

Hope Against Hope
Future making praxes in the Hudson Valley alternative food movement

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ABSTRACT

The alternative food movement has grown in scope and influence in recent decades. However, its legitimacy and efficacy as a social movement has been critiqued because it lacks a cohesive agenda. Taking one widely agreed upon goal of the movement, to (re)localize food systems, as a starting point, this thesis examines alignments, divergences, and tensions amongst people working to achieve that goal in New York's Hudson Valley region. As an engaged anthropologist active in this movement, I attend to how food system activism articulates with race, class, and sexuality. Placing the ideals of (re)localizing food systems in a specific historic, geographic, and sociopolitical landscape grounds my analysis and brings debates about (re)localizing food systems into conversation with settler colonial theory. My methodology prioritizes the production of situated knowledges and so adds nuance to existing anthropological research on alternative food systems. Through ethnographic research with chefs, cider makers, laborers, philanthropy professionals, farmers, and seed keepers, I document differing values evidenced by varied praxes of future making. Engaging Bloch's theories of educated hope and concrete utopias, my analysis of these praxes demonstrates how orientations to the past and the future shape food system advocacy, and I propose two broad categories of future making: determinate and indeterminate. Ultimately, I endorse indeterminate future making, with all of its false starts and idiosyncrasies, as more capable of generating the transformative changes necessary to address the complex and intersecting existential crises of this era. Rejecting the call for a unified agenda, I argue that the proliferation and contestation of utopian food thinking and food projects strengthen the alternative food movement.

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No race, no class, no gender, nothing can keep any of us from dying into that death where we are made one. To tend the earth is always then to tend our destiny, our freedom and our hope.

— bell hooks, *A Culture of Belonging* (2008:117)



*Fig 1. People marching during Slow Food's Terra Madre gathering in Torino, Italy
Photographed by the author (2016)*

Introduction

APPETITE

I went to a holiday party in December 2016 at the Glynwood Center for Regional Food and Farming, where I had just accepted but not yet begun a position as Director in their Regional Food Program. Approaching the largest building on the country estate turned non-profit organization, ochre rectangles of light reflected from the windows onto the banked snow and starlight pierced the bare branches of apple trees. Inside the opulent rooms, people in cocktail attire sipped cider from stemmed glasses and nibbled on cheeses, charcuterie and pickled vegetables produced in the surrounding Hudson Valley. The crowd was made up of Glynwood staff, food writers, farmers, chefs, and other advocates for building a better food system. Across the room I spotted an old friend that I had met a decade before in Chicago when we both volunteered for the Slow Food chapter there. Ryan had moved to the Hudson Valley the year before to take the head cider maker role at the nation's largest cider company, a role in which he was hoping to shift the company's sourcing away from international juice suppliers to domestic orchards. I

made my way to him, and we clinked glasses. ‘So’, he said, ‘what the fuck are we doing with our lives?’

Appetite for Change

Ryan’s question echoed the ruminations of a lot of us on the political left, and in the food movement, in the wake of the election of Donald Trump as president of the United States. The results of the 2016 presidential election brought social divisions in the United States into stark relief, and precipitated a crisis for progressivism that continues to leave many on the American left feeling hopeless as to our ability to overcome racism, sexism, homophobia, neo-colonialism, wealth disparity, the climate crisis, and so on. For the ‘food movement’, it looks like this: the Obama administration planted a vegetable garden at the White House and the Trump administration served a fast-food feast (Higgins 2016; Law 2019). In food system reform as in other progressive projects, the setbacks were palpable even as the issues needing resolution became more complex and urgent. Was our activism around food and farming irrelevant, even self-indulgent, in the face of this unexpected political catastrophe? Had it always been? Ryan and I and others like us had tasted the quality of foods grown by thoughtful farmers and made by artisan producers. We’d planted community gardens and felt the pleasure of cultivating connections with humans and non-humans. We’d been awed at the creative artistry of chefs. Like our predecessors in the 1960s who promoted the revolutionary possibilities of a ‘countercuisine,’ we had an ‘appetite for change’ (Belasco 2007). We’d channeled our hopes for a healthy planet and an equitable economy into efforts to change the food system. We’d tasted the possibilities and had an appetite for more, but would satisfying that appetite be enough or was something else required of us? The next morning, I took the train south along the Hudson River to New York City where I was staying in a friend’s apartment while I sorted out my move north to the valley, and I wrote the proposal for this research.

The existential crises Ryan and I felt about our identities as members of the so-called good food movement reflected the preoccupations of critical food studies towards the food movement. Neoliberalism fundamentally transformed the architecture of the food system, and what is today known as the food movement

can trace its lineage to early twentieth century critiques of that emergent transformation. Industrialization and globalization of the food system accelerated throughout the twentieth century with deleterious effects on food quality, the environment, human health, and cultural practices (for more on negative impacts see Carolan 2011; Lobao and Meyer 2001; van der Ploeg 1993; Willett et al. 2019). By the turn of the current century the call for de-industrializing and localizing food production had reached mainstream awareness, and its advocates were increasingly critiqued for reproducing neoliberal subjectivities rather than collectively addressing issues of oppression and inequality (Guthman 2008; Counihan and Esterik 2013). With the global rise in right-wing populism, of which Trump's election was the local result (Robinson 2019), the interconnections and similarities between the rural-based political agendas of agrarian movements and right-wing populism were highlighted and the insanely difficult project of achieving radical socialist transformation in farming systems seemed more impossible than ever (Borras 2019; Kasabov 2020; Ulrich-Schad and Duncan 2018) . My research is set against this backdrop, drawing upon and adding to the multidisciplinary literature that describes the social and economic shifts and political projects associated with the food movement.

While food and farming have often been the object and modus of progressive political action in the United States (see for example Belasco 2007; Berry 1996; Penniman 2018; Nearing 1973; Shaw 2010), activism against dominant (globalized and industrial) food systems and promotions of alternative food networks (AFNs) surged in the early 2000s and 2010s (Goodman, DuPuis, and Goodman 2012; Alkon and Guthman 2017). Increasing numbers of people sought to counteract the global food system through 'alternative food practices' that Slocum defines as 'those that advocate more ecologically sound and socially just farming methods, food marketing and distribution, and healthier food options across the US' (Slocum 2007:3). However, these people were predominantly white and middle class, and the actions they took disproportionately focused on consumption practices. So much so that famed food journalist Michael Pollan dubbed the food movement a 'market-as-movement' (Pollan 2006). Critiques noted the de-politicizing nature of a movement so thoroughly normalized within neoliberalism, and the term 'food

justice' entered the lexicon as a needed intervention (Slocum and Cadieux 2015). Building on decades of agri-food system work by people in the global majority (ibid:2015), food justice centers the voice of marginalized communities in imagining agri-food systems that are ecologically sound and socially equitable. Food justice, then, promises to de-center both the intrinsically classed practice of 'virtuous consumption' (Finn 2017) and the reform-minded aim of food security (Holt-Giménez and Wang 2011) by attending to and transforming oppressive, interconnected systems of power like white supremacy, patriarchy, and capitalism.

The 'critical tensions between food justice activists and the broader food movement [...] highlights the polyvocality of approaches to food [...] issues' (Alkon and Guthman 2017:7). The concept of food justice centers the political nature of food and has opened pathways for novel alliances between activists with converging, though not explicitly aligned aims. For example, collaborations between labor activists and food access activists (Myers and Sbicca 2015) that more potently address the root causes of inequities in the agri-food systems. Ironically, the increased professionalization of the food movement, as demonstrated by the proliferation of organizations, especially NGOs, in the Global North, and their participation in spheres of governance that directly engage food as political (Clark et al. 2021), has muted the polyvocality of the food movement.

This marginalization of voices by professionalized food activists has happened in at least two ways. First, food movement NGOs informed by food justice take form to fill the social role abandoned by the shrinking neoliberal state (Guthman 2008a). As they do so, they are compelled to legitimize their existence and raise funding by claiming they are better equipped than the state to serve society, thus reproducing neoliberal subjectivities (Alkon and Guthman 2017). These NGOs, as enterprises that depend on philanthropy, may come to measure success by their ability to eclipse other food movement organizations. They may also seek to align themselves with more or less powerful organizations within what Sbicca et al. term 'food movement networks' that mobilize resources such as money, land, and labor through 'collaborative concession' between organizations with interlocking aims (2019:2). The resulting distribution of resources is uneven, favoring organizations

that already hold power and privilege, thereby muting, rather than amplifying, peripheral voices.

Second, the needed intervention of food justice in the food movement activates the desire for policy change. In seeking to build power through coalition and alignment, the discourse of food policy can have a chilling effect on the diversity of praxes within the food movement. Scholars, activists, and food movement leaders have variously called for the food movement to unite around, for example, city-level school lunch provisioning (Ashe and Sonnino 2013), public health (Dimock 2013), anti-corporatism (Petrini and Waters 2010), and global food sovereignty (Amin 2011), amongst other things.

Importantly, (re)localizing food systems has maintained near-universal acceptance within the movement as a panacea for the ills of the global food system. Eating locally everywhere, the logic goes, will result in a food system that is: better for human health, because locally produced foods are fresher and less likely to be highly processed; better for the environment, because local farmers producing for a local market will care more about responsible stewardship of their land and the food itself will have a lighter carbon footprint than foods transported from further afield; and better for society, because wealth will circulate within the community that generates it, reinforcing and creating equitable and reciprocal relationships (Goodman, DuPuis, and Goodman 2012). Even as support for more localized food production and consumption has grown, it has not necessarily proven to be the case that these benefits accrue equitably or at all. Scholarship on the local turn in food activism has shown that as localization is codified into political and economic policy, the particularity of place and people tends to be flattened in favor of universalizing conceits that may be antithetical to the ecological and social values presumed to underly food localism (Hinrichs 2000; DeLind 2011; Cleveland, Carruth, and Mazaroli 2015; Hinrichs 2003).

Placing Local Food

My research examines efforts to enact the (re)localization of food in a specific place, New York's Hudson Valley. Though efforts to (re)localize food systems have

often prioritized virtuous consumption over food justice when push comes to shove (Alkon and Guthman 2017), food justice remains as a core organizing principle, both in policy and praxies, of the food movement. By placing efforts to (re)localize the food system in a particular region, my research maps the ideal onto a concrete place in all the particularity of this historical moment. What it shows is a proliferation of divergent visions for the future that resist cohesion as a unified political agenda despite sincere attempts to align diverse actors. In the ongoing effort to harmonize the chorus of disparate voices in the food movement, I recognize hunger. This is the hunger of a person, a person I have often been, who finds themselves in the throes of an existential crisis to find *the* answer, *the* path forward.

Living in the twenty-first century is to live in the midst of intersecting and mutually exacerbating crises: precarity, climate change, late-stage capitalism, migration, violent conflict, pandemics, intolerance, etc. Each on its own presents a challenge to individual and collective survival, cumulatively they constitute the most profoundly dangerous existential crisis in human history. I came to realize over the course of this project that the core anthropological question tugging at me was not about how the food movement (and therefore I) ought to proceed, but about how and why people work to shape the future in the face of overwhelming existential threats. Ultimately, the 'why' has proven hard for me to tackle. Though I asked the question frequently of my interlocutors, their reasons for doing what they did to transform the food system were idiosyncratic, though often presenting similarities in broad concerns over the existential threats of climate crisis, white supremacy, and late-stage capitalism. Rather than fall back on naïve subjectivism and assume each of my interlocutor's positions to be utterly unique and unknowable, or impose a rubric that would further flatten the polyvocality of the food movement in the Hudson Valley, I adjusted my research focus. I was inspired to do so following an answer I received to the question of 'why?' from Kathleen Finlay, the president of Glyndon, who has worked in the food movement for decades.

While working at Harvard, Kathleen had taken part in organizing a class for medical students on food and ecosystems. Taught by multiple faculty, the class

kicked off each year with a lecture from Dr. Dan Goodenough, the topic of which was how to emotionally prepare for all the ‘very bad stuff’ they were about to study. Kathleen recounted that he had said, ‘the antidote for despair is action’. She went on, ‘And I have just carried that line with me. As long as I am participating in a bettering [...] that’s one more energy unit in the right direction. That doesn’t mean it doesn’t prevent the bad stuff from happening, because it is limited in terms of resources, but when I don’t feel despair is when I am acting.’ Kathleen’s focus on action resonates with active hope as theorized by Ernst Bloch and those who have built on his work to understand and identify prefigurative social practices. Bloch argues for an ‘educated hope’ that understands the obstacles it faces, and uses that understanding to imagine possible futures (Bloch 1995). While not discarding the particularity of ‘why’s’, understanding them outside of action to transform the Hudson Valley food system would demand comparative work amongst the apathetic and dejected, the hopeless, which I decided was beyond the scope of this project. In action, I found that my interlocutors insisted I try to answer the ‘how?’ I wanted to answer Ryan’s question: what are we *doing* with our lives?

That the global, industrialized food system is deleterious to human health, the environment, and society is not in question, what we might do within the context of that system to feed ourselves morally and ethically is. My interlocutors helped me understand how they try to transform the food movement, and that understanding allowed me to sharpen the question of ‘how’ humans construct futures in the face of devastation. In Chapter One, I introduce the methodological and ethical underpinnings of my research before explaining the theoretical framework that I employ to form a potential answer to the question of how humans make futures despite existential threats. I have developed a heuristic model of ideal types with determinate future making at one end of the spectrum of future making praxes, and indeterminate future making at the other.

Determinant future making treats the world as a known and describable system and the present as the result of the past. To change the future, determinate future making changes the variables in the present to arrive at a different, defined result. Because this is an ideal type, no perfect example exists in lived reality, but the

example of cider, the subject of Chapter Three, can help to illustrate the point. To establish a commercial American cider industry in the twentieth century, a discourse was constructed. Its logic went like this: 1) Cider was the most popular drink in America in the Colonial Era; 2) It disappeared because it became unfavorable politically (prohibition), socially (less refined than wine), and economically (small orchards weren't competitive in the market); 3) Legislating favorable policies for cidermaking, increasing people's appreciation of cider, and creating a high value market for local cider will make a different future for cidermaking. This clear logic points towards a clear goal that is dependent on the past as a fixed thing. This past-oriented temporality of determinate future making can be seen in the rhetoric of these types of efforts, which speak about a 'Cider Revival' (Wilson 2019). Other watchwords of determinate future making are preservation, tradition, and the like.

Indeterminate future making recognizes the limitations of received histories and present perspectives to describe the interplay of micro and macro that exist in the present. It points to new possibilities without asserting their certainty and embraces indeterminacy as inseparable from the ongoing praxis of seeking reality. While it takes the future seriously, in a way that aligns with Bloch, who persuasively argues that the future is as real as any past or present (Bloch 1995), indeterminate future making cannot precisely define the desired future. Indeterminate futures are necessarily promiscuous and multiple. While as with determinate future making, no ideal type exists in the field, this praxis is evident in work with seeds, the subject of Chapter Six, when people prioritize their present relationship with plants as one characterized by fecund possibilities. Both indeterminate and determinate future making rely on temporal orientations to the past and to possible futures while demonstrating marked differences in those orientations.

Subsequent chapters describe and interpret my field work, and do not present tidy examples of indeterminate and determinate future making, but rather the messy, contingent, and incomplete enactments of future making praxes that can be understood as falling somewhere in relation to the binary scale of indeterminate and determinate future making. These chapters appear in order from the most

common experience of agri-food systems to arguably the least, from Chapter Two: 'Food' to Chapter Six: 'Seeds'. Roughly, they also move from most expressive of determinate future making to most demonstrative of indeterminate future making. The chapter order can also be read as an illustration of the rural-urban divide, beginning in New York City and travelling northwards along the Hudson River, into the Hudson Valley.

The Hudson Valley

The river valley features prominently in the turbulent histories of Indigenous nations, colonial settlement, and the American Revolutionary War, all touchpoints that continue to define its regional identity (Bruegel 2002; Chambers 2012; Midtrød 2012). Despite this, at the start of the nineteenth century it was considered the ideal, untouched wilderness by Transcendentalists, such as Emerson, who saw 'society's relationship to wild nature as the spiritual core of a New World culture' (Flad 2009:358), and therefore a worthy object of desire for sophisticated urbanites seeking a tonic to the degeneracy of modernity. If, following Kathleen Stewart, nostalgia is 'a cultural practice, not a given content', then the nostalgia of urbanites for the undeveloped landscape of the Hudson Valley is only one shade different from 'the very first meaning of nostalgia as a longing for a lost geographical home' (Stewart 1988:227; Angé and Berliner 2015:9). The imaginary of this landscape held the old promises, it was the untouched horizon to which one might return for the first time.

The second half of the nineteenth century was a period of rapid transformation in the U.S. Northeast as urban development and industrialization accelerated and the national debate over slavery (pervasive and lucrative in New York's economy) erupted into civil war. The philosophical, artistic, and touristic celebration of the Hudson Valley's rugged and unspoilt nature developed concurrently with the philosophy of Manifest Destiny. The latter drove the displacement and genocide of Indigenous peoples to make way for colonizers and for European immigrants to settle and introduce European methods of agriculture and land ownership that were the precursors of global industrial agriculture (Cronon 1991). Both philosophies took as given that the wild landscapes of the continent were *terra*

nullius, essentially blank, and leveraged moral arguments to lay claim to the right of inscribing meaning upon them.

Preservation of wilderness was one means of inscribing meaning on the Hudson Valley landscape. The nation's first efforts at natural conservation were carried out in the Hudson Valley, largely out of aesthetic concerns over maintaining pristine wilderness for elite enjoyment. Wealth accumulated through industrialization caused bewildering cultural and economic change and that wealth funded attempts to preserve, restore and address perceived losses and harms. Conservation of wild, open spaces established the importance of social valuation of land in the Hudson Valley, but in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, conservators became interested in the loss of rural communities as demonstrated by the loss of working lands, and turned their efforts of conservation and preservation to those lands. The pattern of nostalgic political economy, using profits earned from extractive capitalism to remedy the harms it causes, is replicated in today's philanthropic efforts in the region. Today the Hudson Valley hosts one of the highest concentrations anywhere of non-profit organizations aiming to preserve or recover agrarian lands, economies, and communities.

However, the rurality of the Hudson Valley is distinct and not always what its protectors imagine it to be. Unlike rural communities distant from urban centers, it is closely tied to the megapolis of New York City. Since the founding of the city, the valley has been an object of desired escape from urban contamination. While incomers desire an escape from the city, longer term residents value their proximity to the city as a defining feature of their cultural and economic lives. Different narratives about the past and future of the Hudson Valley as a place defined by rurality or urbanity are used to legitimize oppositional claims of who and what the place is for.

This is evident currently in Beacon, a city of 14,000 residents situated on the banks of the river, with a commuter train stop on the line to Manhattan's Grand Central Station. A drastic upswing in real estate development since 2013 has prompted fierce debate over whether Beacon is losing its quiet, rural soul or returning to its

former, bustling glory (Dilawar 2019). Throughout the second half of the twentieth century, urbanites have travelled to the Hudson Valley to enact their nostalgic imaginings. Vacation resorts for the middleclass thrived both in the valley and in the nearby Catskills, particularly in the Jewish Borscht Belt as romanticized in the film *Dirty Dancing*, set in 1963. The Woodstock Music and Art Fair held in 1969 is mythic in its reputation as a touchstone of the counterculture, and its aura continues to draw musicians, artists, and neo-hippies. The 1970s saw the largest wave of back-to-the-land homesteaders in North America, a movement inspired by the socialist activists and academics Scott and Helen Nearing who left NYC for ‘the good life’ in rural Vermont at the start of the twentieth century (Jacob 1996; Nearing 1990). Some of those back-to-the-landers are today elders to the region’s new-agrarians. All these positive imaginaries add to the allure of the Hudson Valley, reinforced by a New York City resident’s experience of Hudson Valley through food at farmers’ markets and farm-to-table restaurants.

The valley is, in fact, not so much rural as it is post-industrial and post-productionist, having experienced the same detrimental effects of Rust Belt collapse and suburbanization as other parts of the nation (Monnat and Brown 2017; Salamon 2003). There are many non-white residents, exemplified by the majority Black cities of Newburgh and Poughkeepsie – that such things even exist in the Hudson Valley surprises many non-residents. The ex-urban in-migrants put their bodies into new relationships with unfamiliar ecologies and communities where they are confronted with the subjectivities of the place itself and its existing inhabitants. While the biodynamic farmer they expected lives there, so too do the marginalized migrant laborers that cultivate the majority of the region’s harvest (Gray 2014). Alternative food network projects in the valley are rightly subject to the same critiques of classed and raced exclusions as have been leveled at the broader food movement, including Glynwood, the organization where I am employed.

The wealth and privilege that made Glynwood, and peer organizations, possible also imprinted a set of values and aesthetics on their campuses and projects that can make them exclusionary. However, the crisis of progressivism and inflamed

culture wars of the current macrocosmic moment have made the need to center inclusion, diversity, equity, and access in their work a pressing concern. This resonates with Henrich's research into local food systems in Iowa, and her observation that the development of local food systems creates binary thinking leading to calcification of social boundaries *and* encourages more fluid and novel constructions of community (Hinrichs 2003). Alternative food projects often draw on nostalgic imaginaries of rural spaces that are more available to whites and end up replicating classed and raced systems of oppression and exclusion (Slocum 2007; Guthman 2011). Yet placing those projects in physical space can give rise to new configurations of bodies and knowledge (Slocum 2006; Slocum 2012). How those reconfigurations are mobilized, through indeterminate or determinate future making praxes, is apparent in the present and alters the possibilities for future transformation.

To understand how the day-to-day work of people engaged in (re)localizing the Hudson Valley food system confronts existential crisis through future making praxes, I draw on theories of hope and the indeterminate horizons it evokes (Crapanzano 2003). Though liberal progressivism has been associated with urban interests and conservative populism with rural communities, neither is bound by geography and both evince dissatisfaction with neoliberalism (Monnat and Brown 2017; Ulrich-Schad and Duncan 2018; Kelly and Lobao 2018; Borras 2019). Hope is a useful theory with which to examine the food movement's response to neoliberalism, because hope is as indeterminate and amorphous as neoliberalism itself in responding to changed circumstances (Miyazaki 2006). Hope's plasticity allows us to see the 'politics of the possible' both within and without neoliberalism, allowing us to imagine a better future food system (Gibson-Graham 2008; Gibson-Graham 2015; Guthman 2008a; Harris 2009).

Hope and nostalgia are opposite ends of a temporal continuum, they are intertwined in the present (Angé and Berliner 2015). From this entanglement people imagine utopias, which is a political act (Harvey 2000). An ethical and moral food system is such a utopian vision (Stock, Carolan, and Rosin 2015). The envisioned food system – agrarian, small scale, ecologically sound, economically

profitable, socially just, producing ample nutritious and delicious food – has not yet existed in the Hudson Valley. How does the envisioned system map onto the world as it is? Where do the imagined and the extant contradict? My field work shows that through cultural practices of nostalgia and grief people engaged in food system (re)localization utilize varied narratives about the past of the Hudson Valley and the United States to articulate the values that comprise their visions of the food systems they are working towards. There is much to learn by following their lines of sight from the points at which their visions converge and diverge.

Table to seed

The people I have conducted this research amongst have an appetite for change. While the global, industrialized food system produces an abundance of calories, it fails to satisfy their appetite. Appetite is an expression of distinction, a desire to satisfy a specific taste, it presumes that the resources exist to meet one's needs and may be arranged or selected in different, more or less desirable, ways. The Hudson Valley is rich in ecological, human, and financial resources, but those resources have not been distributed evenly and the power to utilize them is likewise unevenly shared. I analyze the ethnographic data in this thesis to identify how attempts to reorganize resources in service of (re)localizing the Hudson Valley food system demonstrate appetites for change that are contingent on temporal orientations and either limit or proliferate possible futures.

Chapters Two to Six are the ethnographic heart of my research. Each is organized around a central feature of food systems and elaborates upon how that feature is articulated within the Hudson Valley food system. Beginning with food itself, Chapter Two addresses the role of chefs as arbiters of good taste, following Bourdieu, and curators of community whose influence tends to overvalue the urban gaze, unintentionally obfuscating the nuanced lifeworlds of the Hudson Valley and suppressing valley residents' agency to shape food systems. Shifting location to the Hudson Valley, Chapter Three identifies orchards and cider production in the valley as sites where heritage discourse is confronted by attending to racialized inequities. This chapter offers a complication of the literature on heritage in food studies by interrogating heritage through settler colonial theory. The legacy of

colonization and land dispossession is further explored in Chapter Four, where I show the linkages between philanthrocapitalism and nostalgia for colonial, agrarian societies. Would-be farmers demonstrate how this limits their access to land, training, expression of their identities, and fulfilment of their hoped-for futures. While the previous chapters illustrate praxes more closely aligned with determinate future making, Chapters Five and Six focus on prefigurative praxes more demonstrative of indeterminate future making. Queer farmers, from their position of subalternity, are shown in Chapter Five to be uniquely able to contest white-supremacist-capitalist-patriarchy. Their prefigurative practices are salient beyond social groups demarcated by sexuality or gender. Chapter Six takes place amongst the seed keepers. Seeds, materially and figuratively inseparable from pasts and futures, open slippery temporal terrain where narratives are contested, bodies are activated, and possible futures multiply.

Transformation

Ryan asked me what we're doing with our lives. While I try to answer that question with ethnography, implicit is a question of efficacy, morality, and responsibility: what *should* we be doing with our lives? I have witnessed commitment, care, and bravery amongst all of my interlocutors who work to realize a Hudson Valley food system that is equitable, ecologically sound, and delicious. In delineating, throughout my ethnography, the differences between the determinate future praxes making and indeterminate future making praxes they employ, I have concluded that only promiscuous futures shaped by educated hope and brought into focus by indeterminate future making hold the promise of achieving those desired food systems. And so, I offer up this piece of work to my beloved community, as documentation and invocation, so that we may better see what we've been up to and what we could get up to. In confronting the intersecting existential crises of our era, we can choose to reanimate the ghosts of past hopes or to awaken our transformative capacities to shape as-yet unknown realities.

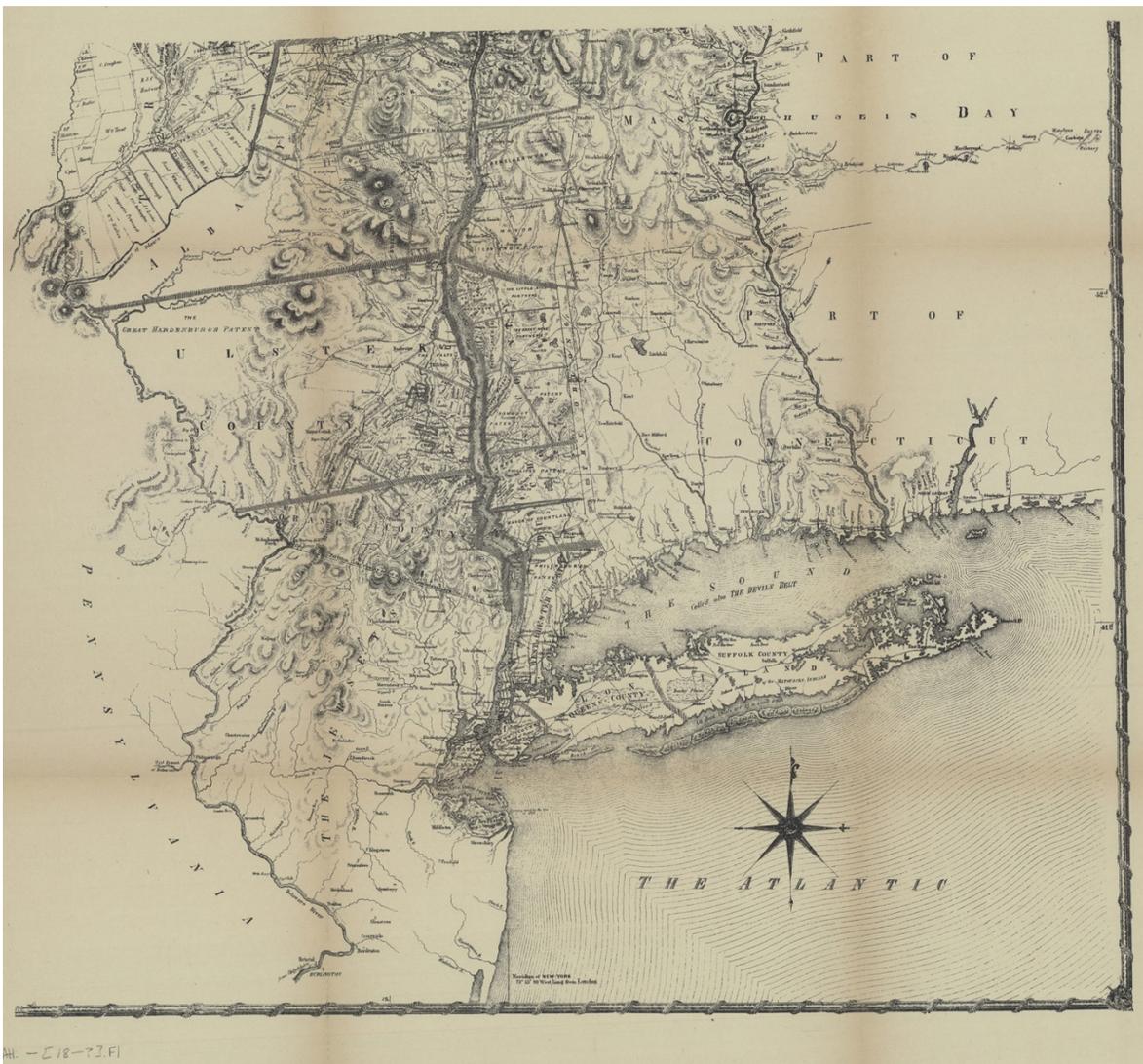


Fig 2. Map of the Hudson River Valley, New York Metropolitan Area, and Long Island circa 1777 (1893), Map Collection, Mid Atl.-[18--?].Fl; Brooklyn Historical Society. <https://mapcollections.brooklynhistory.org/map/map-of-the-hudson-river-valley-new-york-metropolitan-area-and-long-island/> Accessed 7 Nov. 2023

Chapter One

RIVER

The central feature of my field site is the Hudson River, an unusual waterway that shapes the geography, history, and imagination of New York and, by extension, of the United States. In my first months living here, I often watched the river at sunrise. A multitude of small ice flows gently progressed northward, filling the milewide expanse of water. By mid-morning, they had reversed direction and glided southward toward the Atlantic Ocean. Four times daily the ocean's tides will rise

and fall, the Hudson River's current switching directions for one hundred and fifty-three miles between the cities of Troy and Manhattan. From my position in a top-floor apartment of a crumbling Victorian mansion, I considered the Lenape word for this body of water: Mahicantuck, 'the river that flows both ways' (Joseph 2013). As a tidal estuary, the brackish meeting place of salt and fresh water, the ecology of this region is abundant with unique forms of life. Humans have been drawn to this rich ecology and used the readily available natural resources of the region for spiritual practice, inspiration, military prowess, economic gain, and – of course – food. For centuries, people have been fed by this waterway and the valley surrounding it.

Prior to colonization, Algonquin tribes foraged, farmed, hunted, and traded here through a complex and flexible network of kinship and land rights (Midtrød 2012; Sellers 2015; Schutt 2007; Starna 2013). In 1609 Henry Hudson piloted his ship up the river in search of a Northwest passage to China on behalf of the Dutch West India Company, opening the region to colonization (Hunter 2010). The river had many names. Around 1740, the English dubbed it the Hudson River, symbolically legitimizing their claim to the territory over the Dutch, Lenape, Mahicans, Esopus, and Wappingers. The river, and eventually the transportation infrastructure it anchored, has been a major thoroughfare of commercial and leisure traffic for goods (pelts, food, machinery, timber, coal, cement, paper), people (traders, settlers, soldiers, the enslaved and fugitives from slavery, tourists, aristocrats, migrant laborers, commuters), and ideas. Today, as in the past, this perpetual motion repeatedly raises questions about whose place this is and what this place is for. The Hudson Valley is teeming with varied lifeworlds, and is therefore a rich site for ethnographic inquiry. Even more so when this intercultural microcosm is situated, as all places are, in the macrocosm of time and space with which it articulates (Jackson 2013).

We are in the era of the Anthropocene. Humanity faces the clear and urgent threat of climate crisis that, unchecked, will end humanity. The climate crisis is both cause and result of intersecting crises of politics, economies, and identities whose cascading interrelations are definitive of the era. The motivating question of this

thesis is: how do we make the future when its arrival promises catastrophe? I look to my friends, mentors, and colleagues in food activism for answers. Food, that brings us so viscerally into interdependent relationships with the ecosystems and social structures we inhabit, is studied as both cause and solution to a multitude of crises. Food is studied as a site of solidarity and of division. Food is, as Lévi-Strauss famously said in 1962, good to think with before it is good to eat (Lévi-Strauss 1971); meaning that food nourishes the mind as well as the body and so must align with value systems, beliefs, collective identities, and traditions in order to be considered edible. As an anthropologist in the Anthropocene, to think with food is to open a window into humans' attempts to face existential threat.

In this chapter I will present the methodological and theoretical framings that I utilize in my attempt to answer how we make the future in the face of annihilation. The ethnographic research I conducted was designed as engaged anthropology and utilizes both formal and informal methods of data collection and analysis. Ethnographic inquiry is definitionally situated in the present. With the Hudson River as inspiration, I approach the present as a tidal estuary, not as a fixed moment but as the site of motion created by the varying pull of the tides of imagined pasts and futures, and so address temporality, adding to a growing anthropological interest in the future (Bryant and Knight 2019). Like the river in its banks, social activity shapes and is shaped by the particularity of the material historical moment it inhabits, leading me to attend to the dynamics of capital and ownership historically and today to deepen my analyses. Nostalgia, grief, and hope are key theoretical discourses I use to define two distinct modes of future making evinced by my research. Nostalgia and grief emerge as orientations to the past that at least partially determine the futures envisioned and the modes employed to realize them. Hope is the animating force behind future making, but not all hopes are alike. Attending to the ongoing praxes of people who hope for the (re)localization of food systems in the Hudson Valley, I conclude that those praxes can be roughly grouped into determinate future making and indeterminate future making. Any individual person, organization, or project is likely to demonstrate elements of both determinate and indeterminate future making. Nonetheless, this distinction

between future making praxes is a useful tool for understanding the food movement and potentially other social movements.

Methodology

When I began this project, in 2017, I was a recent transplant to the Hudson Valley. Exigencies of finance, familial commitments, global politics, and personal desire upended my first plan to pursue a PhD 'away', in Turkey. I negotiated a proposal to accept employment at the Glynwood Center for Regional Food and Farming concurrent with my course of study, and so the Hudson Valley became my field site and my peers and colleagues became my interlocutors. I found that the question I was asking required a research plan that would study up, down, sideways, and through (Hannerz 2010). I grappled with the shift from doing anthropology 'away' to doing it 'at home' in a place that was not yet my home, and with the attendant ethical and practical considerations (Clifford and Marcus 2010).

The Indigenous anthropologist Kim TallBear profoundly shifted my understanding of how one could do anthropology, and the methodology I employed for this research builds upon her conception of 'standing with' (TallBear 2014). TallBear, in describing her approach to working with Native geneticists, demonstrated for me the ability to be my full self within this project, inclusive of social relations and interior life without limiting the project to an auto-ethnography. Drawing on feminist theory (e.g. [Tronto 1998](#)), TallBear offers 'standing with' as a critique of the concept of engaged anthropologists 'giving back' to the community of study. '[T]he goal of "giving back" to research subjects', she writes, 'seems to target a key symptom of a major disease in knowledge production, but not the crippling disease itself. That is the binary between researcher and researched – between knowing inquirer and who or what are considered to be the resources or grounds for knowledge production' (2014:2). Building on work done by scholars such as Donna Haraway and Sandra Harding (see Harding 1991; Haraway 1990), TallBear adopts a feminist objectivity that embraces situated knowledges arguing that by 'promiscuously accounting for standpoints, objectivity will be strengthened' (2014:3). Adopting feminist ethics of care for the subject, she is able to engage with a community of study as 'both an intellectual and as an invested moral agent' who 'inhabits that

material and virtual world' rather than just doing 'fieldwork' there (2014:3). The methodological implications of adopting this stance require the researcher to study knowledges and projects in which she is invested, and so to critique towards the improvement of those rather than for the sake of critique alone. The ethical benefit of 'standing with' is that the researcher works with people in her community of study in ways that support their success while it benefits the intellectual work of the research by opening novel modes and paths of inquiry. As the starting point for explaining my methodology, I will describe my own situated perspective.

For twenty-five years I have worked in the food sector, and I have been an active community organizer in that sector for fifteen years. I am a woman in my forties, white, queer and cisgender.¹ As a child, my family was lower middle class, both of my parents being teachers. We lived in a working-class suburb of San Diego, California that shifted in my lifetime from a primarily agricultural place to a fully developed suburban landscape replete with big box retailers and chain restaurants. The suburbanization of agrarian landscapes is a well-studied trend across the United States during the late twentieth century (e.g. Salamon 2003). From 2005 to 2013 I lived in Chicago, Illinois where I worked in restaurants across the city, most often as a server, of all scales and tiers. It was there and then that I began to understand the food system as a site of political action. My participation in food activism has included community gardening, running farmers markets, volunteering and employment with Slow Food USA, and my current job as a program director at the Glynwood Center for Regional Food and Farming (Glynwood). Now, as an intellectual laborer, I benefit from the associated class privileges I see starkly after spending my early adulthood doing working-class jobs without those privileges. My academic work is inseparable from the hopes I have for myself, for my friends and colleagues, and for the ecosystems of which I am a part. My viewpoint is shaped by the life I have had and the people I have lived it with, just as this thesis records knowledge that has been co-produced by the people amongst whom I researched.

¹ Cisgender is used to designate 'a person whose sense of personal identity corresponds to the sex and gender assigned' at birth (Martin 2015).

One key feature of standing with is that the researcher must be willing to have their mind changed, their methods changed, their objectives changed by the community of study (TallBear 2014). Rejecting the supposed objectivity of being a 'fly on the wall' as prescribed in classic social anthropology (Hannerz 2010), my aim is to align my sightlines with those of others so as to proliferate situated perspectives and the knowledges they produce. The epistemology of 'standing with' leads me to adopt an intersubjective ethnographic practice, following Michael D. Jackson, that 'forfeits the search for an ahistorical and determinate knowledge, describing instead a forcefield of human interaction in which contending needs, modes of consciousness, and values are forever being adjusted, one to the other, without any final resolution' (Jackson 1998:14). As theorized by Husserl, the concept of intersubjectivity is not merely 'mutual understanding' but a fundamental means by which humans experience their own existence relationally (Duranti 2010). Intersubjectivity encompasses the main concerns of my research because it understands sociality, the 'being-with' of human experience, as arising from embodied individuals situated together in a material and theoretical world. It pays attention to the articulation of the microcosm within the macrocosm so that the temporal currents, cultural imaginaries, and material landscapes that layer to create 'place' can be fully explored. Intersubjectivity also allows serious consideration of sensory perception as fundamental to sociality, allowing greater access to understanding how food activism is an embodied practice (Carolan 2011). Finally, it centers existential questions that direct our interrogation towards the ways in which humans navigate agency and subjectivity within the accumulating and shifting sediments of culture; intersubjective ethnography is the praxis of existential anthropology that illuminates lifeworlds (Jackson 2013). This last feature of existential anthropology is relevant to this project, placed as it is in an historical moment when political trends indicate an existential crisis of progressivism and unmitigated climate change constitutes an existential crisis for all humanity.

Jackson has convincingly argued for existential anthropology's capacity to reveal the in-betweenness of existence by attending to the ways in which people negotiate with the world as it is and the world as they would have it through action

and imagination (Jackson 2013). Through comparative ethnography, these negotiations reflect ‘the struggle of human beings everywhere to create and sustain fulfilling lives under conditions that are always falling short’; to carry on struggling requires ‘a hope without which existence would be untenable – the hope that life, for ourselves and those we care about, holds more in store for us than less’ (Jackson 2015:62, 71). Adopting an intersubjective lens has aided my ability to study up, down, sideways and through because it insists on the agency and interdependency of humans and so is a bulwark against both pity and scornful dismissal of those with less or more status, wealth, or power, in a way that supports my attempt to care for those amongst whom I research (Tronto 1995). ‘For rich and poor alike, the search for money, work, love, happiness, power, presence, pleasure, knowledge, honor and dignity all, in different contexts and at different times, betoken a struggle for life itself’ (Jackson 2015:62). I went into the field to understand how food activism demonstrated struggles for life itself.

I approached my field work as a long conversation, already begun, about how food activism relates to shared existential crises. After successfully completing my ethics review in March of 2018, I conducted preliminary field work by discussing my research and its aims with coworkers, colleagues, and community members and by participating in community meetings and public events. Beginning in June of 2019, I conducted more formally structured field work. It included participant observation on eight farms over the course of the growing season, for a total of twenty two workdays in fields and orchards; eleven semi-structured interviews with a range of food system actors; keeping up to date with local and national publications and listservs about food and farming projects focused on regional food systems; following the social media accounts of participants and influencers; and attendance at dozens of public and semi-public events, such as conferences, volunteer days, tours, celebrations, and meetings. The data I collected, including written field notes and audio recordings, has been encrypted and securely stored in compliance with the EU’s General Data Protection Regulation and the University of Exeter’s policies. My in-person field work concluded prematurely in March 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic forced the shutdown of New York State and the University of Exeter forbade in-person research. This impacted my research in so far as I was

not able to execute the planned participant observation with chefs, and so rely on published interviews, scholarly literature, and my own experiences outside of formal field work in order to include their perspective in this research. I continued to conduct interviews and participate in virtual events until the conclusion of my field work period in May of 2020. Given the seismic disruption of the pandemic to both my field work and the food system, this thesis focuses on the state of food activism in the Hudson Valley as it was prior to the pandemic with possibilities for future research that would incorporate post-pandemic realities noted in the concluding chapter.

During field work, my primary methodological consideration was to build reciprocal relationships of trust. Having lived and worked in the Hudson Valley within the sphere of local food system advocacy for over two years prior to my formal field work, many of the people that I included in this research already knew me as someone who is personally invested in the success of food localization projects. This had potential benefits and drawbacks, as I will elaborate upon later. To concretize how I begun and continued conversations during field work, consider my participation in the Food Issues Group (FIG).

FIG is a reading group composed entirely of culinary professionals who self-organized in 2016 to create a space in which to think through problems in the food system from a holistic perspective and to identify actions they could take within their own spheres of influence. It includes bartenders, chefs, butchers, bakers, consultants, activists, and more. I was, at that point, the only academic in the group, and was included based on my ongoing activism. As a member of the group, I presented at one of the early meetings on de-colonizing the food system and at another on pasture-based livestock farming. This is key – I not only observed the group but actively participated. Similarly, during field work with farmers I joined in the tasks that they assigned me to do, laboring towards their goals, and when necessary resisting their attempts to create unnecessary or less urgent work specifically so they could show me what they thought I wanted to see. As a third sector worker, I have established relationships with my peers there through collaborating on shared goals such as fundraising and project execution.

Working not just amongst, but with people, from the perspective of 'standing with', built relationships of trust and reciprocity that allowed me to engage in sustained conversations about murky topics like existential dread and hope. By 'conversation' I do not mean only literal, verbal exchanges. I mean all the activities that build rapport and the expressions of thought, verbal and non-verbal, that are the data of anthropology. These conversations developed, not in a linear fashion, but circling back upon themselves through sustained interaction and care to build layers of meaning, all predicated on trust and reciprocity.

I solicited participants through snowball sampling, building on my existing relationships both as a means of practicality and to temper the influence of my status as a Glynwood employee. While Glynwood is respected for its longstanding work in the Hudson Valley, it is also criticized as being elitist. I was sensitive to the fact that my motivations may be deemed suspect, as some may believe that I am prejudiced towards strategies that will show Glynwood's projects in a good light or may withhold information from me that they believe will prevent them from benefiting from Glynwood's resources. In all cases, I used the consent form approved during my ethics review that describes the concurrent but separate nature of my employment and my research to open a conversation with potential field work collaborators about conflicts of interest. None voiced concern. Furthermore, in initiating new relationships, I sought an introduction from someone with whom I already had built trust. It was necessary to provide an opportunity for interlocutors to ask a peer independently about my character and about this research, because issues of power and hierarchy may have impacted the quality of my interactions with people. I am not aware if any discussions of this sort occurred. On the other end of the power dynamic, engaging with philanthropists carried risks to my own employment, the organization I work with, and those involved in this research. For that reason, prior to beginning field work, I presented on the nature of this research to Glynwood's Board of Directors and executed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Glynwood's President detailing my and the

organization's respective rights and responsibilities.² During field work I utilized my day-to-day role at Glynwood to conduct participant observation of the philanthropic sector and chose to interview fundraising professionals who engage philanthropists rather than the philanthropists themselves, relying instead on informal interactions with philanthropists and written records to include their perspectives.

At the outset of this project, I focused on hope as the organizing principle I wished to study. In my search for it, the interactions I had in the field demonstrated different types of hopes and indicated that the different hoped for futures they envisioned were partly defined by a temporal dimension. Grounded in feminist, intersubjective, and situated ethnographic methodologies, I was compelled to recognize the complexity of the future making work the people I researched amongst were doing and to change how I thought about it. The lived experience required me to explore literatures and theories beyond food activism and hope, to bring into focus the epistemologies at play in efforts to localize food in the Hudson Valley.

Theory

The primary theorist I engage for this effort is Ernst Bloch, and specifically his opus *The Principle of Hope* (1995). In it, Bloch argues his ontological thesis of the 'Not Yet'. Humanity and its knowledge systems are incomplete, he argues, and therefore there are materially evident emergent future(s) that can be discovered in the present. Though Bloch's work had considerable influence on philosophers, notably Theodor Adorno and Walter Benjamin, his work did not lead to 'the formation of a school of thought' and 'placed as it is in Marxist currents, [it] has been eclipsed further and further' (Siebers 2013:61). That Bloch's work is not more broadly engaged reflects politicized intellectual bias, particularly in the U.S., but also the general paucity of academic engagement with hope, including in anthropology, prior to the twenty first century (Jansen 2021; Crapanzano 2003a).

² This MOU was developed based on Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine's templates for community based research projects (Memorandum of Understanding Samples n.d.).

My research contributes to that growing body of literature (eg. Kavedžija 2016; Hage 2003; Kleist and Jansen 2016; Ringel 2020; Grøn and Mattingly 2018).

To explain the hopes I observed, and sometimes shared, during my field work, I found it necessary to address the temporal orientations of hope. Looking to the past, nostalgia and grief came into view. Looking to the future, hope and desire distinguished themselves one from the other. Theories of utopian imaginings and enactments helped me to describe the daily praxes of future making. Here, I propose two broad categories of future making: determinate and indeterminate. Ultimately, I endorse indeterminate future making, with all of its false starts and idiosyncrasies, as more capable of generating the transformative changes necessary to address the complex existential and political crises we face. Rejecting the call for the alternative food movement to cohere around a unified agenda, I argue that the proliferation and contestation of utopian food thinking and food projects is a strength.

As my principal concern is with how and why people carry on in the face of existential threats, agentive anticipation is at the heart of my analysis. Bloch writes:

The anticipatory [...] operates in the field of hope; so this hope is not taken *only as emotion*, as the opposite of fear (because fear too can of course anticipate), but *more essentially as a directing act of a cognitive kind* (and here the opposite is then not fear, but memory). The imagination and the thoughts of future intention described in this way are utopian, this again not in a narrow sense of the word which only defines what is bad (emotively reckless picturing, playful form of an abstract kind), but rather in fact in the newly tenable sense of the forward dream, of anticipation in general. And so the category of Utopian, beside the usual, justifiably pejorative sense, possesses the other, in no way necessarily abstract or unworldly sense, much more centrally turned towards the world: of overtaking the natural course of events (1995:12)

Shaping the future against the historical trajectory of a food system ideology that narrowly focuses on productivity and cheapness, at the expense of other values, is

exactly what the food movement purports to do. It envisions and sometimes enacts utopias. Paul V. Stock, Michael Carolan and Christopher Rosin have proposed 'food utopias as a research agenda' (Stock 2021:96) with the ability to open 'dialogue around the encouraging of just, regenerative and sustainable food' (Stock, Carolan, and Rosin 2015:11). While few of my interlocutors would be likely to self-describe the work they do as utopian, in large part because of the common contempt for the word that Bloch describes above, all consider themselves to be working to realize a 'just, regenerative and sustainable' food system for the Hudson Valley. The three tools of food utopia research identified by Stock, Carolan and Rosin that I utilize throughout this thesis are critique, experimentation, and process. Utopias respond to and therefore illuminate the deficiencies of the present, and so studying them both implicitly and explicitly critiques existing forms of power and exploitation, adding to what has been the necessary albeit over-represented need for critique of the failures of the extractive, globalized food system. Experimentation turns the researcher's gaze to anticipatory practices, allowing for the possibility, even likelihood, of food utopias' failure to realize hypothetical futures without discarding the discoveries made in the attempt. This leads into the necessity of attending to process, or praxis, in order to identify new ideas emerging from the margins of the food system, wherein all of my interlocutors are situated, and the responsibility of researchers to 'help incubate them and keep them alive' (Stock, Carolan, and Rosin 2015:10). Whereas Stock, Carolan and Rosin propose attention to food utopias as a counter to the dominant food system, my research seeks to understand the interplay of various actors within the alternative food movement, so I look to Bloch for distinctions between utopias.

The sociologist Ruth Levitas has committed her career to the study of utopia, and eloquently explicates Bloch's philosophy. At root, she asserts, is Bloch's theory of the Not Yet as a fundamental aspect of reality, meaning that reality is not only what is but also 'what is becoming or might become' (Levitas 1990:17). Utopia is therefore acknowledgement of the objective possibilities of the future within present reality. Critically, Bloch distinguishes between theoretical and real possibilities, and builds from this a distinction between abstract and concrete utopias (Levy 1990:5).

Abstract utopias are passive, defined by 'wishful' thinking, while concrete utopias arise from 'will-full thinking' (Levitas 1990:15). Bloch terms the latter *docta spes*, or educated hope (Bloch 1995). Here Levitas finds a weakness in Bloch's distinction between abstract and concrete utopias because he relies on the content of the utopia as definitive. For Bloch, concrete utopias are those that realize Marxist ideals, though unlike pre-Marxist socialist theoretical utopias and traditional Marxists such as Engels who disparage utopia as unscientific, Bloch goes beyond utopian thinking that desires the transformation of social structure to utopian enactment towards achieving social transformation (Levy 1990). In other words, Bloch shifts focus from the form of utopias to the content of utopias (Balasopoulos 2010).

Bloch's attention to the content of utopia, though justifiably critiqued as overly teleological, is also 'fundamental to [...] the relationship between utopia and any political orientation involving a commitment to social transformation' (Levitas 1990:13). While Bloch is adamant that 'all forms of Utopian venturing beyond are better than anti-utopian pragmatic attitudes which close off the future, not all Utopian imagining is as good as any other' (Levitas 1990:14). Abstract utopias are the result of uneducated hope. They imagine impossible futures and so cannot act to realize them. Concrete utopias marry theory and practice by 'simultaneously anticipating and effecting the future' (Levitas 1990:15). Because concrete utopias demonstrate the very real possible futures with which the present is imbued, Bloch reaches 'the surprising conclusion, in contradistinction to customary belief, [that] the true roots of utopia have to be looked for not in the social tier but in the anthropological' (Levy 1990:9). Utopia is an ideal, perfect social order that has not yet existed, *but* can be observed as emergent in the present. Ethnographic attention to hope illuminates how efforts to (re)localize the Hudson Valley food system do or do not evince utopia, and bring Bloch's distinction between concrete and abstract utopias into conversation with a food utopias research agenda.

Hope has increasingly been taken seriously in popular and academic discourses in the U.S. as existential threats mount. For example, Barack Obama's 2008 presidential campaign rode to success on the rhetoric of generalized hope

(Miyazaki 2008), stories of hope have been proffered by food movement activists and environmental activists as motivation for continued activism (Lappé and Lappé 2002; Solnit 2016), and engaged academics have written a handbook for how to cultivate hope through activism in the wake of Donald Trump's election as president (Cann and DeMeulenaere 2020). Hope, as Miyazaki's ethnography of Fijian knowledge practices demonstrates, is powerful because it replicates, interactively from one person to another (Miyazaki 2004). Hope is fundamentally intersubjective, and most powerful in its interpersonal dimension – pointing to its societal value.

