ficto-critical storytelling, develops structurally from Foucault’s suggestion that while power censors and excludes it also, at the same time, ‘productive’ because it produces ‘reality’ which is always open to change. The project at this stage is being developed around the narrative and critical possibilities inherent in having ‘my’ character, as a grown man, explain, discuss and debate (with various other representational) characters his (always evolving) reasons for bringing his Grubs with Gusto dish to a series of dinner parties. Imaging the first of these parties (and conversations etc) to be a ‘hippy’ wedding feast in 1977, a Bicentennial event in 1988, a 2000 Millennium-Bug event and the final a New Years Eve party a few years into the future allows the conversations to be ‘positioned within’ some of the central discourses influencing the development of contemporary Australian cuisine. Having characters who discuss the association of eating insects to the hunter-gatherer stage of human evolution and the notion that insects might taste ‘primitive’, for example, might prove productive.

Likewise, discussing entomophagy in terms of edible reconciliation, industrial and organic foods, conscious-consumption and ethical eating might be useful for, amongst other things, exploring the view that the body, as suggested by Belasco (2005), is a resource that might point people towards a path of eco and ethical ‘resistance’.

This path is one that, upon reflection, I started upon many years ago. The first step of many ‘down this path’ was when I decided that the only animals I would knowingly eat would be ones that I killed myself. While I have been a vegetarian for nearly 35 years it is only recently that I have applied Foucault’s concept of the ‘technologies of the self’ to that fairly youthful decision. One of his most often used definitions for these technologies is that they ‘permit individuals to effect by their own means ... a certain numbers of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state’ (Foucault 1988: 18). Whether the state I imagined for myself was based on wealth, happiness, health, purity, perfection, wisdom and/or immortality is less relevant here than the fact that my understandings of the ‘technologies’ that induce and produce these ‘states’ are ingredients to be used to help plot and ‘locate’ my subject characters within the *imaginary*.

The ‘second step’ that I sense myself taking as I develop my food studies in general and this storyline in particular is one that wends way back towards my past as a ‘normal’, meat three times-a-day, middle-class white child growing up in a small community on the edge of the Stuart Stony Desert in far south-western Queensland. I was 11 when the 1967 referendum took place, and though have never sought out the proof, I ‘know’ that the over-whelming majority of residents of my small town voted No in that Referendum. I grew up in a racist environment and the *imaginary* posited here is, in part, an active intervention specifically designed in resistance to my childhood history of being ‘taught’ to ‘know’ the Indigenous as ‘primitive’ and ‘the other’.

Today, as an adult, and more especially, as an adult vegetarian, I ‘know’ the eating of insects to be something that ‘others’ do, but I do not consider those ‘others, or the practice of entomophagy to be ‘primitive’ or ‘distasteful’ in any way. I suspect, however, that many Australians who do eat meat do think that the eating of insects is, in fact, ‘distasteful’ to the point of being nauseating. As noted earlier, the notion which is embodied in the creative practice I have briefly discussed here is that this aesthetic imaginary has critical and political potential. While I myself have eaten witchety grubs it was done long-ago and far-away as a childish ‘game’ of ‘dare’; it is only now that through my characters and my storytelling I am ‘free’ to ask questions about what eating indigenous foods might mean in terms of, for example, ‘belonging’ or how their becoming a ‘mainstream’ food consumption item might inform and re-align various ‘ecologies of nationhood’.

My central character is *precisely* imagined as an explorer, whose seeking into the ‘basic’ and deep-seated, cultural reasons for the aversion to eating insects starts with a recipe within a *Cookbook*. A partial re-writing of Margaret Fulton’s private and professional history *is* the necessary starting point of this particular *imaginary* exploration and the central character’s ‘transformation’. ‘His’ internal ruminations and external conversations

are designed to ‘unpack’ exactly what eating insects might mean in terms of our understanding of ‘progress’ and our relationships towards nature, others and ourselves. They are, in themselves, examples of ‘thick storytelling’, or ‘storytelling that narrates the ‘practice of everyday life and its density of detail’ (Duruz 2005: 54).

While I accept that imaginary narratives must do more than simply reflect interdisciplinary concern for producing politically engaged critiques of the everyday and the power relations involved in culture as a whole way of life, I suggest imagination is a useful experiment in disrupting habitual theory and practice. In fact, using your imagination might be considered an ethical intervention in and of itself, especially when it disrupts previous hierarchies of knowledge and enhances new politics and evaluations.

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