The attempt to reclaim hope for societal struggles may be read as a response to the unequal distribution of hope that has arisen under neoliberalism and global capitalism. Ghassan Hage writes that societal hope's 'enemy is a sense of entrapment, of having nowhere to go, not a sense of poverty. As the state withdraws from society and the existing configuration of hope begins shrinking, many people, even those with middle-class incomes – urban dwellers paradoxically stuck in insecure jobs, farmers working day and night without "getting anywhere", small-business people struggling to keep their businesses going, and many more – have begun suffering various forms of hope scarcity' (Hage 2003:20). The effect of hope scarcity is, Hage argues, paranoid nationalism that violently defends the state despite its hostility towards its citizens. The temporal orientation his Australian subjects take towards the past as better than both the present and the frightening future can easily be transposed to the U.S. settler colonial state as well. However, lack of hope does not necessarily lead to a backwards temporal orientation. Miyazaki delves into the scarcity of hope in his work on Japanese businessmen, identifying it as a state of 'no hope' that turns temporally towards 'no longer' rather than towards Bloch's 'Not yet' (Miyazaki 2010). 'No hope' is non-directional, truncating future possibilities. Hope, then, requires a generative future.

The object of hope is a future with desirable content. How can we distinguish between hope and desire? The literary-philosophical anthropologist Crapanzano theorizes the future as a horizon that extends with the act of hoping (Crapanzano 2003a). For Crapanzano, hope is passive because it is defined by waiting and

dependency. Dependency, he argues, it is what distinguishes hope from desire. Desire has a direct object with the possibility of attaining that object, and so can act. Hope is dependent upon 'some other agency' to be realized. Crapanzano illustrates: 'I desire her. I hope she will desire me. I do what I can to bring about her desire, but finally there is a limit to what I can do. I can only hope' (2003a:6). Bloch would categorize Crapanzano's passive, suspenseful hope as uneducated hope.

For Bloch, the horizon of hope is a dawning one. 'The singular characteristics are not yet bright because the sun which radiates its light on everything has not yet risen; it is still dawn, but no longer dark. The direction which one ought to follow is already visible' (Levy 1990:5). Discerning that direction requires *docta spes*, educated hope. That is, '*dialectical-materialistically comprehended hope*' (Bloch 1995:9). The dialectical process destabilizes any finality in the present, thereby reintroducing 'the openness of future [...] to see the contingent process that generated what was in its process of existing' (Žižek 2013:xvii). Educated hope is able to envision and enact really possible futures through dialectical-materialist interrogation of the reality that is pregnant with possibility, not only to wait. The dependency of Crapanzano's hope correlates with the interdependency of educated hope in concrete utopias, but educated hope is more active. Educated hope extends beyond individual hopes because its aim is societal transformation. The educated hoper depends on others for their hopes to be realized, but recognizes that others depend on them for their shared hopes to succeed as well. This interdependency requires action, not only theory. Waiting, then, is an inaccurate description for the obstinacy of educated hope. Survival is more fitting, as in the Black Panther's slogan 'Survival pending revolution' that merges agency and anticipation (Patel 2012). The free breakfast for school children that the Black Panthers ran as a 'survival program' in the U.S. in the 1960s and early 1970s is demonstrative of a concrete food utopia operating with educated hope. Fully comprehending the oppression of Black people that creates food insecurity, and clearly envisioning a future of care where Black life is valued, they fed children both as a means of survival and as demonstration of the possible future (Potorti 2017). Hoping for a more just and equitable future, the Black Panthers were reliant upon each other and the broader community to enact a concrete food utopia.

Comparing Crapanzano's and Bloch's theorization of hope clarifies the distinction between desire and hope, educated and uneducated hopes, and their relationships to the concepts of concrete and abstract utopias. In Crapanzano's thought experiment a person desires a woman and hopes for her desire in return. That person dreams of a better life, a life of shared desire. An on-topic example would be of a person who desires an heirloom tomato and hopes the farmer at the market has some. That person dreams of a better life, a life with a delicious tomato. But as Levitas notes, not all dreams of a better life fulfil the function of concrete utopia: to shape and anticipate the future. They act on desire by going to the market and depend on the farmer for their hope's fulfillment, but their hope does nothing to increase the likelihood of that tomato's existence, nor do they interdependently share hope with the farmer. To characterize this shopper as demonstrating educated hope in a concrete food utopia working to transform agri-food systems would be wrong. At best our tomato shopper may dream of a transformed agri-food system, but has not assessed that hope dialectically. Levitas summarizes the point, 'abstract utopia may express desire, only concrete utopia carries hope' (Levitas 1990:15).

Concrete utopias demonstrate educated hope, which is persistent in its attention to the dawning horizon and requires interdependency to shape the future. Attention to concrete food utopias offers the alternative food movement the opportunity to self-assess. Given the evidence that (re)building human connection within our foodscapes can effect positive social change (Carolan 2017), looking for interdependency in our projects would be beneficial. Critical and persistent attention to the context we are in, the contingency of the present, and emergent possibilities requires engaged, active and self-reflexive hope. This is hope as praxis.

Future Making

This section outlines two models of praxis in food system activism in the Hudson Valley using the concepts of concrete and abstract utopias, desire, and educated hope discussed in the previous section. While both models shape the future, they

also engage the past, leading me to consider nostalgia and grief as differing temporal orientations. Inspired by tomatoes, I term these models determinate future making and indeterminate future making. During the summer that I wrote this, my partner Salem is grew tomatoes in our garden. They could have picked a variety with a determinate growing pattern and left the plants on their own, aside from some watering, with the confidence that the branches of the plant would stay tidily in the garden bed and produce a fair amount of fruit. But they didn't. Salem picked heirloom varieties that grow indeterminately. These tomato plants grow their branches as far as the sun and soil will allow and in any direction they find advantageous. Without care, their branches can flop and break, making a good harvest unlikely. Salem trellised these tomatoes with a bit of twine with one end attached to the base of each plant and the other end of the twine to the top of a wooden frame above. As the plants grew, Salem encouraged the branches along the twine and had to add or move bits of twine to suit where each plant decided to grow. This twine looks to me a lot like educated hope and the relationship of Salem to the tomatoes a lot like interdependency.

Determinant tomatoes have what is called a 'self-pruning' gene. The way this works is that each branch ends in a cluster of flowers, and ultimately a cluster of fruit. The flowers stop the growth of the branch, and all the fruit comes in at once. Indeterminate tomatoes' branches end in leaves, and so continue to grow. They flower along the branch throughout the season and produce multiple harvests. Determinant future making takes a fixed object as its end goal, flowering ends its trajectory and the anticipated harvest is expected at a fixed time. Indeterminate future making shapes the trajectory, anticipating flowers and fruits along the way with no fixed end point. Now, there are also semi-determinate tomato varieties, and likely semi-determinate future making as well. For the sake of clarity, I will describe two ideal models of determinate and indeterminate future making, but with the insistence that such ideal types exist primarily as mental constructs and are unlikely to manifest perfectly in the real world. They do not manifest, except in partial and contingent forms, in the ethnography in subsequent chapters though they are developed from that ethnographic data. I intend these models as epistemological tools that (hopefully!) will support knowledge production towards

shared understanding. In describing each model, I focus on temporality, the object of praxis, how it relates to social structures, whether it expresses desire or hope (and what kind of hope), and whether it generates an ideology, abstract utopia or concrete utopia.

Determinant Future Making

This is a praxis of confidence and assuredness. The past is seen nostalgically, and the future is conceived of in the long term. Reality is complete and humans are what they are; they are not in the process of becoming. Its slogan could be, as the famous Martin Luther King Jr. quote goes, 'The arc of the moral universe is long but it bends towards justice'. It tends to sustain existing social structures. In a pure form it functions as an ideology, though in practice it can also present as an abstract utopia. This is the praxis of both neoliberalism and progressivism, of pragmatism and 'realists'. It intends to shape the future while engaging the past. What pasts does it engage? How and why?

The national political and social atmosphere in the United States today is experienced as frenzied and fracturing. Since the turn of twenty-first century, the failure of civic and political strategies to mitigate the harm caused by capitalist extraction (namely increasing disparities of wealth and health) and to address the increasingly severe climatic changes caused by human activity have contributed to escalating anxiety and to disillusionment with the progressive promise (Tsing 2015). Internationally this sense of precarity can be read as a crisis of capitalism that is fueling the rise of far-right political ideologies and their adherents (Robinson 2019). Longstanding social divisions have been exacerbated by deepened partisan divides – or at least heightened media attention to these divides (Lennon 2018). The ways that classed, gendered, and raced bodies are moving in relation to each other, both physically and ideologically, is disorienting and profound. This is a known story: when the perpetual motion of life seems to speed up and the patterns of that life feel unfamiliar, people may yearn for an imagined time of stillness and constancy in the well noted interplay of modernity and nostalgia (Angé and Berliner 2015; Latour 2012; West 2014; Appadurai 1996). In the twenty-first century, the object of our collective nostalgia is a time and place un-spoilt by globalization. In

the Hudson Valley, people and organizations are reimagining the relationship between society and nature through food and farming to fill this desire by (re)localizing food systems. Much like nostalgic anthropology, the nostalgia of determinate future making worries at the impending loss of the 'other' and centers its attention on 'the local, the particular and the poor, versus the global, the heterogenous and the dominant' as preferred subjects (Angé and Berliner 2015:4). This leads to compensatory and conservationist efforts. As Boym incisively observes, 'Contemporary nostalgia is not so much about the past as about the vanishing present' (Boym 2002:351).

Like hope, nostalgia has been disparaged as passive. In her study of Appalachian communities, anthropologist Kathleen Stewart rejects this view. While she acknowledges a type of nostalgia that flattens cultural images into a 'pure present' without social implications, like Civil War re-enactments or 1950s themed diners, she argues that 'from another place it is a pained, watchful desire to frame the cultural present in relation to an "other" world – to make of the present a cultural object that can be seen, appropriated, refused, disrupted or "made something of"' (1996:225). Nostalgia then is an attempt at agency. It looks to the past as a critique of the present and a guide to the future.

Svetlana Boym dissects nostalgia's future orientation into two types: restorative and reflective (Boym 2002). Through anthropological study of post-socialist nostalgia in the former Soviet bloc she finds, 'Restorative nostalgia returns and rebuilds one homeland with paranoic determination, reflective nostalgia fears returning with the same passion' (2002:354). I found little expression of reflective nostalgia in my own field work; perhaps arising in baby boomers who felt nostalgia for the activism of their youth but adamantly do not wish to return to the social structures of their youth. Restorative nostalgia, on the other hand, arose consistently. The decline of small, family owned and operated farms in the U.S. prompts restorative nostalgia, as I will explain in Chapters 5 and 6. Nostalgia, says Boym, arises from loss and the impossibility of return. The number of small farms in the U.S. has declined steadily from a peak of 6.8 million in 1935 to 2.0 million in 2022 (USDA 2023). This is but one of the ruptures in rural communities and small

cities that shape the 'landscapes of despair' that Monnat and Brown identify as key to understanding the unlikely election of Donald Trump to U.S. president in 2016 (Monnat and Brown 2017).

The animating emotion of restorative nostalgia is despair. Despair is an emotion expressing loss that may be compensated; the lost thing cannot be retrieved but a reasonable substitute may be secured. Though expelled from one homeland to which there is no return, a new homeland may be found. Despair generates compensatory solutions and nostalgia models these solutions on the idealized past. It is impossible to resurrect the farms lost over the past century, but restorative nostalgia inspires efforts to increase the number of new farms, as in Chapter 5. It compensates for losses by predicating the future on retrieval of the past.

The past is no settled fact, and nostalgia touches it selectively. In the Hudson Valley two key eras in the region's history generate restorative nostalgia. The first is the Colonial era, including the Revolutionary War also known as the War of American Independence that concluded in 1783. The Hudson Valley was an early site of colonial settlement by the Dutch, French, Germans, and English. It was also a primary battle ground in the Revolutionary War. Nostalgia for this era is further described in Chapters 3, 4, and 5. Of particular interest is the distinction between post-colonial imperial nostalgia that arises in colonizing states like England (Tyler 2012) and settler colonial nostalgia that frames settlers as bystanders to the erasure of the native, and therefore legitimate inheritors of Indigenous lands and legacies (Imada 2013), as is demonstrated in Chapters 3 and 5. The second era that is a common object of nostalgia here is the Progressive Era, the 1890s to 1920s, that followed on and responded to the industrial revolution in the U.S. It is lauded as a time of social change and activism, and the titans of industry whose wealth funded the birth of contemporary philanthropy are revered. The power dynamics of that era continue to replicate themselves, as will be shown in Chapter 5. Restorative nostalgia for these eras does not naively seek their return. 'One is nostalgic not for the past the way it was', writes Boym, 'but for the past the way it

could have been. It is this past perfect that one strives to realize in the future' (2002:351).

In striving for the 'past perfect', determinate future making tries to pry away what was good in the past for recovery while discarding what was bad. It deconstructs history and knowledge systems into finite and known pieces. By doing so, it aligns with modern Western epistemologies that arose from specific cultures of dominance over local and Indigenous peoples and epistemologies; Western ways of knowing, including about the past, lay false claim to universality and so replicate these systems of dominance (Shiva 1993). Restoring these 'good' pieces of the past, determinate future making aligns with progressivism's belief that the world is slowly but steadily improving, despite evidence to the contrary, and so harmonizes with neoliberal temporality.

'Neoliberalism is [...] a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade' that has proliferated since the 1970s (Harvey 2007:2). The voluminous discourse around what exactly neoliberalism is and does is beyond the scope of this research, but its impact on the Hudson Valley agri-food system is undeniable and Harvey's succinct definition fits my purpose. The temporal attitude towards the future of determinate future making is a neoliberal one.

Jane Guyer made the astounding discovery that under neoliberalism the immediate present and the near future are eliminated in favor of the distant future. She builds her argument with examples from Christian Evangelicism and macroeconomics. The latter is of salience to the ethnography that follows this chapter because of a preponderance of wealth in the Hudson Valley accumulated in financial markets, wealth that is controlled by philanthropists who are comfortable in those markets. Monetarism is 'the basis for recuperation of the long run as a viable working horizon: focus on continuing stable value of money [...], faith in freed up market forces to produce innovation, and calculation by increasingly sophisticated

mathematics and model building, all complemented by a whole range of financial instruments that address (and take advantage of) market risk' (Guyer 2007:412). Faith in money and the market encourage one to ignore what are seen as deviations or temporary crises in what is generally considered a stable and improving environment, echoing progressivism. 'As a logic and model, this combination of rational choice in the very short run, growth in the very long run, and "submission" in the interim' eliminates the importance and even the reality of the near future (Guyer 2007:413).

The 'submission' Guyer identifies has similarities with Crapanzano's waiting hope, and is antithetical to Bloch's concrete utopias. 'Utopian consciousness wants to look far into the distance, but ultimately only in order to penetrate the darkness so near it of the just lived moment, in which everything that is both drives and is hidden from itself. In other words: we need the most powerful telescope, that of polished utopian consciousness, in order to penetrate precisely the nearest nearness' (Bloch 1995:12). The praxis of determinate future making, built on restorative nostalgia and confidence in the inevitability of improvement in the long run, enervates agency in the present by eradicating the near future of value. It separates means from the ends, prioritizing the ends.

Determinate future making bases its credibility on 'common sense' and 'pragmatism' that gain validity from their resemblance to a nostalgically framed past and neoliberal logics of the future. Bloch contends that pragmatism is fundamentally bourgeois, indicating a classed nature to determinate future building that is upheld by my field work (Chapters Three and Five). The political economy of neoliberalism is reliant on the myth of meritocracy, and so is incapable of confronting racial oppression (Andrews 1999). This too resonates with my field work (Chapters Three, Four, and Five). Additionally, the totalizing view of individuals and households as independent economic units under neoliberalism erases different valuations of commodities and social relationships in the present, past and futures (Chapters Six and Seven).

In summary, determinate future making relates to the past nostalgically, views the present as one spot within a fixed trajectory, and looks to the furthest horizon for realization. This supports the separation of theory and practice, and so generates what is either an abstract utopia or an ideology. Mannheim distinguishes ideology from utopia, though he finds both incongruous with reality; the difference he delineates is the backwards impulse of ideology and forward impulse of utopia (Levitas 1990; Mannheim 2015). Ideology, Mannheim concludes, serves the purpose of sustaining the status quo. Some compensatory food system projects demonstrate the maintenance of the status quo; for example, diverting food waste to food pantries to decrease food insecurity does not challenge the root causes of food insecurity while it rewards the wasteful practices of food corporations through tax write-offs (Patel 2007).

Other compensatory food projects, like the Nourish New York program established during the COVID-19 pandemic that pays market rate for food from farms within the state to supply emergency feeding outlets, appear to innovate, to be future oriented, but ultimately also reinforce the status quo. The farms that have historically benefitted from close ties to the resources of the USDA, an institution with an indisputably racist legacy³ (Minkoff-Zern 2019), were those that benefitted most from Nourish New York while farmers from the disenfranchised communities most likely to experience food insecurity were excluded. The Nourish New York program enacted a novel intervention in hunger alleviation but did so without questioning the existing sociopolitical order. Then, following Ze'ev Levy, it cannot be considered utopian. 'Ideology is a thought-system which does not necessarily manifest or proffer a perfect social order. Therefore it can also serve the existing social order' (Levy 1990:11). Though the differences between ideology and abstract utopia may be muddled in the real world, for the purposes of this epistemic model determinate future making is best understood as producing ideology. The precision of ideological thinking and its belief in a closed, finite reality fits neatly

³ Throughout its tenure the United States Department of Agriculture has discriminated in its offers of technical assistance and financial support to non-white farmers. This reality was legally recognized in the historic *Pigford v Gluckman* class-action lawsuit that promised financial restitution to Black farmers, but fewer than half of the applications from farmers have been approved (Agri-Pulse Staff 2014)

with neoliberal ideals of rationality and working towards long-term horizons of growth. The persistent focus on replicability and scalability in alternative food movement projects reflect these ideological concerns. A coherent alternative food movement ideology would answer critique of its validity as a social movement that lacks strategic focus. But what would be lost? Ideology is precise in its vision of the future, and it is because of these pre-determined conditions that it cannot contribute to utopias (Levy 1990:6), including food utopias. Determinant future making forecloses on possible futures rather than proliferating them.

Indeterminate Future Making

Possible futures multiply when indeterminate future making is practiced. Identifying them requires reading for difference (Gibson-Graham 2014; Stock 2021; Stock, Carolan, and Rosin 2015). Cultural critic and feminist theorist bell hooks uses the term white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy (bell hooks 1997), a phrase I utilize throughout this thesis, 'to signify the dominant power structure and systemic interlocking of oppressions that grant power and privilege to some, while disproportionately disadvantaging others' (Fitts 2011:112), and it is against this that difference can be discerned. The transgression from existing oppressive systems that hooks' term evokes arises most often from those who are marginalized by these systems, from those who do not benefit from white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy – a list to which could be added terms like colonial, heteronormative, cisgender, etc. Bloch characterizes the radical sentiment that arises from marginalized peoples as originating in 'the No to deprivation' (Bloch 1995:5). 'The will which is at work here stems from deprivation and does not disappear until the deprivation is eradicated' (Bloch 1995:63). From this informed discontent arises educated hope that animates transformative visions of the future. But indeterminate future making does not only look to the future, it engages with the malleability of the past. For people who have been the losers in white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy's canonized histories, who have often been written out of these histories, the past is a different landscape and requires a different orientation.

The people who demonstrated indeterminate future making during my field work did not yearn for the past nor reflect nostalgically upon it, they grieved it. Grief

differs from despair in that the object of grief cannot be replaced or reconstituted. A beloved relative cannot be replaced by the birth of a new relative, the value of one cannot be conveyed to another. Grief cannot be satisfied with compensation, and therefore is incompatible with determinate future making. The artist and activist Jenny Kendler first alerted me to the necessity of grief as orienting temporal emotion. Writing of the climate crisis, she denounced the numbing popular discourse of hope:

Hope – when generated as a product of the dominant culture, reinforces the status quo...

Hope is brittle these days, and if we look through rose-colored glasses at a loss the size of the world – it can shatter us...

Hope pacifies us – holding back the righteous anger that is needed to hold those responsible accountable for their crimes...

The process of letting go of the seductive hope that we can save *our* world is the process of letting go of the delusion that our current way of life can continue. In releasing this privilege, we can start to conceive of the *new* worlds which may be built in *this* world's composted remains (Kendler 2019).

Her art, instead of providing hope, enacts rituals of grieving for what has been and will be lost to climate crisis. An antique ivory-keyed piano plays a score that represents the predicted monthly loss of elephant lives to poaching. Five decades of 'discarded, neglected or overlooked books on climate change' are carbonized into biochar that is returned to the soil (Kendler n.d.). These artistic memento mori provide ritual-like experiences of mourning while actively transforming the detritus of past eras; in other words, they compost the past.

This active attitude to the past, as something that can be interacted with and that it is imperative to transform, belongs to grief. The wan hope Kendler describes is, in Blochian terms, uneducated hope. It lacks the 'cold stream' of dialectical materialism that must marry with the 'warm stream' of emancipatory passion to enact concrete utopias (Levitas 1990; Bloch 1995). Grief is the realization that the current situation is unbearable, and that this situation is historically and materially contingent, but it is more too. The realization on its own would be for Marx

'alienation' and for Bloch 'disenchantment' (Marx 1954; Bloch 1995). Dialectically constructed hope, argues Bloch, excavates failed past revolutionary efforts for their 'heritage' in order to 'explain how these betrayed radical-emancipatory potentials continue to "insist" as a kind of historical specter and to haunt the revolutionary memory, demanding their enactment, so that the later proletarian revolution should also redeem (put to rest) all these past ghosts' (Žižek 2013:xix). I reject this as overly teleological and limiting to the application of Bloch's ontology of the 'Not yet'. Not all ghosts must be pacified, and all ghosts must be grieved before they can be put to rest.

Putting ghosts to rest requires us to acknowledge their death through ritual. Rituals of grief can extend and transform the relationship of the living to the dead (Hockey, Kellaher, and Prendergast 2007), metabolize grief into resistance against injustice (Leath, Butler-Barnes, and Haynes-Thoby 2022), and enfold the death of non-human bodies (like glaciers) as casualties of climate crisis (Sideris 2020). Writing of the revitalization of the Buddhist Hungry Ghosts Festival amongst diasporic Chinese in Malaysia, anthropologist DeBernardi demonstrates how the ritual was utilized by a political faction to enfold communities in a political agenda (1984). Psychologists have increasingly recognized that the activity of grief can give the deceased a beneficial role, providing resources that enrich the present (Continuing Bonds: New Understandings of Grief 1996), and in my field work I increasingly encountered community rituals of grieving that acknowledged loss, utilized the loss to educate their hope, and fostered shared political agendas.

I read the rise in the use of land acknowledgements on websites and at gatherings of alternative food system advocates as a ritual of grief. Whether short or long, spoken or written, these acknowledgments name the Indigenous peoples whose territory is the space occupied by that organization or meeting. Naming the space as Indigenous land challenges the common use names given by settlers, thereby explicitly or implicitly evoking the harm of colonization and grieving it. As another ritual of public grieving, at gatherings of food system activists I often hear invocations of deceased elders with marginalized identities as celebration of their legacies *and* grief at harms endured. As an example, Black farming activist Leah

Penniman often tells the story of enslaved Africans braiding seeds into their hair before their forced migration to North America (Penniman 2018). This story invokes hope amidst horror. It grieves the lost future of the Africans stolen from their homes, while celebrating their confidence in the reality of new futures and the actions they took in the moment to enable those futures. New futures are assured, but lost futures cannot be reclaimed and must be grieved. This grief is activated through collective ritual and so is different from passive grief, much as active hope is different from passive hope, it composts the ruins of white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy rather than burying them.

The distinction of active grief from Bloch's revolutionary 'heritage' is important. Active grief frees utopian thinking from the fear of failure, for in the past and the future both loss and failure are assured (Muñoz 2009). Grief educates hope and provides a vessel for the collective education of hope. Moreover, grief disrupts white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy's history of conquerors by reclaiming the past for those who lost and the futures lost along with them, thus rendering a multivocal past against univocal history. Thus multivocal futures are made tangibly possible. By including grief as a critical temporal orientation for indeterminate future making I distance it from Bloch's teleological 'heritage' discourse, while demonstrating how attention to profligate futures is co-constructed by acceptance of profligate pasts.

Through grief we see that the past was a site of deprivation, the present is a site of deprivation, and the 'No' to this deprivation insists on transformation. While the past contains 'otherness' that challenges the hegemony of white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy, grieving the loss of that otherness' possible, but truncated futures helps us to see the necessity of transformation, the aim of educated hope (Levitas 1990).

This leads me to the prefigurative praxis of indeterminate future making. Anthropologists have studied prefigurative political praxis since the explosion of social movements in the late 1960s, with heightened interest again during the protests against neoliberalism of the late 1990s (Moreira Fians 2022). Prefigurative

politics are comprised of struggle within and against capitalism, and experimentation to create a new, more just and equitable society (Raekstad 2018). Prefigurative praxis is rooted in anarchist efforts towards autonomy. Carl Boggs argues that prefiguration distinguishes anarchy from Marxism because Marxism is invested in creating the transitional stage prior to the Not yet, while prefiguration practices new plural worlds as part of the process of ongoing transformation (Boggs 1977; Soares and Argüello 2020).

Prefiguration marries means and ends, as does Bloch's concrete utopia, but provides a needed correction to the teleology of Bloch thereby allowing concrete utopias to appear in service to futures within but also outside of explicitly Marxist imaginings. Framing Bloch's work within the Western ontologies from which it emerged, Dinerstein offers another critical reading of prefiguration's relationship to concrete utopias. She emphasizes Bloch's process of educated hope as generative of a pluriverse, capable of connecting different resistances across ontologies through observation of prefiguration and leading to the acceptance of many possible futures as actionable (Dinerstein 2022). While not necessarily Marxist, the prefigurative praxes I identified during field work sought to enact less hierarchical, transactional, and oppressive microcosms through food and farming that are central to my formulation of indeterminate future making.

The projects in which I participated and which I observed were also not explicitly anarchist, but understanding anarchism as prefigurative helps to identify how the attempts to reorganize social and personal life amongst my interlocutors is prefigurative. Writing of anarchists in Germany in 2010, Felix Ringel utilizes Foucault's conception of 'practices of the self' (Foucault 2020) to read the 'mundane aspects of life' amongst the anarchists for 'an approach to the present that is political and critical, but also practical and experimental. These practices help the anarchists to acquire what they know is always only a partial independence from the state, the market, and the general main stream' (Ringel 2012:180). Amongst my friends and colleagues in the Hudson Valley I noted such contingent practices of autonomy in community dinners (Chapter Three), foraging (Chapter Four), collective land ownership (Chapters Five and Six), and seed

saving (Chapter Seven). Each of these is enacted in community, fitting with Foucault's understanding of practices of the self as an ethic of care that is necessarily related to enacting social structures of power that minimize domination (Fornet-Betancourt et al. 1987). Enactments of horizontal power structures and self-liberation as communal praxes are most explicit in Chapters 7 and 8, while Chapter 8 speaks specifically to how the praxis of liberation from heteronormativity, liberated sexuality (Foucault 1978), can operate as a template for imagining liberating futures. As Ringel observes amongst the anarchists, everyday enactments of possible futures, the unity of means and ends, results in a temporal orientation he terms 'creative presentism' that contrasts with Guyer's 'enforced presentism' because it 'practically' reappropriates 'the near future' (Ringel 2012:127; Guyer 2007).

I observed creative presentism and critical grieving of lost past futures as a temporal slipperiness produced by indeterminate future making that engendered a joyful sense of possibility: hope. By slipperiness I mean a willingness to allow the currents of past and future to ebb and flow, much like the estuary waters of the Hudson Valley. This temporal stance emphasizes the malleability of past and future, and fits Bloch's assertion that 'past, present and future are not simply aligned in progressive states, but dialectically related' (Dinerstein 2022:54). Neither past nor future is fixed, and the present is not a dividing line between past and future but rather an opportunity for transformation that opens the horizons of hope. In some cases the slipperiness arose in public enactments, performatively, producing amazement capable of shocking the people present into new conceptions of possible futures (Bloch 1995; Muñoz 2009).

Such moments arose in a meal where Indigenous chefs intervene in the Thanksgiving holiday (Chapter Three), in a Farm Pride celebration and a Dairy Drag performance (Chapter Six), and during a seed harvest of Indigenous crops (Chapter Seven). Each of these events prioritized participation across boundaries of identity, and welcomed diversity of people and thought. Dinerstein notes that Bloch's concept of *multiversum* 'refers to diversity as an expression of the non-contemporaneity that is hidden in unilinear (universal) capitalist time'; her

interpretation of Bloch makes clear the role of grief in identifying diversity in both past and present as needed for time to become slippery. Further, it makes sense that in several cases temporal slipperiness emerged when Indigenous wisdom was centered, because Indigenous ontologies often understand time as cyclical or as an ongoing reality rather than a linear progression (Dinerstein 2022; Crapanzano 2003b; Whorf 1988). I also noticed temporal slipperiness in individuals' thinking. For example, farmers who reject rural/urban binaries that code the former as heritage and the latter as modernity (Chapters Five and Six). Placemaking, I noticed, could also demonstrate this malleability of time.

David Harvey has drawn attention to the need to analyze the geography of utopias as a counter to the flattening of place imposed by the growth imperative of capitalism (Harvey 2000), and place is, of course, a central concern for advocates of (re)localizing food systems. The food utopia research agenda likewise names experimental relationships to more-than-human places as a marker of food utopias and an area for further research (Stock, Carolan, and Rosin 2015). I contend that the enduring occupation of place, as in farmers' markets (Chapter Three), orchards (Chapter Four) and farms (Chapter Six), is more conducive to indeterminate future making than are transient relationships. This is because enduring relationships to place highlight different temporal scales, while providing evidence of the reality of possible futures. Seeds, trees, insects, rocks, cucumbers, money, and people move at different speeds that become apparent against the backdrop of a single place. Enduring occupation of a piece of land also allows for departure and return, so that a migrant worker (as in Chapter Four) may begin to see one place as prismatically connected to distant places through shared passage of time, or so that a queer entrant farmer may experience the countryside as a place for life rather than death (as in Chapter Six). Through enduring occupation of land, people engaged in prefigurative projects reclaim the near future, and as it becomes the near past its real possibilities are made evident, even through failure, so that the real possibilities of the future can be more tangibly felt. Placemaking becomes prefigurative when it experiments with methods of achieving Bloch's 'Utopian Totum ... that homeland of identity in which neither man behaves toward the world, nor the world behaves toward man, as if towards a stranger' (1995:209). It is this

homeland that may most distinguish determinate future making from indeterminate future making. The nostalgic homeland of determinate future making is one to be returned to or resurrected, but the 'still unachieved homeland' is the object of educated hope and it is an unknown, incomplete, but knowable place (Bloch 1995:9). Through prefigurative praxis it becomes known.

Indeterminate future making aligns with Bloch's theory of concrete utopias, with the corrective of including grief as a critical orientation towards the past. It is collective, practices the world it wants to see, exhibits joyful moments of slippery temporality, and focuses on the near future rather than the distant future. In doing so, it acknowledges the present reality of multiple possible futures and acts to realize them.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have introduced my field site, the Hudson Valley, as a landscape rife with meaning making. I have described my ethnographic methodology and its grounding in feminist theory. The theoretical framework, which I invite the reader to consider as they continue through this thesis, proposes two future making praxes: indeterminate and determinate. Determinate future making is nostalgic for the past, enacts compensatory solutions to present problems, and projects desire into the long term. The result is that it sustains existing social structures and aligns more with ideology than with utopia. Indeterminate future making grieves the harms of the past, takes transformation of social and political systems as its objective, and reclaims the near future. The result is that it rearranges social structures and produces concrete utopias.

In the following chapters neither of these theoretical future making praxes will appear in their ideal form, as they have been described. The ethnographic section of this thesis will move along the spectrum, more or less following the structure of this chapter, from the attitudes and projects that are most exemplary of determinate future making to those that are most exemplary of indeterminate future making. Tracing the experiences of people working to (re)localize the Hudson Valley's food

systems, indeterminate future making praxes are shown to be more capable of generating the radical everyday practices and really possible futures needed to address the intersecting existential crises humanity faces.



*Fig 3. A signature dish at the restaurant Blue Hill at Stone Barns
"Summer vegetables on a fence: radish, turnip," Photographed by Adam Goldberg. (2013)
<http://www.alifewortheating.com/posts/july-2013/blue-hill-stone-barns> Accessed 6 Nov. 2023*

Chapter Two

FOOD

Ascending the steps to ground level from the subway platform at the 14 St.-Union Square stop in Manhattan on a Greenmarket day, I experience a euphoric disorientation. From out of the dim, dank cacophony of steel and concrete, the mass of humans I am part of is plunged immediately into the smells, colors, and bubbling chatter of the thriving marketplace in Union Square. It is a mecca for gastronomes, and a critical anchor for farmers in the region lucky enough to secure a stall. My favorite season to be there is early autumn, when the heady aroma of concord grapes, the berries blue-black with a silvery bloom, wafts around ochre sunflowers and scarlet amaranth nodding like carnival masks above tables laden with cascades of dark leafy greens, knobby red-orange squashes, thin-skinned potatoes crusted with still-damp earth, and russet apples exuding their honeyed breath. And then there's the cheese, wine, bread, eggs, spirits, herbs, meats... All

this nestled in a leafy square encircled by glassed office buildings and big-name retailers, with a view of the Empire State Building to one side and to the other a digital display of the Climate Clock counting down the minutes until global warming makes Earth uninhabitable.

The City

I want to introduce you to the Hudson Valley from this place because New York City, referred to throughout New York State as simply 'the city', exerts an inescapable influence on the Hudson Valley. Visitors, ideologies, class relations, and capital flow from the megapolis into the valley where they can be adopted, shaped, contested, or rejected. The relationship is not entirely one sided but it is imbalanced. 'New York City stands alone among American cities in its relationship to the state of which it is a part. Size alone distinguishes it: New York City's population exceeds that of the nation's next three largest cities combined and has accounted for roughly half of the state's population for more than a century. In almost every way—in its wealth as in its poverty, in its culture and its diversity—the city is a force too large to ignore' (Schneier, Pole, and Maniscalco 2023:14). The division between 'downstate' and 'upstate', the terms residents use, are not merely geographic indicators of south and north; they are clearly understood cultural boundaries. Upstate residents often experience the city as extractive and domineering. In terms of food systems, the city is the primary market for foods from small-scale and mid-sized producers; foods that are ironically difficult to obtain nearer to where they are grown and made. As Heather Paxson notes in her study of artisanal cheesemakers, the business possibilities for anti-industrial food producers are demonstrably enabled by their proximity to urban centers, urbane consumers, and the industrial infrastructure (such as highways) that allow for high volumes of urban-rural traffic; labeling a cheese as 'farmstead' only carries value in markets where farms are themselves distant, imagined places (Paxson 2012:68). The Hudson Valley is not only a geographic place, but a region defined by urban imaginations. It has become a shorthand for consumers that food producers engage and shape in order to secure market value for their products in the city. On jar labels, chalkboard signs, and vinyl banners, the words 'Hudson Valley' pepper the Union Square Greenmarket.

In my lifeworld, this market is an idyl of urban bustle and rural abundance joyously mixing. It is a place I feel I understand, a place where I feel I belong. This surely is not true for everyone who emerges from the subway with me. As farmers' markets have proliferated in the U.S., so has the stigma that they are 'bougie', overpriced, and coded white. Based on research at a farmers' market in Minneapolis, Slocum shows how racialized bodies practice different patterns of movement and consumption in the market that evince racial segregation while also creating opportunities for bodily relationships and consumption practices that value difference, generate intimacy, and demonstrate proto-anti-racist politics (2012). Alkon, in her research of farmers' markets in California, finds that the meanings farmers' markets patrons, vendors, and managers attribute to the economic activity of buying and selling locally produced foods is raced and classed so that some are included, and others excluded. Ultimately, Alkon finds that these bastions of the 'green economy' favor strategies of economic growth over others, effectively sidelining issues of food access and environmental justice that are more pressing to marginalized communities (2012). In my own research, I've found that farmers also feel the pressure to present an image of themselves at farmers' markets that aligns with the white, gendered, middle-class expectations of their customers even if it does not align with how farmers view themselves (Larmer 2017). Before moving from Brooklyn to the Hudson Valley in 2016, my mental image of the region was constructed from experiences in farmers' markets like the Union Square Greenmarket and in farm-to-table restaurants, subject to the same legitimate critiques of class and race exclusion as farmers' markets are, that proudly announced the Hudson Valley provenance of crops in their stalls and ingredients on their menus. From this bodily experience, I constructed an image of the Hudson Valley as a white, wealthy, agricultural, and culinarily thrilling place. Kind of like Tuscany, or Napa Valley.

I'm not alone in that. Before I worked for Glynwood, I served on the organization's Advisory Council. At my first meeting of that body, as we suggested positive changes we would like to see made to the organization, I said that we would do well to think about how the group itself, majority white presenting, could be more

racially diverse. I then looked around the living room of the estate's largest building where the meeting was taking place and, feeling a bit out of place myself in such posh digs, turned to a fellow city-dweller beside me to joke, 'Are there any Black or poor people in the Hudson Valley?' He chuckled and responded, 'I honestly don't know'. I'm embarrassed recalling this now. Of course there are. But our limited experience of the region through food evinced no socio-economic diversity in the region, and so our urban gaze was myopic.

In this chapter, I delve into the urban-rural relationship of the city to its hinterlands in the Hudson Valley. The two are connected through commerce, culture, and contested power as much as geography. The food of the Hudson Valley found in markets and restaurants contributes to an urban imaginary of the Hudson Valley, and this urban gaze is oddly recursive. It sets expectations for Hudson Valley chefs that are difficult to achieve without the alternative food system infrastructure of the city. Focusing on chefs and their relationship to the Hudson Valley, the complexity of making futures in a region that is constantly making meaning from and about place comes into focus. Food is a lens into the messy, unfinished attempts to make futures in a place where culture has been written and overwritten time and again.

Through food, the city constructs an urban gaze that lands on the Hudson Valley. This obfuscates the lived experience of Hudson Valley residents, but simultaneously the values and assumptions invoked by the urban gaze are relocated to the Hudson Valley, informing the hopes of both city and valley residents for the future of the region's food systems. Questions of taste, distinction, authenticity, and expertise arise. Chefs, powerful arbiters of these concepts, are my primary interlocutors in this chapter, while the voices of others in the food system will feature in later chapters. The futures imagined by chefs for the region are ignited by the 'discovery' of Hudson Valley grown foods, and have built a system of provisioning for urban markets and restaurants that is radically different from the main stream food economy that most Hudson Valley residents rely upon. Two strains of future-building seem to have emerged from chef-advocacy fostered in the so-called 'culinary revolution' of the mid-aughts (Alexander 2019). One, that I will use the example of the Blue Hill restaurants to illustrate, has crystallized as

determinate future making premised on recapturing the flavors and connection to landscape presumed to have proliferated in the past, even if that imagined past was in foreign landscapes. The other strain of future making practice is more indeterminate. It is inspired by explorations in kitchens and farmers' markets to interrogate the structural underpinnings of the food system with hopes of restructuring the business of food as a vehicle for transforming society. The first praxis imagines the Hudson Valley as a fixed and passive place while the second praxis leans into the discomfort of unknowing and interdependency and so is better able to see the region's complexity, but both are ultimately urban gazes.

The Country in the City

Let's go back to the market.

The Union Square Market is the flagship market of the city's Greenmarket program, managed by the umbrella organization Grow NYC, that now organizes over forty additional neighborhood markets across the city, all exclusive to farmers following strict production guidelines and within a circle 'extending 120 miles to the south, 170 miles east and west, and 250 miles north of New York City' (GrowNYC 2023:2). Like other producer markets, these are more than sites of commerce, they are social 'third spaces' that provide an opportunity for civic engagement and social connection facilitated by 'tasteful' purchasing (Tiemann 2008; Zukin 2008). More than eighty of the vendors who attend these markets are based in the Hudson Valley (GrowNYC n.d.). This contributes to a widely held urban imaginary of the Hudson Valley as a place defined by the production of authentic food and social connection, strongly tied to rural narratives and experiences of place.

It is also a symbol of the reclamation of New York City as a vibrant site of cultural production and economic activity. Founded with 10 vendors in 1970, the market now hosts hundreds. The city of the 1970s was rundown and dangerous following decades of white flight to the suburbs. Union Square, encircled by mansions at its construction in the late nineteenth century, was a busy commercial district through the 1950s and then declined steadily as businesses shuttered. The intrepid farmers who first pitched their tents in the square in 1970 were occupying space known for

drug use and vandalism, not kale and cherries. A multi-million-dollar renovation of the park in the 1980s began an era of revitalization that has included expansions to the park and its increased role in the city's cultural life as a gathering space for shopping, relaxing, and political protesting. In her study of consumption practices that engage with and alter public space in New York City, Zukin notes that 'food stores and restaurants anchor many of today's urban transformations'; transformations that, she argues, are largely driven by the desire to consume 'a special kind of authenticity: real food, locally grown' that has an evocative backstory. (2008:735, 736) She demonstrates how these spaces of alternative consumption drive gentrification as entrepreneurs and consumers co-craft these spaces to serve middle-class, white demographics and draw the attention of investors from other spheres. The development of the Union Square Greenmarket aligns with Zukin's findings, as do many of the restaurants its vendors supply.

Today, there are food distributors in the region dedicated to supplying high-end restaurants and markets with locally and regionally grown specialty foods. Grow NYC primed this distribution network by bringing these foods into the city at its Greenmarkets, and has been instrumental in laying the foundation for more sophisticated distribution through GrowNYC Wholesale and its development of the New York State Regional Food Hub in the Hunt's Point neighborhood of the Bronx. They estimate that twenty million pounds, or over nine million kilos, of food produced in compliance with Greenmarket rules will be distributed through the hub annually once it is fully operational (GrowNYC 2021). This wasn't how it was in the early aughts.

Katy McNulty came to the city then. After being active in gardening and food system activism with Slow Food in Washington, D.C., she felt it was time to earn her chops in a professional kitchen. Jonathan Hittinger, now her husband and business partner, had just moved to New York City to make a career transition into the culinary field, after time in the military, and urged her to join him. She remembered:

'I felt like we were weird kids at the time. We moved here super specifically to try to work at farm-to-table restaurants. We were just watching what was

happening in New York and were drawn *specifically* to this scene. That would have been about 2006, 2007, 2008 – those years. And so it was happening, and it was really cool, and really exciting. In some ways I feel like it is really hard to remember how different it was then. People were still telling stories about Peter Hoffman riding his bicycle to the market and bringing stuff back to Savoy.⁴ It was old school! There was so much less distribution and people didn't use words like foodshed. There was a lot of excitement around the idea of like, whoa – this is way better food.'

Katy's passion for food as a site of political action wasn't so persuasive to Jonathan, but as they worked the line together at farm to table restaurants, Katy says he couldn't deny 'the fact that farmers' market food tastes better ... so what we truly bonded over was just the qualitative difference – you know that experience that a person has when they go to a dinner...and they're just like, "oh, I wasn't eating food before.'" That excitement for the quality and flavor of local food, and its transformative potential, seemed to be contagious across the country in the early aughts.

American chefs in that period were creating a new measure of culinary distinction based on superlative ingredients that were rare and extraordinary not because they were intrinsically scarce, but because locally grown, idiosyncratic, seasonal foods had become scarce within an industrialized foodscape. The iconic dish of this flavor-driven 'locavorism' appeared on the dessert menu of Alice Water's Chez Panisse restaurant in Berkeley, California in 1991: a hammered copper bowl containing perfectly ripe fruit, unadorned with any culinary techniques, elevated to the level of fine dining by the chef's uncompromising selection of perfect specimens from the crop and by the menu's listing of the farm from whence it came (Pollan 2011). This dish encapsulates a shift in the cultural capital of chefs. At the turn of the century chefs rose to celebrity status on an unprecedented wave of culinary rebellion that emphasized authenticity and eschewed the trappings of

⁴ In 1990 Hoffman opened the restaurant Savoy with his wife Susan. It was an early adopter of farm-to-table cuisine and presaged an 'unfussy' approach to dining on dishes made with meticulously sourced ingredients. The Hoffmans ran successful farm-to-table restaurants in NYC for 26 years. (Rosner 2016)

haute cuisine (Kuh 2001; Alexander 2019). Fascination with taste as flavor, and the drive to understand it, has been a springboard for chefs who would shift cultural tastes as well. Following Bourdieu, good taste belongs to 'legitimate culture' and professionalized experts in particular cultural fields are arbiters of legitimacy (Bourdieu 1984). To understand how the social capital chefs have as professionalized experts may be wielded as activists who change taste, we must understand how the occupation rose from laboring class to professional class.

In France in the 1970s, chefs of *nouvelle cuisine* redefined themselves as auteurs, not laborers. Many great American chefs of the 1980s and 90s – such as Wolfgang Puck, Jean-Georges Vongerichten, Daniel Boulud, David Bouley and Jean-Louis Palladin – began their careers by working in kitchens of those French pioneers (Barber 2014). These *protégés* espoused the French concept of *terroir*, the influence of landscape and production methods on flavor, in sourcing high quality, seasonal ingredients that suited the simple preparations of *nouvelle cuisine*. Bringing their experiences of *nouvelle cuisine* to the States, the chefs who popularized farm-to-table cuisine in the 1990s retained reverence for the finest ingredients while embracing culinary populism. As Hyman notes, 'Many of the new culinarians...were the aspirational children of the working and lower middle classes, raised in optimistic post-war suburbs or in culturally mixed working-class city neighborhoods' (Hyman 2008:44). They brought to the kitchen both a respect for culinary excellence and a democratic approach to cuisine. This aesthetic gave rise to a new generation of 'culinary omnivores' who, Johnston and Baumann argue, distinguish themselves by consuming 'authentic' and 'exotic' foods as legitimized by celebrity chefs (2007). Famous chefs were transformed from 'culinary professionals into creators of culture, capable of bestowing knowledge and "coolness" on those who dine in their restaurants' (Hyman 2008:47). I will illustrate how this unique social capital is accumulated with the example of the late Anthony Bourdain, archetype of chef coolness.

In 2000, Bourdain's book *Kitchen Confidential* marked a turning point. Written in 'Kitchenese' (Bourdain 2013:xiv), this bildungsroman depicts his 'less than stellar career' alongside 'wacked-out moral degenerates, dope fiends, refugees, a

thuggish assortment of drunks, sneak thieves, sluts and psychopaths' (Bourdain 2013:69). An ode to manual labor and the general low-classness of restaurant kitchens, it made Bourdain one of the most famous chefs alive. His first television show, *A Cook's Tour* (Collins and Tenaglia 2002; 2003), set his signature style. Bourdain, the brute with the golden palate, travels from Paris to the Sahara to the Mekong to find the most authentic and exotic foods, at any cost, and deliver the experience to the viewer. He's a champion of offal and street food and Michelin stars all at once, the model democratic gourmand. His persona, a seeming contamination between the high and the low classes Bourdieu describes in *Distinction* (1984), is the source of his cultural authority. A chef is a manual laborer, mediating the dangers of 'raw' food through his cooking (Lévi-Strauss 2012). Following this application of Lévi-Strauss' culinary triangle, Hyman argues Bourdain is 'the liminal monster of the kitchen' who becomes the 'tour guide' buffering the viewer from the dangerous peasant foods (2008:50). But, understood as Johnston and Baumann detail it, the significant cultural capital chefs have gained is potent because 'authenticity and exoticism are ways to valorize food' that resonate with democratic cultural ideals while reinforcing classed means of distinguishing and appreciating culture through professional expertise (2007:200). Bourdain is a culinary explorer whose authority is *defined by experience*. By traveling to exotic places to see, touch, and taste foods in their embedded reality, he becomes an expert. Accumulated sensory experience becomes social capital. Bourdain defines culinary authenticity, distinguishing for the omnivorous gourmet those foods that are of the populous, but not common: foods in good taste.

The persona exemplified by Bourdain is now a standard measure for chefs. It is not enough to source an ingredient with great *terroir*, the journey to the source of the ingredient is central to establishing a chef's authority. Consider the television series *Chef's Table*. Each episode depicts a chef from another corner of the globe, scouring breathtaking landscapes, picturesque open-air markets, or rustic farms for exemplary ingredients. Often, the chef is led to these ingredients by a romanticized 'other' – an elder (Chef's Table 2017a; Chef's Table 2015b), an Indigenous person (Chef's Table 2017b), an agricultural laborer (Chef's Table 2016; Chef's Table 2015a), etc. The culmination of the drama is a shot of the final dish in which the

exotic ingredient, beautified by the chefs' artistry, is plated and offered seductively to the viewer. The food is tamed by the chefs' ability to aestheticize it. The authentic, exotic ingredient is thereby assimilated into legitimate culture through the chefs' journey from source to plate. The Union Square Greenmarket has become a source in itself, gaining its identity and claim to authenticity through a combination of market regulations, producers' marketing efforts, and chefs' ambitions.

Amongst farmers' markets some are deemed 'chefs' markets', and Union Square Greenmarket is the grandame of them all. The market is legitimized by chefs' attendance as a site of authenticity, a metonymous pocket of the Hudson Valley and other agricultural landscapes where chefs can enact their first steps on the critical journey from source to plate. At a chef's market, the early chef gets the maitake mushroom, or whatever the coveted ingredient of the season may be. Jonathan relishes telling stories about his days sourcing for Blue Hill in Manhattan and its sister restaurant of the same name in the Hudson Valley. He enjoyed the competition, snatching up the most prized ingredients before other chefs had a chance at them, and to this day feels proud to serve the people he feeds something special that he's found at market. Katy gives the example of 'patty pan squashes from the most intentional farm' evoking 'that sense of – this is meaning'. Much of that sense of meaning came from those early mornings at Union Square, picking up pre-orders and checking out unusual harvests with farmers before public opening hours. While Jonathan had been persuaded by flavor to seek out ingredients from the market, in the social space of the market he learned directly from farmers about their skill, their challenges, and their aspirations. They became his friends, and he became persuaded to Katy's way of thinking of food as part of a social and ecological community. In those market interactions Jonathan and Katy found inspiration for their entrepreneurial dreams and began planning for a food business that would let them 'start leveraging our buying power', she said, 'because that was the most satisfying part of it, like, being a player'.

Another chef told me of a similar journey he made to Union Square Greenmarket as he was building his own business. Shawn Hubbell grew up in Guatemala, then

Florida, and came to the Hudson Valley to attend the Culinary Institute of America (CIA) in Hyde Park in the early aughts. After graduation he spent a year working at a three-Michelin star restaurant in San Sebastian, Spain. When he returned to New York, he wanted to stay in high-end fine dining but found that the job offers he was getting in the city weren't going to provide the financial support he needed for the family he was planning to start with his new wife. So, he and his brother-in-law opened a small restaurant in Orange County, in the Hudson Valley. Following in the steps of the high caliber chefs he aspired to join, Shawn remembers, 'I was the one who was like, "I gotta get into the city", and I heard about Union Square Market. I remember very distinctly going down there, and being like, whoa whoa whoa wait – Pine Island? Goshen? And seeing all these farms that were within minutes of where I lived instead of travelling into the city, paying exorbitant prices for produce, and that was what really opened my eyes.' The farmland he lived amidst had been a blur outside his car window. It only came into focus as desirable when the food grown there was legitimized by its presence in the chefs' market. Through the image of the Hudson Valley constructed within the urban context of the Union Square Greenmarket, Shawn saw his own place differently. He began visiting Hudson Valley farmers' markets and nearby farms and featuring their produce as specials at the restaurant.

Though the restaurant was doing well, Shawn was frustrated with the ownership and the lack of passion in the service staff, so he left and eventually opened a catering company named Amuzae. He launched the business with dinners at a local winery that featured farms and their produce. Much like Jonathan, he had come to farmers' market ingredients seeking superlative flavor, and in the course of building relationships with the farms that were his neighbors, he became invested in their success. Supporting farms became the organizing feature of his catering business. Annually in August the dinner would focus on tomatoes. Different varieties sourced from multiple farms would be served and the farmers who grew them would attend the dinner. Shawn took his role as proponent of the farms seriously, and enjoyed seeing diners learn 'the difficulties of farming' as well as 'the effects of *terroir*'. The dinners weren't particularly profitable. 'I treated those dinners as my marketing', he said, 'as long as I covered my costs and made a couple

hundred bucks [...] if I got a private gig out of one of those dinners that was my success.’ But as the business matured, he found himself conflicted. When we spoke in 2019, Amuzae had been open for thirteen years.⁵ ‘The real catering’, he said, ‘you go about this balance between the food itself and creating a business, and when it gets to that realm you gotta make money. That part there – this is like a cathartic moment – that part there is where you start making different decisions. One small farm can only produce so much chicken, and when you have an entity that we have to serve fifteen hundred people...’ Shawn had been at a local outpost of the national Restaurant Depot chain earlier that week, a conventional wholesale supplier. He looked over the frozen foods piled on his platform truck and thought, ‘What the fuck is happening?’ While in the early days he had relied on self-exploitation, working excessive hours and forgoing the type of profit that would allow him ‘to pay staff, to pay my bills, to bring money home to my family and be a contributing partner’, as his business grew it became unfeasible, and he reverted to reliance on the industrialized food system for the bulk of the food he worked with while featuring the pricier, locally grown food as luxurious flourishes. Without structural transformation to the business of catering, Shawn was caught in a precarious bind between supporting the family farms he neighbored and supporting his own family.

Down in Brooklyn, Katy and Jonathan also launched a catering business, with similar motivation to Shawn’s. They considered seeking out investors to start their own restaurant, but after watching too many of their friends go that route and be forced to compromise on principles for the sake of profit, they went into catering because they could afford to start it on their own with the little capital they had to hand. It was about independence for them as chefs at the start, but, unlike Shawn’s experience in the Hudson Valley, it came to be about interdependence as their business grew. As farm-to-table became de rigueur for New York City restaurants, distribution channels for local food proliferated. Greenmarket got in on it, but so did many other businesses and individuals who acted as intermediaries between the farmer and the purchaser. These alternative distribution channels functioned from

⁵ Amuzae closed in 2020 as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic, and has not re-opened at the time of writing.

an economic solidarity mindset similar to that of Shawn, Katy and Jon. With the critical mass of restaurants and consumers in the city, they have been able to achieve a degree of economic stability by aggregating foods from the hinterlands and bringing them into the city. Without that market concentration, the less populous cities and towns of the Hudson Valley have largely not made it onto those distribution maps, leaving the burden of sourcing on individual chefs until some can no longer justify the effort, and more never even attempt it.

The economic network of regional food supply and distribution anchored by the New York City market is not, Katy argues, simply a miniature version of the conventional food supply chain:

‘If you think about being a line cook, even when we started, 2008 or whatever, you put your orders in at 11:00, 12:00, 1:00 am and if that shit didn’t show up the next day exactly as you ordered it, you’re not gonna order from that company anymore. And that’s just a normal assumption. But the way that our relationships work in this food world is so different than that. I love it. It can be frustrating but it is also so real, and so personal, and so organic. It’s this constant conversation of – oh well, we don’t have that we have this. Can I give you these crazy heirloom winter squashes that cost some insane, like \$35 a pound, something totally crazy. I’ll give them to you for a different price, but you gotta try them. You gotta sell them. That constant back and forth. [...] That kind of level of open, transparent conversation is unthinkable in industrial [food supply chains].’

Shared values around food, its meaning and its potential as a tool for change, organize this alternative supply chain and it is the geographic concentration of people sharing those values that the city, and urban spaces like the Union Square Greenmarket bring together that make it possible.

Arriving in the Hudson Valley I was eager to revel in the abundance of deliciousness that the Greenmarket promised me, only to learn, as Shawn did, that it’s a lot harder to buy Hudson Valley grown foods in the Hudson Valley than it is at

Union Square. Over the years I've joined a CSA⁶, bought grass-fed meat in bulk as well as the freezer to store it in, and driven hours to try meals at farm-to-table restaurants that I wouldn't have ridden the subway more than twenty minutes for when I lived in Brooklyn. I still find myself looking to the city as the place where the good food is, inducing a kind of vertigo in perception as, from the Hudson Valley, I covet the city's Hudson Valley food.

The urban gaze defines Hudson Valley food and chefs strive to connect to farms as the source of authenticity, and therefore social capital. However, intermediaries are necessary to calibrate two business models – food production and food service – that have developed amidst neoliberal marketization of food and service. In this context Shawn found himself unable to reconcile his values with the market. Without the critical mass of the city, Shawn's efforts to serve Hudson Valley food in the Hudson Valley required untenable levels of self-exploitation. More famous chefs, though, have built their own cultural capital by becoming the conduit for well-heeled foodies to enact their own journey from source to plate by opening restaurants in the valley. The urban gaze then contorts, as if in a hall of mirrors, resulting in strongly determinate future making praxis.

The City in the Country

The most famous farm-to-table restaurant in the Hudson Valley is Blue Hill at Stone Barns. Like many of its patrons, the restaurant has residences in both the city and the valley. The executive chef and co-owner is Dan Barber. Barber is, today, the epitome of chef as activist taste maker. In 2000, he and his brother opened Blue Hill in the Greenwich Village neighborhood of Manhattan. It is named after the family dairy farm where they spent parts of their youth (Barber 2014), and has gained widespread acclaim including Michelin stars and name checks by President Barack Obama. One early patron was David Rockefeller, grandson of John D. Rockefeller. David Rockefeller also had a family dairy farm with golden childhood memories, in Tarrytown, about an hour north of Greenwich Village. David's late

⁶ Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is a model that has grown in popularity in the U.S since the 1970s whereby 'CSA members' buy a so-called share in the farm's harvest before the growing season begins and collect their shares throughout the season.

wife, Peggy, had founded American Farmland Trust to preserve farmland and he wanted to make the family dairy farm into a tribute to her work. He asked Dan to open an outpost of Blue Hill there, and in 2004 the non-profit Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture and the second (for profit) Blue Hill restaurant opened their doors.

Quantifying the impact of these two restaurants on the food culture of New York, the Northeast, and even globally would be challenging. Hundreds if not thousands of aspiring culinarians have come to work in their kitchens and dining rooms, drawn as Katy and Jonathan were to the promise of exquisite food with meaning. Leaving Blue Hill, many have continued to work in the food system with the drive to make positive change. Interestingly, as the Blue Hill restaurants evolved and the food movement within which their work was contextualized shifted the values it promoted, so has the perception of the restaurants and of Barber himself changed. For the rest of this chapter, I will trace the activist trajectory of Blue Hill's chef and the alumni who worked for him, in order to illustrate how future making practices develop according to one's orientation to the past, how discordance in praxis reveals divergent values, and how urban-rural relationships in the region are not dichotomous but heterogenous.

Katy and Jonathan both worked for Dan Barber for several years, and as they continue to be active in alternative food system advocacy as chefs and business owners in New York they continue to have both personal and professional relationships with Blue Hill and Stone Barns. Katy spoke to me of the importance of her and Jonathan's time working for Barber in the aughts:

'Jack Algiers, the main farmer, and Dan himself, and the livestock farmer [Craig Haney] and his wife [Gabrielle Langholtz] – they were like a friend group almost. They were tight and starting this thing, and there was a circle around them of all of us. We were kind of followers, but we were also apprentices. We were watching them to see if they would make it. Can they do this thing? So, for some of the earliest graduating classes of that institution, I think we have a relationship to it that's – for some people it's almost sacred, like your alma mater or a religious institution, just something

that you never question. I feel like my relationship to it is – some of that, but that’s almost a nostalgic piece of it – I feel like what I value most is that I got to see them in a much more vulnerable, transparent time in the life of that institution.’

By all accounts, Blue Hill was a place of experimentation and obsessive curiosity in its first decade. Barber and his leadership circle were trying something radical even within the farm-to-table movement by tying specific farms, Blue Hill Farm and Stone Barns’ farm, to the Blue Hill restaurants. It’s worth noting that the distinction between urban and rural is almost entirely collapsed when people speak of Blue Hill. People say ‘Blue Hill’ to refer to what Katy called ‘the institution’, meaning both restaurants inclusive of the restaurants’ relationship to the Stone Barns Center, *or* to indicate only the upstate restaurant. If they want to distinguish another part from the whole, they say Blue Hill in Manhattan, or Stone Barns to distinguish either from the most famous of the trio, the restaurant Blue Hill at Stone Barns. Blue Hill became as much a brand as an actual place over the course of the aughts as the scrappy group, pushing the boundaries of fine dining, gained in reputation and fame. Reflecting on this shift, Katy said, ‘Now their story is so tight. Their brand is so tight. What the world knows of them is so tight that they seem sort of impenetrable, like another ecosystem.’ An important part of that brand is Barber himself, who has crafted his public persona as a chef-activist. Numerous media articles, his appearance on *Chef’s Table* (Chef’s Table 2015a), and public speaking appearances point to Barber’s desire to serve as a guiding voice in the food movement. He most clearly articulated his vision, and his drive to achieve it, with his first book publication in 2014.

The Third Plate: field notes on the future of food, is a book that is part memoir, part farmer profiles, and part treatise (Barber 2014). It chronicles Barber’s development as a chef, the trajectory of farm-to-table dining from European to American kitchens, and the role he sees for chefs in forging a landscape based, American cuisine. He critiques the limits of the farm-to-table paradigm through his own experience, writing, ‘Farm-to-table restaurants promote their menus as having evolved in [this] order: forage first – maybe with a morning’s stroll through the

farmer's market – and create later', but years into cheffing at both Blue Hill restaurants, he found, 'My cooking did not amount to any radical paradigm shift. I was still sketching out ideas for dishes and figuring out what farmers could supply us with later, checking ingredients off as if shopping at a grocery store. [...] I wanted an organizing principle, a collection of dishes instead of a laundry list of ingredients, reflecting a whole system of agriculture – a cuisine in other words' (Barber 2014:12,15). This cuisine he terms the 'third plate', the first having been America's embrace of *nouvelle cuisine* and the second plate being farm-to-table cuisine. For plate zero, as it were, Barber enacts the chef's journey to the source to find inspiration for the American cuisine he imagines.

In Spain, he takes what he describes as 'a pilgrimage to a sacred place'(Barber 2015:124). It is the *dehesa*, an agro-sylvo-pastoral system producing cork timber as a cash crop, food stuffs, and providing wildlife habitat for game and other flora and fauna. Barber is particularly enchanted by production of *jamón ibérico* and *foie gras* from the *dehesa*; celebrated and mass-produced delicacies that he is surprised to see raised there with humane and ecological methods. His guide to the *dehesa*, Miguel Ullibarri who runs a culinary tourism business in Spain, posits that the complex, more-than-human system of the *dehesa* has survived because of the region's poverty. Barber quotes Miguel as saying, 'respecting nature was not a choice, but the rule to survive' (2014:176). This privation, Barber concludes, is the reason America lacks cuisine: 'Unlike American settlers, who were spoiled by our country's natural abundance, Spaniards couldn't simply drop their plows and move to better land' (2014:176). Later in the book, Barber uses the subsistence foods from American shores as another inspiration for the 'third plate' when he explores the rice culture that arose from the intermingling of enslaved Africans and migrant Italian laborers in the American South. The gastronomic treasure they cultivated, Carolina Gold Rice, is being preserved in the present, he argues, by high-end chefs. Using the examples of *jamón ibérico* and Carolina Gold Rice, Barber enacts in his writing the chef's journey to the authentic source, and so legitimizes his authority to declare what is in good taste. The source to which he journeys is not only geographic, though it is worth noting that both are 'exotic' to Blue Hill in so far as they are not in the American Northeast; he also journeys to a past peopled with

poor and non-white humans, exoticized by their difference from the well-off white people featured as experts in the book's present day.

Fetishizing poverty, People of Color and the foods associated with them is common in the food movement, and demonstrated in *The Third Plate*. *Cucina povera*, the Italian phrase for the food of the poor, has been reconfigured for high-end diners and lauded for the authenticity conferred upon it by its humble and historic origins. This tendency has been critiqued by scholars as incoherent pseudo-political action (Leitch 2003), eliding the lived realities and desires of impoverished communities to market gourmet products to elites (West and Domingos 2012), and creating new means of class distinction by elevating supposed subsistence foods to popularity through resource-intensive haute cuisine (Freire-Paz 2023).

The future envisioned by Barber in *The Third Plate* is part of a nostalgic lineage that has ensnared farm-to-table chefs and eaters in elitist tendencies, but it purports to move away from another unintended consequence of farm-to-table by beginning not at the farm, but at the ecosystem. Echoing Lévi-Strauss's culinary triangle (Lévi-Strauss 2012), Barber claims chefs can transmute nature, an ecosystem, into culture, a cuisine. The presumption behind this is that the ecosystem supplying the inedible material that chefs manipulate is untouched by culture. The argument of *The Third Plate* is demonstrative of the deep ecology philosophy framed by Arne Naess, whose work presages much of the regenerative agriculture movement. He argues 'shallow ecology' cares only for limiting harm while 'deep ecology' decenters humans, placing them within the ecosystem (Naess 1973). The inherent value of all living things and therefore their right to flourish is the central tenet; humans must work not only to reduce harm but to positively increase multi-species well-being. While Naess conceived of this philosophy as essentially political, equal valuation of all life is anti-oppressionist, Davenport and Mishtal have shown that those who follow this philosophy in food system activism are prone to taking apolitical stances that ultimately undermine the efficacy of their projects (2019). Building on Guthman's research into the tendency of alternative food systems practices to replicate and reinforce raced and classed exclusions (Guthman 2011; Guthman 2008b), Davenport and Mishtal find that white, middle-

class urban gardeners in Florida advance a color-blind and class-blind agenda by using the egalitarianism of deep ecology to gloss oppressions rather than reveal them, in doing so deligitimizing the oppression of the poor and of People of Color in the community around them.

Barber similarly simplifies deep ecology, resulting in similar occlusions in his vision for the future. While *The Third Plate* calls for chefs to see themselves as actors within an ecosystem who are obligated to revere the inherent value of all other life, Barber adopts an apolitical view towards ecosystems in North America. For Barber, the constraints faced by the poor and People of Color in the past are desirable because he sees them as essential to the creation of a cuisine, and he concludes that America has no cuisine because, 'Our country's been so fertile. You've got so much abundance. That's not our fault. That was agriculture. Our soil was the best in the world. Virgin soil, temperate rain climates – it's like, shit, the Garden of Eden' (Goldfield 2015). The first-person plural Barber uses in the quote above reveals whom he sees as American, as people like him and for whom he is creating this cuisine, and in their absences reveals the people whom he does not see, for whom he does not cook.

I argue that what *The Third Plate* proposes and celebrates is, in part, a settler colonial cuisine that reinforces settler claims to land and nationhood. A catchphrase in Barber's promotion of his book was 'there is no American cuisine'. The assertion itself belies the unearned power of American imperialism by which American food is so ubiquitous as to be unrecognized as having any origin point. This is a demonstration of colonial power. As Morris writes, 'Just as British and American whites are unmarked ethnically, so is their food' (2010:18) making their food, Heldke argues, 'culinarily neutral' (2016). But Barber isn't speaking simply of food, he wants a cuisine, and argues that a true cuisine can arise only from ecological limitations. From the outset, Barber's views on the absence of an American cuisine were critiqued by Indigenous leaders in the food movement who pointed out that

their foodways persisted across centuries and are aligned with ecology.⁷ There were and are, by Barber's own criteria, many cuisines that arose from Indigenous cultures whose territories now bear the colonial name America. To ignore this is a manifestation of the settler colonial mindset that, when applied to the creation of a cuisine, renders landscapes apolitical and ahistorical.

Wolfe, building on the work of Indigenous academics and activists, theorized brilliantly that settler colonialism is a structure not an event (2006). This means that the driving aim of settler colonialism, the elimination of the native through displacement, genocide and/or assimilation, is not complete but an ongoing process codified in social practices like governance; cuisine too is a social practice (Bourdieu 1984). Moreover, settler colonialism is enacted by individuals in settler societies who demonstrate 'common sense' beliefs in the non-existence of Indigenous peoples and/or in the historical and *complete* process of colonization, as Rifkin demonstrates in his analysis of nineteenth century American fiction (2014). Rifkin pays attention to how land in the American Northeast is depicted by authors Nathaniel Hawthorne, Henry David Thoreau, and Herman Melville to be places absent of Indigenous peoples and unsuitable for Native American regeneration, despite the persistence of Indigenous peoples in the places they write about. These authors neglect the political processes that continue the settler colonial project and ignore Indigenous perspectives on these processes. The same can be said of Barber.

Though Barber glancingly praises the wisdom of Indigenous agriculture, he relies on settler colonial 'common sense' to conclude that the U.S. has no food culture. 'Manifest Destiny', Barber says, 'is about going towards fertility, virgin soil. And we weren't forced into negotiations that Europeans or Asians or everyone else was forced into. Which is like, oh, you exhaust the soil what the hell do you do now?' (Dan Barber | Chasing Fertility + America's Absent Food Culture | 003 2021).

⁷ While I have not found media or academic sources for this, it was frequently raised in conversation I had with Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in 2014, prior to embarking on this research project.

Baber's interpretation of Manifest Destiny as a quasi-biological imperative whereby people sought fertile soils to feed themselves ignores entirely the socio-political motivations and genocidal practices of nation building that drove European settlement across the continent, as well as the many (bad faith) diplomatic negotiations between colonial and Indigenous governments (Akers 2014). By invoking Native held territories as 'virgin' land and the 'Garden of Eden' that settlers farmed to depletion without the environmentally imposed restrictions that would force a cuisine, he presumes the land lacked prior stewards and that it was justifiably put under the plow by settlers.

This was not and is not the case. Barber's thinking is a recapitulation of the concept of *terra nullius*: 'the idea carried around by Europeans in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries' based on colonial blindness to 'Indigenous governance and land management structures [that] did not register in the European worldview, so Indigenous territories were available for the taking. The extensive and intensive Indigenous land and food management systems already in place in the so-called "discovered" land did not count' (Tennant 2020:84). In her exploration of the discourse of Canadian restaurant menus and websites of local foods and Indigenous foods, Tennant finds that restaurants touting farm-to-table procurement demonstrate everyday erasure of indigeneity precisely because they, like the proposed cuisine of *The Third Plate*, lay claim to the land (2020). Despite the ongoing project of eliminating the Native, Indigenous peoples and cultures *and their foodways* persist in their ancestral lands and in diaspora (Craig 2019; Zappia 2019; Sherman and Dooley 2017).

Evidence of this persistence is suppressed. Apache chef Nephi Craig, founder of the Native American Culinary Association, has an illustrious resumé and appears in many forums as an expert on Native cuisine. However, he is unimpressed with how his work and those of his colleagues has recently been framed as a trend. In profiling Craig, scholar Devon A. Mihesuah notes, 'current popular writings about Native foods give the impression that no one had really thought much about traditional Indigenous ways of eating or Indigenous health issues prior to 2012', despite a large body of scholarly work on Native American food sovereignty and

the catastrophic consequences of its absence (2019:306–307). Though he continues to grant interviews, Craig expects his message of Indigenous resistance and resilience to be erased from the media, hidden behind language that make Indigenous foodways sound ‘noble, romantic, or overly spiritual [...] these phrases are for the comfort of the wider audience’, Craig says,

‘that has already demonstrated they have no interest in the real people deep in the plight of surviving colonialism and colonial violence or, essentially, it is to keep the larger society/reader comfortable while continuing to dismiss, minimize and deny the truth of our current Indigenous reality. Larger society wants our culture, but not our struggle. Terms like “oppression,” “racism,” “decolonization,” “genocide,” “murder,” “deliberate violence(s),” “land theft”, and many other culinary truths are not mentioned’ (Mihesuah 2019:308).

Barber’s invocation of Indigenous foodways as giving historic authenticity to Otto File maize, or as inspiration for agricultural futures, as in his keynote at Eat New Zealand’s Food Hui conference (Brookes 2022), reinforces a de-politicization of Indigeneity that continues the settler colonial project because it both erases Indigenous persistence in the face of oppression and appropriates Indigenous genius as its own. Morris, writing on struggles to classify New Zealand food, tells us that ‘the ability to codify your food as the national cuisine may also signal the ability to make yourself the national subject, and in turn make the nation yours’ (2013:221). The ability to create this symbolic capital is held by chefs because of the social capital they accrue by enacting the journey from exoticized source to professional kitchen that legitimizes their definition of good taste. As I’ve shown, Barber’s vision for the future of food, and specifically the development of an American cuisine as the epitome of good taste, is premised on settler colonial blindness.

Operating from a position of *terra nullius*, Barber’s viewpoint renders his own surroundings, the Hudson Valley, as devoid of any socio-political history under the assumption that the farming practices there arose organically from lack of ecosystem constraints and humanity’s own innate greed. This line of reasoning leads to the conclusion that the Hudson Valley and places like it should be remade

and that chefs have the power to enact that transformation. It is an oddly paternalistic place to land for a chef who touts the importance of a cooking style dictated by the needs of the soil. Though provocative and inspiring in its attempt to integrate deep ecology into culinary practice, *The Third Plate* is ultimately a dish conceived from romanticization of oppression and settler colonial blindness that is served up for the enjoyment of the elite.

The manner in which Barber codified his vision of the future, and by extension the purpose of Blue Hill, transformed its significance as a place of experimentation from one that was moving towards indeterminate, multi-directional futures to one of determinate future making. In the early days, Katy said, ‘a lot of the things, like cooking things in piles of compost,⁸ we were just doing because it seemed like a radical, weird idea. All this shit that we just take for granted as the Stone Barns experience, those were just ideas then, and they were *never* being used in service.’ In codifying those experiments into an argument for an American cuisine in *The Third Plate* they became calcified into a vision of the future reliant on an apolitical and ahistorical understanding of food, agriculture, and land in North America. It is a vision so constraining that even Stone Barns is unable to live up to it. An exposé in *Eater* quotes former employees who say the once experimental and now expected compost oven was too unreliable, so foods were cooked in the kitchen then transferred to the compost oven for the big reveal to diners; the article also accuses the falsification of food origins to uphold the image of achieving Barber’s imagined cuisine (McCarron 2022). As I aim to show throughout this thesis, determinate future making forces adherence to narrow perspectives. While Barber eschews the ‘cherry picking’ of farm-to-table for utilizing only what is exceptional and not what is necessary, he cherry picks what he finds admirable in cuisines from the far past or far lands while leaving behind uncomfortable, close-to-home truths of the past and the present. This is the opposite of Bloch’s educated hope. Invoking the past without interrogating it, reclaiming values he situates in the past without

⁸ One of the techniques in Blue Hill’s repertoire is the use of a so-called compost oven, meant to utilize the heat produced by active decomposition of food scraps to cook food..

grieving the harm they caused, leads Barber to envision a future that is constrained by the prejudices of the past and replicates its inequities.

This vision has been hugely popular with affluent foodies, perhaps because it does not call into question the tension between their privilege and their ethics. At the time of writing, dinner for one at Blue Hill at Stone Barns was \$348 to \$398, an eye-popping price that effectively prohibits anyone without significant expendable income from experiencing the ‘third plate’ (Blue Hill at Stone Barns n.d.). I ate dinner there in 2016 at the invitation of a friend of mine who, at the time, raised pigs and made charcuterie in Wales. I justified the expense to myself by thinking of it as equivalent to a vacation. I had to take the train out of the city, after all. I also told myself it was important professionally to experience this paragon of farm-to-table dining. Truthfully, I was excited to see for myself what the fuss was about and to enjoy some high-caliber culinary acrobatics.

The setting of the dining room was elegant, and most of the dishes were tasty. The service was theatrical and at times comic. In the name of education, a server marched through the room with a two-meter-tall Japanese knotweed plant as our soup was set down. Holding the plant for reference, he proceeded to explain that it is part of the rhubarb family, which flavor we would notice in the chilled broth we were about to enjoy, and that since it is invasive, we were about to do our part in returning ecological harmony to farmlands by eating it. My farmer friend and I, both familiar with the plant from hours of pulling its tenacious roots out of the ground only to watch it reassert itself with uncanny speed in the ensuing days, could hardly keep a straight face. As soon as the servers were out of earshot, we giggled at how many gallons of soup one would have to consume to eradicate even one specimen of the weed, while we sipped our petite portions. Though both self-identified food activists whose values presumably aligned with Blue Hill’s, it was plain that we weren’t the audience for this performance or this meal.

When the *Eater* exposé came out in 2022 my phone was abuzz with text chains from folks I know who had worked at Blue Hill or worked, as I do, in its orbit. No one was surprised by its allegations of toxic workplace culture and dissembling on

the menu. There was some interest though in whether this would knock Blue Hill off its pedestal. The official line from Blue Hill and Stone Barns was 'no comment', and a fundraiser I spoke with told me that in the subsequent weeks, when she raised the subject with several wealthy donors to food and agriculture projects, they mostly hadn't known about the exposé and didn't particularly care. The Blue Hill brand remained intact. A critical part of that brand is that Blue Hill at Stone Barns is situated on a farm. It is an opportunity for anyone, if they have the cash, to experience Barber's vision of a cuisine integrated with its unique landscape. But as my dinner there showed me, the vision presented is curated for people who have little direct experience of agriculture here or elsewhere, and the underlying settler colonial presumption of *terra nullius* is reinforced for diners with no other agrarian reference point. While the restaurant defines its mission as allyship with rural farmers, it draws primarily wealthy urbanites and has inspired dozens of others to attempt to replicate its success throughout the counties of the Hudson Valley by opening high-end restaurants on manicured farms targeting affluent urbanites, with the ironic result that it reinforces the rural/urban divide by extracting resources from agrarians for the pleasure of elites.

A further irony is that what had been a valued training ground for chef activists now seems inscrutable and inhospitable to them. Speaking of Blue Hill, Katy told me, 'It is confusing in some ways, because they are so tightly webbed with just the highest echelon of money and power. Like, I don't understand why *those* are your buddies. Those don't feel like our people.' The assertion of *The Third Plate* and the premise of Blue Hill at Stone Barns is that high-end chefs have the power to craft a cuisine that will bring humans into right relationship with ecosystems, but implicit in the book and evident in the restaurant is that the proposed cuisine is for the wealthy. At best, this theory of change echoes the disproven mechanisms of trickle-down economics (Chancel et al. 2022), gambling that the food consumed by the elites will become the food of all. In practice, cooking for the most privileged diners can create a cognitive dissonance for activist chefs who learned to experiment with their role in creating meaningful food in renowned farm-to-table restaurants, making them feel estranged from the meaningfulness of their cooking. Another

proud Blue Hill alumni, Mavis-Jay Sanders, told me of the moment of epiphany that reoriented her chef activism away from fine dining.

In the summer of 2014; the same year *The Third Plate* was published, Mavis-Jay was feeling good. As a queer, Black woman from the South, the odds were stacked against her, but here she was on the line at Blue Hill in Manhattan, one of the most respected kitchens in the world. At the end of dinner service, she popped out of the basement kitchen to the sidewalk above for a break. Protesters filled the street outside the restaurant, and streets across the country, chanting ‘I can’t breathe’, the last words of Eric Garner, a Black man who was choked to death by a white New York City police officer on suspicion of committing the petty crime of selling single cigarettes. It was the beginning of the Black Lives Matter movement. Mavis-Jay thought, ‘I should be with them.’ She descended back into Blue Hill’s kitchen that night, jarred by dissonance of the luxurious serenity mere feet from the public outcry. The protesters were inaudible in the dining room where she saw ‘people were partying it up, spending more than my rent money on a bottle of wine. And that was the first time that I was really starting to question, who was I feeding? And did it matter?’ (DiValentino 2023). Shortly thereafter Mavis-Jay left her coveted position at Blue Hill to pursue food activism that centers racial and economic justice. In 2022 she was recognized with a James Beard Leadership Award for the work she has done since leaving fine dining to increase access to food in under resourced communities and to support people transitioning from incarceration into employment in the restaurant industry. Katy and Jonathan had also felt compelled to find another model for practicing the world they hoped for and launched a business centered on feeding ‘our people’.

Community Suppers

Their catering company is called Pixie Scout, and if you meet Katy and Jonathan, it is immediately evident why. Katy is the pixie: wiry, strong, passionate, and hilarious, all smiles and laughter and kinetic energy. Jonathan is the proverbial Boy Scout: softspoken, diligent, earnest, and sturdy, a ballast in the vessel they’ve built together. Both are white and in early middle age. Three primary activities define Jonathan and Katy’s business: producing events including food and beverages, a

delivery service that provides drop-off catering, and two seasonal food kiosks in Battery Park. They work primarily in the city with some projects taking them to adjacent areas like the Hudson Valley. Pixie Scout employs fulltime cooks and porters to run the commissary kitchen and a pool of people who work front of house at events as one of several gigs that make up their livelihoods. Katy is the Creative Director of Pixie Scout, a role that encompasses administrative duties and, as she described it, ‘non-profit adjacent work where I am the businessperson who is trying really hard to facilitate, support, or partner with a not-for-profit mission and figure out how a business can help execute that, or fund it, or find the resources for it.’ It is an unusual role in any for-profit food and hospitality company, especially one of their relatively small size.

The values-driven work Katy’s role forefronts is coherent with the intent of Pixie Scout, and has grown out of the lessons learned as the business was built. Much like Shawn in the first section of this chapter, Katy and Jonathan chose to open a catering business with the limited capital they themselves could mobilize because it gave them more control over sourcing and labor than a restaurant, beholden to investors, would have. A central value of Pixie Scout is sourcing from local and ecologically managed farms, a skill and passion developed during their time at Blue Hill and other farm-to-table restaurants. ‘Our creative input, and our menu’, Katy said, ‘it just started so long ago. It started when Jonathan was making friendships and relationships with those farmers [at the Union Square market].’ The relational aspect of their sourcing, valuing not just the soil health of the farm or the quality of the product but the quality of the human relationships that gets that product to an eater, points to Pixie Scout as a locus of prefigurative praxis that accepts the premise of *The Third Plate*, that chefs have a role to play as cultural creators in sustaining ecological agriculture, without ignoring the situatedness of humans in that system. Human interrelationship, solidarity, and flourishing hold equal value at Pixie Scout to ecological flourishing.

Katy puts it this way, knowing that ‘food and labor are all worth exponentially more than our industrial world determines’ leads to acceptance of ‘a foodshed and a community and an operating system that involves a lot of jobs, a higher price point,

and constant communication' to ensure a good livelihood for everyone involved. 'It is built into the whole way we share food with people', she told me, 'Everything we do is an extension of that starting point.' Katy and Jonathan's attention to the inequities of the dominant food system and active practices of equity in their business demonstrate educated hope striving to make Pixie Scout a concrete utopia of food procurement and consumption.

Simplistically applied, their ethos, financially valuing every element of food procurement in an alternative food economy, usually leads to exclusion (Holt-Giménez 2017). The resulting higher price point means the food is only available to those who can afford it, and success in the New York City restaurant and catering industries often means adding additional expenses to satisfy the tastes of wealthy clientele and to gain prestige. Rather than ignoring the tension between accessibility and financial success, Pixie Scout actively tries to live in the tension, which Jonathan and Katy have perceived as an obstacle to their business. 'We're not recognized because we're kind of scrappy', Katy said, 'We don't overstaff and we're not boutique luxury. We're flexible and very generous, which is not respected as good business practice in this industry generally. People don't think, "that's so cool". They think, "that's weird". [Because of] all these things that are important to our brand and we don't want to change them, we were like, we're never going to be major players in New York because we don't follow the same rules.' Instead of following the rules of running a catering business, the rules Shawn followed for his company at the expense of his values, they espouse transformation, demonstrating one key element of indeterminate future making.

One of the foundational rules they break is the supremacy of the customer. It is one tenet of what they call 'transformational hospitality'. Pixie Scout's website describes how they value the customer/laborer relationship this way:

'Historically, hospitality work has been organized around the nonsense proposition that the "Customer is always right" meaning money and power equal the right to determine reality for yourself as well as those around you. Transformational hospitality welcomes guests into a space created with

intention and love by professionals who are there to enable and enhance the experience of their products.’ (Pixie Scout n.d.)

This orientation to food service reveals a key difference in practice between Pixie Scout and Blue Hill. It invokes history, and the past, as a site of error based on classist prejudices and the present as a place for addressing inequity, for enacting co-created realities. Rather than romanticizing past inequities as positive constraints to guide future making, as in *The Third Plate*, ‘transformational hospitality’ names and grieves those inequities so as to imagine and practice different relationships of power. It does *not* name a definite endpoint for this practice. Whereas Barber practices determinate future making by invoking nostalgia for the past to identify a definitive future outcome, an ‘American cuisine’, Jonathan and Katy demonstrate indeterminate future making by grieving the harms of the past, identifying the prefigurative practice they strive to enact, and holding the possibility of potential futures that could arise from that practice. The first two elements of indeterminate future making are clear in the text quoted from their website above. The third, envisioning multiple possible futures, emerges in the specific form of commensality enacted in the community suppers they host at their commissary kitchen.

I’ve attended a handful of these suppers, and they subvert all expectations of a fancy dinner in a well-appointed dining room. ‘There is a level of trust and a weird kind of suspension of other kinds of barriers that people engage in when they come that I rarely witness elsewhere. I don’t know if it is because it is so bizarre to walk into a warehouse building. I think the whole process of entering is kind of disarming and also alarming!’ Katy laughed. Pixie Scout’s kitchen is in Brooklyn’s Crown Heights neighborhood, in the former Nassau Brewery, on the ground floor. Below, the brewery’s lagering caves, built in the 1850s, have been repurposed by Crown Finish Caves for aging cheeses. Approaching the massive steel doors of the loading dock and hunting for a buzzer the first time I went to a community supper there made me feel both lost and anxious, though at the time I worked in an office next door and knew well where I was. It had the thrill of the illicit. Inside, I received an unexpected hug from a woman I knew casually who was checking guests in.

She pointed out the self-service bar stocked with odds and ends left over from past catering gigs and encouraged me to take a seat at the makeshift tables next to the towering wire racks stacked with the tools of the trade: dishes, glasses, utensils, food processors, plastic bins of every size, skillets, sheet pans, etc. Katy waved me into the kitchen to check out what was cooking. Of the dozen or so people there, I couldn't tell who was working and who was a guest. That's intentional.

Describing these suppers, Katy said:

'The food is thoughtful. It's the most pure expression of Jonathan and I gathering the things we are most inspired by from the moment of the growing season. It is very ephemeral. It is usually pretty delicious. It is not overly complex. There isn't necessarily a cheffy vibe to it all. That's been a really big thing for us over the years, we didn't ever want it to become sceney, like people were coming to see the next thing that was gonna happen. It needed to be a meal where everyone at the table was sort of equals. Where we were equal to you, we're cooking for you, with you. If you don't come, we have no other reason to do this.'

This egalitarian approach, different from that of deep ecology because it not only ascribes intrinsic value to all but also invokes the interdependency of agency, can be read as an intentional manipulation of the gastro-political. Appadurai, who coined the term, defines gastro-politics as 'conflict or competition over specific cultural or economic resources as it emerges in social transactions around food' (1981:495). One economic resource in commercial hospitality is emotion. As Arlie Hochschild demonstrated in her study of airline attendants, service work requires emotional labor, management of one's internal emotions and external expression of those emotions so as to evoke a sense of comfort in guests in order to achieve the profit goals of the company (Hochschild 2012). Such situations subordinate service workers; they must labor for the benefit of guests whose emotions are not commodified. Following their articulation of transformative hospitality, Pixie Scout's community suppers renegotiate the allocation of emotional labor, as well as the physical labor of cooking and fetching drinks, to be spread more equally amongst hospitality professionals and guests. This rewrites the rules of the meal and has the

effect of de-commodifying emotions to an extent by requiring that both those who are paying to be at the meal and those who are being paid to cook and serve take responsibility for hosting, for creating the affective atmosphere. If, as Hochschild argues, performing commercialized emotional labor can cause one to detach from their emotional state (2012), the de-commodification and redistribution of that labor at a meal can be read as an invitation to reattach to one's emotions in a communal way.

On the one hand, by refusing the normal hierarchy of diner over hospitality worker, the community suppers at Pixie Scout take on a more informal, domestic style of hospitality, which Julier has shown is largely concerned with the extent to which guests feel comfortable and 'at home' (2013). On the other, it adds to the unfamiliarity of the experience as compared to a restaurant meal. Tension between comfort and the unfamiliar creates the potential for conflict and negotiation of values amongst the ad-hoc community around the table. 'Sometimes I feel like the vibe of the dinner is way more just like all our friends came over for a party', said Katy, 'And I love that. I am never sad about that. But it's different. My favorite version is when it *is* like it was all our friends came over to dinner, and then it was actually about a queer farm in Puerto Rico – surprise! And now they are all kinda like -oh, ok, maybe I should have had less or more to drink, I don't know yet.' The setting created by the intentional manipulation and inversion of gastro-political norms in restaurant dining shapes the commensality of the Pixie Scout community suppers. Following Maurice Bloch, strangers who eat together participate in a dialectical process of temporal unification because eating the same food unites the bodies that eat together, thereby transforming strangers into family, if only temporarily, by mutual willingness to overcome fear of 'poison'. '...[T]he willingness to overcome that fear becomes a proof of a commitment that is continually being bargained about in the process of establishing moral social links (Bloch 1999:147).' At these community suppers, eating together is one praxis of tolerating risk and difference. The conversations these meals are intended to spark require tolerance of risk and difference as well, with the intent of establishing moral and social links.

In some cases, the discussion topic is part of the invitation to the meal. This was the case for a community supper described as a 'Thanksgiving intervention & celebration of pre-colonial cuisine' (Wise 2017). I drove down from the valley to Brooklyn to attend. The chefs who took over Pixie Scout's space that evening were part of the I-Collective, an 'autonomous group of Indigenous chefs, activists, herbalists, seed, [sic] and knowledge keepers' that 'strives to open a dialogue and create a new narrative' of Indigenous history and innovation (I-Collective n.d.). Approximately a dozen I-Collective members from across Turtle Island, the name for the North American continent shared across multiple Indigenous cultures, had traveled to Brooklyn to stage this 'intervention' in the colonial narrative of the Thanksgiving holiday. The dominant cultural myth of Thanksgiving in the United States is that it celebrates a meal between the Wampanoag and Puritan Pilgrims, British colonizers, held in the early 1600s to celebrate the harvest. President Abraham Lincoln named it as an official national holiday in 1863, during the middle of the Civil War, as a gesture towards one national identity amidst the rift. It has become one of the most important civil holidays in the U.S. Popular representations of the holiday are a pervasive tool of settler colonialism in so far as they celebrate the triumphant survival of the Pilgrims in a hostile environment and erroneously depicts Indigenous peoples as bit-players who, like the Pilgrims, are no longer around (Silverman 2019). The myth legitimizes colonizers' rights to this land, and its harvest, while semiotically exterminating the Natives (Trubek 2009). Indigenous peoples have viewed the holiday as the glorification of genocide. The meal the I-Collective staged in Pixie Scout's commissary built on the history of the Red Power movement of the 1960-70s that established the counter traditional observance of a National Day of Mourning on the same day as the Thanksgiving holiday. As historian Jana Weiss points out in her analysis of the discourse of Thanksgiving and the National Day of Mourning, Indigenous intervention in the Thanksgiving myth 'addresses the question of memory sovereignty: Who is entitled to speak for the past and whose version of the past is remembered?' (2018:368). Through this community supper, Indigenous chefs asserted their right to speak for the past. The community supper featuring the I-Collective demonstrated how reorienting ourselves to the past through counternarratives also reorients our ability to imagine possible futures.

Food is the focus at Thanksgiving, and it felt especially provocative to reconsider the holiday through pre-colonial foods. The I-Collective chefs served several beautiful and delicious courses prepared with pre-contact ingredients, though the stylish plating and cooking techniques were modern. Roast turkey, the centerpiece of main-stream Thanksgiving celebrations, did not make an appearance. The food itself took on powerful semiotic meaning. Its flavors were themselves Indigenous to the continent and the artistry of the chefs demonstrated Indigenous excellence. Seared scallops set in a pool of rich sauce deeply colored by roasted chilis was a material provocation, opposing stereotypes of Indigenous foods and peoples as ‘uncivilized’, that begged the question, what if? What if Indigenous culture were not oppressed? What if it flourished? The food didn’t carry the entire weight of launching the conversation, though. I-Collective members often came to the table to interpret and shape the meal. They sang traditional songs, offered prayers, explained how dishes were conceived and prepared, named the provenance and producers of ingredients, condemned the violence of settler colonialism, celebrated the resilience of Native peoples, and explicitly called settlers at the table to join them as allies in Indigenous liberation. Similarly to a meal at Blue Hill, the food and its presentation were designed to deliver an activist message from the chefs to the diners. The praxis of the two meals, however, diverged significantly.

Enacting ‘transformative hospitality’, the meal at Pixie Scout did not forefront the cohesive vision of a chef auteur, as the one at Blue Hill is skillfully staged to do for Barber’s vision. It was multi-vocal. Chefs spoke, but often when they did they insisted that their sous chefs and prep cooks join them, despite their more junior colleague’s hesitancy to take center stage. Farming activists and Indigenous academics also addressed the group. Even the diners at the long table changed frequently as people hopped back and forth to pitch in with cooking or to join in the meal, so that the line between paying guests and paid hosts receded.⁹ It was not polished and elegant, did not fit the mold of a fine dining meal in setting or in tenor. It was, at times, boring, chaotic, and confusing. I think this is the point. By holding

⁹ the seven course meal cost \$120, with proceeds benefitting the I-Collective

space for the incomplete and the imperfect, this community supper asked participants to interpret it as a transitory moment alive with potentiality, rather than as a lesson to be received and acted upon towards a definitive end.

By default the paying guests at the meal were a self-selected group likely to be receptive to messages promoting Indigenous rights. The paying diners were diverse in race, gender, and sexuality, and I assume that most of us had the expendable income to attend the dinner, while diversity in terms of age and possibly economic status were represented mostly by the Indigenous cooks and hosts. Had the meal been flawlessly curated, those of us who paid to attend would likely have walked away with our minds little changed and feeling a bit smug about the affirmation of our progressive politics. We also would likely have only spoken to the people we came with. But the awkwardness of certain moments, like two I-Collective members disagreeing with each other or an inaudible sous chef addressing the group, had the effect of removing the artifice from the meal and implicating diners as active participants in the event. They are not the audience to a completed narrative, but co-constructors of an emerging narrative. Katy sees the materiality of the food itself as critical to the process of building moral bonds through shared narrative,

‘If we are talking about an actual food thing’, she said, ‘it becomes so concrete. There is almost a horror that [supper guests] experience that is like, “Oh really? I guess you are right. I never thought about it that way.” And for a minute there is a horror I feel, like, “How can that be true? Really? Is that just laziness, or are you dense? How did you not connect these dots?” But then we’re like, “Ok. That’s really problematic and troubling and we can both identify that’s not the world we want to live in.” We may not agree about how we solve it necessarily, but that is a very interesting thing to me.’

In the case of the I-Collective community supper, the beautifully executed dishes from pre-contact ingredients are food, but they are also a tangible counter-narrative to the Anglo-centric Thanksgiving narrative. The reaction Katy describes above to encountering unexpected meaning in a plate of food is a process of forming social

and moral bonds that moves from mutual discomfort, ‘horror’, to shared recognition of dissatisfaction with the present, to the possibility of indeterminate futures.

Tolerance of ambivalence, discomfort, and disagreement is foundational to Pixie Scout’s community suppers and is a skill built through the praxis of the suppers. I’d never seen Katy look quite as exhausted as she seemed at the I-Collective dinner. Though six chefs were slated to cook, about a dozen I-Collective members arrived to co-create the dinner. Partnering with Ora Wise and Sabrina DeSousa to produce the dinner, Katy was heavily involved in securing lodging and figuring out travel logistics for the Indigenous cohort on a very slim budget and had found the group’s proclivity to shift plans and headcount at the last minute did not sit well with her proclivity for meticulous organization. She complained about it to me, but with numerous caveats that she saw the experience as offering her the chance to learn new ways of doing, valuing and being in community. The praxis of imperfection and egalitarianism for Pixie Scout community suppers is not confined to the meals themselves, it begins before the warehouse doors open and ideally continues well after the dishes are done.

As an example of this, I will briefly relate my experience at another community supper. In 2019, Katy and Jonathan were pursuing a restructuring of Pixie Scout to distribute leadership and ownership more horizontally across the business. In addition to employees of Pixie Scout, they wanted their friends and neighbors to have a say in how the business operated. They saw community suppers as a potential forum for bringing community input into Pixie Scout’s development, having already identified these meals as important moments of recalibration for themselves as chefs and business owners with their intentions and values. The first dinner to re-launch community suppers with this more intentional purpose was invitation only, and I was grateful to attend.¹⁰ At the table that evening I saw some familiar faces, like that queer farmer from Puerto Rico, and some unfamiliar faces. It turned out that the folks I didn’t know from the NYC food activism world were mostly people from Jonathan and Katy’s church. They were ebullient about the

¹⁰ Jonathan and Katie invited guests to this dinner without charge, but it was not open to the public.

food and their love of Katy and Jonathan. When the conversation shifted to the structural inequities of the restaurant business and how Pixie Scout might re-imagine those norms, the church members seemed ill at ease, but none left, got defensive, or tried to change the subject. Katy grew up in a religious household, and both she and Jonathan are active in their faith community despite the more conservative values some in their congregation may hold. 'I did not like it as a young adult', Katy told me. 'Although I am very grateful for certain pieces. I have never been able to write it off, and now, at this point in my life it feels like a responsibility. I know these folks better than anyone, maybe, and if no one is going to say this stuff to them, who is going to say it to them?' Despite Katy's sense of obligation to speak, her intended audience is under no obligation to listen.

Food, Katy posits, can make people curious even if they don't want to listen. As Lévi-Strauss points out, food is a total social fact of immense semiotic capacity because it is produced and productive (2012). Cooking is culture acting upon natural materials to create food; food also literally constructs our bodies and is utilized in creating and delineating social relations and cultural values (Appadurai 1981). Jonathan and Katy are rigorous in their sourcing of regional, sustainably grown food because of its tangible ability to move economic resources towards practitioners of an alternative food system *and* because of its semiotic potency. Katy said:

'These political implications or those economic implications are baked into the thing you just ate. You may not recognize it right away, but as if you ate a lot of dairy – if you were allergic now your dead. (laughs) A lot of the people I am around all the time, they're so allergic to my – to certain political things, but it's like literally they just ate it all. They just scarfed it down. And it works. It's not like they don't go out and vote for the person they want to, but they do really start to – the first thing is they just come back. They keep returning to that conversation. They follow people on Instagram. Why? Why do you want to see people in your life all the time who you don't agree with? That's so interesting to me. Because they ate it, they love it. They can't escape it now'.

This is a different semiotic use of food than the proposed cuisine of *The Third Plate*. Whereas Barber uses food metonymously to reference apolitical and ahistorical ecologies that are transformed through the expertise of the chef into legitimate culture, Pixie Scout's food is served as the material manifestation of situated political and economic values whose ingestion builds the eater's tolerance for those values. The former strikes me as a paternalistic trick. Like a parent might hide broccoli in mac'n'cheese to improve their child's nutrition, Barber asserts that human's hedonism, not our agency, is the key to 'the future of food'. Katy implies some trickery in her food, but it's more like an optical illusion than a concealment. Pixie Scout's food asks the eater to refocus their attention, to consider other perspectives, and then to remain engaged in the questions. This subverts the cultural capital of her and Jonathan as chefs. While they are intimately aware of the sourcing of the food they serve, they do not synthesize that knowledge into easily digestible conclusions. They do not reify their own awareness and knowledge or that of others as definitive expertise; they set the table with the things they have found and invite the community to join them for supper. They do not travel to the source and back. Their community suppers are marked by ephemeral foods, incompleteness, and transition, simultaneously nullifying the concept of a fixed source of authenticity or knowledge and empowering that meal to be the source of prolonged negotiation of relationships and values.

Eating the Landscape

A common goal in the local food movement is the cultivation of a 'taste of place'. From the adoption and adaptation of the French concept of *terroir* to the farm-to-table movement, the aim to eat in a way aligned with the seasons and soils of the landscape we inhabit is consistently seen as a virtue to aspire to (Trubek 2009). Barber's philosophy is a critique of how the food movement has failed to appreciate the depth of transformation of human behavior necessary to appreciate the taste of place, but it ultimately relies on familiar touchstones of 'authentic' food that obfuscate political and historical understanding of a place. The eater's role in the cuisine of *The Third Plate* is passive as a tasteful consumer of the cultural product of activist chefs, perpetuating the compensatory strategy of virtuous consumption and so practicing determinate future making. While Pixie Scout is led by Blue Hill

alums who credit their time there with instilling in them the values of creating meaningful food through experimentation and risk, they refuse to see food as ahistorical and apolitical. The community suppers they host are designed for agentive eaters who are invited, through food, to practice educated hope. From a position of mutual awareness of past and present oppressions and future uncertainties, the line between expert chef and tasteful consumer is challenged through the praxis of discomfort and imperfection so that indeterminate futures may be imagined collectively.

The divergent praxes of Blue Hill and Pixie Scout, at the table and elsewhere, project different conceptual landscapes onto the geography of the Hudson Valley. Applying the principles of deep ecology, the landscape that Blue Hill diners are encouraged to eat is a *terra nullius* whose vitality must be managed by chefs' expertise. Viewing the Hudson Valley landscape as peopled and historically situated, Jonathan and Katy do not reject the ecological imperative to support an alternative food system that enriches the natural environment. They do reject their own cultural capital as chefs and implicate diners as co-creators of understanding and of futures, making a more multi-dimensional view of the Hudson Valley landscape possible. I have shown in this chapter how Barber's view of the landscape produces determinate future making rooted in nostalgia, while Pixie Scout's orientation as a 'player' in the landscape generates indeterminate futures.

Barber, Katy and Jonathan are all based in New York City and their gaze upon the Hudson Valley is ultimately an urban one. The city is a gravitational force in the region, and just as the water of the river does, the people move back and forth between city and hinterlands, bringing their value sets with them. The farmers who travel to Union Square to sell at Greenmarket have had a powerful influence on the dining scene in the city, and the urban valuation of Hudson Valley foods makes people in the valley reconsider the place they live. The motility of people in the region is one of its defining aspects. Amongst Hudson Valley residents, New York City is seen with ambivalence, as will be shown in subsequent chapters. To understand how the Hudson Valley landscape is understood by people who farm it,

the next chapter take us to the orchards where the region's iconic drink, cider, originates.



*Fig. 4 A glass of cider
Photo courtesy of Glynwood. Photographed by Max Flatow (2022)*

Chapter Three

DRINK

We were in the middle of a super bloom. Apple trees produce biennially, meaning that they naturally cycle through ‘on years’, when fruit production is high, alternating with ‘off years’ when it is lower. Orchardists practice various management methods to even out these highs and lows, but they remain. Occasionally, the ‘on year’ exceeds all expectations and the Hudson Valley, where forty percent of New York’s apples are grown (Pucci and Cavallo 2021:109), froths with apple blossoms. It was early spring, 2017. I was walking through the expansive orchards of Fishkill Farms at golden hour with a colleague from Glynwood and two cider makers, sipping cider from stemmed glasses, petals falling like confetti.¹¹ Bucolic barely begins to describe the scene. In moments like this, one must admit that romanticized visions of the countryside are not purely fictitious. A professional photographer clicked away, capturing images for storytelling to funders and the public about the project we’d begun that day.

¹¹ The term ‘cider’ here is used here as it is most commonly used internationally to mean fermented, rather than fresh pressed, apple juice.

Earlier, we'd unloaded a few hundred young trees into the barn for planting in the following days. Those trees were only a meter or two tall and were bundled together with twine. They sat in a large wooden crate with soil loosely piled around their roots, and each had a colored plastic tag attached to it with the variety of fruit the tree would produce. Cultivar names like Dabinett, Frequin Rouge, Wickson Crab and Kingston Black fluttered from the thin trunks of the trees as a small forklift moved the crate from the truck to the barn. These trees would make up one of twelve plantings at orchards in the three most significant apple producing regions of the state: Western New York, the Finger Lakes, and the Hudson Valley. The tree varieties were all ones preferred by cider makers because of the tannins and high acid levels present in their fruit, qualities that don't make them very nice to eat out of hand but add complexity to cider. Most of the varieties planted for this project originated in Europe while the others were American 'heirloom' varieties originating in the colonial period. Glynwood, Angry Orchard, and the New York Cider Association were collaborating on this long-term citizen science project to assess the vitality of these tree varieties and the qualities their fruit would express during fermentation, with the ultimate goal of providing evidence of *terroir* in New York ciders.

Terroir is defined, most simply, as the expression of climate, cultivation, and technique in the flavor of a food. However, it is a constructed and contested term entangled with economic and socio-political agendas (Trubek 2009; Guy 2007). Evidence of New York cider's *terroir* would, we believed, give cider prestige alongside wine, the product that popularized the concept of *terroir* and that has a nearly identical production process to cider making. Utilizing historic apple cultivars to provide evidence of *terroir* was a choice based both on flavor profile and our desire to further assert the authenticity of the beverage by inscribing its lineage as heritage. Following Laurajane Smith, I will explore heritage, through the example of cider, 'as a cultural and social process which engages with acts of remembering that work to create ways to understand and engage with the present' (Smith 2006:2). Scholars have coined the term 'heritagization' to refer to this process – in food it is especially studied in the legal formalization of production processes – and the tensions that arise amongst different stakeholders in that process (Grasseni

2011). Ironically, the heritagization of food often results in codification of production practices that are at odds with the cultural practices assumed to underpin heritage, or that make it more difficult for producers to benefit financially from heritagization because codification excludes the use of modern efficiencies (West and Domingos 2012; West 2014; Bernardo and Rodrigues 2020; Klein 2018). I will use the example of cider making in the Hudson Valley and the United States in order to understand how the heritagization of cider articulates with individual and group identity and boundary-making work amidst broader social rifts, and thereby show what productive tensions arise within the cider community as it goes about rethinking and retelling the history of the beverage in order to shape the future of the industry to align with emergent and often divergent sets of values.

The Privilege of Nostalgia

The 'acts of remembering' core to the heritagization of cider are suffused with nostalgia for agrarian, colonial America. Fishkill Farms is a useful place to think with in order to understand cider heritagization. The farm shares its name, derived from the Dutch words *vis* (fish) and *kil* (stream), with a nearby town that was an important site during the colonial period and the Revolutionary War (seventeenth to eighteenth centuries). The farm is a 'century farm', meaning it has been recognized by the state of New York as having existed as a farm for over one hundred years. In addition to the orchards, the farm produces vegetables for a CSA and hosts a farm store. Today, it also houses an estate cidery, meaning a cidery that makes cider from fruit grown in its own orchard. This follows the convention established by wine in denoting similar operations in that industry as estate wineries. The name of the cidery is distinct from that of the farm, as is common with estate cideries in the U.S. It is called Treasury Cider in homage to Henry D. Morgenthau, first Secretary of the U.S. Treasury and the grandfather of Josh Morgenthau who today runs the farm and who established the cidery business at Fishkill Farms in 2016.

Henry D. Morgenthau had an influential career in public service and purchased the farm in 1913. He was appointed Chairman of the Farm Credit Administration and later Secretary of the U.S. Treasury by his friend and neighbor, President Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR) who was a lifelong resident of Hyde Park, twenty miles north of

Fishkill Farms. More than once when I mentioned the farm, people told me how, during World War II, FDR and Winston Churchill had sat on the porch of the white clapboard farmhouse sipping mint juleps prepared by Henry's 22-year-old son, Robert. Robert is Josh's father, and a political celebrity in his own right. He was appointed the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York (that includes New York City) by President John F. Kennedy, Jr. in 1961, briefly resigning the role to run an unsuccessful campaign for Governor of the state against incumbent Governor Nelson Rockefeller. Robert Morgenthau is best known for his tenure as District Attorney for New York County (the New York City borough of Manhattan) from 1975 until his retirement in 2009; he was the inspiration for the protagonist in the television show *Law and Order* that has been running since 1990 (*Law and Order* 1990). Clearly, the Morgenthau family is firmly ensconced amongst the legacy powerbrokers of New York State, but it is the way in which their wealth and social status intersect with their role as stewards of this farm that exemplifies how nostalgia is constructed as part of determinate future making and how claims of heritage are contested in American cider as a call for indeterminate future making.

Class, racial and economic privilege are prerequisite to claims on nostalgia in contemporary cider making in the region, as the example of Fishkill Farms illustrates. In the 1960s, Henry Morgenthau died, and the farm's ownership was divided amongst his children. Robert's 270-acre parcel included the core of farm operations. Standing on the back porch of that historic farmhouse, you can see the acreage that Henry's other heirs, Robert's siblings, chose to sell to real estate developers. Rows of indistinguishable housing units sit angularly beyond the undulating orchard landscape. The pressure the Morgenthau siblings faced to sell is understandable. The bottom fell out from the market for fresh apples in the second half of the twentieth century as apple imports, from China especially, drove the price down. In Western New York orchards survived by producing fruit for processing into apple sauce, shelf stable juice, and frozen concentrate, but the Hudson Valley's proximity to New York City and its dramatic landscapes made it desirable real estate. The land was worth more money if it were sold than if it were used to grow apples at scale for the processing or wholesale markets.

Fishkill Farms survives today in part because it opened to the public for 'U-Pick', which is just what it sounds like. People come onto the farm to pick fruit themselves and pay for that fruit as well as an entry fee. The first U-Pick orchard in New York, and possibly the country, was opened in 1905 at Hicks Orchard, also in the Hudson Valley and today home to Slyboro Ciderhouse. Josh Morgenthau says the switch in business model from wholesale to U-Pick saved Fishkill Farms after a disastrous season of extreme weather in the 1970s. U-Pick orchards are today ubiquitous across the Hudson Valley and New York state, and going apple picking in a nubby sweater is the quintessential autumn activity. Every weekend, June through October, thousands of people come to Fishkill Farms for U-Pick. Peak attendance is September through October, when the demand for apple picking is so high that visitors are allowed to drive their vehicles right into the orchards to accommodate the hordes, two to three thousand people daily, that cannot be contained by the large parking lot. On many orchards, the U-Pick business model has evolved into a sophisticated agritourism offering that includes hayrides, farm stores with fresh produce and preserved foods, onsite bakeries, prepared food offerings, and increasingly cider tasting rooms. Producing cider is, for farms like Fishkill Farms, a natural continuation of the economic strategy of diversifying enterprises and income streams through onsite production and sale of value-added agricultural products (pickles, jams, preserves, etc.) that help the farm to survive. Part of marketing those products is selling a nostalgic vision of the farm.

In their study of cider mills as sites of agritourism in Michigan, Wright and Eaton note that 'modern cider mills represent idealized forms of bucolic nostalgia' that obfuscate the realities of rural and agricultural livelihoods (Wright and Eaton 2018:80). The building blocks of this bucolic nostalgia, they show, are 'tradition, cultural heritage, and distinctiveness' (ibid:80). The way Fishkill Farms frames its story as a century farm, a multi-generational family farm, and a site of historic significance in global politics all bolster its claims to tradition, cultural heritage, and distinctiveness (History 2017). Once on the farm, the historic barns and buildings that serve as the center of operations welcome visitors. Preserved agricultural buildings are particularly evocative to tourists with nostalgic longings, and are

frequently transformed from their historic utility as sites of production into sites of consumption, like cider tasting rooms (Wright and Eaton 2018; Joyner et al. 2018). The farmhouse where FDR and Churchill drank mint juleps still stands (today as senior staff offices) and just beyond it a barn has been renovated into a bustling farm store, a bakery cranking out dozens upon dozens of fresh apple cider donuts¹², and a cider bar. The entire building is encircled by a broad deck from which to enjoy the lush landscape and spectacular sunsets while sipping cider.

The invocation of tradition, cultural heritage, and distinctiveness extends to the cider itself. The name, Treasury Cider, invokes both the Morgenthau family lineage as a marker of tradition and the family's political influence as a marker of distinction. Shackel states, 'Heritage is based on shared values that people have about culture and their past' (2019:10). The names of individual ciders reference cultural heritage specific to the history of the land and of the landscape as a site of settler colonialism, demonstrating the assumed shared values of colonial-era agrarianism. For example, some of their ciders are: 'Homestead' that references the first homes of colonial settlers; 'Wiccopee' is the name of a settlement of the Wappinger tribe that was exterminated by the forces of colonization and whose unceded territory is now a nearby hamlet of the same name; 'Counterpane' is an old fashioned American word for quilt; and 'Centennial' celebrates the 100 year anniversary of the farm. This collection of cider names exemplify the inherent contradictions of settler colonial nationalist anxieties, as theorized by Thomas Wolfe to whom I will return later in this chapter, who observes that 'the erasure of indigeneity conflicts with the assertion of settler nationalism' because settler colonial nations need indigeneity to differentiate themselves from the original colonizing nation *while* naturalizing their presence on colonized land (Wolfe 2006:389). Settler colonialism requires complex identity gymnastics. In post-colonial contexts, nostalgia for the period of colonization is anathema to the formation of national identity and the legitimization of those now in power. In settler colonial contexts, those in power must view themselves as the rightful inheritors of

¹² These donuts are made with fresh apple juice, which Americans, confusingly, call cider. Fermented apple juice has been popularized as 'hard cider' to distinguish it from fresh juice.

the colonial project, on their own terms, by positioning themselves as an oppressed class who justly liberated themselves from distant imperial control. This narrative of self-righteousness cannot withstand admitting the ways in which they embody that unjust empire, and so it requires indigeneity to bring settlers into proximity with the land they rule. This leads to historical imaginings that erase the sins of conquest, while emphasizing how the settler colonial nation is inherently different from the empire that birthed it. An example of this is the cultural trope of the noble savage, an Indigenous hero who exemplifies the spirit of the New World but is unfit for the inevitable future of progress and modernity. Settler colonial society simultaneously eradicates Indigenous humans in the present while holding their existence in the past as a point of pride, thereby rationalizing settlers' claim to both Indigenous cultures' legacies and the legacy of hardscrabble homesteaders.

The frontier homestead and the Indigenous settlement are places as critical to communicating the authenticity, the 'Americanness', of Treasury's ciders as are the old-timey craft implied by a quilt and the history implicit in the century of the farm's existence. Though the settler colonial history of this land is not part of the personal biography of the Morgenthau (Ashkenazi Jews who emigrated from Germany to New York in the late nineteenth century), invoking that heritage legitimizes Treasury cider as connected to the American agrarian imaginary. For Fishkill Farms and farms like it, satisfying the nostalgia of people separated from productive landscapes with projections of idyllic rural life is a sound business strategy, despite the way it glosses social and economic realities that the people working on the farm contend with daily, as Wright and Eaton observe in midwestern cider mills and as will be shown throughout this chapter (2018). However, the building blocks of a story that conjures nostalgia – tradition, cultural heritage, and distinction – are cultural assets that few others in the region have because few have had the class, racial, and economic privilege to own and operate a multi-generational family farm.

The development of Fishkill Farms from diversified wholesale to U-Pick to agritourism destination to cidery depended upon a familial legacy of power and privilege. Henry Morgenthau purchased the farm in 1915, and throughout his ownership of the farm he accumulated and wielded both wealth and power well

beyond that of an ordinary farmer. As the century progressed and the collapse of the domestic fresh fruit market forced owners of apple orchards across the Hudson Valley to sell their land for development, the Morgenthau's were able to survive a disastrous season and maintain ownership of the land by investing in shifting the business model and later by becoming landlords and leasing it to other farm operators.

At no point was the family's livelihood dependent on the farm, neither financially nor socially. When Robert retired from public service in 2008 and convinced Josh to leave his painterly pursuit in the city to join him upstate in assuming management of the farm, they were able to do so because they still owned the land. They held onto their farm even as the number of family farms in the nation dropped precipitously (Lobao and Meyer 2001), a fact that generated despair at the loss of rural ways of life and energized deterministic future making projects to save family farms. This is not to say that Josh and Robert did not face significant and ongoing challenges. A 100-year old barn was completely destroyed in a fire in 2009, for example. Alongside that are the ongoing challenges of managing a large staff and the narrow margins for any farming operation. Financially, the farm's profitability today remains precarious. While the stewardship of this land that Robert and Josh undertook, demonstrated by the ecological easements they have pursued, the purchases that have brought parcels of land back into the farm, and the custodial care they show to employees who have worked the farm for decades, is admirable, the structure of American society dictates that the resources to survive as a multi-generational family farm in this region have accumulated disproportionately to white men, and the Morgenthaus are not an exception to this rule.

As I will discuss at length in Chapter Five, agrarian based nostalgia adheres to tropes of white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy. The cultural and economic capital accumulated by white cis-gender men in American farming's history are the very same narrative building blocks needed to market agritourism to nostalgic tourists. The nostalgic narrative is predicated on multi-generational land ownerships, actual or implied. For example, the designation of Fishkill Farms as a century farm, its

connection to WWII political figures, and the settler history invoking names of Treasury Cider's offerings all hang off the spine of the assumed narrative that this family farm has been *this family's* farm for a long time. As People of Color, women, and the poor have been barred from land ownership or dispossessed of their land historically and today, legacy farm ownership by such people is rare. In the case of cider and agritourism in the U.S., the power to craft nostalgia that is legible to a broad swath of consumers is a manifestation of socio-economic privilege. The following section interrogates how attention to inequities past and present disrupts claims to heritage.

Heritage Style

The close relationship between U-Pick agritourism and the rise in cider production in the Hudson Valley accounts, in part, for the region's nostalgic cider narrative. That narrative articulates with conversations in the industry nationally about how cider defines itself as a drinks category that consumers easily understand. In this section, I will explore why heritage became the term for a style of cider and how this heritagization of cider differs from food heritage projects in Europe, the social rupture within the cider community caused by invoking heritage as an American cider style, and how attention to inequitable distribution of social and economic capital within cider production, both historically and in the present day, complicates the creation of food heritage narratives. I will continue to utilize my field work at Fishkill Farms to understand the specific nostalgia invoked by American cider, and contextualize Fishkill Farms and Treasury Cider within the broader American cider industry based on my participation as an advocate within that industry since 2014. The previous section explained that the ability to utilize the colonial-nostalgic cider narrative is predicated by the history of land ownership in the U.S., and this section builds upon that understanding. The remainder of this chapter will show how heritage-making in the cider industry demonstrates the cycle of despair to nostalgia to determinate future making described in Chapter One, and ask if the contestations of that process reveal alternate pathways moving from grief to hope to prefiguration that may coalesce as indeterminate future making.

A discourse of heritage, and specifically cultural heritage, emerged in the 1960s as a Western response to the intersecting and uneven intensification of industrialization and modernization following WWII raised concerns about the loss and exploitation of fragile and finite cultural resources; in the 1980s, archaeologist and museologists joined this discourse with the aim of valorizing heritage claims (Smith 2011). At the turn of the twentieth century, academics shifted their focus from the object of heritage to heritage as a cultural process and so interrogated questions of who heritage was made by, how it was socially constructed, and who benefitted or was harmed in the process (Shackel 2019). As the field of food studies has grown, it has participated in and contested the authenticity narrative (Weiss 2011). Authenticity is one of the conceptual and linguistic building blocks of food heritage, whose 'vocabulary involves a search for place-bound anchorage with the application of notions like *terroir* and geographical indications' (Geyzen 2014:73). Though *terroir* has become a synonym for quality, historical authenticity, and connection to soil (Trubek 2009), its origins and mechanisms are in European political economies (Guy 2007).

Terrior and geographic designations are top of mind for cider makers, in the Hudson Valley and elsewhere, eager to garner the perceived rural tourism and commercial markets that come with inscribing their beverage as exceptional because of where it is made (Baldacchino 2015; Agostino and Trivieri 2014). In her study of *terroir*, Trubek traces its origin to the early 1900s when 'a group of people began to organize around this naturalized connection of taste and place, for they saw the potential benefits of a foodview celebrating the agrarian and rural way of life' (Trubek 2009:263). Imagined nostalgically, the connection of *terroir* to simpler, authentic foodways was celebrated by its proponents for nourishing body and soul and relieving modern anxieties (Techoueyres 2001). The construction of food heritage is enmeshed with civil society, government, markets, and natural resources to form a 'social construct' that generates 'places of meaning' through re-activating and re-appropriating 'memory' (Bessi re 2013:290). This process has been termed heritagization.¹³ While stemming from the desire to sustain agrarian

¹³ In the European context, *patrimonialisation* is common and interchangeable with heritagization.

and rural ways of life, heritagization in Europe can mimic the structures of industrial food regimes, resulting in further marginalization of small-scale producers and significant changes to rural life (Lotti 2010).

Critics pay particular attention to the class based divisions arising from food heritagization. As Grasseni notes in her study of Alpine cheeses, 'heritage-value is acknowledged as part of a political negotiation that entails implicit notions of classification and of quality. These often include conflicting criteria for boundary definition as well as an active silencing of alternative strategies of value construction' (Grasseni 2011). Cases across Europe demonstrate the silencing of alternative values, often those held by rural and economically marginalized producers. In Portugal, Slow Food Presidium regulations made Serpa heritage cheese unrecognizable to the traditional producers and too expensive for them to produce (West and Domingos 2012). In Italy, cured pork fat that was rarely eaten gained in such popularity through heritagization by Slow Food as to be unaffordable to the people of Colonatta (Leitch 2003). In Cyprus, the European Union's food heritagization program favored industrial producers and hegemonic national identity (Welz 2013). The benefits of food heritagization in Europe have been unevenly distributed, tending to fail to address classed disparities and, at worst, exacerbate them.

And yet, in the United States food producers yearn for the legal protections and economic benefits they believe Europeans have. As Paxson demonstrates amongst artisan cheesemakers, there is a belief that Americans can borrow heritagization from Europe but do it differently, innovatively, entrepreneurially (Paxson 2014). This belief can be linked to American exceptionalism, the idea that Alex de Tocqueville first described that America can be more egalitarian, more free, and *better* because it does not have a history of feudalism, as Europe does (Herwitz 2012). 'Ever since Tocqueville, an important section of America's thinkers have written its autobiography as reflected in a European mirror' (Mamdani 2015:596). America defines its national identity as Europe without the hindrance of

class inequity, but looking into that European mirror obfuscates America's legacy of enslavement of Africans and genocide of Native Americans. The example in my research of cider's efforts to define itself as heritage illuminates the racialized implications of heritagization in the U.S., while adding to literature on heritagization and its complications in non-European contexts (eg. Klein 2018; Brulotte and Starkman 2014; Avieli 2013; Counihan 2014). The case of American cider opens questions about the challenge of integrating racialized narratives and bodies into food heritage projects.

Why did 'heritage' become the name for a style of cider? Cider is a product that was niche if not unknown in the U.S. market prior to the success of Woodchuck Cider, founded in 1991, when one million gallons were produced domestically. In 2015, more than fifty-five million gallons of American cider was on the market (Fabien-Ouellet and Conner 2018). Although U.S. cider production has skyrocketed, most drinkers in the states remain unsure of how a cider ought to taste or how to describe what type of cider they like. The American Cider Association (ACA) has spent years in committees and at their annual conference, CiderCon, debating the terms for describing cider styles and what characteristics and production techniques comprise those styles.¹⁴ In 2017 the ACA released its first 'Style Guide' with two overall categories: modern and heritage. These were unusual terms to apply to drinks and represented passionate factions of cider makers divided by ethos and geography as well as production styles.

I will explain the context that produced 'modern' and 'heritage' as oppositional cider styles as well as the ciders they aimed to describe. What emerges validates Smith's argument 'that what heritage does is intersect with a range of social and cultural debates about the legitimacy of a range of values and identities, and subsequently plays a part in their validation, negotiation and regulation' (2006:6). With specific attention to the implications for cider makers in the Hudson Valley, I will explore the sociopolitical currents in cider discourse that influenced adoption of

¹⁴ In January, 2020 the United States Association of Cider Makers changed its name to the American Cider Association. For ease of reference and reading, the name American Cider Association will be used here regardless of when the described activities of the Association occurred.

the terms 'heritage' and 'modern' and ultimately the cultural reckoning that erased the terms from the official ACA lexicon.

The surge in contemporary cider production in the U.S. began in the Northeastern states at the turn of the century. Cideries have proliferated in recent decades, and at breakneck speeds since 2009 (Pucci and Cavallo 2021:9). Ten cideries operated in the entire U.S. in 1990 (Pucci and Cavallo 2021:18); more than 120 cideries were operating in New York State alone as of 2021 (NY Cider Association Releases Economic Impact Study 2021). Wine writer Jason Wilson's book *Cider Revival* puts forward a widely repeated narrative that the disappearance of cider as a common American tippie is due to the regulations of Prohibition, when cider orchards were attacked with hatchets by temperance evangelists, and that the resurrection of cider relies upon cider makers seeking out lost and forgotten fruits and techniques (Wilson 2019). *Revival* is, however, a misnomer when speaking of the growth of the commercial cider market. As professor Greg Peck explained during a tour of the experimental orchards at Cornell University in 2019, scholars of cider in the U.S. agree that the decline in cider production reflected the agrarian basis of that drink, and that as the rural population migrated to urban centers in the nineteenth century their homesteading practice of pressing cider from their own trees for household production fell away. Moreover, the influx of immigrants from Germany introduced a taste for beer, which relied on grains and water for production. Grain could be shipped easily and stored in less space, for a longer time than apples, and so was a more fit drink for urban production of a beverage the working class could afford (Pucci and Cavallo 2021). Cider's twentieth-century re-emergence into America's drinking culture created a brand-new commercial sector, and the spatial and temporal location of that re-emergence are significant in understanding how the word heritage became imbued with a specific meaning in the cider community. Cider's commercial growth began in the New England states bordering New York, where romanticization of the country's colonial history is strong, at the turn of the twenty-first century, a specific phase in the American local food movement when virtuous consumption was on the rise and European models of food patrimony revered. In the face of mounting economic and environmental chaos, the impulse to rediscover and preserve threatened foodways drove

determinate future making practices. Historic apple varieties became one foci of those efforts.

Some passionate advocates of localizing food systems focus on the maintenance of biocultural crop diversity. They are often called ‘seed keepers’, a social group originating in the 1970s and to whom I will return in a Chapter Six. Many seed keepers specialize in certain crops, and apples have ardent champions. In their work on apple collectors in the American Southeast, Chapman and Brown show that while more apple varieties are commercially available today than were available in the nineteenth century, the erosion of apple diversity is in orchards and farms and people’s yards. They call what is being lost ‘ubiquitous diversity [which] is diversity that people use, tinker with, and transform, not only in its phenotypic characteristics but also in its practical uses and historical significance’ (Chapman and Brown 2013:43). Smith’s ‘acts of remembering’ in the context of ubiquitous diversity manifest as using, tinkering with, and transforming apples, the food and drink made from apples, and the ‘historical significance’ of apples all as part of the heritagization process. Chapman and Brown argue that it is the everydayness of apple diversity that apple collectors seek to preserve and maintain by sharing, growing and using apple varieties with each other rather than the practice of conserving apple genetics in more removed settings, like the USDA’s apple germplasm repository in Geneva, New York. In contrast to *ex situ*, or out of place, conservation apple collectors’ *in vivo*, or lived, conservation practice transform the social meaning of apple varieties.

A network of ‘apple collectors’ who practice everyday conservation has been growing since the 1990s (Chapman and Brown 2013:44). Place-making was a growing preoccupation of local food system advocates during those decades. Place-making comprises a unique set of activities in relation to apples. As Chapman and Brown write, ‘the work of apple collectors fosters ubiquitous apple diversity via the maintenance of processes that aid the (re)construction of “place”’: exchange of seedling and grafted apple varieties and the circulation of practical, personal, and cultural memories of apple cultivars. These processes are often evident in the ways that different varieties are categorized and acquire new social

meanings, such as heirloom or heritage status' (2013:45). During the decades in which place making became a prioritized activity for apple collectors, cider made an emergence on the American market.

Because of the way they are propagated, apples varieties have a particular biological connection to place that promotes the adherence of social meanings, like heirloom and heritage, to varieties. Apples are not self-pollinating, a minimum of two apple trees are needed in order for a tree to bear fruit and produce seed. They are genetically recombinant in their reproduction. This means that the seed of any given apple will grow a tree that produces an apple that is quite different from the parent apple because it has its own distinct combination of genes. Specific varieties of apples can only be propagated clonally from root sprouts or grafting. Grafting is the process of inserting the living 'scion wood', a cutting from the end of a branch, into the living root system of another tree. While grafting is an ancient technology dating back to the Romans, it was not a widely known skill in North American prior to the Revolutionary War (Diamond 2010). Seedling orchards, comprised of trees planted from seeds, were a mainstay of American rural life during the periods of colonization and settlement. Homesteaders were sometimes even legally required to plant trees to claim their tracts of land during westward expansion, and a seedling orchard was easy and cheap to plant (Pucci and Cavallo 2021:40–41). Seedling trees would produce mostly so-called 'spitters' that weren't good to eat, but were acceptable for cider making. When fortune struck and a seedling tree bore fruit that had desirable qualities for cooking, storing, or processing it would be named and clonally propagated for commercial sale (Pollan 2002:45–50).

Often apple varieties' names would reference the place where they appeared, like the beloved Newtown Pippin that originated in the village of Newtown at a site that is today the intersection of Broadway and 45th Ave. in the New York City borough of Queens. These cloned trees carried not just the name of their origin place, but the identical genetics of the first tree of their line. In that sense, they are materially the same tree. Because of clonal propagation, 'apples instilled with the memory of one place can be moved to another place' (Chapman and Brown 2013:56). The mobile

memory of place carried by apples may be an individual's or a communal memory mediated through shared cultural values. For makers of heritage-style cider, it is communal memory.

What shared cultural values that communal memory expresses are subtextual in the 2018 draft of the American Cider Association's (ACA) definition of heritage ciders. It reads 'Heritage Ciders are made primarily from the fresh juice of multi-use or cider-specific bittersweet/bittersharp apples and heirloom varieties; wild or crab apples are sometimes used for acidity/tannin balance' (USACM Cider Style Guidelines Version 2.0 2018). The definition includes ciders produced in England, Spain, France, and Germany 'as well as regional American ciders and others in which cider-specific apple varieties and production techniques are used' (ibid 2018). This definition includes temporal as well as spatial implications for which fruit can be used in a heritage cider. From this definition emerge three loci for apple varieties that are sufficiently imbued with cultural meaning to make them fit for heritage cider production: Europe, pre-prohibition America, and untended stands of apple trees known as wild or feral orchards.¹⁵

The first two loci are the origin of cider-specific fruit varieties that are propagated clonally, and so are instilled with the memory of a past place. The feral trees are not physical clones of trees once rooted in a past place, but contemporary manifestations of the European settler orchards of yesteryear. A strong commonality of the three loci of fruit fit for heritage cider production is that they evoke the country's colonial history. These heritage apples are anti-modern, defined as much by what they are as by what they aren't. Heritage apples are valued for their organoleptic qualities but also for what they represent, for the generations of cidemakers who used similarly grown or genetically identical apples and so, in theory, made ciders much like the ones made from heritage fruit. Makers invoke this lineage to authenticate their cider and distinguish it from mass-produced cider by situating it in an historic time and place. It is specifically

¹⁵ As apple trees are not autochthonous in North America, I prefer the term feral as more accurately describing apples trees that were planted by humans and then left untended or are the untended descendants of trees planted by humans.

antagonistic to the cider produced in Washington and Oregon on the West Coast, which primarily utilizes fruit from orchards initially planted in the mid-twentieth century for the fresh fruit and processing markets; fruit with a relatively flat flavor profile in fermentation that is often supplemented with aromatics and other fruits in the finished ciders. The Northeast cider makers' appreciation of feral apples and cider fruit produced through clonal propagation has a cultural slipperiness that has seeped into the regional industry and encouraged determinate future making praxes imbued with settler colonial nostalgia.

The ACA's published definition of heritage cider drew on years of debate and conversation amongst cidemakers, and when the ACA style guide was first adopted in 2017, the term heritage was generally understood to be synonymous with Northeast while modern referenced the West Coast. During the previous decades, the emergent Northeast cider industry had romanticized the region's colonial history to build its identity and claims to authenticity. There are sensory as well as cultural reasons for this. European apple varieties are the most prized for cider making because they are high in flavors that remain in the cider after the sugar has been fermented into alcohol, namely acids and tannins, and so make cider that is more complex than apples that are prized for their sweetness. Because cider has had a more continuous history in parts of Europe than it has in the U.S., these European, cider specific apples have been widely propagated and their behavior in fermentation is better understood. English cider apples are particularly revered in the Northeast. The British colonial settlement of North America is the historical precedent for this reverence for English varieties (Watson 1999; Calhoun 2011; Merwin, Valois, and Padilla-Zakour 2007). Here I focus on the intersection of settler colonialism and nostalgia that co-construct a Northeast cider mythos that brought the category of heritage cider into existence.

Following the national cider conference, CiderCon, in 2017, I went for a rowdy dinner with a dozen of the Northeast's leading cider makers. Stephen Wood of Farnum Hill Cider sat to my right and lived up to his reputation as a larger than life embodiment of the hardscrabble New England farmer turned cider iconoclast. Knitting his wild eyebrows at me, he told me how in the 1980s, when he'd decided

to turn his family's New Hampshire orchard to cider making, he'd taken several trips to Southwest England to visit the cider makers there. He was curious to know whether their apples would grow in New England, and wanted some samples to try it out. Wood took cuttings from the trees that bore fruit varieties he was interested in and used his pocketknife to whittle them into the shape of pencils. Across the table, Lulu Spencer, his fierce and wiry wife, twinkled in anticipation of the well-worn punchline. Tucked into the front pocket of Wood's work shirt, the tannic cultivars were carried through airport security without the usual scrutiny biological specimens would attract. The 'pencils' were shortly thereafter grafted to root stock planted on their land at Poverty Lane Orchards. England was (re)rooted in New England.

Steve and Lulu experimented with many apple varieties before settling on those that would grow best, at which point they sourced English varieties as well as colonial-era varieties through the regular channels to plant their cider-specific orchards. It was these, at the time, hard to find apples that establish Farnum Hill Cider's reputation for excellent cider. Today they supply the European cider apples they grow to makers across the country at premium prices. Without the addition of these apples to their business, they believe they could not have resisted the pressure to sell Poverty Lane Orchards to real estate developers (Our Place - Poverty Lane Orchards n.d.).

In the Hudson Valley, Elizabeth (Liz) Ryan also turned to cider to save farms from the incursion of real estate developers. She made her first batch of cider as a student at Cornell University in 1980, where she studied Pomology following a previous degree in folklore. Liz studied the craft with cidermakers in England, in Somerset and Hereford, as well as collecting oral interviews and doing historical research into apple production in New York. She bought Breezy Hill Orchard in 1984 to rescue it from development, as she tells the story, and has gone on to accumulate four more farms that produce eggs and vegetables in addition to fruit. In each case, Liz felt called to become the steward of these farms in order to keep them in agricultural production. In most cases, the farms were being sold by multi-generational farmers without willing heirs to pass the farm on to or because they

could no longer turn a profit from the operation, often both. Steve and Liz are the forerunners of the craft cider boom of the early 2010s, having been at it for the previous three decades. Their commitment to continuing the agricultural legacy and use of land is an important counternarrative to the centralization of agriculture that defined USDA policy in the 1980s, and to the devastating crises caused by it (Ritchie and Ristau 1987). However, romanticized narratives about land and legacy were more durable than the vagaries of 1980s agricultural policy and as a result, the image of cider in New York remains laden with settler colonial nostalgia.

What is this particular strain of nostalgia? Using postcolonial analysis, Lorcin distinguishes between ‘imperial nostalgia’ and ‘colonial nostalgia’ (Lorcin 2013). The former is concerned with the political stage and orients itself to the lost glory of empire, while ‘colonial nostalgia’ is concerned with the loss of lifestyle and draws on the lived experience of individuals so that it fades in the postcolonial context, as fewer and fewer people remember that lived experience. While the U.S. is a settler colonial state, not a postcolonial one, elements of both imperial and colonial nostalgia can be seen in Northeastern cider makers’ nostalgic turn. Building to a fuller understanding of how settler colonial nostalgia animates determinate future making praxes in Hudson Valley cider culture, I will describe some expressions of colonial and imperial nostalgia that arose in my field work.

Northeast cider makers’ affinity for British apple cultivars and their desire to have their cider ranked alongside European ciders resonates with imperial nostalgia, while the romanticization of homestead orchards and cider making by descendants of European settlers exhibits traits of colonial nostalgia. One Hudson Valley cider maker, Andy Brennan, exemplifies the colonial nostalgic presence with his company Aaron Burr Cider (named after the Revolutionary War era politician who killed Alexander Hamilton). Brennan, a former media professional and present-day homesteader, is an eccentric, outspoken luddite known for his passionate embrace of so-called naturalized orcharding, and wild fermentation (Brennan 2019). He frequently dons a white, colonial era wig for public appearances and social media posts. Though Aaron Burr Cider production is limited to thirty barrels annually, they’ve received outsized attention from the press and Brennan’s influence belies

the cidery's miniscule market share (Aaron Burr Cider » More About Us n.d.). And market share has everything to do with the stickiness of nostalgic tendencies in cider.



Fig. 5 Andy Brennan presenting at the NOFA conference [aaronburrcider]. Photographed by @mainstfarm, 17 Jan. 2020 <https://www.instagram.com/p/B7bzQUMJkbW/> Accessed 7 Nov. 2023

In the last decades of the twentieth century the glorification of European foodways that underpins the contemporary American food movement arose alongside the rise in imperial nostalgia (Bissell 2005). While not causal, both social turns

responded to increased anxiety about the perils of modernity, and so it is unsurprising that leading-edge artisanal cider makers such as Liz Ryan and Stephen Wood turned to the legacy of empire to inspire their cider making during that time. As I have described earlier, the notion of *terroir* as a concept that links food, culture, and landscape has been a primary organizing principle for local food advocates, but it belongs at least as much to political economy as it does to socioecology. As Kolleen M. Guy shows in her history *When Champagne Became French*, the questions of who, where, and how champagne was made and controlled were much debated, leading even to violent conflict, in defining the *terroir* of champagne upon which its eventual award of an *appellation d'origine contrôlée* (AOC) were based (Guy 2007). The AOC system of regulating authentic production of food and drink has served as the model for legislation across Europe and for the American Viticultural Area (AVA). A study of cider making in Vermont argued for the necessity of Geographic Indicators (GI) to improve consumer understanding of and demand for hard cider (Fabien-Ouellet and Conner 2018). It is representative of opinions widely held across the American cider industry that AOC inspired legislation would improve market access and distinguish the quality of orchard-based cider, justifying to consumers its higher price point. Imperialist nostalgia may also go some way to identifying the motives of cider makers for inclusion of their product. This mix of motivations led me to deliver thousands of apple saplings to various Hudson Valley orchards including Fishkill Farms with the aim of discovering and documenting cider *terroir*. However, neither market nor postcolonial analysis fully elucidates the values Northeast cider makers expressed by seeking to define their cider style as heritage. Nor does it explain the backlash within the cider community to the codification of heritage as a cider style. A settler colonial analysis offers deeper insight.

Initiated by Indigenous critique of the limits of postcolonial scholarship, anthropology has increasingly recognized the unique context of settler colonial societies such as Australia, New Zealand, and North America since the 1970s. (Veracini 2010; Carey and Silverstein 2020; Wolfe 1999). In Wolfe's seminal article *Settler colonialism and the elimination of the native*, he asserts 'Territoriality is colonialism's specific, irreducible element' (Wolfe 2016:388). Artisanal food

producers' interest in naming, delineating, and profiting from a 'territory' accounts in part for their affinity to the glorification of colonial pasts broadly. Cider exemplifies this settler colonial nostalgia. It differs from colonial nostalgia as theorized by Lorcan just as settler colonial and postcolonial societies differ from each other. Settler colonial societies are different from postcolonial ones because the colonizers came 'to stay' (Wolfe 2006). The goal of colonization was not control and exploitation of the colonized, but the creation of a society by and for the settlers. It is a process that did not conclude when formal ties to colonizing empires were severed.

Returning to Wolfe, the ongoing process of settler colonialism operates by what he terms a 'logic of elimination' that must displace Indigenous claims on land and therefore Indigenous peoples from land, political power, historical narrative, and ultimately existence (Wolfe 2006). In her study of the Hawai'ian song 'Aloha 'Oe', Imada theorizes 'settler colonial nostalgia' as a material and symbolic practice that she summarizes this way: 'We, the settlers, have witnessed the destruction, but we mourn our loss. Nostalgia for those people, values, and things they eradicated gave settlers and their American counterparts an alibi as mere witnesses, while they aided and benefited from Native dispossession' (2013:37). How does this inflect with nostalgia in the cider community? The Wiccoppee cider made by Treasury Cider can be read as a manifestation of settler colonial nostalgia, but building on Imada's work I argue that settler colonial nostalgia can manifest as celebration of Indigeneity without acknowledging Indigeneous existence.

This may be particularly the case in agricultural circles. Wolfe continues, 'In addition to its objective economic centrality to the project, agriculture, with its life-sustaining connectedness to land, is a potent symbol of settler colonial identity' (2006:396). Reading Andy Brennan's performance of colonial nostalgia through the lens of settler colonialism, our attention is drawn away from the powdered wig and towards the invisibilized, the displaced, the extinguished indigeneity of the land. Brennan's book, *Uncultivated*, argues that we must all learn to work closely with nature and its rhythms and actively unlearn the structures of modern society (culture) to live meaningfully and to make meaningful cider (Brennan 2019). He

positions himself as an expert and iconoclast who has received unanticipated revelations. Contemporary slang terms this posturing ‘Columbusing’, which is when a person (usually a white cisgender man) claims to discover something that is already well known to a subaltern community. Indigenous societies have no need to ‘uncultivate’ their agricultural practices or cosmologies to be in rhythm with their environment (Shiva 2007). However, Brennan espouses the homesteading model to do this rather than advocating Indigenous land management practices.

Claiming homesteading as a *sui generis* method of sound agricultural practice rather than a reiteration of Indigenous practices may be easier for New York cider makers because, to my knowledge, there are no Indigenous people currently participating in New York cider. Although Indigenous people did grow apples, destroying their ability to feed themselves was a common strategy of settler colonialism in the eighteenth century. The Huadenosaunee apple orchards in the Finger Lakes region were ‘destroyed in 1779 when General George Washington called for the complete destruction of those Huadenosaunee settlements that supported the British’, and forced the Huadenosaunee refugees into British-controlled Canada (Pucci and Cavallo 2021:102). The settler colonial genocide of Indigenous peoples in New York was so nearly complete by the twentieth century that Indigenous peoples’ existence as orcharding peoples here has been almost entirely erased.

Moreover, homesteading was a means of colonization that displaced the Indigenous societies who stewarded the land Brennan’s contemporary homestead occupies. This is a special form of epistemological violence, following Spivak (1994), performed by settler colonial nostalgia, as theorized by Imada. Settler colonial nostalgia goes beyond the romanticizations of colonial and imperial nostalgias, that gloss the harms of colonization against the colonized, by mourning the loss of Indigenous ways of thinking and being that are valorized in counterpoint to modernity. Settler colonial nostalgia relegates Indigenous peoples to the past, eliminates their existence in present and future, and naturalizes their erasure. Brennan’s land is ‘uncultivated’, not Indigenous. Wiccoppee is a hamlet and a cider, but nearly forgotten as a tribe. Following the ‘logic of elimination’ of the

'native', Indigeneity is assimilated to the point of disappearance by settler colonial nostalgia.

Settler colonial nostalgia generates determinate visions of cider's future, such as one where the most revered ciders are those made with apples that carry imperial and colonial narratives. These futures are unacceptable for some within the industry, as was demonstrated by the social rupture in the cider community that led to the removal of heritage style from the ACA lexicon. In the Spring 2019 issue of the American cider industry's trade 'zine, *Malus*, an article appeared titled 'Whose Heritage? American Cider in Black and White' (Maki 2019). It was written by Olivia Maki, the young owner of Redfield Cider Bar and Bottle Shop, one of only a handful of cider-dedicated retailers in the country. In the article, she denounces the use of the term heritage by the ACA and the Great Lakes International Cider and Perry Competition (GLINTCAP) because it 'whitewashes' the racialized past of the United States while glorifying its colonial history. Her primary thesis is that 'Wealth and land ownership are intrinsically tied in this country. Heritage and slavery are intrinsically tied in this country' (Maki 2019). To illustrate this, she uses the example of Thomas Jefferson and Jupiter Evans. Jefferson was a founding father of the U.S. and primary author of the Declaration of Independence who is frequently celebrated within the cider community as a connoisseur of the beverage and devotee of the Esopus Spitzenberg apple. Jupiter Evans, born the same year at the same place as Jefferson, likely oversaw the production of the cider Jefferson drank, but because he was an enslaved African American, little historical record exists to prove this and his contribution to American cider is uncelebrated.

Jefferson owned the land where the apples grew and the man who made the cider, with the result that Jefferson also owned the heritage of cider. Maki argues further that the contemporary connotation of heritage resonates too strongly with white nationalist groups whose increase in number and political sway coincided with the election of Donald Trump as president (Woodyard 2019). In the article, hospitality activist Ashtin Berry is quoted as saying that heritage has become:

'a marketing ploy for people to talk about history in a way that doesn't make them feel like shit. So when you speak of the Founding Fathers and you

want to talk about how that's your heritage, cool—it is your heritage. Just make sure that you mention slavery and all of the other things that go along with that heritage. You don't get to piece and parcel it for the parts that make you feel proud and leave out the parts that make you feel ugly' (Maki 2019).

Facing cider's complicity in the history of enslavement did make people feel ugly. The article set off a firestorm of conversation on social media and in person. Not long after it was published, I fell into discussion of the article with two prominent cider makers in the Hudson Valley. Good friends of mine and of each other, they are both white men with leftist politics. They work at different ends of the spectrum as far as scale and production styles go, but aligned on their annoyance at Maki's critique of the term heritage. Seeing me approaching, one said jokingly, 'Ask Megan. She's woke. Are we seriously not allowed to make heritage cider anymore?' I rebutted, 'I dunno. Do you want to sell it to anyone who isn't a racist?' Though we were teasing, the conversation that day did take a more serious turn in our small group and was reflective of many conversations I and others had in the years following. Eventually, cider brands mostly decamped into two factions: those who stood behind the term heritage as meaningful personally and for their marketing and those who saw the term as limiting their sales opportunities by alienating people who took offence to the term. In practice, the imagined market became the arbiter of the debate and capitalist logics held sway. Though not the broad accountability to the original sin of the U.S. that Maki's article called for, this does mark a rapid and large-scale shift that has been reflected by the ACA.

In November of 2019, only months after the *Malus* issue hit subscribers' mailboxes, the ACA put forth a 'Rough Draft Lexicon' that did away with so-called modern and heritage styles and instead separated cider into 'families' (USACM Cider Lexicon, Rough Draft for Feedback 2019). These are: Cider, Perry, Fruit Cider, Botanical Cider, Dessert Cider. These terms are notably neutral. They imply neither place nor time, yet place and time remain critical to cidermakers' sense of what cider *is*. This is demonstrated by continued efforts to identify and codify cider terroir, including current advocacy by the New York Cider Association and the ACA for the establishment of federally regulated American Pomological Areas modeled on

wine's American Viticultural Areas, and by many makers' continued use of the term 'heritage' to describe their cider. The majority of the cider community in the Hudson Valley and the Northeast is invested in nostalgic readings of the past and of place, and so are inclined towards determinate future making praxes that identify clear outcomes and are aligned with common sense knowledge of the world as it is. Even so, Bloch's Not yet is present, if unseen. I turn for the remainder of this chapter to identifying the invisibilities imposed by this practice, in order to glimpse the horizons of hope where the invisible becomes visible.

No More Masters¹⁶

The apples seemed to float more than hang in their branches. Golden Supremes. Nearly perfect in symmetry and color against a blue September sky. It was a joy to pick them. When I said so, I was reminded by the men teaching me the work that what's fun for a day loses its charm when done for sixty hours each week.

The crew of three that I worked with that day in 2019 was kind and patient as my foot learned its place on the ladder's rung, my wrists practiced twisting the apples, so their stems stayed intact, my ear adjusted to the Jamaican cadences of their instructions and jokes. These Black men with decades of orcharding experience seemed amused by the presence of a white lady with too many questions. They bantered with each other about who was the better teacher, pawning off responsibility for me in a good-natured volley. Gus lost by being named the best teacher, and I became his pupil.¹⁷ He was older, I'd guess in his seventies, and good humor shone from eyes deeply set within a permanent squint earned by a life laboring outdoors. Gus cautioned me not to overreach and risk falling. In a couple of hours my apple picking skills went from abysmal to mediocre, and Gus congratulated me. I replied, 'No, no, you're the master!'

¹⁶ Much of this section appeared originally as an article of the same name in *Malus* v12 (Larmer 2021)

¹⁷ All names in this section are anonymized.

'No.' Surprised by his changed tone, I looked from the apples to his face amidst the branches. 'I'm no one's master, and no one is mine', he said. 'I'm just a poor man, doing his job. No one is better than me and I am better than no one.'

I stammered, 'No – of course. I just mean, you're really good at it... y'know...' It hadn't occurred to me that the word 'master' would conjure its natural context: enslavement.

My ignorance in that moment stung, but was also an invitation to understand the scale at which the racialization of our agricultural system shaped the development of the cider industry and circumscribes its future. In the Hudson Valley of New York, as elsewhere in the U.S., most orchard laborers are Black and Brown migrants and immigrants. While orcharding in other parts of the world is similarly reliant on migrant labor, that labor is mostly white. For example, many Poles work in U.K. cider orchards. Moreover, in the U.S., mechanical apple picking, the norm in Europe, is rare and so the work requires many more hands. The crew I worked with that day were all Jamaican by origin. Most were participants in the H-2A temporary agricultural worker program, also known as an H-2A visa.

The precursor to the H-2A program was the Bracero Program, instituted in the 1940s as farming was increasingly mechanized and consolidated. This program allowed Mexican citizens a temporary right to work as agricultural laborers in the U.S. Discontinued in the 1960s, the Bracero Program paved the way for today's H-2A program.

Minkoff-Zern's powerful analysis of the program and its contemporary implications shows how the H-2A visa program operates on the same principle as the Bracero program: that racialized migrant laborers are preferable to white, domestic laborers (Minkoff-Zern 2019). She demonstrates an entrenched racial hierarchy that equates highly valued intellectual labor with whites and devalued manual labor with darker skinned migrants, so that it is difficult to recruit domestic, white laborers for field labor even when it pays a competitive wage. This prejudice intersects with classism to degrade people in the working class, including light-skinned people.

The normalized assertion that Black and Brown workers are ‘tougher’ and ‘more hardworking’ belies an insidious racism that values these humans for their brute force over their knowledge and skill. Further, it patronizingly asserts that migrant laborers categorically prefer annual migration to settling permanently in the U.S. This second assumption glosses over the inhumanity of the United States’ immigration policy towards laborers, Minkoff-Zern concludes, instead forgiving its miserable state by pretending immigration is unnecessary to the continuation of our current agricultural system when the opposite is true.

According to the USDA, 70% of agricultural laborers in this country are foreign born and of those 85% have worked on U.S. farms more than ten years (Gold et al. 2022). While immigrant labor, both documented and undocumented, has historically played a large role in New York state agriculture, the number of H-2A visa workers filling those roles nearly doubled during the Trump administration as undocumented immigration became more severely restricted (Khimmm and Silva 2020). The legal but temporary nature of the residency of migrant H-2A visa workers increases their dependence on their employer relative to immigrant laborers, according to labor rights activists like Farmworker Justice (Newman 2011). Though not enslaved, H2-A visa workers’ dependency on their primarily white employers recreates a racialized dependency that has been at the root of agriculture in the U.S. since the colonial era.

The more time I worked with the crew and learned about the H2A visa program, the more I was struck by the structural resemblance between the program and the romanticized nostalgia of an era of so-called benevolent slavery in the U.S. Under the H-2A program, the power rests with the employer to choose each laborer each year. Laborers may not choose or change employers. While the crew I worked with were managed by men who had asked them to recommend other laborers so that fathers and sons and friends lived and worked together there, it is not difficult to imagine that a farm owner, statistically likely to be a white man, could choose to disrupt rather than reinforce those social ties – echoing the separation of families during the slave trade. Under the H-2A program, housing must be provided by the farm owners as well as transportation to shop for food and necessities, which is

logical considered the migratory and temporary nature of the work, but further reinforces inequitable dependency on the farm owner. Without the autonomy to choose a new home, it is difficult to complain of substandard housing. Abuses in the system also arise in the form of underpaying or non-payment of wages. Despite the many barriers faced by workers seeking to raise allegations of mistreatment (e.g. language, time, mobility), there were 150% more violations confirmed by the U.S. Department of Labor in 2019 than in 2014 (Khim and Silva 2020).

Intolerable working conditions for Black and Brown people participating in the H-2A visa program are rampant (Second-Class Workers: Assessing H-2 Visa Programs' Impact on Workers 2022), and this mistreatment of them by primarily white employers are one manifestation of the racialized logics that devalue their humanity. The persistence of these logics from the era of enslavement of Africans to the present day are evident.

One man I worked with told me that prior to coming to this orchard he had worked on tobacco and sugarcane farms – crops that became highly profitable cash crops on Southern slave plantations and built the early wealth and power of the nation (Mintz 1986). At one of those farms, the white owner told the white orchard manager that the Black H-2A visa workers were prisoners in Jamaica and would return to prison when they left the U.S. While blatantly untrue, the system this orchard owner imagined bears striking similarity to U.S. agriculture following the Civil War and into the early twentieth century when Black men imprisoned by racially motivated Jim Crow laws were the cheap labor that kept Southern plantations turning a profit with almost no discernable change to their business model (Hinson and Robinson 2008). How could the specter of slavery be far from Gus' mind?

While enslavement is the ultimate form of devalued labor, the epistemology that devalues the manual labor of racialized bodies persists even in the absence of enslavement. The hierarchy of labor in the cider industry lionizes the maker while invisibilizing the orchard laborers. The benefits of intergenerational wealth and privilege being what they are, that maker is most likely to be white and male. If that maker happens also to be performing orchard labor, their social capital rises

further, as with Andy Brennan and similar to the chefs who journey to farm fields in Chapter Two. These landowners are applauded as masters of their craft. Not so for those who apply their skill solely in the orchard, whose artistry is no less profound. I am as guilty of this as anyone, of applauding the skill of the maker in coaxing the essence of the fruit into the glass while failing to celebrate the skill of the many who cultivated that fruit. While this lack of regard for the agricultural work of cidermaking is global, orchard laborers in Europe are likely to be light skinned migrants while in the U.S. they are most likely to be darker skinned. The U.S. industry's inattention to this inequity in representation and regard leads the U.S. cider industry to replicate the racialized hierarchy of slavery and colonization, sustaining the racist legacy of U.S. agriculture that is uncontested by determinate future making.

The crew at this orchard told me repeatedly how much they liked working there. Perhaps this was because I am friendly with the owner, but I observed what I believe was genuine good will between the primarily white managerial staff and the primarily darker skinned laborers. I asked Gus if he liked working there. 'They don't treat me like a slave here', he said. 'If they did, I would leave.' The white bosses would have been disappointed with this faint praise, wanting, as they told me, to provide a high quality of life and job satisfaction for the crew. These men echoed the attitudes towards labor that Weiler identified in her study of craft cider makers in the Pacific Northwest where she identified 'justification' of existing systems of labor as win-win for business owners and laborers alongside 'critique/misgiving' of the existing system (Weiler 2022). At the orchard in the Hudson Valley, it is clear that every person is doing their best within a structure that positions them as adversaries. This is what is meant by structural racism. Regardless of the actions and desires of the people within the system, the very structure of that system enforces a power imbalance along racial lines so that the fates of Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) are subject to the whim of the white people in power. This thwarts the desires of the white bosses who would do well by their crew. Racism harms everyone, if to different degrees (hooks 2008).

The H-2A program, as with many of the systems underpinning most agriculture in the U.S., is permeated with patriarchal-white-supremacist-capitalist logics

developed to justify the genocide of Indigenous peoples and the enslavement of Africans. In this case, the racist belief – so normalized that for white people it is indiscernible in our day to day - is that people with darker skin do not deserve the social, political, and economic benefits of citizenship (Minkoff-Zern 2019). Some of those benefits are the stability of permanent residence (if desired), participation in democratic processes, ownership of land, and the profits of their labor. If Black and Brown people deserved these things as much as white people, how could the displacement of Indigenous civilizations from their territories be justified? How justify removing people from their land to enslave them? This racist ideology survived Emancipation by evolving throughout the Jim Crow era of sharecropping and tenant farming, eventually justifying industrialized agriculture's unfettered expansion on the backs of a disempowered, poorly paid, temporary, migrant workforce (Minkoff-Zern 2019; Holt-Giménez 2017). This poison is at the heart of agriculture in the U.S., and those who would see food utopias realized are obligated to seek its antidote.

For many workers on orchards across the Hudson Valley the situation is more precarious than at the farm where I picked apples with Gus. There, management makes a point to feature the Black people who work in the orchard in its social media channels and celebrates their contributions, for example by serving Jamaican recipes prepared by one of the Black crew leaders as part of their agritourism offerings and selling the sauces he created in jars with his own face and name on the label. This is unusual, in no small part because so many agricultural laborers in the region are forced to hide in plain sight. Nationally, just over forty percent of agricultural laborers did not hold legal work authorization in data from 2019-2020 (Gold et al. 2022:7), leaving them without the minimal labor protections in place for H2A visa workers, while they are threatened by the increasingly violent anti-immigrations rhetoric and policies of the populist right (Finley and Esposito 2020). Many undocumented workers from Central and South America are responsible for the bountiful harvests of the Hudson Valley, as Margaret Gray documented in her decade-long research in the region (2014). Gray's work shows how the locavore value set of food system change in the early 2000s centered agrarian idealism that prioritized environmental concerns, the

survival of small holder farms, and animal welfare at the cost of existing and exacerbating labor concerns (2014). While Gray places blame largely at the feet of the growers abusing the uneven power dynamics of employing undocumented workers, I witnessed the complex social, market, legal, and operational pressures growers face in trying to do right by undocumented employees. I learned this most profoundly while learning apple pressing at a different orchard.

When I arrived there, I walked under laden laundry lines and into a kitchen where Latine¹⁸ women were preparing various baked goods for the week's farmers markets. In corners, above well-worn counters and shelves stacked with baking supplies and pans, makeshift alters held dusty statuettes of la Virgen de Guadalupe and saints I didn't know on sight. They directed me out, through a screened-in porch where another woman used an old-fashioned, hand-cracked apple peeling machine to skin apples one by one for pies while keeping an eye on apple cider doughnuts sizzling in a cauldron of oil and a simmering pot of beans intended for lunch. I spotted the cider pressing building, a retrofitted affair with walls clapped onto what had been an open-air pavilion. Inside, two men, Miguel and Lance¹⁹, were at work. Despite having been to many events featuring the cider made here, all the faces were new to me. A conversation with the owner later that day clarified why I hadn't met them before; we discussed the balancing act between living up to consumers' expectations for the owner to embody the agrarian ideal at events and the necessity for laborers without legal immigration documentation to draw as little attention to themselves as possible.²⁰

Inside the pressing house, a forklift moved a large crate of apples into a levered lift that tipped the apples onto a belt that moved the apples through a spray of water to be washed. Then, another belt with little shelves lifted the apples into the grinder. From there the macerated fruit went into a large plastic hose that Miguel positioned

¹⁸ 'Latine' is a gender neutral term for people of Latin American ancestry that is used instead of the gendered term 'Latino' and is considered easier to pronounce in Spanish than Latinx, a gender neutral term coined by English speakers.

¹⁹ Anonymized pseudonyms

²⁰ The internalized pressure on farmers to appear as avatars of consumer's idealized agrarian imaginary is one I have also noted in previous research (Larmer 2017).

into folds of an accordion of fabric about a meter tall and two meters wide, filling each successive fold of the accorded fabric before turning the hydraulics on to press the juice which was collected into a tank where it would get UV treated before being bottled and sold as fresh juice, also called cider in the U.S. My job was to put handfuls of pasteurized rice hulls onto the apples as they went up the belt into the grinder to increase the fiber content and thereby improve the juice yield for these early season apples. As I did, I noticed stickers with bar codes on some of the apples despite the owner's insistence that every apple on site came direct from the farm's own orchards. I wondered about the apples' origins and those of the men I was working alongside.

Once the crates had been pressed, the older man, Miguel, left Lance and me to hose errant bits of squished apple and rice hulls off the machinery and walls, down through a drain in the center of the concrete floor. I asked Lance how old he was and, with a Caribbean lilt, he said he was nineteen. Though he'd been jovial before, when I asked if he was settled in New York or just working the season here he became visibly uncomfortable. The owner of the farm had told me that the workers there may not like having me around very much. The looming threat of deportation, evinced by the daily presence of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) vans in the nearest town, had made everyone anxious about strangers. Eventually, Lance told me he worked summers in New York following the harvest and wintered in Florida with his parents, but later another person on the farm told me that Lance went back to Jamaica in the winter where his wife and children lived. Clean up done, we broke for lunch.

The farm owner, Sam²¹, took me on a tour of the property, including a section of the orchard where several mobile homes were set up with front doors facing each other, well established flower gardens out front, chickens and dogs wandering the yard between dwellings, and sheep grazing in the surrounding apple trees. This is where Miguel, his wife Elena (who had been peeling apples and frying doughnuts), their children, and several other laborers' families lived. It was the most pleasant,

²¹ Anonymized pseudonym

and most permanent, laborers' housing I saw during my field work. Zoning didn't allow for these structures on this property, but Sam had fought for it and won, telling me, 'I always win, because I am on the side of righteousness.' Miguel and Elena had been working that farm for twenty years. Their children had attended the nearby schools alongside Sam's own. After a disaster decimated core farm infrastructure over a decade earlier, they had convinced Sam to carry on rather than shutting the operation down. Miguel and Elena were both undocumented immigrants and, despite legal aid recruited by Sam to secure their citizenship, and decades of making their home and their livings in that orchard, they were in the process of being deported to México. What does it mean for heritage cider to valorize itself by claiming to have a taste of place when the people who grow, pick, and press the fruit are displaced?

Despite this farm owner's intentions and claims, righteousness didn't always win nor was the path of righteousness always clear. I was driving Sam to run some errands, when an urgent call required us to pull over. Esther²², a Latine woman who had been working on the farm off and on for decades, had grown increasingly volatile and abusive to coworkers since her son had been imprisoned a few months back. Elena had called to say that Esther had shoved her white coworker, Lisa²³. The Spanish/English language barrier made the exact cause unclear to Sam, but what was clear was that it wasn't fair to ask Lisa or other employees to work with Esther after such an incident, and that she had to be fired. Today. This decision precipitated a flurry of calls to deal with the logistics of Esther's firing – not because of any human resources concerns, but because Esther was the ride to and from the farm for the laborers who lived in the Mexican enclave of the nearest city, over forty-five minutes away. In fact, Esther would have been fired well before this if not for that concern.

I was told the farm's bookkeeper had grumbled over Sam's decision to pay Esther for the time she spent driving, to which Sam replied, "Don't you know how badly

²² Anonymized pseudonym

²³ Anonymized pseudonym

they wish they could drive?” It had only been a few months since the Green Light Law in New York had passed, making it legal for undocumented immigrants to obtain a driver’s license, and fear of being reported to ICE prevented many from taking advantage of the change in the law. Prior to that, being caught driving without a license would put one at serious risk of deportation. Although they are essential to U.S. agriculture and the economy (Kerwin and Warren 2020), undocumented agricultural laborers live under terrible threat. The ethical onus and personal motivation to provide a good life for farm employees, felt deeply by this orchard owner and cider maker whose eyes glistened with tears as the decision was made to fire Esther, is not easily achieved. The conflict created in trying to provide safe transportation and a safe work environment illustrates this. As with my time picking apples, the inhumanity inflicted by structural racism as it exists in immigration laws, though unequal in severity, harms everyone involved in cider production regardless of race. The boosterish, hegemonic, future determinate story of cider as a colonial drink that is being revitalized not only invisibilizes Black and Brown people from the industry but limits the view of a horizon of hope where white people can also act upon the full breadth of their humanity and care for their colleagues.

I came to cider, like many, through apples. I too have peddled the story that the virtue of cider is its agricultural nature. It is a drink of a place and a time. That place is an orchard, a haven for natural beauty and tradition. That time is a season, fecund and ephemeral Autumn. It is a romantic story, but romance does not make it entirely untrue. Orchards *are* beautiful. The skills of cidermaking from tree to glass surely are the admirable product of generations of cultural and technological endeavor (Watson 1999; Merwin, Valois, and Padilla-Zakour 2007). What makes the story nefarious is that the story the industry has been telling is far too simple. It is far too white.

In another orchard, Paul pointed at a stand of trees. ‘I’ve worked here eleven years’, he said. ‘We planted those trees the same time my youngest daughter was born. When I look at them, I see her and when I look at her, I see these trees.’ Paul’s daughter lives in Kingston, Jamaica. That planting is rooted in the Hudson

Valley and in Jamaica. Two-thirds of the year Paul is my neighbor, and one-third he is in Kingston with his wife and children. Eleven seasons of growth in the orchard and the man who tends it, growth of the people Paul loves in his homes, growth enmeshed in the pattern of migration he's followed every year for over a decade. The cider made from those trees is the product of those places and those years. Paul's sense of temporality and placemaking explodes the determinate trajectory of a cider heritage, with a singular time and place as the focal point of nostalgia, that is revived and conserved. Paul's layered vision of time and place illuminates a more multidimensional horizon for the future of cider. As much as cider makers and enthusiasts enjoy the complex flavors of a fine cider, can they appreciate the complexity of the story behind it? By illuminating the many places and peoples involved, can the cider industry become as prismatic as the orchard Paul sees?

One Jamaican man I worked with packing apples said, 'I just think the time is over for all these things, these borders and things.' He meant political borders, but the phrase stuck with me as I tried to understand what the future of place-based cidermaking might be and the various social borders that constrain the cider industry. At the end of the harvest, I came back to the farm where I'd learned apple picking to celebrate. Each year the farm throws a farewell party that sends the temporary summer employees (mostly white teenagers) who worked in the farm store back to school and the H2-A visa workers (mostly Jamaican men) back to their home countries. The Jamaican guys had made a curried goat buck stew that sat on a long buffet next to all-American potato salad and packaged cookies. After eating and some toasts from different crew leaders, Spiderman (so nicknamed for agility) got behind the DJ table and the dancing began. I stood around drinking warm liquor from red plastic cups – there was notably very little cider being drunk – and chatted with a few men I'd met that season. Eagerness to get back to Jamaica and out of the cold was a primary topic of conversation. I received multiple invites to visit them in Kingston, and promises that if I came they would take me to Spiderman's club which was even better than this, though they said this was a pretty good simulation. They asked if I'd be back to 'really work' next harvest. The party was in the packhouse, and just behind Spiderman's speakers the cold storage rooms emitted the scent of the apples stacked in massive crates. Accents

collided, bodies of different ages and sizes and genders and histories danced under the string lights. The slipperiness of time and place, the joyfulness of slipping between times and places, felt right on the surface that night. The collective moment of occupying a space of labor with the act of celebration that was both reward for the work done and farewell for the journey ahead mingled temporalities and confused social hierarchies. I read it as a moment of pre-figuration. It was a brief moment when all these borders and things *were* over.

For now, while American legal structures do not allow all humans to move about or to stay put as furthers their own pursuit of happiness, the cider industry must look for ways to increase the professional mobility, dignity, and visibility of Black and Brown colleagues in the orchards while breaking down the mutually constructed borders within the industry between citizen and non-citizen, pale and dark skinned, laborer and owner. It must leave off the praise of mastery, an honorific from colonial value systems that do not serve the best interests of *everyone* involved in cider production, and replace it with educated hope for futures that value dignity above all.

Pippins

Heritage cider apple varieties with centuries long lineages are produced clonally, through grafting. Newer apple varieties are either produced at research centers, like Cornell University, to capitalize on market trends or they can arise naturally from seedlings. This second type of apple is called a pippin, for the seed or pip from whence it grew. Farmer and cider maker Melissa Madden has told me of her passion for apples not necessarily because of their history, but because, in terms of genome, they contain a breadth of diversity with the potential to thrive in the changing climate we are experiencing. Each pippin is an expression of that genetic diversity, and accordingly the qualities and characteristics of pippins' fruit is, within bounds, unpredictable. The North American cider industry is like the genus *malus* in this way. It has flourished by grafting settler colonial nostalgia onto the present, but the pippins that are sprouting up amongst people whose lived experience is not compatible with the nostalgic mythos are producing unexpected, if not always desired, alternatives to the existing industry. Pathways for indeterminate futures are

sprouting. As in an orchard, homogeneity is visible in the industry, but the diversity needed to adapt, though hidden, is present.

Some cider professionals, primarily those who themselves are in marginalized identity groups, long toward the horizons of hope where a more just cider industry exists. They do prefigurative work to experiment with more equitable means of cider production. The impetus to do prefigurative work is often born of disillusionment with the nostalgic tropes of the industry. In this final section of this chapter, I will explore disillusionment with the nostalgic narratives of the past as a type of grief. This grief is not to be confused for the disappointment that Bloch rightly identifies as a crucial element of hope. It is hope's nature to be disappointed. Using the example of Pixie Scout in the previous chapter, Katy and Jonathan have been at times disappointed with a community supper, but were disillusioned with farm-to-table dining that relied on elite consumers to effect change. Disillusion is not the result of a failed experiment, as disappointment results from the failure inherent in enacting a concrete utopia, but of a shifted perspective that causes misalignment with previous values so that to continue to live in that value system becomes uncomfortable and even painful. Pain either overwhelms and stunts an organism or forces adaptation and growth. I have experienced both in the context of the American cider industry.

In individual conversations, board meetings of the New York Cider Association (NYCA, where I serve as an ex-officio board member), and large gatherings I have witnessed the intense discomfort of members of the old guard of cider when faced with questions as to how cider might address the country's systemic oppressions, especially racism. At CiderCon 2020, in Oakland, California I attended a session led by the diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) professional Dr. J Jackson-Beckham (2020). Dr. J, as she is known, is a queer Black woman with a broad smile and an easy demeanor. Her doctoral and professional work focused on diversity and the lack thereof in the craft beer sector. The ACA, the conference's producer, invited her to present the business case for cideries to embrace DEI initiatives. Beginning with sales and demographic data, she defined the untapped market that cideries could court if they were to make their products more attractive and their facilities

more accessible to a wider swath of people. To make this concrete, she talked through how a tasting room might be configured for someone in a wheelchair to easily access the bar.

She continued with two case studies from beer businesses as inspiration. Each business looked around their community and asked who was in the community that wasn't coming into their tasting room. In one, there was a large population of retirees and the brewery decided to partner with nearby retirement homes to provide shuttles for residents to the brewery in the late afternoon. This provided business during a slow time as well as social interaction for the residents. In the second case, the brewery operated in a neighborhood with a large population of immigrants from Ethiopia. While a couple of members of the immigrant community were employed at the brewery, few ever came in as customers. Walking around the neighborhood, the brewers noticed that many of the Ethiopian immigrants would gather in yards and on sidewalks to listen to their team's football games on the radio. The brewery started showing the games on their TVs and told their employees to spread the word. Eventually, many people came to the brewery to watch the football games and the rapport that developed between brewery owners and neighborhood residents shifted their production. The brewery began to brew more Belgian-style quadruple beers because the residual sugar and higher alcohol percentage was an appealing analog to Ethiopian *tej* (honey wine). Despite Dr. J's focus on the business case for DEI initiatives, the question period following her presentation almost immediately demonstrated the defensiveness and fragility of white supremacy in action.

The questions had a common theme. White men of different ages asked something like, 'We are in a rural place. There is no diversity, so what am I supposed to do?' Though Dr. J's examples focused on disability, age, and country of origin as markers of difference, it was clear that race was the most legible marker of diversity for many in the room. One cidery owner stepped up to describe how his own business considered economic inequity in hiring and compensation practices, noting that his rural community was dominantly white. This met with resistance from one of the elder statesmen of cider, an early stalwart of heritage style cider in

the Northeast. In a commanding voice, he said he recognized the noble intent of Dr. J's work but that it was irrelevant to his business. This man is an almost mythic figure in American cider, so the implication was that being irrelevant to his business made DEI work irrelevant to any worthwhile cidery. As he continued to recite the lament of the rural white man, the thin economic margins of agriculture and artisan cider making, and the ways in which his hardship is overlooked by so-called social justice warriors, I observed attendees in my generational peer group physically cringing. My phone lit up with several texts from frustrated but unsurprised friends in the room. The thesis of this man's argument was that if people want to be part of the cider industry, no one is stopping them, but cider makers have too many challenges already to add DEI efforts to their workload. Dr. J responded graciously, also clearly unsurprised by this response to her expertise.

Problematic.²⁴ That's the word that came up in my conversations with others afterwards. This man's comments were problematic. The weight they held because of his clout were problematic. So, what exactly is the problem? His pain stunts the growth of the industry, turns it in on itself. To begin with, his conclusion amounts to an open-door policy that is a hallmark of neoliberal race-blindness reliant on meritocratic values – values that have proven unsuccessful in creating equity. Ryan Burk, head cider maker of Angry Orchard at the time, put the challenge of hiring People of Color into the cider industry this way, 'How are they supposed to walk in the door? They don't even know a door exists! We need to build a path to the door with flood lights.' Just beneath the surface of that man's comments at Dr. J's conference session is colonial nostalgia and valuation of the (white) homesteader as the quintessential cidemaker. His commitment to heritage style cider demonstrates a determinate approach to cider, and Dr. J's presentation on DEI initiatives triggered a defensiveness in him that is identifiable as white fragility. The misalignment between his values and hers produced discomfort, and his response was defensiveness.

²⁴ Though originating in academia's embrace of French structuralism in the mid-twentieth century and the subsequent popularity amongst academics of the terms 'problematic' and 'problematization' as theorized by Althusser and Foucault (Kelly 2018), the term has moved into common usage as a means of identifying an individual or behavior that is outside or antithetical to an assumed progressive value set (Bejan 2021), as used here.

The discomfort displayed by those who cringed at this cider elder's words was different. We too felt misalignment between our personal values and those he expressed. As a room, and industry, of primarily white people, discomfort with cultural homogeneity leads some to a longing for cultural and racial difference. Slocum has researched the difficulty and promise of White people trying to create space of difference in alternative food systems (Slocum 2007). Many of her observations apply to the American cider industry as well. At cider conferences and events there is a similar 'clustering of white bodies', and at that CiderCon session I recognized cringing shame. Drawing on Elspeth Probyn's work with feminists in settler colonial Australia, Slocum concludes that 'shame is productive of ethical relations because it results from passionate desire for connection that is, for whatever reason, not possible' (Slocum 2007:7). This thwarted desire produces a collective sadness amongst white people in alternative food spaces who long for difference.

It is tricky to give much weight to this sadness, as centering white angst in discussion of white privilege and racist exclusions in the cider industry runs the peril of reinforcing the supremacy of white agency. However, there is an important difference in the longing to 'to be white differently' (Slocum 2007:7) and white fragility. While the latter protects whiteness from perceived harm, the former has the potential to utilize unearned privilege to move groups dominated by whiteness toward more ethical possibilities. Slocum names this hope: 'Whiteness, capable of endlessly transforming itself, can change its tendency to reproduce and enforce racial oppression' (Slocum 2007:17). Slocum's conclusive assertion of ability overstates the possibility, I believe, given the powerful hegemony of white-supremacist-patriarchal-capitalism. However, the possibility of such transformation is on the horizon of hope and there are white women in American cider with their eyes on that horizon.

In the cider industry, discomfort with cultural homogeneity and recognition of system racism reached a pinch point of pain around the heritage narrative and the settler colonial nostalgia underpinning that narrative, as demonstrated by Maki's

influential article in *Malus*. It is unsurprising that disillusion with that narrative was voiced by a woman who is a cider retailer, rather than a man who is an orchardist and cider maker, because the nostalgic mythos does not represent such a woman as a key figure in cider. While white women are more prominent in cider than in other craft beverage sectors, they are nonetheless marginalized. Their perspective from the margins inclines them to intersectional analysis, while their greater power relative to laborers of color in the industry gives them greater influence over the narrative. The hopeful pippins of a new cider industry are planted and cultivated by these women.

Dr. J and many others frequently note that cider, as a beverage category in the United States, has a unique opportunity to attract diverse consumers because it is not already identified with a certain demographic as marketing of wine is feminized, of beer is masculinized, and both drink categories are racialized as being for white people. Comparative to today, cider drinkers' identities were more constrained in the late twentieth century (Brown and Bradshaw 2013). As one British cider maker put it to me, cider at the time was associated with 'teenage girls and vagrants'. The classed and gendered identity of cider is viewed as a stereotype to escape, but to where? And who is coordinating that escape?

A scan of CiderCon attendees would lead one to believe that the industry is led by bearded men in plaid shirts. However, women have been in strong leadership positions during the immense growth of the industry in the twenty-first century, as Kennedy shows in her analysis of the tensions between representations of women in cider marketing and the reality of women's role in the industry as cider makers and, critically, as what she terms 'industry shapers' (Kennedy 2019). Women in cider, argues Kennedy, both contest the agrarian myth by creating new spheres and roles of influence and have access to power because of the existence of working women in the construct of the family farm. Ironically, the women working in unconventional 'industry shaping' roles have also played a key role in reintroducing the agrarian myth as a central marketing trope for American Cider. Even so, for those of us pained by the misalignment of settler colonial nostalgia with personal values, women in cider present a horizon of hope:

‘At the 2019 United States Association of Cider Makers, the first official meeting of the Pomme Boots Society drew almost 100 women and a smattering of men to discuss the goals and projects of a group dedicated to supporting women in the cider industry. Enthusiasm was high, generated by the belief that in this young, rising craft beverage industry, women might be able to set a new standard for gender and racial equality before the habits and power structures of white male dominance have the opportunity to take over’ (Kennedy 2019:27).

From my research, I am forced to conclude that that enthusiasm is misplaced. White-supremacist capitalist patriarchy is the national context in which the industry operates, and its power dynamics are well established within it. However, following Gibson-Graham (2015), this does not preclude pockets of activity within that context that operate along different logics and demonstrate the real possibility of divergent futures. The intersectional analysis some women in cider are bringing to the industry is not only theoretical, but active. Melissa Madden, farmer and cider maker, wrote a series of articles for *Malus* grappling with her work in the Finger Lakes region of New York in which she explored more-than-human landscapes and the history of land dispossession (Madden 2020a), orchards as a commons (Madden 2020b), and ‘Truth and Reparations’ (Madden 2020c). They are evocative essays written with humility and gratitude, and a sense of obligation to act *now* in a way that changes the cider narrative. They do not eschew or demonize the past, but make it palpable in the present, and eloquently sum up some of the tensions presented throughout this chapter:

‘There are many of us seeking and making cider with feral apples, whether they are wild seedlings or the remnants of old and abandoned homesteads. It’s a romantic scene, the committed and maybe a little crazy cidemaker tramping through the brush in search of hidden gems. It makes for nice marketing copy on labels and websites. In truth those apples we seek are gems, and I am so grateful to find them. The harder truth, though, is that they are there to be found as the result of hundreds of years of broken

treaties and the forced destruction and displacement of people and communities that once sustained themselves on this land. The lands that we use for our tidy orchards are similarly tainted' (Madden 2020c).

Madden goes on to describe small but specific acts of financial reparations by white women in her community: Autumn Stoschek of Eve's Cider who makes a monthly donation to the Northeast Farmers of Color Land Trust and Deva Mass of Redbyrd Cider who donates \$1 from every bottle sold to either the Soul Fire Farm Institute that supports BIPOC farming or the Ganondagan State Historic Site that marks the location of a Seneca town. These three makers collaborated on 'reparations packs' after the publishing of Madden's articles that featured limited release ciders and virtual, live tastings with all proceeds benefiting organizations with missions to increase land access to Black, Indigenous and People of Color. Similarly, in the Hudson Valley, Kimberly Kae of Metalhouse Cider donates a portion of all her cider sales to the non-profit Harambee that is protecting the Pine St. African Burial Ground and developing an interpretation center around this previously unmarked graveyard for enslaved people. By their own admission, these women are making small acts in the immensity of the harm needing repair, but it is active. Stoschek wrote in an email to Madden, 'Paying a tithe, if you will, while it is not a substitute for actively working to dismantle White supremacy, is a material reminder that I am committed to it with more than just thoughts' (Madden 2020c). This 'material reminder' works within the context of capitalism in so far as it stems from mercantile exchange, but also subverts capitalism by allocating the wealth generated through sales to those who historically have been exploited and robbed of the surplus value their labor generates.

Of particular interest is the way in which the grief of disillusionment with cider's settler colonial nostalgia motivates these women not to create a new or ahistorical narrative for cider, but a prefigurative practice of cidermaking. Like the pippins that express genetics that have been long present but repressed, the new cider narrative emphasizes long ignored pieces of the history of land and orchards to create what could be called a new heritage discourse for the industry. Madden's reflections on the Finger Lakes National Forest and what she terms the 'Apple

Commons' there, where she gathers fruit to produce cider, resonate with Anna Tsing's theory of 'polyphonic assemblages' (Madden 2020b; Tsing 2015). Both authors 'are stuck with the problem of living despite economic and ecological ruination. Neither tales of progress nor of ruin tell us how to think about collaborative survival' (Tsing 2015:19). Madden would no doubt add social injustice to Tsing's list of ruinations. Reading cider for tales of progress and of ruin, settler colonial nostalgia is at the root of both.

The progressive narrative insists that individual business growth will bring economic prosperity to smallholder artisans, ignoring that the opportunity to become such an artisan is limited almost exclusively to white men. The narrative of ruin claims that the same artisan is on the brink of disappearance and must be conserved. Both narratives activate determinate future making praxes. Neither narrative engages grief at what is already lost nor hope for an indeterminate future. Remembering Andy Brennan's glorification of homestead farming and pippin apple varieties, it may seem that such cidermaking is a dead-end for prefigurative work. However, the women working with reclaimed feral orchards and their pippin offspring – Melissa Madden, Autumn Stoscheck, and Kimberly Kae – are thinking less of cider as 'heritage' or 'culture' and more of cider as an 'assemblage', thereby opening space for prefigurative work.

In Madden's 'apple commons' as in Tsing's field site 'Open Ticket',

'There are too many people and histories [...] to plunge directly into the coherence through which we usually imagine "culture." The concept of assemblage – an open-ended entanglement of ways of being – is more useful. In an assemblage, varied trajectories gain a hold of each other, but indeterminacy matters. To learn about an assemblage, one unravels its knots' (Tsing 2015:83).

Madden aims to unravel the knots of Indigenous people's history of displacement *and* displacement of settler farmers that created the present-day commons where she forages for apples. She writes,

'My thinking is this. The apples exist in the national Commons, but I am aware that the existence of this Commons is fraught. I desire to make it

right, and also, I love this fruit. I love the unexpected tannins, the tiny acid bombs, the delightful rose tinted streaking in our own 'Pink Zebra'. I love wildly naming these trees through the joy of shared (re)discovery... I love the bounty of this landscape, despite its generations of troubled transition' (Madden 2020b).

The pain of discomfort with settler colonial nostalgia spurs Madden to hold grief and love simultaneously, and so to put hope into practice: '...while I poke among the wreckage and gather the bounty of our national lands, I have work to do.' Madden neither erases the past, nor pines for the future but works in the present tense to un-varnish cider's 'heritage' from the whitewashing of marketing while approaching the fruit and the land with curiosity as to what her relationship with them will be.

Because of these women's attention to the wreckage as well as the wisdom of generations past, the narrative for cider they are crafting includes restoration and reparations, both concepts dependent on reverence for historical accuracy. This is itself prefigurative work in redefining 'heritage' in cider, because it is a narrative told as if the facts of systemic oppression are already well understood and accepted in the industry, though they are not. Much like the mushrooms and people of Tsing's assemblages, the apples and people of cider in the U.S. and the Hudson Valley find themselves amongst the ruins of history, they are entangled with each other and with the world making projects of past and present generations of people and plants. Following Tsing, there is in fact the 'possibility of life' here too, if one attends to the indeterminacies of the assemblage and the discomfort they produce.

Women in cider have proven most adept, so far, at growing into the spaces of discomfort. As I have written elsewhere, the practice of rooting in disturbed soil, at the fecund and uncultivated edges of social spheres is a practice that middle-class, white women must learn as entrant farmers, and it may be for this reason that they are more likely than men to take an intersectional approach to moving the industry towards greater gender and racial equity (Larmer 2017). It is difficult to know if the seeds they are planting will bear fruit, if the pippins will root and produce something

new from what is latent. Will the culture-making and narrative-crafting work of the white people in the cider industry be relevant or compelling to the Black and Brown laborers in the orchard? It seems unlikely. But it may plant a seed that grows the space for collaborative survival, and even thriving in settler colonial ruins.



*Fig. 6 Rows of field crops at Glynwood
Photo courtesy of Glynwood. Photographed by Eva Deitch (2019)*

Chapter Four

LAND

It is so beautiful here. Painters, photographers, and authors have tried to document it. I am most struck by the Hudson Valley's beauty when I am in the field with farmers. I have shooed tail-wagging sheep into new pasture and watched them gleefully chomp on roses to a buzzing chorus of honey bees. From a misty, muddy hilltop I have looked up from harvesting kale to watch shadows of storm clouds glide over the surrounding highlands afire with autumn foliage. Even stooped and picking rocks from the steamy soil, centipedes and fungi have unfurled before my eyes into the unexpected sunlight in sublime fractals. The land is so beautiful. Despite the wild generosity of its beauty, it is tightly controlled.

No acre of land in the Hudson Valley is unclaimed. Land, of course, is necessary to farm and therefore proximate, arable land is necessary to develop a localized food system. Land access was the issue my friends and interlocutors throughout this

research saw as most important and so must be addressed. In this chapter I will describe the historic relationship of wealthy elites to land in the region as a site of natural conservation, investigate the evolving role of philanthropy in structuring agricultural land ownership patterns, and unpack the similarities and differences between land-use valuation by philanthropists, non-profit organizations, and entrant farmers as they go about envisioning and enacting futures for the region.

Land as it is conceived within white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy is a commodity to be bought and sold, but the various actors, both historic and contemporary, whose valuation of land I engage with in this chapter universally insist on a more lively understanding of land and its worth. They engage in more-than-human relationships to land both as a locus of vitality in itself and as the home of non-human lives. How land is valued points to how it is enlisted into future making praxes.

Working the land: lifestyle or livelihood?

The Hudson Valley is known as home to an unusually large number of first-generation farmers. It was while I was crouched alongside one of these farmers, grappling with unruly snap peas, on a hot summer day when she told me a story I'll never forget. The farm I was on is Letterbox Farm in Columbia County, and it is the only for-profit vegetable farm described in this thesis where both the land and the business are owned by the farmers. Faith Gilbert, one of the farmer-owners, was talking to the peas, chastising them for being 'naughty' and escaping their trellis, as she snapped their thin but tough stems between her thumb and forefinger.

Laughing she said, 'Plants. They just do whatever they want!' This prompted us to discuss the expectations of consumers and especially non-farming landowners about what vegetables and farms should look like (pristine and tidy), how those folks thought plants should behave themselves (according to human will), and how different that was from the way she understood her relationship to plants. She saw the plants as agentic cooperators on her farm and respected their abilities. While planting lettuce transplants and fussing over whether I was securing them properly

in the soil she told me, 'Plants want to live. Just give them a chance and they'll take it from there'.

Faith is a powerful presence in a compact frame. Fair-skinned and freckled, Faith wears her hair in a signature style piled atop her head and her blue eyes glint with intellect. She cooperatively owns Letterbox Farm with her high-school best friend Nichki Carangelo and Nichki's husband Lazlo (Laz) Lazlar.²⁵ All three founding farmers at Letterbox are white and in their thirties. Faith is also a well-respected community organizer and farmer educator. When giving a class to farmers in training, she often tells her 'farm story' of how she and her friends cobbled together resources and conquered mountains of paperwork to secure their land and launch their business in 2013. Usually, she told me, the folks in her class understand her 'farm dream' because they have one of their own, so they find it really inspiring to know that Faith, Nichki and Laz have been able to realize much of their dream. That day amongst the snap peas, Faith told me a prequel to her farm story I hadn't heard before that illuminates the unique interaction of wealth, philanthropy, and farming in the Hudson Valley.

One of Faith's early farming jobs was on the crew at Locusts on Hudson. Like other estates in the region, this one has a history dating to the colonial period. Located in Staatsburg, it had been farmed by a Dutch family named De Witt prior to the purchase in 1782 by Revolutionary War officer and future Supreme Court Justice Henry Brockholst Livingston. Through the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the land was developed for farming and horticulture; saw at least one mansion constructed, demolished, and replaced with a new mansion; and was owned by powerful patrons of politics and arts with family names like Astor as well as the *nouveau riche* like Bob Guccione, the founder and publisher of the pornographic magazine *Penthouse*. In 2004 Locusts on Hudson was purchased by hotelier André Balazs and his then partner, the movie star, Uma Thurman. Balazs and Thurman made the farm a special priority. Faith told me how much she learned

²⁵ At the time of my field work Faith was a co-owner and lead vegetable farmer at Letterbox Farm. In 2022 she transitioned out of her active role in managing the business to focus on teaching and organizing.

about growing agroecologically from the farm manager while she was there, and how powerfully that education influenced her own approach to farming as an act of primarily caring for the soil; producing food was a secondary benefit. This aligns with 83% of entrant farmers in the U.S. who are motivated to farm as an ecological benefit (Ackoff et al. 2022). Some of the food they grew at Locusts on Hudson was sent to Balazs' high-end hotels in the city, different locations operating under the moniker The Standard, for use in their restaurants. None of this is the strange part. Any number of properties along the river have similar trajectories.

What stuck with me was this. Faith recalled to me something that had made her uneasy, that made her feel the vegetables were maybe too secondary to farming at Locusts. When Balazs came to stay at Locusts he arrived by seaplane. The farmers would put on a performance of welcoming for his arrival, waiting at the shore with arms full of the most beautiful vegetables from the fields that day. It was unclear what happened to those vegetables after that. Faith wondered if they were ever eaten. The image of farmers laden with a curated harvest, faces upturned to the millionaire as his plane lands on the river left me speechless. She arched her eyebrows at me, recognizing the absurdity of the situation she'd described, and went on to tell me how that contributed to her determination to obtain her own land. Something she felt was crucial, but knew would also be difficult.

Entrant farmers who want to settle in the Hudson Valley are unlikely to end up owning farmland, because they can't afford it. The high cost of farmland is a national issue. Between 2021 and 2022 farmland value rose, on average, 12.4 percent (Ackoff et al. 2022). The National Young Farmers Coalition, a non-profit based in Hudson, New York, reports that land access is the number one barrier to entrant farmers and the primary reason that existing farmers leave the profession (Rippon-Butler 2020; Ackoff et al. 2022). This is not a new problem, but a simmering one.

Restriction to land access for People of Color due to over a century of discriminatory lending policies, displacement, and disinvestment is evidenced by the result: 98 percent of farmland is owned by white people (Rippon-Butler 2020:8).

Entrant farmers of color, who make up approximately 20% of entrant farmers nationally (Ackoff et al. 2022), are therefore unlikely to have generational wealth, in the form of land or otherwise. For anyone looking to purchase agricultural land, the supply has long been dropping. The total amount of farmland nationally continues to diminish as real estate developments expand; 25 million acres of farmland have been removed from agricultural use because of development and as of 2020 that encroachment continued at the rate of 2,000 acres daily (Rippon-Butler 2020:10). Moreover, the agricultural land most desirable to developers is land nearest metropolitan centers, the same land that is most desirable for entrant farmers who mostly grow human-grade specialty crops and benefit from direct market access (Ackoff et al. 2022).

The Hudson Valley, with its proximity to New York City, appeals strongly to commuters, second home buyers, and farmers, so the problem of agricultural land price is exacerbated. Additionally, there are a fair amount of what would derogatorily be called 'hobby farms' run by people who don't need their farm to supply a livelihood. One Black, entrant farmer told me, 'I didn't know about the "second career" as a farmer until I came to the Hudson Valley. Here, I feel like I've met plenty of people that were in the art world, or graphic designers, or in finance and realized they didn't like their life and started farming because they could. They had the money and they wanted to escape the city.' Out-migration from the city to the Hudson Valley increased dramatically during the COVID19 pandemic and has raised the cost of farmland, with knock-on effects for entrant farmers that are only just beginning to be understood. According to data from Realtor.com analyzed by the New York Times, between 2020 and 2022 farmland prices rose 20% in Columbia County (Dunn and Jones 2022). Columbia is emblematic in the farming community, being the county where The National Young Farmers Coalition is headquartered and supporting a density of small farms; over one hundred farms in the county (out of approximately five hundred total) operated on ten or less acres according to the 2017 USDA agricultural census (USDA 2017) .

Market access isn't the only reason for farmers to see the Hudson Valley as a desirable place to put down roots. For people who didn't grow up in agricultural

communities or who rarely see people like them in those communities, a connection to the city is also a social lifeline, a way to feel that one belongs. The same young, Black farmer told me:

'I wanted to buy land in [the county I grew up in], and there's only three farms left. I wanted to buy some land there, have my farm, because my parents are there – have family close by – but then it was like, you can't afford land there or [in nearby counties]. You have to go farther north, and then you start to lose the connection to New York City, and I've always wanted to stay closer to the city just – like when I was living in Ithaca [in the Finger Lakes region], there's one Black farmer in Thompsons County. I know him. He's super cool. But I don't want to be the second one, y'know? The farther you move away the less and less there are People of Color, you can point them out. [...] in the city I am around folks who look like me, who think like me, who get my culture and upbringing even if they're not Black – at least they've been around Black people'.

I've heard similar sentiments from queer farmers and New American²⁶ or second-generation immigrant farmers. I know at least a dozen farmers from marginalized communities who live in the city and commute hours, daily to farm in the Hudson Valley. Some have been doing this for as long as a decade, while one New American family I know decamps from their permanent home in the city to a makeshift camp on their farm during the growing season.

Legibility is not always available for entrant farmers from historically marginalized communities within rural, agricultural communities. The same farmer quoted above told me, 'I commute [to the farm] from a truly suburban place and I prefer it because it is much more diverse, and though no one understands my job, they get me.' Purchasing farmland in the U.S. is a struggle for all entrant farmers, and especially so in the Hudson Valley. For would-be farmers who rely on social

²⁶ In this context, New American refers to people who have arrived in the U.S. in the recent past (a term that is purposefully vague) and desire a pathway to citizenship or have recently become citizens. It erases the distinction amongst immigrants and refugees between those who have legal authorization to enter or remain in the country and those who do not, so as to increase their availability to resources as in President Obama's New American Project launched in 2014 (The New Americans Project n.d.) and is semiotically meaningful as it implies in-group status within the nation.

support networks in New York City and its suburbs, the financial cost and social cost of acquiring farmland can be insurmountable.

Various state and philanthropic efforts exist to aid farmers in securing the capital necessary to begin a farm business, but of the hundreds of small-scale, new-entry farm businesses that I have interacted with in the region since 2017, those who own their land are a scant minority. Those who run their own businesses are likely to lease land while other farmers find employment as managers of a farm business owned by a landholder. While writing this, I hopped online to look at the ‘Find a Farm’ listing for the Hudson Valley. The website is one piece of a project called ‘Farmland for a New Generation New York’ that is coordinated by American Farmland Trust with the aim of increasing farmland access for entrant farmers. Of the seventy-two farms listed as available, only sixteen were listed as ‘for sale’. The other fifty-six were seeking someone to lease the land, operate the farm as an employee, enter a business partnership, or develop an ‘Other Tenure Agreement’ (Find a Farm n.d.). Of the sixteen farms for sale in the Hudson Valley that day, nine were ninety acres or larger – a scale well out of reach for anyone without significant capital or ability to finance. Leasing land from a wealthy landowner or going into one’s employ, as Faith did at Locusts on Hudson, can be the most accessible options for entrant farmers, especially those who conform to cultural tropes around agrarian life, as I delve into more fully in the next chapter.

There are sound reasons to take a job farming for a wealthy land owner on their estate: one does not need any startup capital, one is buffered from the exigencies of the market, one can farm with ethical and ecologically sound methods that are labor intensive without the worry that the cost of that labor won’t be recouped, the paycheck is steady and likely higher than the profit margin one would realize by owning a small-scale farm, one might even get healthcare benefits, sick leave, and/or onsite housing. The farm manager Faith trained under, himself a widely respected expert in agroecology, explained to me once that he came from a working-class background and had financial responsibilities, including contributing to the support of family members, that he couldn’t reasonably expect to meet if he owned his own farm business and land. He chose to farm for wealthy patrons so as

to get to be a farmer and to meet his familial duty. Last I heard he had moved to Tennessee to farm for former Vice President Al Gore.

The socioeconomics of agroecological farming, and the way farmers are trained in those methods, interweaves value sets that constrict options for actually living as a farmer. On one hand, there are the ‘young farmers’.²⁷ This group encompasses and is primarily made up of entrant farmers who do not come from farming backgrounds, but also includes people from farm families who want to continue in the profession. Enthusiasm for training a new generation of farmers took hold of the food movement in the U.S. at the turn of the century because of two statistical facts. First, the population of Americans living on, and making a living from, farms dropped from 30 percent in the early 1900s to 2 percent in the early 2000s (Lobao and Meyer 2001). Second, the age of farmers is rising decade by decade. ‘It was 50.3 years for the “principal operator” in the 1978 census, 53.3 years in 1992, 57.1 years in 2007, 58.3 years in 2012, and [in 2017 was] 59.4 years.’ (Abbott 2019) This means the nation is in the midst of a massive agricultural land transition as farmers retire.

The push to train and support the people who will farm in the future gave rise to ‘young farmer’ initiatives. One of these is the annual Young Farmers Conference founded in 2008 by the Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture and is held on their campus, the former Rockefeller family estate where chef Dan Barber’s Blue Hill restaurant’s upstate outpost operates, as discussed in Chapter Two. Faith has been a frequent presenter there, and I asked her why the gathering attracted her and why it is so popular to attend. She told me that when she began her farming career, ‘young farmer’ gatherings spoke to a value set she hadn’t been able to fully articulate for herself, but she knew that a space meant for ‘young farmers’ was going to be politically progressive, concerned with the environment, and a community that she wanted to be a part of.

²⁷ I put ‘young farmers’ between quotation marks because, in my experience, the ages in groups identifying this way span the spectrum of adulthood, with the majority of participants in their thirties and forties.

These 'young farmers' are the target demographic for support from non-profit organizations operating with philanthropic dollars. Philanthropy's interest in environmentalism, especially conservation of working lands as discussed later in this chapter, intersects with the interest of 'young farmers' in environmental stewardship. Faith told me she had been drawn to Stone Barns early on because they were one of the few organizations, if not the only, that explicitly stated the goal of their farming practice as stewardship of land rather than crop production. Since then, she has come to feel dubious of their work and concerned that it only prepares farmers to farm as managers on estate properties because, as a deep-pocketed organization, it is so blind to the economics of commercial farming and therefore fails to prepare 'young farmers' to operate in a market economy.

During this conversation I wondered out loud if maybe that was ok? There *are* a lot of those estates in the Hudson Valley, and farming them ecologically would be stewarding that land while providing a living to a farmer. For a moment, Faith considered this. 'In order to think that it is ok to train farmers just to farm on estates, you have to think it is ok for those estates to exist', she said, 'That the concentration of wealth and resources is ok. I don't.' Faith's sentiments echo those of the Hudson's Valley tenant farmers in the eighteenth century who successfully ended the manorial system (Bruegel 2002). The class analysis inherent in her statement points towards futures where wealth is more evenly distributed. Philanthropy is, ostensibly, a means of wealth redistribution and it has a long history in the Hudson Valley that is inextricably tied to the use and meaning of land.

Highest and Best Use: what is land for?

To understand the relationship of the philanthropic sector to efforts to regionalize the food system in the Hudson Valley, this framing section presents my research into the history of land conservation in the region up to the twenty-first century. Tracing the development of philanthropy in New York from its origin in the midst of the Progressive Era response to how society had been restructured by industrialism and Gilded Era capitalism, and into the recent past when the Hudson River was an early battleground for contemporary environmentalism will

demonstrate how past hopes and desires for the land have accumulated, like sediment, in the region. This temporal and emotional sediment shapes the flow of entrant farmers onto land, in ways that can both increase and limit access. The tendency I find in land-based philanthropy is toward determinate future making; this finding contests the feasibility of wealth redistribution through philanthropy as demonstrated by its failure to effect equitable land transfer to entrant farmers from wealthy landowners or the non-governmental organizations they fund.

Land in the Hudson Valley that is not private property is owned by the state or by third sector entities like land trusts. Much of the latter category takes the form of state parks, nature preserves, historic farmland estates, and other protected ecologies and landscapes. Much of the former exists as large private estates, horse farms, or real estate developments. Some of these housing developments, like the one my house is a part of, were built as early as the start of the twentieth century. As one of the first and most thoroughly colonized and settled areas of what is now called the United States, land use patterns in the Northeast of the country more closely resemble those in Northern Europe, especially England, than they do the Midwest and the West of the country. Meaning that land parcels are smaller and the proximity to metropolises is closer. What 'untouched wilderness' exists here is very intentionally untouched.

The set of sociopolitical beliefs and actions that undergird contemporary nature conservation in the U.S. originated in the Hudson Valley, and it began with aesthetics. From Henry Hudson's first voyage up the river through the end of the Revolutionary War, the valley landscape was viewed as a wealth of commodifiable elements – mountains for minerals, beavers for fur, forests for timber, etc. (Bruegel 2002). In the mid-nineteenth century, however, a distinctly American type of tourism emerged in the region: environmental tourism (Chambers 2012; Gassan 2008). At the time the Hudson River was a busy commercial thoroughfare passing through a sparsely populated landscape transitioning from subsistence agriculture to market oriented production (Bruegel 2002). Urban travelers could appreciate its rugged, rural landscape as they moved between cosmopolitan centers. That appreciation was formalized as a nostalgic aesthetic by painters and writers living

through the tail end of the industrial revolution. 'Underdevelopment made the Hudson River Valley an ideal locale to mourn the consequences of development; all places once looked like it before the ravages of industrialization' (Chambers 2012:361). The privation that the industrial revolution was meant to save us from was romanticized by these cultural creators as demonstrative of one's American character, and as prerequisite for appreciating true beauty.

The Hudson River School of painting was America's first recognized art movement (1823-1875), and the painters' hardships in the wilderness were part and parcel of the picturesque landscapes they produced (Strazdes 2009). Writers of fiction, such as Washington Irving and James Fennimore Cooper, popularized the Hudson Valley landscape as both treacherous and beautiful. In their stories, epiphany in paradise was man's reward for enduring the wilderness. This aesthetic view of the region was in line with the young nation's settler colonial preoccupation with simultaneously distancing itself from the colonizing empire and naturalizing itself as rightful master of Indigenous land and legacy; Indigenous peoples were depicted, when they were mentioned at all, as one more exotic and potentially dangerous inhabitant of the wilderness (Chambers 2012). While Europe had crumbling ruins and effete aristocrats, America had wild landscapes and self-made men. This conception of nature was popularized by early icons of environmentalism like John Muir and Henry David Thoreau for whom 'working, consuming, occupying, and admiring American nature was a way for a certain kind of white person to become symbolically native to the continent' (Purdy 2015b). The Hudson Valley landscape was made into an avatar for American-ness, valorizing personal grit and demonstrating the settlers' right to the land by virtue of their fortitude and their appreciation for its grandeur. This aesthetic valuation was not inherent in the land as assumed by its proponents, but imposed upon it by a white aristocracy that was losing its power as the Gilded Age gave way to the Progressive Era.

For the aspiring middle and upper classes of New York City, trips to upscale yet rustic resorts, called mountain houses, in the Hudson Valley and nearby Catskill and Adirondack mountain ranges demonstrated aesthetic appreciation in a distinctly American cadence. Remnants of the Revolutionary War speckling the

landscape became tourist destinations that re-enforced national identity and myth-making through nostalgia, to which a specific, supposedly untouched aesthetic was integral. 'The 1885 creation of the Adirondack Forest Preserve, the nation's first significant attempt to preserve wilderness, stemmed in large part from the desire of wealthy tourists to enjoy mountain scenery and fish in clear streams, not ones muddied by landslides from nearby logging operations' (Chambers 2012:363). As timber, leather, brick, and other manufacture proliferated on its shores (Bruegel 2002), the Hudson River's waters, like the streams that fed it, became ever more polluted and its landscapes were effaced.

Reverence for the wild aesthetic of the Northeast and the desire to preserve it continued with New York City native, avid outdoorsman, Progressive Era bannerman, and 26th United States President Theodore (Teddy) Roosevelt (Mahoney and Geist 2019:44–45). He drew heavily on the wealth of his friends and neighbors, the Gilded Age's industrial robber barons, to secure land that would become the region's first state parks.²⁸ To conserve land in the Hudson Valley, residents who amassed wealth through industrialization – oil refinery in the case of the Rockefellers and rail and steamboat transport in the case of the Vanderbilts - paid to prevent the industrialization of (certain parts) of the region. Wealth was accumulated during a period of unfettered capitalism; the means of that accumulation caused disorienting cultural and economic change; that wealth was mobilized in the name of recovering and protecting what was being lost.

What was being lost? What was the object of despair and nostalgia in this case? Answers as to the value of wilderness that were recorded and preserved in the public record at the time overrepresent the perspective of white, upper-class men while other's voices are more difficult to recover (Blum 2002; McMurray 2013). At risk, these men argued, were nobility and wilderness. Teddy Roosevelt and his social circle's ardent conservationism sought to preserve environments *from people generally* that they may be used *by white men* for the edification of their

²⁸ One such park is the Palisades Interstate Park on the banks of the Hudson River, a pivotal battleground in the trajectory of land conservation in the twentieth century, and of special significance to Glynwood as will be shown later in this chapter.

bodies and minds through rugged sports like hunting and for the edification of their souls through appreciation of pristine landscapes. This is reflected in the preference to conserve charismatic mega-fauna like elk and bears, noble game for the huntsman (Mahoney and Geist 2019:89), over smaller animals, and majestic mountain ranges over humbler prairies.²⁹

The historical, and racialized, context here cannot be forgotten. This was the Progressive Era when political reformers advanced labor rights, women's suffrage, and anti-corruption policies, but it was also the era of the Great Migration when approximately six million Black refugees fled persecution in the South for the promised economic opportunities of Northeastern and Midwestern industrialized cities (Tolnay 2003). Concurrently, immigration to the U.S. from southern and eastern Europe was outpacing immigration from northern and western Europe, causing significant white supremacist anxieties that led to the passing of the Immigration Act of 1924 (Ludmerer 1972), limiting immigration from Eastern and Southern Europe and Africa and banning immigration from the Middle East and Asia. It was the era of eugenics. The roots of environmentalism and the pseudo-science of eugenics are intertwined.

Cultural critic and legal scholar Jedediah Purdy eloquently traces the co-construction of environmental conservation and eugenics through the words and works of its founding fathers (Purdy 2015b). He resurfaces the influence of Madison Grant who was instrumental in founding organizations to protect flora and fauna, but has been sidelined from the history of environmentalism because he is best remembered for his 1916 eugenic treatise *The Passing of the Great Race, or The Racial Bias of European History* (Grant 1916). In it, Grant argued that 'Nordic' peoples are naturally aristocratic and endowed with superior powers of governance and warned that they were being overtaken by undesirable 'Alpine' and 'Mediterranean' races. Teddy Roosevelt praised the book as did Adolf Hitler (Purdy

²⁹ The only prairie preserved in the U.S. National Park system is the Tallgrass Prairie National Park established in 1996. All other National Parks preserve mountains, canyons, bodies of water, or historic monuments.

2015b). The logics of Progressive Era conservation and eugenics are unsettlingly similar.

Elites, facing irrelevance as laboring, non-white, and female peoples organized for political power in the nation, put energy into developing both eugenics and land conservation to justify and preserve their positions of power over people and land, and justified this social control under scientific premises (Allen 2013). Rather than acknowledging the misery caused by extractive industrialization and grieving it, the blame was placed on the people closest to the land for ineptly and inefficiently managing it. This logic justified the stance that social structures did not need to be transformed, rather that management ought to be in the hands of people presumed to be better at management, people already in power. Conservationism upended the presumed value of farmers and agriculture to land management. It reversed tenets of colonial-era Manifest Destiny that advocated unfettered settlement of North America through the displacement and genocide of Indigenous peoples by recasting yeomen farmers and artisan manufacturers, the heroes of pioneer era America, as anarchic and inefficient destroyers of nature. In the early twentieth century, the titans of industry and political leaders agreed that in order to rescue nature from the rapacious working classes their superiors in intellect and might (and wealth) were duty bound to scientifically manage both land and people (Leonard 2009). Concurrently, philanthropy arose as a specific means by which to enact effective management of natural and human resources, and philanthropists did not limit their spheres of influence to nature conservation nor to U.S. borders.

The Rockefeller fortune was leveraged during the interwar period through its foundations, the Laura Pelman Rockefeller Memorial and the Rockefeller Foundation, to advance public health programs, social and biological research, and arts initiatives domestically and abroad. 'As representatives of the ruling class, the trustees and officers of these foundations subscribed to an ideology of "sophisticated conservatism" whose watchwords were "efficiency," "control," and

“planning” (Fisher 1986:5).³⁰ Prioritizing administrative skill enshrined it as a necessity in the non-profit sector in the long-term, and was justified in the near-term as required for improving the lives of poor people globally through sound management, or, put more bluntly, through social control of the masses by the elites. U.S. aristocracy borrowed a page from Britain’s colonial playbook, casting themselves as the caretakers rather than the conquerors of ‘savage’ lands and peoples domestically and abroad, to maintain and expand their power and influence.

This ethos ushered in a new era of American empire that incorporated and influenced nature conservation. Central to conservationist imperialism was the assertion, backed by eugenic pseudo-science and popular mis-interpretations of Darwin’s theories known as Social Darwinism, that white aristocratic men were evolutionarily the fittest administrators in nature, and therefore predestined to manage environmental and human resources (Purdy 2015a). The international geo-political impacts of conservationist imperial sentiment birthed during the Progressive Era are beyond the scope of this research, but the macro manifest in the micro. Subsequent decades of environmental thought and activism in the Hudson Valley resonate with the predilections and prejudices of the Progressive Era.

As eugenics and the overt racism of early conservationists became taboo, a general misanthropy and classism remained at the heart of nature conservation, encapsulated in the idea that nature must be conserved from the masses by and for those who know better. The emergence of environmentalism and ecology promised a more egalitarian relationship to people and more-than-human beings but did not entirely purge elitist tendencies. The Hudson River is the site of a foundational struggle that defined the environmental movement in the U.S. for the second half of the twentieth century: Storm King mountain.

³⁰ Notably, the Rockefeller foundations were essential to establishing the dominance of Social Anthropology in British academia by grantmaking to Malinowski at the London School of Economics (Fisher 1986).

Robert D. Lifset's comprehensive history of Storm King's role in launching the contemporary environmental movement grounds the following summary of how the establishment of the Palisades Interstate Park that it eventually became a part of was steeped in classed concerns, the significant ideological shift from utilitarian conservation to aesthetic preservation of land that accompanied that project, and the introduction of ecological concerns that legal battles around preserving the mountain encapsulated (Lifset 2014).

Storm King mountain rises more than four hundred meters above the western bank of the Hudson River. It sits at the southern end of the Hudson Highlands, a twenty mile stretch of the river that slices through Precambrian rock and offers spectacular fjord scenery, where the river broadens southward into Haverstraw Bay and Tappan Bay. At the southwestern shore of Tappan Bay a sheer expanse of stone begins and runs fifteen miles along the river before stopping in New Jersey, just across the river from upper Manhattan. These cliffs rise fifteen to one hundred fifty meters above the shore and are named for their barricade like appearance. This is the Palisades. The rugged beauty of these cliffs made for enviable views from the mansions and estates on the east side of the river, they were also a great source for quarrying stone to build the rapidly growing New York City metropolis of the late 1800s.

The quarrying of the Palisades was offensive to both eye and ear, as dynamite was used to pries stone from the cliffs that could be heard throughout the lower Hudson Valley and Manhattan (Lifset 2014). In 1897, the New Jersey Federation of Women's Clubs advocated for the preservation of the Palisades, and their intensive lobbying was supported by wealthy New Yorkers including then state governor Teddy Roosevelt (Lifset 2014:27–30). As a result, New York and New Jersey joined in passing legislation in 1900 to establish the Palisades Interstate Park Commission (PIPC). The founding president of the commission, appointed by Teddy Roosevelt, was George Walbridge Perkins, Sr. who had a clear view of the Palisades and their destruction from his country estate, Glyndor (Binnewies 2001; Gottlock and Gottlock 2007). George, Sr. was a political leader of the Progressive Movement, an accomplished businessman in finance and insurance, and father of

George W. Perkins, Jr. who would eventually purchase and rename the farm now known as Glynwood. George Perkins, Sr. would serve as president of the commission until his death in 1920 .

Powerful and passionate men drove the success of the PIPC. Perkins called on wealthy friends, among them J. Pierpont Morgan and John D. Rockefeller, Jr., to support the cause by purchasing and donating large tracts of land (Binnewies 2001). The quarrying of the Palisades ended, and the land under the authority of the PIPC expanded northward, eventually gaining the sanction of state parks in both New York and New Jersey. The victory of the PIPC ushered a new distinction between land conservation and land preservation (Lifset 2014). The 'Great Conservationist' Teddy Roosevelt and his ilk advocated for sound management of land so that it may be best used by men, for natural resource management and, if necessary, preservation. The Palisades' steep cliffs, however, were protected from being used as building materials, and even underwent restoration, on the basis that the *view* they provided was exceptional and therefore deserved preservation (Tyrrell 2012).

Preservation had heretofore been applied to historical and cultural sites meant for appreciating, not for utilization which was the focus of conservation. By successfully defending the Palisades from destruction on the basis of their aesthetic significance, the PIPC validated aesthetics as a primary value that some land possesses (implying that other land does not) and inspired activists previously concerned only with historic and cultural preservation to take an interest in landscapes. This laid the basis for the values that underlie the creation of the National Park System, and garnered broad based support for that work (Tyrrell 2012). Storm King mountain became a part of the Palisades Interstate Park in 1922 when Dr. Ernest Stillman of Cornwall 'donated 800 acres of mountain and riverfront land to the commission' and 'by 1962, Storm King Park contained 1,102 acres' (Lifset 2014:41). 1962 was the year that two significant events for the future of how land is valued in the Hudson Valley happened on the same day.

While the terms environmentalism and ecology appeared in the mid-1800s, their social meaning had shifted drastically by 1962. Originating in 1860, ecology was a scientific concept developed as 'part of an effort to control life and to apply rational methods to a complex set of problems generated by the American desire to migrate into and adapt to new landscapes' (Kingsland 2005 as quoted in Lifset 2014:4). In this iteration, the science of ecology served the Progressive Era determination to effectively manage nature for man's benefit. Several socioeconomic shifts in post-World War II America lead to the emergence of environmentalism as a movement rather than a science. In 1962 environmentalism was clearly understood as organizing for protection of the environment through civil actions such as lobbying, legal action, legislation, and protest. The movement addressed environmental crises, amongst these 'the increased use of pesticides and the growing use of synthetic materials [that] created new environmental hazards' (Lifset 2014:3).

Rachel Carson's research into the use of pesticides in Long Island, New York prompted her to write the book *Silent Spring* that warned of the enduring harm of pesticides as they moved up the food chain to humans (Carson 2022). Carson's book popularized a different understanding of ecology as a web of life, and she effectively argued that harm to others in that web would eventually harm humans. Carson urged not only a pragmatic shift in environmentalism to look at root causes as well as crises, but advocated for a profound ethical shift that would displace humans from the top of the natural hierarchy and instead give equal respect to the rights and value of all life forms. *Silent Spring* was published on September 27, 1962. That same day, Consolidate Edison (Con Ed) 'announced its plans to build a pumped-storage hydroelectric plant near Storm King Mountain' (Lifset 2014:5). Carson's understanding of ecology would prove to be a powerful tool for environmentalists opposing the construction of that plant.

The plant would be based in the town of Cornwall that had once enjoyed a strong tourism business from ailing city-folks whose doctors prescribed a break from the so-called miasma of New York City. As the fresh air cure waned in popularity, so did the population and economic footing of Cornwall. The proposed plant was

welcomed as much needed windfall for the town, bringing jobs and promising improved civic infrastructure to be paid for by Con Ed (Lifset 2014:38). The leaders of Con Ed knew they had to garner the support of PIPC to move ahead without controversy, as portions of the planned project would occupy land within Palisades Interstate Park.

Laurance Rockefeller was president of the PIPC at the time, and his brother Nelson was Governor of New York. Con Ed worked to appease PIPC by agreeing to concessions proposed unilaterally by Laurance, including burying power lines under the river rather than stringing them over it so as to preserve the view (Lifset 2014:42). This solution tracks with the ethos of land conservation; it balanced the development needs of Con Ed and its customers with the aesthetic value of the landscape. It did not satisfy many of PIPC's other trustees, however, who eventually founded another group to contest the construction of the Storm King power plant. That organization was the Scenic Hudson Commission; it exists today as the non-profit Scenic Hudson and is a major land conservation power in the Hudson Valley (Schuyler 2018).

Scenic Hudson's members were primarily residents of Garrison and Cold Spring, the wealthy villages on the east bank of the river with views of Storm King. Their first attempt to stop Con Ed's plans for a power plant on the western shore was in 1964 at hearings held by the Federal Power Commission (FPC), a body established during the Progressive Era to 'develop and preserve water-power resources' (Lifset 2014:51) that has since been replaced by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. The leading argument advanced by Scenic Hudson at the hearings was a preservationist one, that the aesthetic, historical, and recreational value of Storm King outweighed its potential value as a power plant. The FPC did not agree.

Scenic Hudson appealed to the courts in 1965, and this time took an ecological tack. They argued that the FPC had failed sufficiently to consider several points, most importantly that they had not accounted for the ecological damage that the power plant would inflict (Schuyler 2018). Surprisingly, Scenic Hudson won the

appeal and the FPC re-opened its review of Con Ed's plans. While the fight over Storm King wouldn't be resolved until 1980 when Con Ed conceded to scrap plans for the plant in a settlement with Scenic Hudson, the 1964 ruling against the FPC was a milestone for the environmental movement. In ruling that concerned citizens constituted an aggrieved party with grounds for legal action because of their concern for the environment, the court departed from previous federal rulings that judicial recourse was only available to 'aggrieved or adversely affected' parties strictly in terms of economic interest (Lifset 2014:93–104), thereby setting a precedent for legal action by parties with non-economic interests that rewrote the playbook for environmental activism from that day forward (Carpenter 2022). Moreover, Scenic Hudson's strategy, because of its legal success, marked a shift away from the anthropocentric conservationist and preservationist ethos of the Progressive Era and an acceptance of ecology as a fundamental concern for environmentalism.

The ecological shift in environmentalism has contoured the zeitgeist, and its assertion of humans as part of nature rather than managers of nature has informed countless research pathways. It even has given our era a name: the Anthropocene. However, it did not eliminate the classism of early conservationism and proto-environmentalism. As environmentalism gained sway in the 1970s, it utilized the science of ecology to decry humans as the greatest threat to the environment, and it repackaged scarcity-based Malthusian warnings about the threat of overpopulation to the carrying load of the planet (Malthus 1798; Linnér 2023). Agriculture was caught directly in the cross hairs as anxieties rose that without a significant reduction in population growth humanity faced two options: widespread famine due to lack of food or the destruction of every inch of land by agriculture.

These counterbalanced fears demonstrate enduring prejudices from earlier eras. As Purdy notes, environmentalist texts illustrating the impending horrors of overpopulation with scenes from slums in the global south read more like disgust for poverty and the poor than like sound science (Purdy 2015a). Vilification of farmers as destroyers of the environment traces clearly back to the earliest conservationists, while the extensification of petro-chemical based monocultures in

farming that spread post World War II both purported to be the solution to global hunger and gave environmentalists more reason to label farmers as the opposition.

In the same period, the latter half of the twentieth century, the counterculture was embracing organic agriculture and a new iteration of agrarianism (Belasco 2007; Guthman 2014; Walker 2012). In the ensuing decades agricultural scholarship has paid increasing attention to earth friendly farming practices like agroecology (Wezel et al. 2009). In the early 2000s conservationists were beginning to take an interest in 'working lands' as sites for ecological stewardship by farmers (Charnley, Sheridan, and Nabhan 2014). Reflecting on this, Kathleen Finlay, president of Glynwood, observed how philanthropists drove that shift in the Hudson Valley:

'Historically the wealth of the non-profits [here] has been concentrated in land preservation, and a positive shift for our work has been that those folks are now embrace working landscapes as part of their vision. And that wasn't the case when I started here [in 2012] ... [this shifted because] there were funders who were interested in preserving farmland, and I think the land trusts had to recognize that farms are important. Not only that they aren't being developed, but are an important part of our legacy. There is a growing awareness, but there are still plenty of people in these communities who don't want that field farmed. They just want it to be a field, and that is very deep'.

Kathleen's experience describes the intersecting and sometimes conflicting values that residents who may also be funders put on undeveloped land (ecological conservation), legacy (preservation), and aesthetics (unfarmed fields).

Scenic Hudson has been one of the conservation organizations that took an interest in farmland and has 'conserved 18,000 acres on more than 125 family farms in six counties' (Scenic Hudson n.d.). In 2013 Scenic Hudson published a first-of-its-kind report laying out its vision for conserving the Hudson Valley foodshed, likening food to water in its essential need for protection through environmental conservation of land (Securing Fresh, Local Food for New York City and the Hudson Valley: A Foodshed Conservation Plan for the Region 2013). The

report was funded by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, and in an interview with Glynwood's former Vice President of Development, Liz Corio, she described to me how her thinking about the relationship of conservation to agricultural land shifted while working at the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, and how that revelation led her to work at a food and farming non-profit:

'Land was the bridge for me. Being a grant maker in a private foundation that had largely spent its fifteen years of existence or so paying millions and millions of dollars to permanently protect land from development – most of that was in high and rocky places where no one farms. But as more and more of those lands get conserved, the question is, in these fringe spaces, where you have competing values that people place on that land, how – how is the future of that land going to be determined and what role does philanthropy play in helping to determine that? Some land, its highest and best use is wilderness; some land, its highest and best use is to produce food; and some land, its highest and best use is to house people. And not that those lines are always clear – but it was like, ok, this place, if we're going to be developing land to produce food, how can we ensure that that food is being produced and that land is being used in a way that doesn't further compromise the climate crisis? That produces as much food for people as possible? That connects rural and urban people to land? The early a-ha moment of 'wow', well part of why it's so hard for people to get into farming now is not only that they didn't grow up in family farming. [...] people who are wanting to go back [to farming] – how would you even begin to afford land in the Hudson Valley? It took me until I was almost forty to be able to buy a house. We're looking at people in their twenties and thirties who want to buy land and find housing. So, land is really the crux of it'.

The question Liz raises is what power does philanthropy hold in assessing the 'highest and best use' of land? And how does that assessment effect entrant farmer's ability to make autonomous futures?

From the nineteenth century through to today the winners of capitalism have held outsized power over determining the highest and best use of land in the Hudson Valley, and many have chosen to exercise that power through philanthropic giving.

Consistent over the centuries is a nostalgic impulse within conservation and environmentalism for a time before industrialization that mobilizes determinate future making – looking always to the past for what the future might be and working to realize in the future the hopes of past. The trajectories of imagined futures change with the different, longed for elements of the past, imagined or real. What is most longed for changes based on the values of the era in which futures are being imagined. So too do the mechanisms by which philanthropy is instrumentalized change in accord with prevailing social norms. Philanthropy in the Hudson Valley that looks to change the future of food and farming reflects its foundations in the determinate future making strategies of conservation and preservation and the environmentalism of the 1970s, whose contours and regional significance I have attempted to demonstrate in this section.

In the years I have worked with philanthropists in this sector, I have never had cause to doubt their passion for the land and reverence for its beauty as well as its function. Social, political, and ecological successes have been many. Their lived experience is more nuanced and complex than the history above suggests, but it is important to know this history because its effects are latent. Hudson Valley philanthropy is enmeshed with Progressive Era aesthetics, classism, racism, and adulation of measurements and management, while exhibiting strains of misanthropic ecology. Writ large, this has prevented advocates of (re)localizing food and farming from accessing philanthropic wealth and philanthropically protected land, though that has been changing in recent decades. Articulating with this history, food and farming philanthropy in the region is following a contemporary turn in the philanthropic sector as a whole, to rationalize itself with neoliberalism, which is the subject of the following section. Even as philanthropic dollars turn towards regionalizing food and farming, the determinate future making strategies philanthropists continue to predominantly espouse impose values and meanings onto the land that may constrain possibilities for entrant farmers to pursue the futures they envision.

The Anti-politics of Philanthrocapitalism

By the early 2000s, environmentalism was firmly ensconced as a public good. During this era of neoliberalization, responsibility for the public good was shifting from the state to the individual. This can be observed in the increasing rhetoric around individual consumption choices, like eating locally, as primary means of environmental activism as opposed to collective actions like the obstruction of the Storm King power plant. Disillusionment in the power of the state and civil sectors to achieve positive change fed enthusiasm for applying capitalistic approaches to solving public problems. In 2006 Matthew Bishop coined the term 'philanthrocapitalism' in an article he wrote for *The Economist*; 'Philanthrocapitalism encompasses not just the application of modern business techniques to giving but also the effort by a new generation of entrepreneurial philanthropists and business leaders to drive social and environmental progress by changing how business and government operate' (Bishop 2013:474). I would add to Bishop's definition that philanthrocapitalism has also sought to change how civil society operates, and therefore has rippling effects on how land in the Hudson Valley is valued and used.

Bishop heralds Bill Gates and Elon Musk as model philanthrocapitalists, and with Michael Green describes the outsized influences their philanthropic and business choices have on national and international humanitarian and environmental priorities as 'hyperagency' (Bishop 2013; Bishop and Green 2008). In their analysis, hyperagentic billionaires are liberated from the fickle electorate's power over politicians, the time-consuming burden of fundraising that non-profit leaders strain under, and the short-sighted profit motivation of share-holders that corporate CEO's must satisfy. This allows philanthrocapitalists, they argue, to think long-term and to take risks with their philanthropic investments. It also, others argue, liberates them from accountability to society while lionizing their individual power as serving the collective good.

Haydon, Jung and Russell, in their review of the academic discourse of philanthrocapitalism, identify three cultural frames: '(1) development challenges framed as scientific problems; (2) beneficiaries framed as productive

entrepreneurs; and (3) philanthropy framed as social investment' (2021:354). While Haydon et al. effectively demonstrate these three frames, they are not particularly new to philanthropy. As to framing social problems as scientific problems, McGoey states, 'Modern philanthropy developed from the efforts of mid-nineteenth-century philanthropic reformers to apply scientific methods to the promotion of human welfare, explicitly distinguishing their practices from acts of alms-giving prevalent within religious orders which viewed charity as valuable in itself regardless of observable benefit' (McGoey 2012:189). Philanthropists, in the Progressive Era and now, are reform-minded and 'place conditions on how [money] is used and adopt modern, scientific methods to make sure it is used most effectively and efficiently' (Barnett 2023:10), unlike charity giving. Neither is the framing of beneficiaries as entrepreneurs new, demonstrated by the ubiquity in the non-profit sphere of the truism, 'If you give a man a fish, you feed him for a day. If you teach a man to fish, you feed him for a lifetime.' This ideal of helping people to help themselves has been deployed across the history of philanthropy to justify the movement of excess profit into the hands of organizations and governments rather than the laborers who created the profit (McGoey 2012), and is at the root of the critique of philanthropy as a paternalistic and inept method of wealth redistribution. Philanthropy as social investment may be less obvious in nineteenth century philanthropy, but arguments for Progressive Era public health that focused on the need for a productive labor force pre-figure investments in public health today.

So how does philanthrocapitalism differ from earlier philanthropy? It rationalizes philanthropy to neoliberal values. Harvey's succinct definition of neoliberalism is useful here, 'human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade' (2007:2). Even as neoliberalism rejected the strong governmental social control desired by Progressive Era advocacy, its tenets as identified by Haydon et al. aligned well with the frameworks of philanthropy. Philanthrocapitalism married the two and pushed the charitable sector to take up the means and measures of capitalism.

Barnett defines philanthrocapitalism this way:

‘At the micro level, it mimics business practices such that philanthropists invest not only money but expertise in building infrastructure, encouraging innovation, and introducing modern business practices, methodologies, and organization, all with the assumption that they will improve results. At the macro level, there is the presumption that philanthropy and business can be mutually beneficial: Capitalism can be philanthropic, and businesses can profit from philanthropy. In other words, business and capitalism can do good while doing well, and markets are part of the answer to social ills’.
(2023:12)

Belief that capitalism and philanthropy are synergistic has driven the surge in social impact investing and venture philanthropy, both of which seek financial returns for monies spent on addressing social problems. In agriculture philanthrocapitalistic values have driven major investment from high net worth individuals and foundations in technological interventions targeted at international development concerns, like biofortification of crops through genetic modification to increase nutrient density, without regard for farmers’ interest in utilizing these technologies nor consumers interest in eating them (Haydon, Jung, and Russell 2021:366). In the Hudson Valley, neoliberal values of free markets, private property, and ownership have significant influence on how land is used and who gets to use it. Non-profit organizations, inherently beholden and accountable to philanthropists, that are trying to serve entrant farmers instrumentalize these neoliberal values.

Entrant farmers invested in ecological land management need mentorship, training, and social ties in addition to land access in order to achieve their goals (Carlisle et al. 2019). Philanthrocapitalistic values influence the work done by non-profits to help entrant farmers secure these; privileging those that can be measured in financial terms. As my ethnography will show later in this chapter, the rationalization of non-profits with neoliberalism and the philanthrocapitalistic prerogatives this imposes on entrant farmers in the Hudson Valley cause uncomfortable tensions in the practice of farming and in entrant farmers own sense of authenticity or ‘realness’. Bishop argues, ‘The defining feature of philanthrocapitalism is not, as its critics suggest, a determination to replace

traditional grant-making or the democratic processes of civil society with so-called market-based solutions, but rather its laser-like focus on achieving “impact”.’ (2013:477) I can attest to ‘impact’ being the overwhelming measure of successful investment for philanthrocapitalists, as Bishop puts it, ‘from Bill Gates on down the wealth ladder’ (ibid:477). If I had a million dollars for every time I’ve been asked by a donor, of any giving capacity from fifty dollars to half a million dollars, to translate the worthiness of programs I manage at Glynwood into explicitly financial ‘impact’ – well, I still wouldn’t have one one-hundredth of Bill Gates’ wealth, but I *would* be a billionaire. The effect of ‘impact’ as a measurement of success in future making work is to force that work into a determinate praxis because ‘impact’ must be identified prior to engaging in the work, and defending the likelihood of predicted impacts is often a prerequisite for successful funding proposals. To be funded, the work cannot be open ended, it must make itself legible within business values.

The application of business values to social values is not the unmitigated good Bishop champions for two critical reasons. First, philanthrocapitalism presupposes that obstacles to capitalism are also obstacles to achieving social good. Let us take, for example, the capitalist values of ‘scaling up’ and ‘replicability’. While a car manufacturer may profit from scaling up production and replicating factories, the rapacious expansionism of capitalism when applied to food production has caused well documented harms to ecologies, animals, and humans (Holt-Giménez 2017; Guthman 2014; Lobao and Meyer 2001; Kenney et al. 1991; Imhoff 2010). What evidence is there that applying expansionism towards ‘impact’ rather than ‘profit’ does not also result in inequity and harm? Second, Bishop argues that hyperagents’ power is minimal compared to the financial scale of governments and corporations and that it is mitigated by the need for others to join in the hyperagents’ vision to make it manifest. Both the claim that the finances mobilized by philanthrocapitalists is minimal and that they do not operate with autonomy is contrary to the preponderance of research findings across disciplines (Haydon, Jung, and Russell 2021). For example, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has outsized influence on public health priorities while answering only to its three trustees: Bill, Melinda and Warren Buffet (Eikenberry and Mirabella 2018). The Gates Foundation is the largest contributor to the World Health Organization

(WHO), ahead of the U.S. government, providing 10% of the WHO's overall funding and the foundation itself has a budget larger than the WHO (Eikenberry and Mirabella 2018; Barnett 2023), while there is little to no recourse for people who disagree with the priorities of the Gates Foundation (McGoey 2015).

Moreover, the 'impact' of philanthrocapitalism is not defined exclusively by billionaires. Kirby, a consultant on food and agriculture philanthropy in the Hudson Valley put it to me this way,

'My experience with philanthropy in general in the Hudson Valley is ... there are some very large players who have extraordinary amounts of money and are sort of like in the solar system. They're like the sun. There are a few of these entities that push so many millions and have so much power that they guide a lot. And then there's this suite of other foundations who are big players on supporting people primarily, but aren't huge, and so they don't have enormous capability. And then there's an extraordinary amount of individuals, because of proximity to the city, who have some philanthropic capability. And so you have this funny mix of classes in the stratosphere of wealth...that is pushing into philanthropy'.

Focusing only on the wealthiest philanthrocapitalists, as the academic discourse on this topic has done and as Bishop and Matthews do, is insufficiently nuanced (Haydon, Jung, and Russell 2021). It discounts the accretion of interactions between more moderately wealthy philanthrocapitalists and people with less wealth and power. Bill Gates may not set the strategic goals for every non-profit organization, but board members at any given non-profit who admire Gates and his methods exist in unequal power relationships with the staff and intended beneficiaries. The result is that philanthrocapitalistic values can outweigh the values of those who implement the work as well as those whom it is meant to help. What does this mean for the Hudson Valley food system?

Anthropology is a provocative discipline and ethnography an apt tool with which to probe this question, particularly at the nexus of environmentalism and philanthropy where the question of farmland access for entrant farmers in the Hudson Valley is situated. As non-governmental organizations have grown into and beyond the

social welfare spaces abandoned by the state under neoliberalism, anthropologists around the world have offered sharp critique of non-profits and their practices while also often being employed in the sector (Mertz and Timmer 2010), as I am.

Preoccupied as we are with meaning-making and power, anthropologists are well suited to building understanding of the contested space that is the non-profit sector. Ethnography opens sightlines historically ignored by environmentalism, but critical to its advancement. It offers the perspective and insight of people actually living in, interacting with, caring for, and responding to the environment (Peace, Connor, and Trigger 2012). Ethnographic inquiry refocuses questions raised by philanthrocapitalism. What constitutes impact? For and to whom? What happens when 'hyperagents' interact with mere agents in interpersonal contexts? In this chapter I use my ethnographic research to demonstrate how philanthrocapitalistic values have everyday consequences for how land is experienced, owned and farmed in the Hudson Valley. This is a necessary addition to the critique of philanthrocapitalism that brings it down to earth from the 10,000-foot view beloved by big picture thinkers seeking 'impact' and contextualizes philanthrocapitalism in food and farming activism as a recapitulation of the conservationist urge to retain and shore up existing systems of power, rather than a revolution in wealth distribution for the common good.

Bishop and Green 'found that periods of great entrepreneurial wealth creation, wherever in the world they occur, seem always to give rise to great philanthropy, often heavily influenced by the business thinking that drove that wealth creation' (Bishop 2013:475). From a Marxist perspective, this analysis may be reworded to read: periods of great wealth extraction give rise to great philanthropy influenced by the relationships of production that enabled wealth extraction. In either reading, philanthropic strategies are inseparable from the business strategies espoused by donors and so require us to understand how neoliberalism articulates with philanthrocapitalism. According to Bishop and Green, the early decades of the twenty-first century are the 'fifth golden age of philanthropy since modern capitalism was born', the fourth having been the American Progressive Era (ibid:475). The rise of philanthrocapitalism under neoliberalism in the present era shares similarities with the patrician philanthropy of the Progressive Era in that

philanthropists often profit by proliferating the ills that they purport to ameliorate, and philanthrocapitalism also exists in an era of growing wealth disparity (McGoey 2015).

The engine that generated wealth in New York is distinct from other places because New York City is the global epicenter of financial markets. One philanthropic professional who works nationally told me, 'Something that differs here from the West Coast is the origin of wealth and the mindset of wealth. Techie wealth and techie philanthropy is very different from Wall Street wealth and Wall Street philanthropy'. In New York and elsewhere families that made fortunes, or added to existing fortunes, working on Wall Street in global financial markets now fund non-profit organizations aiming to preserve or recover agrarian economies. The Hudson Valley has one of the highest concentrations of such organizations in the nation. While the legacy of environmentalism here is one reason, another is the rising agency of younger generations over familial wealth. The same advisor described it to me this way, 'I interact with family foundations where [the board members are family members] and there are forty or fifty different family members of all generations. So one thing I have seen a lot in these areas of food and ag is it's often an interest of younger generations, but it might compete with older generations views of farming and that its bad for the environment'. The Rockefeller-funded Stone Barns Center and Churchtown Dairy are two of the best known food and agriculture specific non-profits here, but many exist with less famous but similar trajectories, including Glynwood, the non-profit where I work as the Senior Director of Regional Food Programs.

Glynwood is housed on the former estate of the Perkins family who made their wealth from finance and pharmaceuticals. Purchased in 1929 as a country home, Glynwood was and continued for several more decades to be a working dairy that served West Point Military Academy, across the river. Like their friends in nearby Hyde Park, the Roosevelts, the Perkins were avid conservationists. In the 1990s, the family donated the woodlands that were the majority of Glynwood's acreage to Fahnstock State Park and put the farm and its buildings into trust with the Open Space Conservancy. The founding mission of the non-profit entrusted with

maintenance of the property was to preserve the 'viewscape' and rural character of the area; over the next two decades the mission evolved to focus explicitly on food and farming (Glynwood 2017). While well intentioned, philanthropic emphasis on preservation is premised, like colonialism, on the idea that the Hudson Valley is a place with an abundance of untouched and passive resources, rather than a place already alive with agentive beings. As with the cider industry, the nostalgic focus of regional philanthropy on preserving heritage can produce a tension in timescales, presuming that the microcosm is passively untouched by social change and sheltered from the disruptive changes clearly evident in the macrocosm. The values of these philanthropists can align and conflict with the values of the people who execute food and farming projects that philanthropic money funds as well as those who are the intended beneficiaries.

Ghassan Hage offers useful terminology to think with here: anti-political and alter-political. Anti-politics are concerned primarily with opposition to an injustice or harm.³¹ Alter-politics looks instead to creating alternatives. Hage theorizes that resistance, anti-politics, can be a powerful tool for addressing existing harms, but often relies on the same presuppositions and mechanisms as the system it seeks to challenge, thus tending to replicate inequities. Alter-politics, aligned with prefigurative praxes, has been, he argues, ignored by anthropologists. Alter-politics requires a radical 'alter-political passion' to advance alternatives (Hage 2015). In the analysis that follows, I will pay attention to the possibility of alter-political philanthropy, but find that conservationist environmentalism in food and farming philanthropy tends to be anti-political and exhibits determinate future making.

Given the racial and class composition of the philanthropic and non-profit sectors, this is not surprising. The leadership of non-profit organizations is mostly white (Thomas-Breitfeld and Kunreuther 2020), despite the similar ambitions and qualifications of People of Color in the sector. Philanthropic funding is also

³¹ It is important to distinguish Hage's theorization of the term anti-politics from James Ferguson's use of the term in his work on international development (Ferguson 1994). Ferguson uses 'anti-politics' to describe the tendency of development discourse to obfuscate political realities. Hage uses the term instead to describe an orientation of alterity that can achieve compensatory responses to harm but does not seek transformative responses.

predominantly controlled by white people; as noted by Edgar Villanueva, '92 percent of CEOs of foundations, 89 percent of executives on foundation boards, 81 percent of management for financial services and 86 percent of venture capital investors are white' (Matthews 2019). These national-level facts are reflected at Glynwood and all of the non-profits that will be discussed in this chapter. The majority of the organizations' donors, board, and staff are white and at least middle class. White privilege paired with class privilege, can make it difficult to see the need for building alternatives, much less a radical passion for doing so. The world as it is works more or less ok for white people and especially for wealthy white people, because it was made to do so. For wealthy white people it is safe to assume that the hardships they suffer are not due to lack of resources or inclusion in political, social, and economic systems.

Returning to the case of Storm King as an example, it was a victory for the environment, but its nearest neighbors did not see it as a victory for themselves. The proposed plant would have generated much needed jobs in a severely economically distressed area. An alter-political approach to the dual problem of environmental damage and economic insecurity may have been possible, but the anti-political approach to block the plant through existing legal systems, rather than imagining new systems, was the one endorsed and pursued by white philanthropists. In the present, training for entrant farmers tends to rely on English fluency and the economic capacity for self-exploitation, both of which white people with familial wealth are more likely to possess. Anti-political regional food system advocates have focused on opposing consolidated, productionist farming without imagining an egalitarian alternative, without pursuing the social transformation required to enact concrete utopias. Such utopias would require as-yet unrealized changes to the ways that farmers learn to farm and access farmland.

Fundraisers I spoke with sensed an emerging alter-political philanthropy, and consequently the possibility of alter-political projects funded by philanthropy. Kirby told me, 'There's a shift in mindset I've been interested in. The mantra for so long, even looking back to the early titans of industry, it's to do extractive industry – do well to do good – so you do well at all costs, extract, make yourself good and then

you can give back. That seems to be shifting'. Whether that shift is manifesting, and if it has the potential to make radical change is yet to be seen. In addition to funding alternatives it would need to de-emphasize 'impacts' as the measurement of success. To understand the transformations alter-political philanthropy may encourage, and possibility of those practicing indeterminate future making to access those philanthropic dollars, the next section moves from focusing on the philanthropic class to the vantage point of those who aspire to be part of the land-working class.

Learning to Work the Land

The trend towards conservation of working lands in the food movement converged with the unique philanthropic community in New York creating the conditions for an explosion of non-profit organizations focused on beginning farmer training and sustainable agriculture. As land conservation and environmentalism, ethics deeply engrained in the region's philanthropic community, turned their attention to working lands they could not help but notice that people were needed to work those lands. One irony of the fact that the Hudson Valley is looked to as a national hotspot for non-profits serving entrant farmers is that most of it, especially the parts closest to New York City, isn't particularly desirable farmland. The rocky, steep, and often waterlogged terrain is fairly well suited to small-scale dairy and to apple production, but not to the high-value, specialty vegetable crops that require the least capital investment to get going and fetch the highest profit in urban farmers' markets and restaurants. If philanthropists most wanted people to begin farming, their wealth would be more impactfully deployed, one could argue, in the Midwest where there is more flat, arable land. Instead, the proximity to wealth, to an urban market and community, and nostalgia for an imagined colonial Hudson Valley have converged to draw philanthropic dollars and aspiring farmers to the region. The network of non-profits that receive those dollars and seek to support farmers have become more sophisticated and professionalized over the past decades as the national sector has grown. This has had a snowball effect of attracting more dollars and more people to the work.

Entrant farmer training has evolved over the past twenty years, especially training in organic, sustainable, or regenerative farming.³² The trajectory of my friend and colleague Jarret Nelson, who has run the vegetable operation at Glynwood's farm since 2013, is exemplary of the trends in entrant farmer training for our generation; we're both elder millennials born in the early 1980s. Jarret's first agricultural experience came in the form of WWOOFing. The World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms (WWOOF) began in the U.K. in the 1970s with the aim of bringing visitors into connection with organic farms by coordinating volunteer days and has grown to a network of locally run organizations in 130 countries with a shared mission to 'educate people through hands-on and inspiring cultural exchanges, and support local farmers who are feeding their communities and training [sic] the next generation of farmers' (About | WWOOF 2020). Jarret's WWOOFing was during his 'world traveling phase', and he was drawn to be a WWOOFer because he liked working outdoors and appreciated the free room and board.

He worked on farms in Israel, Australia and New Zealand and found the farms he was on 'really interesting'. For farmers, WWOOF offers access to unpaid labor. As Ekers et al. demonstrate in their research of non-wage labor on ecologically managed farms in the global north, and specifically in Ontario, Canada, 'non-waged internship is one of the principal means through which marginally- and non-profitable farms are reproducing themselves' both economically and socially (2016:708). This non-waged work, they argue, is both similar and distinct from non-waged kinship work that has been integral to farm reproduction across generations. While it supports the viability of farms working in tight or non-existent profit margins, non-waged labor also is a means of knowledge transfer and movement building for alternative food networks. They conclude that with the enormous increase of non-waged farm work in North America and Europe in the past two decades, arise 'a series of ethical, political, and practical questions that stem from the uneasy, or at least contradictory, economic and non-economic

³² The distinctions between these terms are debated, but broadly they encompass the turn towards what I have called resistant agriculture – farming that is as defined by its rejection of 'conventional', expansionist/productivist farming as it is by the farming practices it utilizes (Larmer 2017).

character of non-waged farm work' (Ekers et al. 2016:718). As the alternative farming sector has professionalized and focused increasingly on equity, non-waged work (on farms but also in kitchens, at non-profits, etc.) has become increasingly controversial.

In 2014 the popular job posting board Good Food Jobs stopped posting uncompensated positions, and since then intolerance for unpaid work has continued to grow. This demonstrates the shifting ethics of alternative farming communities, but Jarret's path to farming through WWOOFing is a common one for entrant farmers of our generation. Whereas people raised in rural settings have historically had access to formal training and educational opportunities, in the early 2000s someone growing up in a city or suburb, as Jarret did, would have had little awareness of opportunities like that. Moreover, Jarret's discovery of farming while pursuing another goal, traveling in this case, is also a common starting point for his peers.

When Jarret got back to the Northeastern U.S., he saw that the local food and farming scene was becoming one with 'legitimate job opportunities', so in 2010, when he finished college, he found a job at Fishkill Farms working on their vegetable crew. At the time the whole vegetable crew lived in the old farmhouse, the same one where President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill drank their mint juleps. 'The floor was sunken in in weird places and rotting through, it was a mess – the whole vegetable farm team was living there which was all white people and the orchard was all worked by the Jamaican crew' who also lived onsite in trailers a few hundred meters away. The physical distance between the Black, migrant orchard crew of skilled laborers, similar to the crew described in Chapter Three, and the young, white novices that Jarret worked the vegetable side of the farm with is a good metaphor for the socio-economic distance between the two groups.

Jarret remembers that 'Everybody who worked there when I was there were first generation farmers. Functionally, for me, it was an apprenticeship because we all lived together and talked about farming all the time, and [my managers] were

happy that I was interested'. During that time, he learned about Glynwood's farming apprenticeship program that Dave Llewlynn had begun in 2007 and joined the apprentice cohort of 2011. After that, he returned to Fishkill Farms to lead their vegetable production for the 2012 season. In 2013 Jarret was recruited back to Glynwood as an assistant manager where he took over the vegetable operation and the in-field instruction of Glynwood's apprentices. He was offered a promotion at Fishkill Farms at the same time, but found the non-profit aspect of Glynwood's operation more appealing because, 'the number of hours that are expected and the compensation here would be very hard to find anywhere else'. Over the years he has also come to appreciate the autonomy of working within a non-profit that doesn't rely on farm income to continue and where he has autonomy over the farm operation that allows him to learn and experiment on the job. 'No one knew what I was doing', he said, 'so as long as vegetables appeared they were happy. I have tried and experimented with a lot of things'. Jarret has acquired skill and expertise in organic vegetable production and apprentice instruction, but it is not a path he expected for himself. 'My thinking all along was that I would want to have my own operation, but how do you get there? Because there seems like so many really big obstacles'. Non-profits in the Hudson Valley develop and offer farmer training with the intent to reduce those obstacles, but it is unclear if those programs' emphasis on for-profit farming align with the goals of the aspiring farmers they train.

Farmer training programs, and their connection to philanthropic value systems, are a necessary site of inquiry in describing the various value sets at play in the Hudson Valley's local food advocacy because knowledge creation and transfer are linked to social meaning, its generation, and its transformation. Bourdieu's theoretical framework of social reproduction and cultural capital 'recalls the collective definition of what is recognized as knowledge. Not just any type of knowledge or skill makes a farmer a "good farmer" from the perspective of his or her colleagues' (Burton et al. 2020:131). Training networks comprise communities of practice that construct the definition of a good farmer, and that definition seems to be shifting as more aspiring farmers seek out formal training from non-profits rather than discovering farming as a career path through voluntary work, like WWOOFing.

The professionalization of farmer training traces a generational shift in the definition of a 'good farmer'. Nicole Scott was a Glynwood apprentice in 2017 and returned to Glynwood in 2019 as an employee, who worked at a for-profit sheep farm in New Zealand in the year between those different roles. It gave her an appreciation of farming as a business model and put her early introduction to farming into perspective, 'when I started farming, the people I worked for lived in yurts and were barefoot all the time and wanted to leave society. And I was like, that's not realistic. And now one of them works for a non-profit and the other one's not a farmer anymore. It's not reality'. In the decade that I have worked with entrant farmers, it is clear to me that this generation has a different expectation of alternative farming than the one before. They want farming to be a 'legitimate job', unlike elder alternative farmers who align more with the values of back-to-the-land and homesteader farming. This can be read as a move in alternative farming from the alter-political separatism of an earlier generation to an anti-political rationale to align farming with other professional spheres. It may also speak to the diversification of people who are aware of and attracted to training to be farmers. Nicole's parents immigrated to New York from Jamaica, and she attributes her desire to be financially stable and independent to the Caribbean values they instilled in her.

Nicole and Jarret both see a financial incentive for farmers as crucial to actualizing a food system that relies on smaller, biodiverse, and humane farms. They also emphasize the need to be business-minded in their instruction of Glynwood's apprentices, reasoning that if farmers become better entrepreneurs, the financial incentive will become a reality. This business-mindedness aligns well with the assessment and market-solution priorities of philanthrocapitalism. Ongoing angst amongst Glynwood staff and board members as to whether a non-profit farm that does not rely on the market to cover its expenses is even capable of being a site where apprentices can learn to operate a for-profit farm business demonstrates the financial imperative that is foregrounded in philanthrocapitalism. The impact of the apprenticeship program's success is measured by how well the apprentices learn

to produce food and manage land during the course, and by their ability to make that knowledge the basis of a profitable business in the future.

Business viability may be more a part of farmer training today because more training is offered by established non-profits, including academic institutions, as well as the ongoing process of neoliberalization in society. Or it could be that these farmers equate economic viability with increased autonomy, one of the ‘peasant strategies [that] provide an effective means of resisting neoliberalizing tendencies and can encourage sustainable (social and environmental) relationships’ amongst U.S. farmers (Nelson and Stock 2018:85). Faith’s rejection of entrepreneurship as seeking ownership, described at the close of this chapter, indicates the latter. This points to the challenge of separating determinate and indeterminate future making along a binary, and suggests that similar strategies – in this case farming for-profit – can be understood as either type of future making depending on one’s vantage point. From the perspective of philanthrocapitalists, training successful for-profit farmers is legible as impact while for the farmers themselves it may be part of transforming their relationship to land and to people.

What the next generation of entrant farmers is imagining for their farming futures seems to be shifting. With ten years’ experience as a mentor to Glynwood’s apprentices, Jarret has an appreciation for what has not changed and what has. The applicants to the program are demographically consistent, ‘ninety-nine percent of applicants are first generation farmers and also have college degrees and come from suburban or urban areas. This has varied a bit year to year, but overall, at least sixty percent ... are women [and a] fairly small percentage are People of Color’. The most common reason they want to start farming is ‘because they were becoming involved in environmental activism and they felt like farming was a good path to continue that’ and the second most common is that ‘they come to it from a restaurant background or food background’. The changes he has noticed are in how they envision themselves farming, and what they want to learn in order to achieve that vision. They want to learn how to farm on a small scale, utilizing low-impact, high-labor practices like no-till farming. ‘I feel like a lot more recent apprentices that we’ve had, that’s what they’re interested in’, Jarret told me. ‘I wish

they were a little more interested in the tractor stuff that I like, but they like the small-scale stuff better', he laughed.

Scale, of course, is relative and even the 'tractor stuff' Jarret does on the six acres of vegetable crops he manages would qualify as small scale in most parts of the U.S., and his farming practices would meet the approval of most who advocate for small-scale farming as more ecologically sound. Recent apprentices, though, are envisioning farming that could be called micro-scale. Jarret pins this interest on the feasibility of finding land to farm on. 'It just feels a lot more accessible', he told me. The twenty- to thirty-acre land parcel needed for the type of farm he would want to own himself would be nearly impossible for him to afford or access in the Hudson Valley. 'But finding two acres', he continued, 'that's possible. If you're starting out ... you want to be able to see a path forward, and it's easier to see that path forward'.

I've also observed an increasingly overt politics in the apprentices at Glynwood. Since 2020 I've taught a module in the apprenticeship course that asks them to imagine how their dream farm would support food access and security in their community, on as grand or as small a scale as suits them. Some think of ways they can donate into the emergency feeding system, but the majority dream of a farm that is explicitly political. A recent example was a farm that would grow food for transgender people at no cost. The business models they implicitly propose are clearly not commercial or for-profit farms. The apprentices' imagined future farms are shaped by the realities of land access and philanthropic investment in this region, but the philanthropists and non-profit professionals who make these apprenticeships possible may not recognize any 'real' farmers, farmers making a living through market sales from land they own, among the radical apprentices who propose these utopian farming models.

I asked all of the working farmers that I interviewed what makes a so-called 'real farmer', as I have in past research with Midwestern, organic farmers (Larmer 2017). While the farmers I interviewed in the Midwest defined farming largely by their farming practices, in the Hudson Valley the answer had strong economic

underpinnings. Even though many of the farmers I spoke with were currently farming for non-profits, they emphasized that ‘real farmers’ don’t have the financial cushion provided by non-profit funding. Regarding the high animal welfare farming Nicole does at Glynwood, she told me, ‘I wouldn’t be able to farm this way if it wasn’t for the non-profit sector’. This highlights the very real tension created when non-profits teaching alter-political farming techniques to aspiring farmers who want to learn those techniques are also beholden to the values of philanthrocapitalism. ‘Farm viability’, which is generally understood to mean financial viability, is a key watchword for farmer training programs while the people who deliver those programs question the possibility of earning a living from farming with the techniques they teach. Advances continue to be made in intensive no-till and four-season growing that increase the financial prospects of micro-scale, ecologically managed farms, but the doubt about its ‘realness’ in terms of its ability to compete in the marketplace begs the question of whether the alter-political motivations of aspiring farmers can be reconciled with the anti-political environment of philanthrocapitalism. As farm apprentices complete their training they may pursue land ownership individually or collectively, as Faith and others have, or they may consider taking a position at a non-profit organization where the question of what farming means within philanthrocapitalism is actualized.

Working the Land for a Mission

The many entrant farmers who are called to the work as a means of ecological land stewardship, rather than entrepreneurs, may seek a non-profit employer who shares their mission. A farmer employed by a wealthy landowner is likely to enjoy similar benefits and drawbacks to those who are employed at non-profits. While managing a farm for an estate owner means a steady paycheck for the farmer, it also implies farming is a job more than a vocation. The farmers’ greeting of the landowner at Locusts on Hudson in the opening of this chapter then comes into focus as a performance of farming as luxury lifestyle amenity, rather than farming as livelihood. At Locusts on Hudson and privately owned estates like it, of which there are many, the landowner and farmers may share environmental goals around the stewardship of land, and it is often argued that the landowner is doing good by

leveraging his wealth to carve out space for farming that inverts the hierarchy of goals normalized in industrialized, extensive, for-profit farming. The future making praxes in that case are more determinate than indeterminate, and correlate with an anti-political stance. Both the landowner and the farmers value ecological stewardship over productivism. Together they contest ecologically extractive farming practices but their alliance does not contest capitalist accumulation of land, wealth, and resources. The power rests, ultimately, with the landowner.

There is an interplay between ecologically motivated farming, the way it yearns with restorative nostalgia for beatific farming supposed to have existed in an earlier era, as will be more thoroughly described in Chapter Five's analysis of agrarianism, while operating within, or even bolstering, existing unequal power dynamics that conflicts with the progressivism of entrant farmers in the Hudson Valley. Land is at the center of this conflict. For Faith and many of the 'young farmers' I have spoken and weeded crop beds with, ownership of land and business is about more than the entrepreneurial spirit. When I told her I had only lately begun to understand the entrepreneurial urge, to be one's own boss, to own one's own thing, Faith corrected me. It was not about having 'your own thing' in her mind, but about stewarding resources. It was about being able to create a place, a way of working and being and living that shared those resources with a community.

This imagined place aligns with the future Bloch imagines, a world liberated from capitalist estrangement and fundamentally inequitable, class-based social structures, a world that is based instead on morality without property (Boldyrev 2023). Some farms in the region are prefiguratively experimenting with what that future may be. At Letterbox they have attempted collective ownership as an economic model aligned with their cooperative management practices, but have failed to entice any of their longtime crew members to join in the ownership structure. As a food utopias research agenda reminds us, an unsuccessful attempt at the future is not a failed attempt, though (Stock, Carolan, and Rosin 2015). Other farms such as Rock Steady Farm, a queer farmer-led cooperative featured in Chapter Five, and Soul Fire Farm, 'an Afro-Indigenous centered community farm committed to uprooting racism and seeding sovereignty in the food system' (Soul

Fire Farm n.d.), began as for-profit farms and have transitioned to include non-profit business models. The economic model seems not to be the point, or more accurately no formal economic model fits that achieves the aims of these farming projects. Land ownership seems not to be integral to the indeterminate futures these entrant farmers are imagining and enacting. Faith summed up her point, 'Every good farm plan that I know of starts as a commune first'. In the absence of a commune to join, entrant farmers unable to or uninterested in establishing their own farms as owner-operators may seek employment at a non-profit organization. This arrangement has many of the benefits of working for a wealthy landowner and, as a part of civil society, promises better value alignment vis-à-vis allocation of resources.

Non-profit, agricultural organizations in the Hudson Valley tend to focus on one or several of the following goals: education and training in agriculture, advancing ecological land stewardship, increasing access to local food, and achieving farm businesses' economic viability. Some operate their own farming enterprises while others do not. The roles of non-profits in the agricultural sector that do not actively farm, among them the Hudson Valley Agribusiness Development Corp and the county level Cornell Cooperative Extension agencies, are significant and merit further research. For my purposes, I focus on those that do operate farms as they provided grounding to my investigation of lived relationships to land as central to the value sets that align, intersect, and clash in local food advocacy.

Glynwood's entry into the food movement began with farmer training in 2007 when Dave Llewellyn, who had been employed at Glynwood already for several years as farm manager, launched the apprenticeship program. He eventually expanded the organization's farmer training programs to include a farm business incubator to fledge new farm businesses. The apprenticeship program utilizes Glynwood's land as an experiential classroom in which to teach ecological farming practices and good business management to prepare graduates of the program to manage a farm operation or to launch their own farm business. The food that is grown and raised in the vegetable and livestock operations at Glynwood is sold through an on-site farm store, through a vegetable CSA, and is donated to local hunger relief

organizations. Another farmer training program, the farm business incubator, forefronts sound business practices and has recently included non-profit farm businesses as participants demonstrating the collapsed distinction under neoliberalism between commercial and civic aims and means. Learning objectives for farm business incubator cohorts include land acquisition (paths to land purchase as well as leasing and tenancy agreements with landowners), financial literacy, and staff management. Glynwood and its farm operate on 225 acres of land that has been held in trust by the Open Space Institute since 1993 when the Perkins family decided to divest their ownership of the estate; the other 1,700 acres of forested land they owned became part of the surrounding Fahnestock State Park. Other non-profits in the region balance the emphasis between farmer training, business viability, and ecological practices differently. They also demonstrate other structures of land ownership.

Some farming non-profits emphasize increasing the general public's appreciation of, and access to, locally grown food, aligning themselves with educational and ecological values. Two examples are the Poughkeepsie Farm Project (PFP) and Common Ground. PFP operates a relatively large CSA vegetable farm with a focus on food access and food literacy for the general public (Poughkeepsie Farm Project n.d.). While this non-profit's educational goals include farmers through internships for students at nearby Vassar College, the focus is on promoting utilization of locally grown foods through workshops and resources for individuals and educators as well as direct donation of some of the food grown on the farm into the emergency feeding system. PFP shares space and closely collaborates with a sister non-profit, The Environmental Cooperative at the Vassar Barns, with a mission to support land conservation in the Hudson Valley. The land both organizations manage and operate from is the former site of the farm that fed Vassar College when it was established in the mid-nineteenth century. PFP has leased the land for its farming operation from Vassar since 1999.

Common Ground farms six and a half acres that are leased from another non-profit, the Stony Kill Foundation (Common Ground Farm n.d.). Originally the homesite of the Verplank family, that family gave the land to New York State in

1942 on the condition that it would be used for agriculture in perpetuity. Both non-profits utilize the land as an educational site for the general public, especially youth, about local, diversified agriculture. The food produced on Common Ground's farm is distributed through a U-Pick CSA on the farm, a mobile market truck in nearby Beacon, and at two farmers' markets that the organization runs. Like Glynwood, PFP and Common Ground engage in the commercial food market, donate food to alleviate food insecurity, and view their farm operations as educational spaces. Many other land-based non-profit organizations in the Hudson Valley that could be named here that demonstrate selections from a similar menu of civic-minded farming programs and activities and operate on land owned by another entity. Hilltop Hanover Farm, Phillis Bridge, and Downing Park Urban Farm are a few.

None of the non-profit organizations I describe above are themselves the owners of the land they farm. In each case the land is owned by a separate entity that takes responsibility for its stewardship or conservation. This highlights a critical similarity between non-profit farms and for-profit farms in the region, land tenancy rather than ownership, and a fascinating contradiction in land values and use. That farmed land is owned by a separate entity from the farm itself, be it part of a business or any other organization, demonstrates a reticence to trust farmers with ecological land management that harkens back to early conservation efforts during the Progressive Era. Whether held privately or in trust, the owners of that land see themselves as stewards and protectors of a common good – the land and ecology it supports – though they are not obligated to tend the land. This mindset is reminiscent of feudal conceptions of land as a resource to be overseen by social superiors for the common good. Concerns over an era of 'new feudalism' being ushered in by advocates of land as an environmental commons, and what that would mean for farmers, have been raised since as early as the 1930s, when nature conservation was still in its early decades and through the 1970s as environmentalism took hold (Pound 1930; McClaughry 1975).

'New feudalism' is invoked today to describe farming as it exists in the region (Dunn and Jones 2022). This conundrum of the contemporary commons seems to

assert that the best way for agricultural land to be of common good is for it to be owned by an entity that does not directly farm the land. Here we see the contortions of values as they move through the prism of time. The classism of Progressive Era conservation that valued efficient, scientific management and administration of land is reiterated in present day agricultural land conservation in the unspoken assumption that farmers themselves are not best equipped to manage land as a common good.

As organizations farming for community good, non-profits can be value-aligned employers for young farmers and their business structure offers the oversight and management valued by philanthropy. Environmentalism, building an alternative food system, and providing nutritious food to their community are values that farmers and farming non-profits share. The additional requirement of bureaucracy and fundraising, however, are uncomfortable for some aspiring farmers, or even incompatible with the rhythms and requirements of farming. Non-profit farmers are expected not only to farm, but to constantly measure and advance the 'impact' of their farming through evaluation, to conform to more corporate workplace expectations, and to raise the profile of the organization to solicit more funding. One farmer I spoke with described her impression of the farm manager at the first non-profit she worked for, 'they were asking him to do more than he was capable of. To farm this semi-marginal land, and run this awesome CSA, and be the spokesman for like all of farming'. Compared to the commercial farmers she knows, she said that in non-profit farming, 'I think there's obviously more burnout or people become more cynical. And I think people lose that passion that was why they originally started farming. Get really frustrated and take those feelings and swallow it and just get the paycheck'. In the non-profit context, farming is not a lifestyle amenity as it is at Locusts on Hudson, but neither is it as holistic as a livelihood. Farming in the third sector becomes part of the philanthropic industry, and farmers become ensconced in non-profit bureaucracy and are evaluated by often intangible 'impact' measurements. Farmers at non-profit organizations share the experience of non-profit employees broadly who become disillusioned and fatigued, despite deeply held convictions aligned with the organization's mission, by the demands and precarity of working in the funding-dependent sector.

Conservationist nostalgia, shaped by philanthrocapitalism, generates anti-political work that is done within the normalized labor relations of capitalism.

Farming, like bookkeeping or office management, becomes just one more job within an organization, and not necessarily the best job at that. Because intellectual labor is more revered than physical labor (Minkoff-Zern 2019), farmers at non-profits are often on the lower end of the company's salary bands. Whereas the owner-operator of a for-profit farm holds the highest status (Sachs 1983), at a non-profit farmers are more likely to be in the lower echelons of the organization's hierarchy. The people who find themselves in these roles can have difficulty in seeing themselves as the farmers they envisioned for their future selves.

Farmers have expressed a shared concern with me about working for landowners or non-profits, that they somehow are not 'real farmers'. Using Faith's understanding of the entrepreneurial urge as being more about stewarding and redirecting resources than about controlling them, a materialist analysis would suggest the difference between being a farm owner-operator or a farm manager employed by a landowner or non-profit organization is less about whether or not the vegetables go to market and more about whether or not the resources, including but not limited to the harvest, benefit the community. Moreover, it is about who decides what constitutes need and who constitutes community. Farmers say that you're not a real farmer if you do not own your farm business and ideally your land as well, but the materialist analysis does not explain why that would be. Non-profits steward and redirect resources too. One explanation would be: when you own your own farm you don't answer to a boss – or even lots of bosses. Jarret put it this way, 'A lot of agriculture here is just – there's outside money that is involved in making it work, and so much of the land is owned by wealthy people and these nonprofits, that are the same set of wealthy people, and the influence of these wealthy people make more hierarchical, more corporate structures'. The imposition of these structures conscribes the rugged individualism that is a part of the image of farmers in the U.S., an image present in both popular narratives and the early rural sociology of Walter Golschmidt who found that farmers in the California towns he studied preferred individual ownership over collective resource sharing when it

came to irrigation (Goldschmidt 1978). Perhaps owning one's own farm business is attractive because it implies liberation from answering to anyone other than oneself.

But Faith objected to the idea that farm owners are their own bosses. 'Land and a farm are the most exacting boss you could possibly have', she said. 'Time away from work is severely punished. Time on task is rarely rewarded. No sense of work/life balance, no sense of boundaries. But the thing about having the land and a farm as your boss is you don't have that sense of thinking you could do their job better'. I confirmed I understood her meaning, saying, 'Right. I can't grow parsley better than a parsley plant can'. For Faith, it wasn't owning the land or selling what she grew that made her a farmer. It was, she said, more similar to service than a job. This view of farming as service aligns with the feminist practice of mature care that Stock found amongst Midwestern farmers advancing utopian projects (2021). Faith compared her farming to being in the military, in that, at the end of a hard day you can say to yourself that you did it for an important reason and so feel good about your sacrifices. Without hardship and sacrifice, she said, 'the term farmer doesn't fit'.

The influences that have led entrant farmers in the Hudson Valley to conclude that hardship, financial or otherwise, is a defining aspect of farming are surely numerous. One, I argue, is the unique set of conditions brought about by the long history of conservation, environmentalism, and philanthropy in the region. Each of these value sets include a core belief in scarcity. There is only so much land to go around, only so many people the earth can sustain, dollars are limited and must be spent for highest impact. Scarcity is a defining feature of neoliberal capitalism that is the air we breathe in contemporary America. Hardship is a virtue when it shows that you are contending with, and maybe even defeating scarcity. Operating from a scarcity mindset, the dominant mindset, tends to yield anti-political strategies that can foment change and provide important compensatory aid, but do little to transform the overall structuring of society as it is.

Or perhaps there is another way to understand these farmers and aspiring farmers.

Ownership of land arose in my research as a necessary goal for achieving the 'good farmer' ideal in the Hudson Valley that is co-constructed by people who want to farm, non-profit organizations, and wealthy people. As Faith illustrates, that drive in farmers may be less about ownership and more about sovereignty, more about the capacity to enact prefigurative social relationships. The ability to decide what is grown, how, by whom and for whom. This is reflected in other farming organizations like Soul Fire Farm, Longhaul Farm, the Seed Project of the Hudson Valley Farm Hub, Sky High Farm, and Choy Commons and many others that name food sovereignty as a specific goal. Focusing on community sovereignty offers an exit from the constriction of resources experienced in the socio-economic atmosphere of the Hudson Valley. Understanding farming as service to a higher good emphasizes the deconstruction of social hierarchy, and therefore is at odds even with farming for a non-profit whose responsibility must be, in part, to the privileged donors who fund it. Letterbox Farm is not a commune. It must engage, and does so adeptly, with the marketplace (at farmers' market, through wholesale accounts, and by operating a CSA) and with philanthropy (by partnering on non-profit projects like the Hudson Valley CSA Coalition facilitated by Glynwood, pursuing research and project-based grant funding, and earning extra income as consultants to non-profits). Let's not discount this as a utopian effort diluted by its complicity with the dominant economy. Following Gibson-Graham, let us instead 'read for difference' (2015). Then Letterbox Farm and non-profits teaching alter-political farming practices while contending with philanthrocapitalist impact measurements become examples of 'already existing diverse economies of care, provisioning and social and environmental redistribution' that are proliferating (Gibson-Graham 2015:108).

Land ownership gives Nichki, Laz, and Faith the ability to place themselves in service to the ideals they believe are important, not ideals set by a landowner or board of directors, and to measure their success as to how well they serve them on their own terms. Letterbox Farm's farmers' acts of service are not only evident in the hardships they face in producing beautiful vegetables and humanely raised meat for their community. Their service also manifests in acts of care for which

success exists aside from economic metrics. These acts of service include regenerative farming practices that improve the soil's health; hosting a no-cost lending library of food, farming, and cookbooks in their farm store; making their farm into a third space for their community through free movie-nights and warm welcomes; prioritizing joy in their team through made-up holidays like the last delivery of chicks that marks the end of the season and merits a cake at lunch; and caring for their more-than-human friends by doing things like incubating monarch butterflies in jars on the work bench in their pack house, to name just a few. bell hooks writes, 'Dominant culture devalues the importance of service. Those of us who work to undo negative hierarchies of power understand the humanizing nature of service, understand that in the act of caregiving and caretaking we make ourselves vulnerable. And in that place of shared vulnerability there is the possibility of recognition, respect, and mutual partnerships' (2008:87). With this understanding, farming as service opens new horizons of hope for belonging to each other and to the land.

Farming as an act of service does not require the land to be a commodity that is owned and controlled, but makes of the land a site of enactment. Transforming one's relationship to land in this way can be read as indeterminate future making praxis because it rejects non-egalitarian relationships between human and ecology. It transforms the social relationship of humans to more-than-humans because it does not privilege human management over the ecosystem. Reading the farming landscape in the Hudson Valley for difference, examples appear of this land-based enactment that are not reliant on ownership of land but on occupation of and relationship with land. In this chapter I mapped the overlapping and contradicting values that land holds for conservationists, philanthropists, and farmers and how those values inform anti-political projects demonstrative of determinate future making that limit entrant farmers' access to land. To envision alternative, transformative futures and how the work of imagining those futures is done, I turn in the next chapter to the queer farming community of the Hudson Valley who enliven the land they farm with prefigurative work that generates profligate futures.



Fig. 7 A farmer at Rock Steady Farm carrying a bin of produce

Fig. 8 Chaseholm Farm

Photos courtesy of Glynwood. Photographed by Jennifer Young (2021)

Chapter Five

FARMS

As an engaged anthropologist, committed to feminist ethics, I approach ethnographic research from the position of ‘standing with’ as theorized by Kim TallBear (2014). Meaning that I invest in the projects and share the hopes of the community I research. I have increasingly come to understand this situated research perspective as an academically queer perspective. It disrupts the binary of subject and researcher and is therefore at odds with the objectivity imposed on social scientists by academic traditionalists. Here, and throughout this chapter, I invoke bell hooks’ invaluable definition of queerness from a talk she gave at the New School in 2014: ‘queer as not being about who you’re having sex with (that can be a dimension of it); but queer as being about the self that is at odds with everything around it and has to invent, create and find a place to speak and to thrive and to live’ (bell hooks 2014). Queer farming, the focus of this chapter, is the creation of such places.

Queer Farming: weak theory, incomplete history, embodied practice

Fluidity to follow the changing and sometimes contradictory thoughts and aspirations of the people with whom I research, queer or not, is essential to 'standing with', and engenders complex reflexivity on the part of the researcher as I re-imagine the past and envision possible futures with interlocutors. Fluidity is likewise central to queer theories and methodologies. Queer theory is concerned with several key interrogations: deconstructing sex, sexuality and gender; attention to the relationships between performativity and power; and critique of monolithic minority identity politics in favor of intersectional solidarity (Keller 2015). These provocations invite fluidity by focusing analytical attention on multiplicity and mutability rather than categorization and fixity. Queer methodologies require fluid research praxis to navigate between and beyond the repressions of heteronormativity and the dangers of heterosexism. Pioneering research in agriculture and sexuality using queer methodologies shows that the 'co-construction' of data collection by researchers and interlocutors 'allows queerness to emerge as an object of academic inquiry' (Leslie 2017:754; Hoffelmeyer 2020:354). Lewin argues that queer theory is an unnecessary, even dangerous addition to feminist ethnography because it carries assumptions of alterity and transgression that dismiss subjects that are not queer enough (Lewin 2016). However, in the context of my research into how value sets align and conflict within the local food movement, alterity and transgression are salient, so I focus on queerness as a political identity and praxis. Which brings me to the organizing question of this chapter. How does queer farming create possibilities beyond and outside of what hooks terms white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy (1997)?

Following hooks' definition of queerness, I understand queer farming as more than simply farming done by LGBTQ+ people, though 'that can be a dimension of it' (hooks 2014). Varying degrees of 'outness', the threat of heterosexist violence, and heteronormative bias in agricultural censusing make it difficult to know how many homosexual, bisexual, pansexual, asexual, gender non-binary, gender fluid, transgender and otherwise non-heteronormative people have farmed and are farming (Hoffelmeyer 2020; Leslie 2017). Even were those numbers known, it

would not be possible to know how many of those people identify themselves as queer. Queer is not a neutral adjective or noun to be applied to any person or activity that does not conform to cis-heteronormativity.³³

As Lewin argues based on her research into homosexual marriage rituals in the West, queer theory can be a limiting analytical tool for understanding the lives of the 'many real-world people with nonheteronormative sexual or gender identities and presentations' because queerness has been constructed 'as a discourse of resistance'. (Lewin 2016:598). Resistance to the globalized, industrialized food system is a core value of local food activism, and queering emerges in my research and others' as a unique mode of resistance in the context of local food activism (Wypler 2019; Sbicca 2012; Leslie 2017; Hoffelmeyer 2020; Hoffelmeyer 2019; Leslie 2019). Therefore, my research does not focus on homosexual farmers, though that research is much needed. My research focuses on 'out' farmers who understand both their farming and their sexuality as resisting the norm. As the activist saying goes, farmers who are 'Not gay as in happy, but queer as in fuck you' (Sbicca 2012:39). The praxis of future making is my object of study, so I focus on queer farming because turning our attention to farming, rather than farmers, invokes queer as a verb. Queering as a process is active, critical future making. The process of queering interrogates 'relations of knowledge and power by which certain "truths" about ourselves have been allowed to pass, unnoticed, without question' (Sandilands 1994:22). This queer interrogation generates new horizons of hope for farming, such as sustainable farming methods, despite the ways in which rural queerness has been erased (Leslie 2017).

There is no place for rural queerness in the binary of rural = straight and urban = queer. Applying a queer analytic to this binary prompts its interrogation. How and why was this binary created? How did queer farming become at odds with both rural narratives and queer narratives? Why are rural spaces broadly assumed to be

³³ The prefix 'cis' indicates that a person's gender matches the biological sex assigned at birth, i.e.. a masculine person who is biologically sexed as male is a cisgender man, whereas a female person biologically sexed as male is a transgender woman. (Many other types of trans-ness exist.) Cis-heteronormativity is a term inclusive of gender as well as sexual orientation.

heterosexist? Soderling notes in her exploration of queer rural temporality, 'conventional gay/queer scholarship and popular culture portray the southern and Midwestern countryside as ... environments where queer bodies are supposed to die, not live, survive, thrive' (2016:343).

The South and the Midwest are the historic sites of the development of uniquely U.S. American agriculture, namely the industrialization of farming. This type of farming was prefigured in Southern slave plantations and advanced by the advent of plows able to break the Midwestern prairie sod for intensive grain production (Mintz 1986; Cronon 1991), and so they hold symbolic space as quintessential farmland, not just countryside. Extending Soderling's analysis of the Midwestern countryside, all farmland in any region can be seen as situated conceptually in 'environments where queer bodies are supposed to die' (2016:343). However, Leslie's queer farming interlocutors found less heterosexism than they had expected in contemporary rural communities (2017), and Johnson's historical research shows that 'what looks from today's perspective like decidedly queer behavior' was both common and tolerated in rural communities prior to the twentieth century, when heteronormativity was actively constructed and regulated in *both* rural and urban America (2013:3).

The biopolitical regulation of bodies, sexuality, and reproduction evident across twentieth century U.S. politics is also evident in agriculture specifically, as Rosenberg shows in his analysis of the USDA's popular young farmers educational club, 4-H, during the interwar period. '4-H material asserted that the economic and biological union between a revenue-producing male "farmer" and a nurturing "farmer's wife" constituted both the ideal and normal form of organization for rural life' (2016:89). Thus, the cisgender, heterosexual 'family farm' became hegemonic despite its lack of 'cultural salience prior to the 1930's' (Rosenberg 2016:91). Even so, the idolization of the family farm, albeit under different names, can be traced back to the Jeffersonian agrarianism of the colonial era, to which I will return later in this chapter. As queerness was conceptually displaced from U.S. rural spaces throughout the early to mid-twentieth century, it was simultaneously placed into urban ones.

In recent decades queer theory has taken up a critique of what Halberstam identified as the 'metronormativity' of queerness (Halberstam 2005). It is common knowledge, with all the blind spots of common knowledge, that queers with the misfortune of being raised in the countryside must go to the big city to find themselves and their chosen families. This narrative of rural-to-urban migration serves the queer community as a point of commonality used to construct collective identity, and the intellectual focus on urban queerness has illuminated '[social] formations suggestive of a collective consciousness we weren't supposed to possess; formations that gave rise to institutions and networks of sociability that weren't supposed to have existed; formations that served as foundations for the unexpected solidarities and minoritarian identities that literally and figuratively saved many of our lives at certain moments' (Johnson 2007:6). The city has been an important site of queer life and research, but lack of attention to different ways of doing queerness in rural spaces reinforces political divisions that foster prejudice and violence (Johnson 2013). Attention to rural queerness reveals prefigurative practices in the late twentieth century U.S. that are foundational to present day queer farming.

Contemporary queer farming in the Hudson Valley draws on the ongoing legacy of queer, rural, intentional communities that embrace ecological and sexual citizenship, the most influential of which are the landdyke movement and the Radical Faeries. For both, connection to rural places is central to their environmentalist values and their physical expression of gender non-conformity, though their practices on and with rural land are distinct.

The second-wave back to the land movement coincided with the advent of lesbian feminism in the 1970s, giving rise to the lesbian land movement, more recently known as the landdyke movement. In its earliest manifestation the U.S.-founded movement's primary aim was to secure land for women (mostly white and middle class), and lesbianism was predominant though not intrinsic (Sachs 2019; Anahita 2003). Over the subsequent decades of development the movement became explicitly lesbian separatist, spread internationally, moved from communalism to

individual property ownership in collective settlements, and eventually adopted the term landdykes (Anahita 2003). Landdyke settlements were and are sites of prefigurative ecofeminist praxis with four distinguishing elements: 'developing emotional and spiritual relationships with land, engaging in personal, liberating transformation, living movement values through every day practices, and experiencing bodily freedoms that are mostly unavailable outside the network of communities landdykes have created' (Anahita 2009:725). Though not necessarily farming communities, landdyke settlements usually include gardening and farming as anti-capitalist subsistence practices and as the embodied enactment of care for the more-than-human land. The lesbian land movement is revolutionary because it demonstrated how women could obtain land, undoing the patriarchal dispossession of women from land ensconced in inheritance and property laws through the late 1800's. Furthermore, as land-based communities, landdyke settlements are permanent, rather than transient, sites of prefigurative practice. This permanence makes possible a daily praxis of materially manifesting the glimpsed ecofeminist future in the here and now. The continued impact of the landdyke movement on queer farming is demonstrated in queer farming strategies of land acquisition, ownership, and occupation that arose in my research amongst all entrant farmers.

In counterpoint to lesbian separatist settlements, urban gay men (mostly white and middle class) formed the Radical Faeries who looked to rural spaces as epistemological sites for contesting homonormative masculinity (Hennen 2008; Sanford 2013). 'The Faeries were formed in the late 1970s as a gay men's earth-centered spiritual movement. They draw on—many would argue appropriate—various spiritual traditions, especially North American Native spiritualities' (Soderling 2016:335). Their spiritual practice critiques the mainstream LGBTQ movement for being too assimilationist and consumerist. Indigenous and neo-pagan practices were a means for the Radical Faeries to assert the existence and necessity of homosexuals in nature and in the past, making space for non-normative expressions of masculinity and effeminacy (Hennen 2008).

The Radical Faeries' spirituality resonates with the landdyke's spiritual and emotional relationship to land. However, where the landdyke movement is explicitly about access to land, the Faerie's central organizing feature is spirituality and connection to land is a part of the spiritual practice. The Faeries' spirituality can be read through the lens of settler colonialism in that it appropriates Indigenous theology to legitimize their relationship to land and nature while epistemologically erasing the existence and power of Indigenous peoples (Morgensen 2011). For Faeries, connection to nature was important, but sustained land occupancy was not prioritized. Following their anarchist approach to organizing, social networks and queer gathering spaces, urban or rural, could be coalesced and dissolved as needed (Sanford 2013). The Radical Faerie movement imagined and invoked the rural primarily from and within urban contexts, with periodic retreats to the countryside that are an important aspect of Faerie mythos if not always practice (Morgensen 2009). Rural and urban Faerie 'sanctuaries' were established beginning in the 1970s in the U.S., eventually spreading to Mexico and Australia, and are sites of gatherings ranging in size from dozens to hundreds of people (Bonk 2004).

Some rural sanctuaries are formally organized places where people live, attend Faerie gatherings and celebrations, or simply pass through. The permeability and fluidity of land occupancy is similar in many landdyke settlements (Anahita 2003). Though sanctuaries are not necessarily farms, growing and gathering food is usually a key element of daily life in Faerie sanctuaries as it is in landdyke settlements. The stickiness of time in a rural Faerie community arises, argues Soderling, from attunement to the rhythms and requirements of living on and with the land (2016). While land-based Faerie practice confounds metronormative homosexuality by eschewing urbane efficiencies, it also speaks to a permanence of place unique for prefigurative work that makes 'rural queer temporality *non-normative and material*' (Soderling 2016:339). This aligns with the daily, material praxis Anahita observes as integral to landdyke settlements (2009).

The embedded practice of prefigurative queering of life on the land demonstrated by the landdykes and the Radical Faeries underpins contemporary queer farming.

One critical difference in contemporary queer farming projects, that aligns with the development of queer theory and culture, is refusal of binary gender identities. Unlike the Radical Faeries and the landdykes, queer farming projects are less likely to be divided by gender or sexuality, embracing instead a broad spectrum of queer identities including non-binary and trans identifying farmers. What is consistent between the landdyke and Radical Faerie movements and contemporary queer farming projects in the Hudson Valley is that queer farming is a daily, land-based praxis in politics and identity creation. Based on the recent history of queer land movements and my field work, I define queer farming as the structuring of a farm's purpose and operating ethos to embrace sexual citizenship and solidarity with the more-than-human world in a particular place as a means of liberation from oppressive structures. As hooks writes of rural Kentuckians' relationship to nature, 'Maintaining intimacy gives us a concrete place of hope' (2008:119). Queered farms become durable sites of prolonged, hopeful, prefigurative practices.

In the Hudson Valley, the queer farming community effervesces with prefigurative doings. My attention to the prefigurative is framed by Bloch's theory of concrete utopias that presuppose a Marxist political economic critique of capitalism, while embracing future building as a dialectic praxis (Bloch 1995). The cultural critic and queer theorist José Esteban Muñoz writes that concrete utopias require, 'what Ernst Bloch would call an educated hope, the kind that is grounded and consequential, a mode of hoping that is cognizant of exactly what obstacles present themselves in the face of obstacles that so often seem insurmountable' (Muñoz 2009:207). To farm sustainably while queer requires this type of hope. The obstacles to doing so are many.

Scholarship on barriers to queer farmers emphasizes the intersectionality of sexism and racism in producing unequal distribution of access to the tools necessary to operate a successful, sustainable agricultural enterprise. However, the sample size of People of Color in this research is quite small, so further research needs to be done to understand the challenges faced by queer People of Color who aspire to farming. Based on research of queer farmers in the

Northeastern U.S., Leslie identifies four key resources that all farmers need access to in order to get started, but that queer farmers struggle to access because of heterosexism: land, labor, credit and knowledge (2019). Land access is a major hurdle for all entrant farmers in the Hudson Valley, as described in Chapter Four. Leslie argues that heterosexism further limits queer farmers' access to farmland. Farmers' past experiences and perceptions of heterosexism and racism in rural settings made them reluctant to seek rural land, the only affordable farming option. Queer farmers who did seek rural land confronted the reality that 'farmers tend to rely on a heteronormative model of a combined sexual-business relationship to access farmland' (Leslie 2019:929), meaning that marriage and inheritance play key roles in farmland access. Heteropatriarchal inheritance is the process of passing wealth and assets between familial generations, and can be disrupted when a farmer's family disowns them because they are homosexual (Leslie 2019). Additionally, income and labor from spouses' off farm work is critical for most small farms' economic viability (USDA 2022). Same-sex marriage became legal in the U.S. in 2015, but some queer and polyamorous farmers will not or cannot participate in marriage (Leslie 2019). Wypler's research on Midwestern lesbian and queer farmers shows how access to credit is denied to farmers who do not fit into heteropatriarchal family models, including marriage (Wypler 2019). They³⁴ further show that knowledge accumulation is challenging for queer farmers because of heterosexism experienced in training programs, apprenticeships, and within sustainable agricultural networks. For queer farmers who navigate these hurdles, interpersonal heterosexism experienced in those settings as well as with customers and suppliers is particularly harmful because sustainable agriculture markets rely heavily on direct relationships between producers, suppliers, and consumers so that challenging heterosexism within those relationships may jeopardize the financial viability of the farm (Wypler 2019; Leslie 2017). Heterosexism is not only interpersonal and institutional, as Wypler and Leslie's research shows, but is engrained in the American imaginary.

Nostalgic Agrarianism and the Myth of the Yeoman

³⁴ Wypler's pronouns are they/she.

Romanticization of our country's agrarian past constrains queer farmers. To build on my argument that nostalgia is incongruent with prefigurative praxis and indeterminate future making, the obstacle queer farming confronts that I will focus on now is nostalgia for a specific fantasy: the Jeffersonian agrarian ideal. Thomas Jefferson, famous for writing the Declaration of Independence and serving as one of the nation's first presidents, believed the future of the young country's government and economy depended on the proliferation of yeoman farmers. Jefferson adamantly argued that his home state of Virginia and the United States as a whole ought to eschew manufacture, production, and paid labor in favor of an economy and society based in agrarian values (Jefferson 1832). Jefferson grounded this assertion in agrarianism, a value system that upholds agrarian lifestyles as superior to urban ones because agricultural practice is crucial for production of food and raw goods and is conducive to health, virtue, and independence. In contrast, agrarians revile the city as a site of unwholesome, corrupt, and subjugated life.

Agrarianism cohered as a value set in colonial North America and drew on strains of political philosophy originating in ancient Athens. Scores of Greek philosophers praised agriculture as the noblest livelihood and Aristotle explicitly names agriculturalists as the ideal democratic citizen in his *Politics* (Jones 2016). In the context of revolutionary-era U.S. the agrarian ideal was attractive because it placed the farmer in the 'virtuous middle' between the extremes of fearsome wilderness and corrupting culture (Jones 2016). The new republic envisioned by Jefferson and his peers straddled this same divide, and the agrarian ideal served to simultaneously justify settlement of the western wilderness while distancing the formative U.S. from over-civilized Europe. In both ways Jeffersonian agrarianism embraced nascent American exceptionalism. The protagonist of the agrarian ideal is the yeoman farmer.

Jefferson, an aristocratic plantation owner who had no personal experience of field labor, wrote of yeomen 'those who labor in the earth are the chosen people of God ... whose breasts he has made his particular deposit for substantial and genuine virtue' (Jefferson 1832:160). By definition yeomen didn't only labor in the earth,

they also owned it. The concept of small farmer as freeholder, rather than tenant or laborer, was central to the mythology of the yeoman (Smith 1971). Yeoman as landowner was a politically potent construct promoted for two reasons: to justify the theft of Indigenous land and to ease class tensions. The yeoman was a mascot for settler colonialism 'deployed by urban and landowning mentalities like Jefferson's and other members of the merchant class with designs for westward expansion' (Calo 2020:14). The Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island³⁵ did not recognize land ownership as possible, though they observed complex rules of access to tribal territories. Encouraging white men to seize (and subsequently protect) their own piece of land in order to become content and virtuous yeomen was a strategy for bringing Indigenous land under settler control.

Promoting an increase in yeomen was also conceived of as a strategy to stave off feared class wars. In letters to James Madison, another so-called founding father of the nation, Jefferson intimates that promoting the proliferation of yeomen is a preventative measure against revolt by landless white laborers in the South (Morgan 1972:11–12). Jefferson based his fears on the specter of Bacon's Rebellion in 1676 to 1677 when white and Black Virginians rose together in violent revolt against wealthy, colonial government officers. Agrarianism in practice aligned white men as a landed class, glossing the significant difference between subsistence farmers and plantation owners, thereby diffusing class solidarity of the poor against the wealthy and entrenching a racial hierarchy that placed whites who labored the land they owned above Blacks laboring in enslavers' fields (Morgan 1972).

In the Jeffersonian agrarian ideal, white men, and only white men, owned and cultivated land for the subsistence of their families, providing sufficient means to live independent of urban markets and government. No such type of farming had existed previously, most of the farming throughout human history having been a

³⁵ Turtle Island is an Indigenous name for the North American continent. It stems from creation myths that are common to many, but not all, Indigenous communities on the continent. Using this term challenges colonial logics of discovery and naming by European settlers, but a more inclusive term may arise in future Indigenous struggles and scholarship (Sullivan-Clarke 2023:2).

collective endeavor, and no such type of farming existed in America during Jefferson's lifetime nor since. Farming in the U.S. was and is inextricably enmeshed in local communities, political policies at every scale, and the broader economy. Despite this, the Jeffersonian agrarian ideal persists, and its impossible aims continue to shape the decisions of individual farms and of agricultural policy. It is a myth wholly congruent with white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy; the myth idolizes economically self-sufficient, landowning, white, patriarchal family units as synonymous with morality and democratic ideals. Nostalgia carries the power of this myth into the present.

As Svetlana Boym writes, nostalgia is a form of collective remembrance. It is 'how we view our relationship to a collective home', and many good food movement advocates participate in what she terms 'restorative nostalgia' by attempting to 'rebuild the lost home and patch up the memory gaps' (Boym 2002:41). This is demonstrated in the neo-agrarian turn of the late twentieth century. Responding to the moral and environmental crises of the mid-twentieth century, American thinkers and authors such as Aldo Leopold, Wendel Berry, Wes Jackson and Fred Kirschenmann espoused agrarianism as a homecoming to the land (Carlisle 2014). Pushing back against industrialization and market consolidation, these writers advocated land stewardship as ecological conservation, as discussed in Chapter Four, while simultaneously asserting the moral benefits of land-based lifestyles. Their thinking formed the foundation of neo-agrarianism. Drawing from Jefferson's heteropatriarchal, Christian agrarianism, neo-agrarianism conflates rurality with morality. This articulates with the metronormativity of queer politics and theory to further marginalize non-heteronormative farmers. Neo-agrarianism constructs rural landscapes as places incongruent with values and ways of living fostered in urban settings, where many queer people find liberation from heteronormativity and learn solidaritarian politics. For those who had to leave home to find themselves, what place is there in a narrative of homecoming?

Neo-agrarianism surged in popularity in the wake of the 1980's farm crisis, when thousands of independently owned farms failed under the large-scale agribusiness focused policies of the USDA (Ritchie and Ristau 1987). Perpetuating the

correlations of Jeffersonian agrarianism between patriarchal family units and land ownership, neo-agrarians furthered the reification of heteronormative family farms as the exemplary sociopolitical and economic unit. Reading neo-agrarianism for restorative nostalgia, we must attend to what is left out of its historical imagination. Neo-agrarianism seeks to assert authenticity by claiming historical grounding, but 'the stronger the rhetoric of continuity with the historical past ... the more selectively the past is presented' (Boym 2002:41). In emphasizing the desirability of protecting the legacy of family farms that are endangered by rural disinvestment and consolidation of the agricultural industry, neo-agrarianism selectively reanimates the ideals of Jeffersonian agrarianism while ignoring its originating context. In this way, agrarian nostalgia fuels determinate future making that is compensatory rather than transformational.

Jefferson's ideology developed contemporaneous with histories of enslavement, genocide, and peoples existing outside of the binary, Christian, colonial codes of gender and sexual morality. It was an ideology created to assert the dominance of yeoman over enslaved Blacks, Indigenous peoples, and those who did not conform to colonial values. By presenting the ideals of Jeffersonian agrarianism as actual and complete *past*, the restorative nostalgia of neo-agrarianism suppresses the agricultural existence, past, present and future, of people who do not fit the yeoman mold.

Queering How Farmers are Pictured

Pushing against the selectivity of restorative nostalgia, scholars have sought out the histories and present-day realities that Jeffersonian agrarianism obscures. In the 1990's rural sociologists such as Carolyn Sachs, Linda Lobao, Katherine Meyer, and Jane Adams responded to neo-agrarian erasures by documenting the ways in which women's work on family farms was both essential and devalued (Sachs 1983; Meyer and Lobao 1997; Adams 1991). A growing body of work documents the contributions of and discrimination against farmers of Color, including but not limited to: extraction of knowledge and wealth from Black farmers (Penniman 2018; Hinson and Robinson 2008), exploitation of Asian farmers in the advance of neoliberal color-blindness in agricultural policy (Garcia 2012), and

systemic disenfranchisement of immigrant Latine farmers (Minkoff-Zern 2019). The literature on non-heteronormative farmers is scant and summarized earlier in this chapter.

Notably, research into race and gender in agriculture spans scales of operations and farming practices from industrial agribusiness to subsistence farming as well as into global geographies. The research I have been able to find into non-heteronormative farmers, by contrast, is exclusively taking place within the study of small-scale, sustainable farms, predominantly in the U.S. It seems incredible that only cis-hetero farmers exist in all other farming contexts, so the lives of non-heteronormative people farming in other ways and other places presents a promising area for future research. As I am concerned with the divergent values and praxes of actors in the alternative food movement in the Hudson Valley, the existing research into queer people practicing small-scale, sustainable farming is sufficient for my inquiry. That queer farming research exists in the context of sustainable farming practices also suggests that this type of farming is more attractive and welcoming to queer farmers, much as organic farming is for women (Larmer 2017).

Most operators of small-scale, sustainable farms are entrant farmers, rather than multi-generational farmers. Following the discussion above of the assumed and extant heterosexism in rural and agricultural settings, non-heteronormative farmers are more likely than not to be entrant farmers as well. Entrant farmers in the Hudson Valley rely on the network of non-profits with missions to train and support them, as discussed in the previous chapter. Calo shows how the myth of the Jeffersonian yeoman is exceptionally potent in projects that support entrant farmers, with the result that ‘those who are seen as viable, even desirable, newcomers will match the yeoman myth closely: white, privileged, self-sacrificing, Herculean’ (Calo 2020:15). I extend his critique to include cisgender and heterosexual to the definitive descriptors of yeomen, and therefore desirable entrant farmers. Organizations supporting entrant farmers are gatekeepers to at least two of the four resources Leslie shows as critical to a farmers’ success and particularly difficult for non-heteronormative farmers to access: land and knowledge

(Leslie 2019). The ways in which preference for farmers resembling mythic yeoman excludes queer farmers is hegemonic and insidious.

A small example of this played out at Glynwood in 2018. At the time the organizational culture reflected that of the alternative food movement locally and nationally in regard to gender and sexuality. There was no explicit policy on either, aside from state-mandated anti-harassment and anti-discrimination policies. It was generally understood that, much like race, sexual and gender identity should not prevent anyone from holding power in the organization or benefitting from programmatic support. In other words, the organizational culture was color-blind, gender-blind, and sexuality-blind. The insufficiency of this stance for supporting queer farmers came into focus at a fundraising event.

In the balmy air of a September afternoon, donors, staff, and program participants followed the instructions of a contra dance caller as they danced to fiddle music.³⁶ There was good food and good drink, and a line for the designated bathrooms for the event. Having been to Glynwood many times before, some of the program participants knew there were more bathrooms in the office across the way and went there. The next morning, post-it notes were discovered stuck to photos and posters hanging in the conference room that sits between the office bathrooms. Though I didn't find or see the notes myself, the message relayed was to the effect of 'Why don't any of these farmers look like me?' The notes weren't anonymous, and I spoke to one of the farmers who'd been there, Michaela from Rise and Root Farm, a proudly queer farm. She and some queer farm friends from Rock Steady Farm had gone into the office and seen photos of white men farming, a 1940's era propaganda poster of a farmer and his wife, and not a whole lot else. Spurred by the vivacious gathering (and perhaps a bit of liquid courage) they wrote the notes and stuck them up on the wall. This could have been a risk for them, as Michaela acknowledged to me saying she would have rather found a way to 'call the

³⁶ Contra dance is a folk dance arising from cultural contact between European settlers and enslaved Africans and African Americans that combines elements of Scottish, French, and English dance styles of the seventeenth century with the call and response traditions of African dance (Jamison 2003). Contra dances are common across the U.S. Attendees form two lines, facing each other, and execute movement sequences called figures that are determined by the caller.

organization in instead of out'. Her comment demonstrates how farmers are constrained in confronting heterosexism 'when they rely on the offenders for economic and environmental sustainability', as the farmers participating in Glynwood's programs rely on the organization's support (Leslie 2017:766). Had Glynwood personnel taken offense to critique of the office décor, it could have limited the farmers' access to the educational, financial, and social resources Glynwood leverages.

When I heard about this incident, I felt amused by the mischief and remembered my initial response to the office décor. It seemed boring and standard for the environments I was working in. I thought it could certainly be improved, but it wasn't a top priority for me to champion. I would guess that most of my colleagues were, like me, blind to how heteronormative and white the images all were simply because they felt so mundane. The hegemony of yeoman mythology in a farming non-profit's conference room may seem trivial, but the months-long discussion over what to replace them with revealed the importance of interrogating that hegemony.

A small working group convened to update the photos in our workspaces with the goal of replacing the generic imagery with photos specific to our work. In the meeting, I suggested we set some goals for the set of photos. We should have relatively even representation across the various programs, I said, all agreed. 'No photos of food in bathrooms', I said. Apparently being grossed out by seeing vegetables in a bathroom is my own idiosyncrasy, but my colleagues indulged me. I said we should aim to have at least 50% of the people represented in the photos be women or People of Color. This seemed like a pretty easy bar to clear from my perspective, since well over 50% of humans are either not white, not male, or neither. The resistance to this metric was strong. Colleagues who had been at the organization a long time as well as some who were newer objected that this metric was unfair and argued that it would be tokenism rather than representative of our work.

There was concern that the farmer training programs would be grievously under-represented in the photos because the participants were mostly white men. This

moment reveals how insidious the white-cis-heteronormativity of neo-agrarianism, and its nostalgia for Jeffersonian agrarianism, are in the field of entrant farmer support. At no point were women or queer people actively barred from Glynwood's programmatic work, but it wasn't until queer farmers participated in programs and took it upon themselves to call out the imagery that alienated them from the organization's workplace that the over-representation of white men in farmer training programs was explicitly stated and recognized as inequitable. Heterosexism was so naturalized within the neo-agrarianism underpinning Glynwood's work as to be invisible – unseen like those boring posters, until out farmers illuminated a queer perspective.

It took months for staff members to agree on a new set of photos for the office, but in the end just half of the people in the pictures are white men. While hardly a victory of representation for all of the non-white and non-male people in the Hudson Valley, this slight queering of the Glynwood workspace is an example of how queerness can challenge neo-agrarian mythology and positively push mainstream food activism to be more inclusive.

Awareness by activists and organizers of the inhospitable social environment of food and farming spaces for queer people has grown since that day and has led to wide adoption of queer means of sociality in food activist circles. In the early 2000s the social practices of food movement gatherings like planning meetings, community forums, celebrations, and networking events followed neoliberal norms of meritocracy; I mean specifically adopting so-called blindness in regard to race, gender, class and sexual orientation. This is changing in each case, including gender expression.

It was once both radical and rare for people to be instructed at the start of a meeting to introduce themselves with their pronouns. I remember a colleague telling me of a Slow Food meeting in Detroit in the 2010s where people were instructed to introduce themselves with their names and pronouns, and one high profile participant was irate. He thumped his chest and said, 'Who cannot see I am a man?' In fact, 'appearance is insufficient information' to know someone's gender,

as Eduardo González, Jr. stated in a training I attended hosted by Cornell Cooperative Extension. Within and beyond food and farming circles the practice of sharing pronouns is growing amongst cis-hetero people in solidarity with gender queer and trans people. Today, including pronouns when introducing yourself is the norm in at least half of the meetings I attend, and it is common to see someone's pronouns listed beside their name in video conferences and email signatures. While not exclusive to farming, pronoun usage is an example of queerness leaking into the mainstream food movement. It is perhaps particularly interesting in the context of farming for two reasons. First, it allows that there are farmers who are not 'he/him' which contests the misogyny and heterosexism of Jeffersonian agrarianism. Second, it demonstrates a departure from the landdyke and Radical Faerie movements that split themselves along the gender binary because it acknowledges gender fluid people who wouldn't identify as men or women and opens the opportunity for queer farmer solidarity across genders. Using and respecting pronouns is a small, everyday act of recognizing the existence of queer people. It is also a small act of prefiguring a concrete utopia wherein sexualities and genders beyond what may be considered already known can be expressed free from fear of oppression.

Nostalgia for the mythic agrarian ideal is an obstacle to queer farmers, especially queer farmers of color, because within this myth they do not – even should not – exist. Made illegible by Jeffersonian agrarianism, non-heteronormative farmers have left the profession because they felt forced to choose between their queer community or their farming community (Wypler 2019). Striving to achieve the yeoman myth limits the collective agrarian imagination and harms entrant farmers of various genders and races who strive to live within its narrow boundaries (Calo 2020). The post-it notes on Glynwood's conference room walls insisted on photos that looked to the existence, present and future, of farmers who don't match the myth. In this chapter, I respond to the insistence of those farmers that they be seen and to Calo's provocation to pursue '[a] research agenda that applies intersectionality to beginning farmer experiences' by offering up queer farming as an alternative to the yeoman farmer myth (Calo 2020:25).

Farm Pride

In the Hudson Valley, queer farmers of many races are inventing, creating, and finding places to ‘speak and to thrive and to live’ (hooks 2014). One of these places is at Rise and Root Farm in the Black Dirt region of the Hudson Valley. In June of 2019 I went to Rise and Root for their first ever Farm Pride Tea Dance. Queer tea dances originated in New York City and the gay refuges of nearby Fire Island during the era of anti-perversion laws (Kohler 2023). Once held during the day and in private homes so that homosexuals could socialize without fear of being persecuted, they are now held during the day so that you can bring your family along, or squeeze another party in before the evening’s festivities, or both. I’ve never heard of any other tea dance on a farm, and the Black Dirt, a 270 acre region of exceptionally rich soil where farming has been dominated for generations by a tight-knit enclave of Catholic Polish Americans (Haysom 2016), was a particularly unlikely location for the festivities I joined that day.

The event began with a tour by Karen Washington, a well-known political organizer for urban farming and for Black farmers who is credited with theorizing the term ‘food apartheid’, which contests the term ‘food desert’ by asserting that communities with poor food access and high levels of food insecurity are not naturally occurring but exist because of racialized practices of lending, real estate development, and disenfranchisement (Brones 2018). She is one of four founders of Rise and Root Farm, an intergenerational, interracial, and queer group of three women and one non-binary person, two of whom are married to each other. Two of the farm owners live in the Bronx in New York City, and the married couple live near the farm with their children. They don’t own their farmland, but are on a below-market, 30-year, renewable lease at The Chester Ag Center (CAC). Their neighbors at CAC at the time included Huerta Farm and The Grandpa Farm that are run by New American farmers from Central America; Choy Division where Christina Chan grows culturally significant crops for Asian Americans and the Asian Diaspora; and DIG farm that was operated by urban, fast casual chain Dig Inn³⁷, amongst others. The member farms of CAC share key infrastructure such as cold

³⁷ Dig Inn ceased its farm operation in 2022. The other farms named still operate at CAC as of this writing.

storage and frequently advise each other on farming issues. Rise and Root focuses on growing flowers, tomatoes, and culinary herbs as those bring in the highest profit margin at the New York City Green Markets where they sell. The farm also raises seedlings for urban gardens and farms and works with food access programs to bring fresh food into youth programs and pantries.

Nothing about Rise and Root's farm business model resembles the Jeffersonian agrarian ideal. It is not run by a family patriarch, it is not focused on subsistence and market independence, and the farmers are not landowners. Moreover, the farmers at Rise and Root understand their farming as a political practice in solidarity with urban communities of color, rather than an exercise in rugged independence and rural superiority. During the farm tour Karen impressed upon us the principles of mutuality and exploration that have underpinned the development of the farm, expressing anti-capitalist motivations and an embrace of indeterminacy. Highlighting the intersectional reality of Karen's existence as a queer woman of color occupying rural and urban spaces draws our attention to how mutuality and exploration are critical survival strategies for oppressed peoples living in a society that is not built for their benefit. Without slipping into over-romanticization, I aim to describe the genius of creation that arises when the struggle for survival is infused with queer fluidity by attending to the proliferation of potential futures glimpsed through prefigurative queer farming.

There were about ten of us on the tour, including two lesbian couples. One of the lesbians said she was an aspiring farmer herself who researched what she termed 'special farms' to visit. She had driven hours from Massachusetts to see Rise and Root that day. Karen walked us into the fields and told the story of the land and the farm. She recognized that it was unceded Lenape territory, and said they tried to honor the Lenape spirit by farming without 'extracting money from the land'. It was a small opportunity for collectively acknowledging the displacement of Indigenous people from their land and grieving that harm, while naming a practice meant to limit continuing ontological and ecological harm to the land itself. The economic imperative for Rise and Root is to support the farmers themselves, rather than accruing profit to the farm as a business or investing in expansion of the farm. This

is subtly different from Jefferson's yeomen in that Rise and Root's farmers do not seek economic security by freeing themselves from the market, but by strategically growing for the market. Karen referenced the land's history as a large-scale onion farm, the crop that the Black Dirt is known for (Haysom 2016), saying, 'rogue onions pop up when you don't touch the land'. Washington then told us of the many lessons they had learned, coming from community gardening in the city to farming upstate, while emphasizing that the community-building lessons they brought from the city about collectively thriving despite marginalization were key to the farm. She said, 'This is a healing farm. If you ever feel you need somewhere to be loved and held, this is it. That's what Farm Pride is all about.'

From the fields, we went to a cement floored farm building for the dance. A Latine woman who works at a nearby farmer training charity and a white, transgender woman farmer stood behind turntables on a platform and danced while they played Latin house music. We paid our entry and got two drink tickets. I had brought my aunts along, who are white, heterosexual, married women in their sixties. As they took in the crowd of folks of many genders and all ages from toddlers to elders sporting sparkly, rainbow outfits, or sturdy work wear their eyebrows raised ever so slightly. One of my aunts turned to me, 'Does everyone here think we're lesbians?' I couldn't help myself. 'Oh, definitely', I said.

And that itself, a farming space where the *assumption* could be that most people there are queer, is the prefigurative moment I want to investigate. It is a moment existing at the horizon of educated hope, outside and beyond the reconstructive nostalgia that limits American agriculture. It is a moment in which the people of Rise and Root are clearly perceived as farmers, without qualifiers. While Boym writes of nostalgic longing for what has gone (Boym 2002), Muñoz offers queerness as hopeful longing for what is not yet (Muñoz 2009). He writes, 'Queerness is a longing that propels us onward, beyond romances of negative and toiling in the present. Queerness is that thing that lets us feel that this world is not enough, that indeed something is missing. Often we can glimpse the worlds proposed and promised by queerness in the realm of the aesthetic' (2009:1). In this case, the aesthetic of rainbow sequins and Latin beats in a barn amidst fields of

crops rebelliously bursting from their tidy rows opens a vision of the not-quite-here, of a farming future unyoked from Jeffersonian agrarianism and its successor neo-agrarianism. If the queer aesthetic presents the 'schemata of a forward-dawning futurity' (Muñoz 2009:1), what are the implications of the Farm Pride Tea Dance for agriculture in the Hudson Valley?

For Muñoz, 'Queerness is also a performative because it is not simply a being but a doing for and toward the future. Queerness is essentially about the rejection of the here and now and an insistence on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world' (2009:1). Farm Pride physically existed. It was a party, a means of being and doing, that brought the legacy of Pride to the Black Dirt. The Pride celebrations that happen globally today can be traced to the first parade for LGBTQ+ rights that happened on June 28, 1970 to commemorate the one year anniversary of the Stonewall Uprising. The uprising was a response to a police raid of the Stonewall Inn, a gay bar, in the Greenwich Village neighborhood of Manhattan. At the forefront of the conflict were transgender women of color, Marsha P. Johnson, Sylvia Rivera, Zazu Nova and Jackie Hormona, who were known activists for queer rights (Ashley and Sanchinel 2023). In its most radical and historically accurate reading, Pride is the commemoration of a riot led by trans women of color.

Farm Pride was a party, and it was a demonstration of an alternate means of relating to history in the countryside. Rather than accepting the countryside as a place of queer death, Farm Pride placed queer joy in the countryside. Rather than the history of settler colonialism and white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy conquering the countryside, Farm Pride brought a celebration of the leadership and history of urban, trans women of color to the countryside. By placing a queer legacy of resistance at the forefront, the celebration of Pride in the Black Dirt takes a prefigurative stance that the past pushes us to continue striving for a different future. This party can be seen as an alternative to restorative nostalgia. Whereas neo-agrarianism acts within a narrative of homecoming, queer farming builds the future home on a foundation constructed with the bricks of the past – in this case the (apocryphal?) brick that Marsha P. Johnson threw at police arresting Stonewall

Inn patrons. Farm Pride was a space for living a reality where queerness moves freely between city and country, queering the discourses of metronormative homosexuality and rural heterosexism. The dancing that day was a way of *doing* for and to the future.

The criticality of prefigurative doing to queer farming is present in the land-based practices of landdyke and Faeirie settlements and in the farmers of the Hudson Valley. They offer examples of how to overcome intertwined, heterosexist processes of obtaining the land, labor, credit and knowledge necessary to becoming a farmer (Leslie 2019). Queer farmers create new pathways to secure these assets by experimenting with unique configurations of training aspiring farmers and ownership structures of farmland and businesses. As Calo summarizes, within the elite lead non-profit sector ‘the proposed “solutions” to beginning farmer challenges, rooted in a yeoman mythology adapted for the neoliberal age, appear to maintain the status quo’ (2020:25). This status quo includes an overarching emphasis on so-called farm viability, a term that is understood as shorthand for economic viability as measured against capitalist ideals of profit and accumulation. By this measure, access to land, labor, credit and knowledge are necessary primarily to achieve capitalist aims, and farming is inextricably enmeshed in capitalism.

To understand the significance of the creativity practiced by queer farmers I follow J.K. Gibson-Graham in moving away from a ‘*capitalocentric* conceptual frame in which all economic activity is measured up against capitalist forms and seen as basically the same as, the opposite of, a complement to, or contained within capitalism’ (Gibson-Graham 2015:106). While acknowledging the importance of a farm business’ economic viability in so far as it provides livelihoods for the people involved in the farm, I reject the supremacy of capitalist logics to assess the desirability of specific economic activities and look to queer farmers’ different means of accessing and valuation of land, labor, credit and knowledge to demonstrate ‘already existing diverse economies of care, provisioning and social and environmental redistribution’ (Gibson-Graham 2015:108). This theoretical frame is appropriate because it aligns with the values expressed by the queer

farmers that I research with, who, like the queer farmers Leslie writes of, are more likely than heterosexual farmers to cite anti-capitalism as a motivation to farm (Leslie 2017). As I trace the concrete manifestations of queer farmers creating prefigurative modes of providing the necessary assets for farming, I will extend that to see how these queer experiments are queering the broader small-scale farming community of the Hudson Valley.

Queer as in Cooperation

Rock Steady Farm is, in their own words, ‘a queer owned and operated cooperative vegetable farm rooted in social justice, food access, and farmer training’ (Rock Steady Farm n.d.). They distribute their harvest through a sliding-scale CSA program where some people pay more than the fair market value and some pay nothing at all – insisting on food as a right rather than a commodity while creating a system for more equitable redistribution of wealth through mutual aid. As a cooperatively owned business, they operate on a system of economic accountability to each other detached from the heteronormative family. The land they farm is not owned by the farm business but rented from The Watershed Center, a non-profit providing retreats to ‘changemakers’ in the ‘service of democracy, ecology and liberation’ (The Watershed Center n.d.), so depends upon value alignment of the farm with the non-profit, and the personal relationships through which that alignment is negotiated and expressed, to maintain tenancy of the land rather than upon profit generation. They also practice rigorous democratic decision making with their staff, as opposed to a top-down management modeled on patriarchal values. Two of Rock Steady’s founding farmers, Maggie Cheney and D Rooney, are outspoken activists, prolific community organizers, and educators in addition to actively farming. Maggie and D weave community bonds thickly and tightly, rather than romanticizing the rugged individualism of Jeffersonian agrarianism.

Cooperative ownership of farm businesses, like at Rock Steady Farm, is an example of queer farmers influencing the broader farming community. Cooperative farm ownership is a solution to structuring a farm business outside of a patriarchal family structure, therefore it appeals to aspiring farmers who do not have the

privilege of inherited capital or heteronormative family structures. Other marginalized rural communities, notably Black farmers and activists like Fanny Lou Hamer, used cooperative farming to build agency and self-determination in the face of oppression (Penniman 2018). I do not suggest that only queer people cooperate, but that cooperative business ownership is queer as in ‘at odds with everything around it’, but inventing ways to thrive anyway (hooks 2014). It is queer in that it refutes the basic economic principles of extractive capitalism, opting for modes of self-help and mutual aid instead, and refutes heteropatriarchal family units in favor of chosen, less hierarchical bonds of obligation and accountability.

The affinity between cooperative farming and queerness may in part be connected to a moment when out-lesbian farming increased: ‘Influenced by four movements in the 1970s – radical feminist, back-to-the-land, environmental, and commune – lesbians established small, land-based, and rural intentional communities’ (Wypler 2019:951). Queer people in the Hudson Valley are leaders in linking cooperative business models to farming. At an introductory session on cooperative farming models that I co-organized in 2019, of the seven people presenting one was non-binary, one was a lesbian, and one was a trans man. These three were the only farmers presenting during the workshop, rather than a technical assistance provider, and each was actively managing a cooperative enterprise. They had been recruited for their skill and expertise, not their sexuality, yet their queerness was another of their similarities.

Approximately 50 people attended the workshop, far more than we’d expected, a minority of whom identified as queer in a post-event survey. Cooperative farm business ownership is so attractive to entrant farmers because it rejects the heteronormative family as the base economic unit of farming and gives people the opportunity to form different groups of economic and relational obligation, whether that be amongst friends, family, lovers, or some combination of all three. Entrant farmers of all sexual identities are drawn to a queered farm business model.

However, not all farmers feel warmly towards cooperative business structures. The ways in which cooperatives operate is heterogeneous and ideals of aid and

exchange manifest differently depending on idiosyncratic histories and contexts, as Plender shows in her ethnography of two London cooperatives (2021). While entrant farmers who have experienced cooperatives in urban contexts or as part of their anti-capitalist values may be drawn to the model, farmers and people from farming families in Upstate New York are likely to be biased against the model. In rural communities the coop most legacy farmers know is an off-farm business that collectively markets and distributes your milk, grain, fiber, apples or other foods intended for a mass or international market. Though envisioned as voluntary, democratically run organizations meant for the common good of the rural community, many farmers haven't had another viable market opportunity for their product for decades (Torgerson 1977). In particular, the history of dairy farming in New York state gives cooperatives a bad reputation. Many urban expats' upstate retreats are renovated, failed dairy farms.

The disappearance of small to medium-scale dairy farming in New York and the Northeast is due in large part to the consolidation in recent decades of smaller cooperatives under mega-cooperatives such as Dairy Farmers of America Inc., which has frequently been found in violation of anti-trust laws and is accused of eradicating independent dairies' market access. These coops act as emotionless conglomerates, inured to the sustained financial crisis of dairy farming. For example, when the price for milk was projected to drop yet again, the large Northeastern dairy cooperative Agri-Mark didn't lobby for higher prices; it sent its members information on mental health and suicide prevention (Kilgannon and Eid 2018). Rather than feeling empowered by their membership, multi-generational farmers who have grown up in rural communities feel disenfranchised, exploited, and dehumanized by their experience with coops. This makes them reluctant to imagine cooperative business models as desirable.

Down river, the hallowed aisles of the Park Slope Food Coop in Brooklyn are a bastion of highly organized chaos that have inspired producer-owned food cooperatives across the country since 1973 (Jochnowitz 2001). In 2018 New York City boasted the highest growing rate of worker-owned cooperative business creation of any city thanks to a relatively small annual set aside of \$2 million from

the city's \$100 million in discretionary funds (Dubb 2020). With near infinite permutations of economic organization falling under the term coop, one's experience and opinion of coops depends very much on where one has encountered them. It may be that the metronormativity of queer coming out experiences increases the likelihood that queer farmers will have positive experiences, or at least more than one experience, with cooperative businesses in urban settings, in this case New York City. While exclusion, real and perceived, from rural spaces can be a barrier to queer farmers' ability to access land, their experience in urban spaces may also allow them to practice novel ways of securing land and structuring farm businesses by drawing on cooperative models developed in cities.

It is also true that not all cooperative enterprises achieve cooperative management. Henry Corsun, a trans man who runs Dogwood Farm, established a network called Good Food Farmers to aggregate and deliver product from neighboring small farms. He told me how committed he was to building Good Food Farmers as a cooperative endeavor, but whenever he brought up the conversation amongst the other farmers in the group their response was more or less, 'That's ok. We like having you make all the decisions and do all the planning. You can just buy food from us.' Similarly, Letterbox Farm has operated as a cooperatively managed LLC since its founding by three friends. It cannot register legally as a cooperative business because, with only three people, it does not meet the minimum required number of owners to qualify as a cooperative for tax purposes, but attempts to recruit farm employees to work towards co-ownership of the business have met with lukewarm responses. Cooperating is a lot of work, and not everyone sees the pay off.

Rock Steady structures labor based on democratic management and decentralized ownership, accesses land unconventionally (as does Rise and Root) by renting land for below market rate, and gains revenue through a means-based rather than a goods-based pricing system as well as conducting savvy fundraising campaigns and pursuing grant opportunities. In these ways Rock Steady works both outside of and in articulation with the mainstream methods of securing land, labor and credit.

The farm is also a center for new farmer training where knowledge is both gained and generated. Having met the farm owners through their participation in Glynwood's farm business incubator, I decided to see their farming in action by attending an open community workday.

Queer as in Networks of Knowledge Production

I drove a winding road on the downward slope of a large hill to reach the small valley where Rock Steady Farm is located, just outside of Millerton. The sky was vast and perfect summer-blue above the verdant fields. It was June and the farmers had arranged the community workday to get some extra hands in the fields and try to catch up with the chaos of that month on a vegetable farm. I walked up the dirt road and found D fiddling with a small tractor that had been on the fritz. D gave me a warm hello and pointed me to a patch of onions where some of the farm's CSA members and one of the farm crew were weeding. I joined the group and we worked our way steadily along the rows, pulling out a thick cover of tall mugwort, pigweed, and creeping purslane to reveal the regularly spaced spikes of onion tops.

A community day is itself a novel way of securing labor for the land that relies on the cultural capital D and their farming partner Maggie have built through the intentional LGBTQ+ community building that is part of their work together. Jac Wypler's research in the American Midwest highlights the necessity of informal LGBTQ+ farmer networks and labor opportunities on queer-owned farms for queer people to access farming knowledge (2019). As I fell into a weeding rhythm with one of the Rock Steady farm hands, we discussed her path to farming and the Hudson Valley, and how critical queer farming networks were to her envisioned future.

The farmhand was a Latine woman who had joined the crew mid season after leaving part way through a prominent farmer training program based at a large university on the West Coast. It had been a bad experience for her and several other trainees who, she said, had felt that the organizational environment was hostile to queer People of Color. Rock Steady had been, on the other hand, a

refuge and haven free of heteropatriarchy and committed to anti-racism. As she learned the skills needed to farm by doing them at Rock Steady, this farm hand also glimpsed the hopeful horizon where she could be a professional farmer while living freely as her queer, Latine self.

Here I will extend on Wypler and Leslie's attention to how agricultural relationships amongst queer farmers make it possible for them to attain human resources and farming knowledge by arguing that queer farmers also produce unique knowledge through queer ways of knowing. Seed keeper K Greene, who will show up again in Chapter Six, described to me in an interview how queerness shapes their relationship to knowledge and knowledge reproduction:

'I think it's something that many queer people do when they are not able to grow up being out to begin with. You're sort of looking for social cues and modifying how you're appearing or how you're acting in different ways, so from childhood and through the coming out process I've very much had this ability to step back and look at what's happening as a little bit of an outsider and not get quite so stuck in just reproducing what's already happening. So I think my queerness helped me to say, well I'm not doing this the same way that everyone else is doing this'.

One way K does things differently is by working towards a non-binary botany. Botany is a foundational science for growing plants, and therefore farming vegetables and fruits. Following Donna Haraway, queer farmers are producing situated knowledges that bring queerness into conversation with otherwise heteronormative epistemologies of agriculture (1988). Thinking with Haraway's critique of the so-called 'god move' (1988), wherein she illuminates scientific facts as laying false claim to pure objectivity, it is possible to see botany not as the truth of plants but as a product of the white-supremacist hetero-patriarchal gaze observing plants (Subramaniam 2021). Producing botanical knowledge from the embodied experience of queer bodies reveals plant realities differently. K told me:

'When I first started teaching people about seeds. I was using the language that is given to us for plants, which is incredibly binary. Flowers are male or female or a perfect flower has both male and female parts. And I always felt

a little uncomfortable with the [biological] language I was using to teach about plants... [I] started realizing that when I am interacting with plants I am not thinking along those lines at all. When I become a part of the pollination process for squash ... I am not going around thinking 'male, female, male, female' like sex, like heteronormative couples or whatever. I am focused on the plants and how the plants grow, and what the plants do for themselves, and I don't think the plants have any need for thinking about themselves as gendered. Because I don't think of myself in a very gendered way, it just doesn't come into my mind'.

As a queer body in intimate relationship with plants, K began internally to question what knowledge was missed by botany and to wonder who was being excluded from botanical knowledge by the language it used. 'This language is holding us back from really understanding plants. The diversity of the plant world is so far beyond what the straight white men who developed the western sciences of how we think about plants', K said. As K shared these conversations with other farmers and seed keepers they learned that there was growing discussion of queer botany, and connected with others over social media to learn from groups like the queer farmer network Interlocking Roots who published an online zine about queer botany (Interlocking Roots n.d.). K researched plant diversity and asked farmers, 'How do you think about it when you're out there in your body and what does it feel like?' as they looked for language that would queer botanical knowledge.

To share this knowledge K proposed sessions on queer botany at various conferences for a decade. The proposals were rejected. Queer botany was 'not real' and 'too fringe', K was told. K summarized the pushback they've received to queer botany, 'science is impartial ... keep your identity politics out of my botany.' But, as Haraway argues and my interlocutors demonstrate repeatedly, the god move of impartiality is an illusion that occludes other ways of knowing (Haraway 1988).

K's analysis of why industrial agriculture resists the contribution of queer or differently situated knowledge brings to mind Foucault's work on power regimes

(Foucault 1978); K said, 'it's very much about control of nature and control of reproduction and control of identity as well – like who gets to be a farmer and who has access to food'. As power regimes inscribe bodies with meaning, so too do they inscribe plant bodies with meaning. However, through the material experience of farming, queer people see how the more-than-human world defies inscriptions and control. Therefore, they access a different reality than botany describes. 'Farmers learn very quickly that they need to accept plants the way they are, accept the climate the way it is', K said, 'That it did rain, or it didn't. That plants are susceptible to disease or not'. This field experience meets the legacy of landdyke and Radical Faerie relationships to the more-than-human world as agentive and sacred, so that through engagement the plants are not simply being better understood but are teaching farmers to better understand themselves.

In 2021 K's proposal was accepted at the Northeast Organic Farming Association's Winter Conference, a widely attended and highly regarded conference in the region. In K's panel session, seed farmers challenged the biological essentialism of gender with examples from gender non-binary plant relatives and connected the struggle for queer botany to the struggle to decolonize agriculture and culture generally. The keynote for this conference was given by Banu Subramaniam, a South Asian woman, and focused on decolonizing botany. It resonated strongly with K's panel. It was an incredible shift to see this difference in programming from years before and an example of how prefigurative praxis by queer people and People of Color is pushing the boundaries of what is considered worth knowing, and worthy ways of knowing, in the organic and alternative farming sectors. Queer botany is a knowledge production practice that can be part of farming and can open horizons of hope.

The value of queer botanical knowledge does not solely benefit queer farmers, and is being embraced in farmer training spaces as well as conference spaces. Sbicca argues, 'the ideology/worldview grounded in solidarity and affinity, and grounded in deconstructing binary identity categories ... links various threads of the lgbtq and environmental movements together', giving rise to 'eco-queer movements' that re-imagine nature and food (2012:48). Aspiring farmers in sustainable agriculture

desire just such a tool for re-imagining their future farms. Hudson Valley farmers in training, of all gender identities, are being educated with queer theory to expand their sense of what is possible in farm ecosystems.

The Mid-Hudson Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training (CRAFT) has been coordinating farm tours to educate farming apprentices for two decades, and in 2022 added to its programming a new module, Queer Ecology, held at Rock Steady Farm. Cynics may decry all of this as performative woke culture pandering to millennials and the liberal elite. But As Muñoz shows, performance and the performative are essential to queer futurity. For Muñoz, performance jogs one's imagination out of the restrictions of the inadequate present and elicits Bloch's astonished contemplation that is necessary to hope. 'Astonishment helps one surpass the limitations of an alienating presentness and allows one to see different time and place' (Muñoz 2009:5). The examples of introducing oneself with pronouns, conference sessions on queer botany, cooperatives and beginning farmer training in queer ecology each create moments for people of all genders in the good food movement to be astonished into different modes of future making.

Queer as in Threatened

Yet with heightened visibility may come danger and with assimilation may come erasure. Even as LGBTQ+ visibility has grown in the United States, violent backlash has risen. Recently, Lee Hennessy, a trans man who runs a goat dairy farm, launched a Go Fund Me campaign to install a security fence because he fears people from outside his community will seek to do him and his animals harm. In an article he wrote for *Eater*, a food journalism website, Hennessy said, 'it is very in vogue right now for others to not like the fact that I exist' (2022). In 2021, at least fifty trans and gender non-conforming people were violently murdered, the deadliest year on record in the U.S. for trans people. As of September 2022, 23 of the 50 states in the U.S. had proposed or passed anti-LGBTQ legislature that year (Human Rights Campaign). Overt violence and discriminatory legislation are not the only threats to queer farmers' existence and their power.

Erasure in the form of gentrification and assimilation of queer farming frameworks threaten the political potency of queer agriculture. Rural gentrification has been a major driver of the current housing crisis in the Hudson Valley, a crisis that impacts low-wage, landless farmers and farm workers especially hard. In urban spaces, the process of commodifying sexual citizenship into neighborhood and city branding is well documented as part of the process of gentrification (Doan 2018). It results in constraining queerness and new modes of heteronormativity. This process may well play out in rural spaces too.

In the summer of 2022, I attended a Dairy Drag night at the queer-owned Chaseholm Farm. It was a euphoric celebration of queer rurality. At the same time, there were clearly two socioeconomic groups attending. The difference could be seen in their Carhartt work wear. Some people's trousers had stained knees from days cultivating the soil, while other people's barn coats were stain-free and decidedly crisp. Worn patches with political slogans similarly contrasted with shiny new rainbow flag pins. Affluent ex-urbanites may be drawn to the semi-urban appeal of queerness in the country for its aesthetics, without recognizing or addressing the struggle inherent in its presence. Queer farming practices also stand to be detached from their political import. There is a precedence of this in regenerative and agroecological farming. Both are now prevalent doctrines and practices in alternative food systems, but it is rarely acknowledged that they are the intellectual and practical creations of Indigenous peoples. This makes it possible for a farmer to claim regenerative land management without once considering the return of that land to the Indigenous peoples who were displaced from it. Might cooperative farming, queer botany, and queer ecology similarly be assimilated into common practice to the point that their political transgression is stripped away and the queer communities that advanced them are disenfranchised from their benefits?

Queer as in Hope

The colonial fantasy of the yeoman farmer embodied in Jefferson's agrarian idealism and the nostalgia it fostered have shaped the farming landscape, in both theory and practice, of the United States. As my research in the Hudson Valley

illustrates, queer farmers are adopting a political stance as sexual citizens by engaging in prefigurative forms of farming, educating, and socializing that allow them to thrive outside of ongoing oppression. Following Muñoz's extension of Bloch's theory of concrete utopias, we see that the particular futurity of queerness is influencing the educated hope of the good food movement in the Hudson Valley (Muñoz 2009; Bloch 1995). While queer agricultural prefiguration holds promise in the present, the threats of gentrification and assimilation may thwart its efficacy in the future. However, Muñoz situates queer hope as being both after and before loss, after and before grief (Muñoz 2009). He says that we have, in fact, never been queer. Meaning that there has not been a point in time when queerness as we define it today was unrestrained, free to be both extraordinary and mundane. This knowledge defines a queer hope educated enough to know that because the past has been cruel, the future is likely to be cruel as well. It expects disappointment, and so is able to practice hope, which must necessarily be disappointed (Bloch 1995), without expectation of predetermined futures being realized. Rather than a limitation, this queer hopefulness offers the possibility of resilience against setbacks for those who seek to transform food and farming systems.



*Fig. 9 Stephen McComber (seated, in feathered headdress) teaching a group how to braid corn
Photographed by the author (2019)*

Chapter Six

SEEDS

The Hudson Valley in winter is gray and soggy frozen. The landscape does not suggest much activity, hopeful or otherwise. This belies the intensity of work happening amongst the food and farming folks who populate this thesis. Winter is the season of desk work, of conferences, of scheming and planning for the unpredictability of the growing season and the years ahead. One of these activities

is seed purchasing. Thumbing through thick catalogues from seed companies, while the most miserable part of the winter crouches low and seemingly immovable outside the window, the inviting pages are full of slick images of swollen watermelons or folksy sketches of impossibly ruffled lettuces. You can believe that the world will be a more welcoming place in the near future.

In 2020 when the time of year for seed purchasing coincided with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Seed sales skyrocketed. Perhaps the need to imagine a more welcoming natural world was intensified by our tragic contact with this virus. Reports lumped increases in seed purchasing alongside other forms of stockpiling and hoarding, and posited that people were purchasing seeds for the first time or in greater quantities in order to increase their self-sufficiency and assuage anxiety about failing global supply chains. Having been seduced by seeds over a decade ago into a life of food systems study and activism, I think the collective drive to plant seeds in the face of a plague reveals an aspect of humanity that is more primal and poetic. It was hope in the face of existential threat.

The leaf, fruit, or root of a plant can feed a person once, but a single seed could produce infinitely more seeds, plants, and food. Seeds carry on genetic material from previous generations and are the beginning of the generations to come. Seeds embody both past and future. The concept of hope and seeds are so deeply intertwined, so idiomatically paired, that exploring this connection at length may seem unoriginal, but in this chapter, I argue that the origin stories humans are creating and recreating with seeds are exercises in prefiguration.

But seeds are not metaphors. They are the most basic unit of agriculture. Because seeds are both a powerful cultural signifier and a crucial agricultural technology, the relationships of the advocates of local food systems to seeds are a locus for enacting divergent futures. This chapter will explore those relationships, especially as they articulate with the racialization of food heritages, picking up on themes from Chapter Three, and the divergent futures and differing ways of making futures that they illuminate. First, I will focus on the seeds themselves.

Why Save Seeds?

From the perspective of a seed land is not a commodity to be traded or a place to occupy. Land is soil, a medium within which to live. Beneath the surface of the land is a deep and interconnected ecosystem vibrantly alive with possibility. As Tsing (2017) reveals in her work, even land that human activity has decimated through capitalist extraction can be a site of connectivity (Tsing 2015). She describes the ways in which humans take their cues from mushrooms to build a future out of the ruins they occupy together. Like mushrooms, seeds also adapt with people in material ways to the lands and cultures where they are grown, saved, and replanted over generations (Ellen and Platten 2011). Following Tsing's lead, what can we learn about food systems from the perspective of a seed? How do the people I research amongst take cues from the seeds? How are they finding, creating, and collaborating with plant allies that further their visions for the regional food system?

Seeds are bundles of genetic materials and nutrients that a plant produces to propagate itself.³⁸ For the purposes of my research, I will focus only on the seeds of food crops. The shapes and sizes of food crop seeds are infinitely varied and they can be remarkably beautiful. Radish seeds are a buff color and satisfyingly spherical. Swiss chard seeds have a surprising spikiness, reminiscent of a medieval mace. Beans, in their taugt, shiny skins, come in an astounding range of colors and patterns. Botanists will point out there is an evolutionary advantage to the seeds' designs. The barbs of chard seeds cling to the coats of passing mammals and the smooth durability of a bean increases its chances of passing whole through an animal's digestive tract. Indigenous botanist Robin Kimmerer argues that beauty itself is also a part of that evolution, both the beauty created by the plant and the ability of the human eye to perceive that beauty (2013). We have co-evolved to thrive together.

³⁸ Seeds are the sexual means of plant propagation, not the only means of plant propagation. Asexual plant propagation utilizes roots, branches, and leaves to create new plants. Asexual propagation techniques include division, leaf cutting, and grafting, as described in Chapter Three in relation to trees.

This co-evolution has taken place over millennia, from the time of hunter-gatherers when the seeds of food plants were scatter planted in wild landscapes through to the codification of agriculture in tended farmland and up to today's contemporary manipulation of seed genetics in laboratories (Kloppenburg 2005). Indigenous seed activist Rowen White, a Mohawk seed keeper involved in seed keeping practices in the Hudson Valley, writes, 'Our beautiful seeds are deeply connected to lineages and specific lands of origin. These foods and seeds are our mirrors, our reflections; their life is our life, we are intimately intertwined with their well-being. We are bound in a reciprocal relationship with seeds that extends back beyond living memory'. (2019:190) The record of this co-evolution is carried in the seed's genetics and our own. Nutritional and ethnobotanical research has shown that some Indigenous peoples with high rates of diet-related diseases that were rare prior to a societal nutrition transition experience improved health when they adopt a traditional diet of crops alongside which their ancestors coevolved (Nabhan 2013). Though not indisputable, this suggests that peoples have adapted to the seeds their cultural groups select as much as the seeds adapt to the peoples' selection.

The ways in which we, seeds and people, have mutually constructed each other physically have largely been determined by cultural and societal factors. Take corn (aka maize) as an example. This staple food is layered with deep cultural significance. Originating in the Americas, the corn varieties stewarded by Indigenous peoples were selected for a wide range of qualities and phenotypical expressions (Staller, Tykot, and Benz 2006). The different colors, shapes, and other qualities of these corns became correlated to various ceremonies and rituals (White 2019). Further, corn was grown primarily for drying and storage, for use as a grain and as seed. This seed made its way to Europe during the Columbian Exchange and was changed by its encounter with the humans there so that when it traveled with them back to the Americas its shape and uses were also changed.

An example of this in the Hudson Valley is a corn with an Italian name, Otto File. I learned its story from K Greene. K, introduced in the previous chapter, is *the* seed person in the Hudson Valley. They are a lithe, slight person with Sephardic features and a salt and pepper beard, who emanates gentle strength. In 2004 K worked

within their role as a public librarian to organize community conversations on the future of food in the region. From those conversations, K was inspired to establish one of the first seed libraries in the world. The premise was simple: allow people to 'borrow' seeds from the library at the start of the growing season and return seeds saved from the plants they'd grown to replenish the supply.

The idea took hold and community-led seed libraries popped up across the country and the globe. As of this writing there are estimated to be more than 500 seed libraries in existence (Sister Libraries n.d.). This work ignited in K a passion for seeds. Such passion, even zealotry, is a well observed feature of self-described seed people (Nazarea 2005; Nabhan 2014; Nabhan 2002; Shiva 2016; Taylor and Bolden-Newsom n.d.). Some primal devotion, one I often feel myself, expresses itself with a fervor that I think coincides with political anticipatory thinking that makes seeds themselves a material and theoretical object of utopian enactment (e.g. Rosales 2023; Hill 2017). For K, this passion led to founding the Hudson Valley Seed Library, later renamed the Hudson Valley Seed Company. One of the first seeds to find its way into K's trial plots for the seed company was the corn variety Otto File. Corn is a useful crop to think with for understanding how seeds and humans have mutually constructed each other's material present and possible futures.

Otto File is a flint corn, a category meaning that it is meant for grinding into meal rather than eating as a fresh vegetable. In Italy it is revered as making outstanding polenta and has been grown there since sometime in the nineteenth century. In the twentieth century, it traveled back across the Atlantic and became the darling of famous chefs such as Dan Barber from Chapter Two (Helicke 2015). Barber was recruited to include the Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture in the grow out instigated by Glenn Roberts, founder of the artisanal grain company Anson Mills. Barber credits this variety of corn as introducing him to the concept of flavor-driven genetics in plant breeding (Barber 2014), and his embrace of this concept is significant to the culture of seeds in the Hudson Valley because it led him to found the valley-based seed company Row 7. While Barber notes that this corn variety originated with Indigenous peoples of what is today the Northeastern region of the

U.S., his engagement with its troubled history is glancing, preferring to forefront its authenticity via its legacy as a staple in Italy's *cucina povera*. Based in nostalgia, Barber's relationship to the seed emphasizes the determinate future making practice of reclamation.

When K tells the story of this corn variety, they point out that the corn's name makes its legacy clear. Otto File means, in Italian, eight rows. Tribes of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy were known for their eight-row corn, a rarity. Most corns had four to six rows in that era of the plant's cultivation. To a grower versed in Indigenous corn breeding, it would have been immediately clear that this particular variety belonged with the family of corns developed by the Haudenosaunee through their centuries-long relationship to the plant. However, it disappeared from the land where it originated when the people who stewarded that seed became the victims of genocide, as K pointed out, demonstrating their inclusion of difficult pasts and grief in Otto File's history. One reason for K to include Otto File in their seed saving work is to return the seed to its ancestral lands.

Colonizers grew Otto File for a while, eventually exporting it to Europe. Otto File disappeared almost entirely from Turtle Island (Helicke 2015). Italian growers stewarded the plant, and it became a new traditional food at their tables. At each step, the relationship between human and plant altered. The material and symbolic use of the seed was written as much into the future as it had been inscribed by the past. Otto File was recruited into the work of future making, reflecting shifts in how humans feed themselves as it was carried forward into the future because it met shifting human values. This corn has been valued as a sacred covenant between deities and humans, as a flavorsome and reliable staple, as a gourmet experience, and as an agent of Indigenous return to the land. This seed and others are at the center of conversations in the Hudson Valley questioning narratives about the past, present, and possible futures, of our food systems and of ourselves.

Corn, as a species, illustrates changes in the relationship of humans to seeds across North America since the eighteenth century. In the Colonial period,

European settlers cultivated sweet corn to eat as a fresh vegetable in addition to dried corn for grain and innovated the use of dried corn as the basis for liquor production (Shields 2015). As a central part of the foodways in the American South, it is certain that enslaved Africans and their descendants also played a key role in the selection and preservation of corn varieties at this time (Twitty 2018). Settlers' uses of corn in novel ways dictated the qualities they looked for in a plant, the seeds they therefore saved and replanted, fundamentally changing the genetics of the plant. In the centuries since then, the capitalist imperatives that have increasingly dominated all aspects of life have further transformed corn seed and its uses.

As Indigenous peoples were forcibly removed from the great prairies of the United States and settlers looked to turn the land to profit via agriculture (Cronon 1991), the deep soils of the prairie that hosted a grass-based ecosystem were well suited to growing grain producing grasses, such as corn. The cultivation of corn on prairie land was particularly adaptable to mechanization of agriculture that accelerated in post-World War II America as the industries built to supply the war effort continued to grow by pivoting to agricultural and other technologies (Cochrane 1979). This marriage of industry and seed has led to the development of corn seeds in ways that clearly show the influence of humans' cultural imperatives on the evolution of plants. Corn seeds have been bred that rely on petrochemical fertilizers, because capitalist logics favored the growth of the petrochemical industry; this led to the ironic reality that much of the corn produced in the U.S. today is grown with petrochemicals to produce ethanol, an alternative to petrochemicals (Stephens 2023). Corn seed have been bred that have 'terminator genes' that render the plant sterile, making it impossible to save and replant the seed, because seed companies can increase the profit on their intellectual property if farmers are forced to repurchase the seed every year (Gupta 1998).

Turning to the seeds' experience of these developments, the socio-political pressures of the human world have caused immense loss in the seed community. Many varieties of seed have disappeared (Nabhan 2008). Crop genetic erosion and the rise of monoculture farming have constricted the diversity of food seeds

during the twentieth century (Khoury et al. 2022; Meyer, DuVal, and Jensen 2012). Meanwhile, agribusiness companies have consolidated ownership of intellectual property rights over seeds to the point that DuPont and Bayer control the majority of commercially available seeds globally (Howard 2021). Awareness of this loss in both magnitude and access to seeds, that had for millennia been a commons for all humanity, sparked people to come together to protect the genetic diversity of seeds. They call themselves seed keepers or seed stewards. What they do is called seed saving. Varied approaches to conserving crop genetic material, to seed saving, have implications for who is included and who excluded from the prefigurative work that people do with seeds.

In Situ and Ex Situ

In the U.S., the earliest and most revered organization to undertake this work at the grassroots level is the Seed Savers Exchange (SSE), and many others have since been established to increase the diversity of seed and the resiliency of seed systems (Helicke 2015). Founded in 1975, SSE is a non-profit organization that facilitates member-to-member exchange, sells propagative material, and operates its Heritage Farm as a site of seed production (Volkening 2018). The seed stewardship championed by SSE is known as *in situ*, meaning that it happens in place. The preservation of the varieties in SSE's collection is done through the act of growing the plants, either on the organization's farm or in members' and customers' gardens. This means that the work of preservation is entangled in the more than human society from which any specific variety emerged. At SSE all varieties are 'heirloom' varieties, 'though there is no universally agreed upon definition, "heirloom" generally refers to varieties that are capable of being pollen fertilized and whose existence predates industrial agriculture' (Carolan 2011:78). Another term for this type of seed, more common internationally, is landrace, the definition of landrace being a variety that has adapted to its locality over successive generations, often though not always aided by human intervention (Nabhan 2002). The widespread use of the term heirloom in the U.S. for seeds of this kind points to something more than a linguistic quirk. 'Heirloom' conjures a sense of memory, of nostalgia, of a treasured object that has been carried forward generation by generation, so that meaning adheres to it with each passing year.

A parallel form of seed preservation assumes a more alienated stance. *Ex situ*, or 'out of place', conservation operates more as a vault or fortress than an exchange. Since the 1930's, attempts to address diminishing agrobiodiversity at the international level have largely relied on collection and *ex-situ* storage of germplasm (Carolan 2012; van Dooren 2009). This focus on germplasm follows from the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which identifies the preservation of 'genetic material of actual or potential value' as its primary aim (CBD 1992:1). The implications of defining seed as a carrier of valuable germplasm are significant, as illustrated in differences between germplasm storage and seed saving as practice (Carolan 2011). While the CBD calls for both *in-situ* and *ex-situ* conservation of biodiversity, international resources have been primarily directed to *ex-situ* conservation since the 1960's, when mounting concerns about the loss of biodiversity spurred conservation efforts (van Dooren 2009:374). *Ex-situ* conservation is done in gene banks such as the Svalbard Global Seed Vault (SGSV) and the Research Centers managed by the Consultive Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) in accord with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). The CGIAR was founded in 1992 as a response to fears about limits to access posed by privatization of *ex situ* biodiversity conservation (Coupe and Lewins 2007:52), but critics of the program show that genetic material contained in centers like these is only available to other researchers (van Dooren 2009).

This form of conservation is underpinned by Western ontology of the natural world in so far as it takes nature to be material that can be sorted, categorized, ordered, and controlled by humans (Carolan 2011:73–78). In the case of gene repositories, the exertion of this control requires an estrangement of the propagative material from the environment in which it lives and from the forms it may take throughout a life cycle. In other words, the plant humans seek to preserve is reduced to genetic material that can be made stable through technology that allows it to be held for an extended period, freezing in most cases.

Perhaps the most famous *ex situ* food germplasm repository is the Global Seed Vault in Svalbard, Norway. Located in the arctic, dug into the permafrost, the hope for this vault is that it is a safeguard against doomsday. Inside the vault is genetic material sourced from the government-sanctioned networks of genetic conservation institutions across the globe. As the website states, it was ‘built to stand the test of time – and the challenge of natural or man-made disasters’ (Svalbard Global Seed Vault n.d.). The Seed Vault exists as a bulwark against imagined apocalypse (Heatherington 2021).

To protect seeds and us from the risks of the world, seeds are removed from the world and from us. These two forms of conservation are so far from each other as to exist at different poles of future making, to be oppositionally positioned so that *ex situ* may be read as determinate and *in situ* as indeterminate. This binary thinking is unproductive for understanding the complexity of human relationships to seeds. People do not live on either side of this binary. The Svalbard Seed Vault was envisioned, championed, and realized by Carrie Fowler – one of the core founders of Seed Savers Exchange and a current Hudson Valley resident. Tracey Heatherington argues that for seed savers seeds are the object of ‘structural nostalgia’ (Herzfeld 1991), ‘an evolving, shared idealization of what certain relationships ought to be, crystallized in a yearning for more perfect reciprocity and mutual respect that is thought to have characterized earlier times’ (Heatherington 2021:206). Both *in situ* and *ex situ* modes of conservation arise from the same desire to uphold the deeply felt covenant of reciprocity to the seeds that sustain us, to ensure their survival and ours. Both practices can be understood as expressions of structural nostalgia, because both idealize earlier relationships to seed.

Between these groups the earlier times representative of more reciprocal relationships are not the same times. My research has been amongst seed keepers practicing *in situ* preservation, but to understand their temporal orientations it is critical to comprehend the macrocosm of global seed keeping. Many *in situ* seed keepers envision the apocalypse in the distant future and save their seeds to ensure the continuation of the past beyond that apocalypse. This temporal orientation anticipates restorative nostalgia, complicating how

determinate future making praxes may be theorized. Other *in situ* seed keepers recognize apocalyptic events in the past, grieve their outcomes, and animate educated hope to reimagine more reciprocal relationships between humans and seeds in the near future. Amongst seed savers in the Hudson Valley conflict arises dependent on how and if grief is allowed into the process of future making as an act of educating hope towards social change (Dinerstein 2016). Those who understand the story of seed as one that is ongoing but unrepeatable, who allow chapters of grief and harm into that story, are more capable of indeterminate future making.

Who Keeps a Seed's Story?

It bears repeating, the people (and non-humans) who do future making through seed conservation are not separated from each other but are working alongside each other. As with many of the people featured in this research, their interests exist in a relationship more nuanced than oppositional. They are in relationship to each other through tension as much as through agreement. One place they come together is at conferences throughout the winter.

The third weekend of January 2019 was a good time to be indoors in Saratoga, New York. The charming streets of the nineteenth century town were disappearing beneath snow that flurried across cobbled streets and gathered on the windowsills of the anachronistic 'olde timey' apothecary. Outside, a blizzard was brewing, while inside the Hilton Hotel hundreds of flannel- and canvas-clad attendees of the 36th annual New York conference of the Northeast Organic Farming Association milled about the aseptic hallways and sat attentively in sessions. Out past the main ballroom where meals of locally produced foods were served, and up an escalator flanked by glass panes, another event room simultaneously hosted a sister conference, the Second Biennial Northeast Organic Seed Conference. K Green is the primary organizer. In their opening remarks, they posed a framing question for the seed conference, 'Do seeds or soil belong to any of us?'

Even in this setting, squarely within the ethos of the good food movement, this question is not one that can easily be answered. This is in part because seeds and

soil are not mute material, but agentic beings to whom stories adhere. These stories are co-created by the stewards of seed and land, and it can be difficult for stewards to cede control over stories in which they are implicated. Co-organizers of the conference and speakers on its panels worked for and represented seed companies (Hudson Valley Seed Company, Row 7, FedCo, and Johnny's Seeds), albeit small ones compared to the corporate megalith of Bayer-Monsanto and its subsidiaries. These seed companies and their employees rely on the sale of seed to turn a profit to keep operating and rely on the stories in their catalogues to sell those seeds. The seed keepers attending the conference also have powerful reasons to claim seed stories. Viewing seeds as more-than-human kin (Hill 2017; Aistara 2011), for seed keepers the stories of the seeds are, like family stories, dear to them and important to constructing their identities.

Stories take on lives of their own. Seed stories, encased as they are in the supposedly objective science of botany, have been subjected to the 'god trick' that enshrines them as unassailable truth, separated from embodied being (Haraway 1988). Estranged in this way, seed stories become potent pieces of cultural capital that sit at the center of contestations over identity and power within the alternative food movement. But these stories, as social actors, cannot be fully controlled by those who utilize them for their own benefit, be it economic or social. This is because '...nothing makes itself, nothing tells its own story. Stories nest like Russian dolls inside ever more stories and ramify like fungal webs throwing out ever more sticky threads' (Haraway 2019:565). In acts of retelling, reclaiming, and reimagining seed stories the Russian dolls may be opened to reveal surprises inside. Their sticky threads may pull ever more unexpected subjects into the stories and they may be told through ever more different mouths. In this way seed stories can function as counter mythology that points towards as-yet-to-be realized futures, and in the productive spaces between the dominant myth, the widely accepted truth, and the counter myth, seed knowledge becomes resituated, revealing a double vision within the seed keeping community (Sheridan-Rabideau 2001; Haraway 1988). Through the situated knowledge produced by double vision, different futures appear possible and different praxes are engaged to make those futures.

This was demonstrated during a panel at the Northeast Organic Seed Conference called 'Seed Stories'. K opened the conference alongside Rowen White, calling her their 'fairy seed godmother', who was always there to talk with K about all their 'feelings about seeds'. This which elicited a sympathetic giggle from the crowd. K's sparkling eyes look deep into yours when speaking one-on-one, and lose little of their magnetism when addressing a crowd. They gazed across the room at the sixty people there, a large number for the conference though the enormity of the conference center event room dwarfed our gathering. This is a good metaphor for the alternative seed community that can feel so powerful and sprawling, but represents a miniscule David in the face of the industrial seed Goliath. K went on to explain why they had been inspired to organize a panel on seed stories, when the majority of the other panels addressed technical topics:

'All the stories I was hearing when we talked about seed were very white-European centric, and I was like, why are these the only stories that I'm hearing? And when I am looking at seed catalogues why are those the stories that I'm reading? And also realizing that sometimes the stories that are coming from other cultures... are being told in exoticized ways. And who is telling the story? Who is coming up with the words that go into a seed catalogue or a seed exchange'?

To illustrate, K told the story of Otto File corn that they had known only as an Italian corn until Rowen informed them of its Indigenous legacy. K continued,

'And so why is it that the story that we're getting in the catalogues is just the end part of that story? When I think about the way that we redefine seeds, all of us in a way, and we think of corporations that say, "Well I made this last little change and now it's mine..." Well that's the same approach – that I'm adding to the story, because we all add to the story. The stories don't stop. Does that suddenly mean that that seed is yours? Of course, it doesn't, because then you are just erasing this entire past from the seed, genetic and cultural, which are intertwined. [...] Our goal is to [...] authentically reconnect seeds and their stories for all people and value all of

these stories, wherever they come from. So, each of our storytellers today are going to help us do that’.

In this way, K invited the speakers to re-embed their stories in culture, to decommodify them. But reconnecting the seeds to their forgotten stories resituates the context of the remembered stories, a shift that can be unsettling for some. Unlike the restorative nostalgia of ‘heirloom’ seeds, whose stories fill the seed catalogues, K was asking the speakers to return the seeds to the complicated present, the temporal moment in which past and future flow in both directions. As the panel commenced, it became clear that embracing the nested stories of seeds had potential to open new utopian horizons and dismantle others.

The first to speak was Leah Penniman of Soul Fire Farm. Leah is Black, beautiful, and poised. In her forties, she seems in full control of her body and her measured voice. Leah had a high profile at the 2019 NOFA Conference as Keynote Speaker, and indeed has a high profile across the region. In conversation amongst food and farming people during my field work, it was often assumed that everyone had heard her speak or attended the Uprooting Racism in the Food System training that she or another Soul Fire facilitator had led. Her name on the roster for this panel surely accounted in some part for the larger than usual turn out for this specific session.

Yet Leah, by her admission, was new to seed saving. The story she brought for those gathered was of her entry into seed saving. She and her family had been amongst the Indigenous Triqui people in Oaxaca, Mexico learning their means of agriculture. A farmer there, Josefina Martinez, Leah told us, handed her a bundle of seeds she had saved for Leah to plant and save.

‘What struck me was that in the bundle one of the seeds was the black-eyed pea, or the brown crowder. Now for folks who know about deep history, you probably know why I was really surprised to see this particular type of bean, because this is not a bean that is indigenous to this continent. It is a bean that is indigenous to sub-Saharan Africa. And in fact, stories have been passed down in my family about this particular bean, as well as other African

crops like okra and sorghum and millet, being hidden in the braids of women, of elders and children, before being forced to board transatlantic slave ships. That the seed, it was illegal. Y'know you're not supposed to bring anything with you, but folks still believed in a future against all odds, and believed that the most cherished thing that they could carry with them would be the seeds. So here I am, like way up in the highlands of Oaxaca with these black-eyed peas, and I was like how do you have...? – I need to understand this'.

And the story Leah told was of trade between Indigenous peoples and enslaved Africans. 'So I dug a little bit into that and it turns out that in Haiti, which is my maternal homeland through my mother's side, that indeed the same pea, this black-eyed pea had been traded between the enslaved Africans and the Taíno people,³⁹ and I have both Taíno and Black ancestry as well as French and other things, and the thing that they traded the black-eyed pea for was the joumou.'

Joumou is a Haitian pumpkin used to make a soup that was favored by French colonizers and forbidden to the native Haitians. On January 1st, 1804 the revolting Haitians who had freed themselves from French enslavement celebrated by eating this soup. The soup has become a celebratory tradition for Haitians since that time, known as freedom soup, and is inscribed on UNESCO's list of intangible cultural heritage (UNESCO n.d.). As Leah sought to weave the history of resistance and resilience of these two seeds, the black-eyed pea and jomou, that had built relationships between peoples through trade, she highlighted how they both are central to New Year's Day celebrations for descendants of enslaved Africans:

'On the New Year, maybe related to the Haitian revolution maybe not, in some way we eat the black-eyed pea [...] It brings about wealth, fertility and good luck in the New Year. It's often served with cornbread and collard greens; the yellow of gold and the green of money to call in prosperity. And y'know folks in my community will often say you know an actual Black household if there are black-eyed peas on the New Year, and you know

³⁹ Indigenous people of land with the colonial names Florida and the Caribbean.

folks who really disconnected from their culture if there's no black-eyed peas on the New Year'.

The story Leah told differs from most in heirloom seed catalogues. In the story there was no single (white, male) plant breeder's genius, no gastronomic rediscovery by a (white, male) chef. It was a story enacted, populated, and told by people with melanated skin. It was a story not of conservation and rarity, but of resilience and abundance. In the story of the black-eyed pea and its kinship with *journou*, laws are broken, colonizers are overthrown, the foods of elites become the foods of the people, and humble foods celebrate the New Year as a time to exert freedom while hoping that wealth should come to your house – implicit in that hope is the idea that all who can eat these inexpensive foods in their humble preparations are deserving of wealth. In Leah's telling, the story of the black-eyed pea is a story of righteous resistance in a move towards equitable distribution of wealth. The premise of this story is definitively not nostalgic. It is a decolonizing narrative that draws on a history of grief and struggle, and so animates the type of educated hope Block describes that generates pre-figurative action (Bloch 1995; Dinerstein 2022). It is a powerful counter myth to the ones in most seed catalogues that rely on botany, a science steeped in Victorian Europe's ethno-centric enthusiasm for classification (Carolan 2011; Subramaniam 2021), and stories of botanical geniuses like Luther Burbank who pioneered the patenting of seed varieties, and well-illustrated seed catalogues for that matter (Smith 2010).

Leah closed her telling of the story of the black-eyed pea by drawing the story of George Washington Carver, an agronomist at the Historically Black Tuskegee University in the early twentieth century, who valued the black-eyed pea for its leguminous ability to fix nitrogen in the soil. Leah summarized Carver's teachings on this plant, 'You don't plant just to eat. You also plant to feed the soil life, and that's how you sustain your people over generations.' Donati has written of this approach by farmers like Leah, those who farm as activists for building alternative food systems, as 'multi-species gastronomy' (2014). As Donati writes, for these farmers the conviviality of the table extends to the soils they tend and the microbes within them – the soil life. By including this relationship of the black-eyed pea to soil

life, Leah's seed story decentered whiteness and decentered humans. It is a story from the perspective of the subjugated, a story of situated knowledge worth attending to because 'there is good reason to believe the vision is better from below the brilliant space platforms of the powerful' (Haraway 1988:583). This destabilization of the story creates openings for differently imagined futures.

The next speaker on the panel, the Mohawk intellectual, farmer, and seed keeper Rowen White, put forward an Indigenous ontology that similarly embraced more-than-human kinship as foundational to the sociality of seeds and seed keepers. In a calm, warm voice she said:

'What I've come to share with you is this beautiful red corn that I have before me, this red corn that I see as my treasured elder. My teacher. My constant friend. I've been growing my relationship with her for over twenty years and I always tell my children, my students, my community that sometimes I think I'm growing the corn but actually the corn is growing me, right'?

Rowen went on to describe her seventeen-year journey, from a childhood marked by disfunction rooted in intergenerational trauma and disconnection from Native American culture, to an adulthood in which she works to reclaim her Mohawk identity and rematriate the seeds of Indigenous peoples, with the corn as her guide. This story was followed by the stories of seeds that immigrated with people from Mexico in their migration to New York. The common themes in these tellings were of resilience, seeds that survived human grief and became allies in establishing metaphorical and literal roots for People of Color displaced from their ancestral lands through forced or economic migration. The seeds, both literally and metaphorically, brought the past into the present day and promised its survival into the future, allowing people who are nearly invisible in mainstream representations of agriculture to reclaim their role in its earliest foundation and assert the necessity of their participation in its future.

The purpose of telling these stories aligned with Horkheimer and Adorno's stated purpose of art, of which storytelling is part. They were not told to conserve the past,

but to redeem ‘the hopes of the past’ (Horkheimer and Adorno 1972:xv). In this case, the hopes the storytellers were trying to redeem were those they imagined were held by the ancestors of the panelists prior to the colonial period of genocide and enslavement. Each speaker made efforts to point out the temporality of this historical moment as a moment of healing through reconciliation with the past. Leah said, ‘And finally I now believe that we [Black people] are in this returning generation where we have the tools for healing enough that we can hear and reconcile our relationship with land.’ Raúl, a Latino farm worker, said that immigrant farm workers heard their ancestors’ voices ‘through the seeds that they plant, and thanks to that work many of them are now able to consider themselves farmers instead of only farm workers, knowing that they are continuing the legacy of their ancestors’. Rowen added,

‘I think that this work of reconciliation and reparations is the work of the times right now. That we need to be willing to look at each other eye to eye, heart to heart, and be willing to not only share our stories and our seed songs and our ideas, but have the courage to be able to have a reflection that reminds each and every one of you here in this room that you descend from people who sang seed songs too. And that you have deep ancestral connection to many different beautiful food traditions, and ways in which we can feed those things sprouting and taking life in this new food system that we know is possible’.

These seed keepers crafted stories that they relied upon to do the hard work of illuminating and mobilizing the human/seed relationships towards a reconciled future.

These stories do not change the physical make up of a seed nor of a person who stewards that seed, but they are powerful social actors. The stories we use to tell the stories that we tell changes the way we imagine how those stories will continue into the future (Haraway 2016). A change to the story we were told and are used to telling can feel threatening. Near the end of the Q&A segment of the conference session, an older white woman raised her hand. She was not someone I knew, but the sense of reverence and the fact that Rowen called on her by name made it clear to me that she was a respected elder in this community – which later was

confirmed by others. Here, I will call her Trish. Her tone held a live wire, the hum of anticipated hurt on the verge of igniting into righteous fury. She said,

‘This is a difficult one, but you just kind of brought it up, so I’m gonna throw it out and ask that you please listen. Leah, I learned from my mother, who learned from my grandmother to have black-eyed peas and collard greens and country ham and all of that on New Year’s Eve. Your description – from what I understand – your description of your New Year’s Day meal is exactly the same as mine. But my traditions are different. I’m from western North Carolina, and now upstate New York and we’re white. And to me I learned it from my elders, you learned it from your elders. Uh – it’s difficult to think, whether y’know it’s cultural appropriation, or do we each have a shared tradition? And is this an opening up of a conversation about unity or is it opening up a conversation about division? And I think that it’s more important to have the conversation of unity, that I think it’s neat you learned it from your grandmother, but I also think it’s neat that I learned it from my grandmother. Um, and how do we talk about these seeds and culinary traditions and the fact that in our families the children are actually more genetically homogenous than I am. Because I married a hundred-percent German, and so his traditions would be more lima beans and sauerkraut on New Year’s Day. But because I’m the one who does the cooking in our family, my children have acquired the tradition of my mother and my grandmother. So, I admire all of you, and I admire all of our positions, but at what point does sharing tradition and recognizing that shared traditions are healthy and good and give us more of a conversation of unity become more important?’

The room crackled with tension.

Trish sat down as Leah began her response by recalling everyone to the story of Otto File corn, to point to the deeper history of seeds. She continued,

‘My understanding from the scholarship of Michael Twitty and other Black culinary experts, anthropologists, is that the reason that Southern white folks have black-eyed peas and collard greens and cornbread on the New Year is

because my ancestors cooked for you. And made those foods, and that became part of the tradition. So, I think, it's not about unity versus division. It's about telling the truth, and the whole truth. So absolutely it makes sense that you would learn that from your grandmother, that your grandmother learned that – if you trace it all the way back, from probably the Black person who was probably enslaved who was probably working in their kitchens...'

At this point Trish interrupted, 'Not my family! Not my grandma!' Leah continued,

'...and sharing the culinary traditions. And so for us the difference of what's very important about cultural sharing is that it comes in the context of consent and accountability. So it comes in the context of these conversations where we share because we want to, and because we honor each other and honor each other's fullness and humanity, and we ask permission. And sometimes we ask forgiveness, y'know. For things that were taken. And also, that we have accountability, so that just means giving credit where it is due. And sharing resources that we have with folks from whom things were taken'.

This interaction encapsulates the ubiquity and confusion of class and racial divisions that permeated every aspect of social life during the Trump administration, and have disoriented progressives' understanding of their own political identity (Klein 2023), including the progressive left of the seed keeping community. It illustrates the generational differences between baby boomers' allegiance to meritocracy with the millennial generation's preoccupation with social justice. Baby boomer progressivism, as voiced by Trish, upholds the grassroots direct action of the heirloom seed saving community that developed as a part of the 1970's counter-cuisine (Belasco 2007), but does so without interrogating what stories are excluded by the restorative nostalgia embedded in that work.

The views of the panelists are better understood as falling within the value set of 'food justice', that seeks to name and address systemic inequities within the good

food movement (Holt-Giménez and Wang 2011). Trish's comments and behavior can be analyzed as expressions of white fragility in that she places a higher value on social accord than on reparations of harm done and in how she personalizes the history of enslavement of Black people by white people in order to excuse herself from culpability.⁴⁰ She tries to defend the story she has been telling, understandably since this story is intrinsic to her own identity making, by insisting that a class analysis aligning her poor family with Leah's poor family is more applicable than a racial analysis. Trish further obfuscates and invalidates the racialization of seed stories by conflating race, a social construct (Frankenberg 1993), with genetics by bringing up the example of her children's 'hundred-percent German' father.

In subsequent conversations about this incident, and there were many both during the remainder of the conference and in the year that followed, everyone believed Trish to be a good and kind person who was flummoxed by the sudden shifting in the terrain where she had built her life and legacy. White people like Trish who find identity in heritage seed narratives can struggle with counter myths that confront the context of white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy that has underpinned and privileged white people's relationship to land, food and seed.

It is terrible to realize that something so horrific as white supremacy has been the air you are breathing, the soil you till, the seed you plant as you build your self-narrative and attempt to make a better future. Two aspects of white supremacy are likely contributors to the clash between Tish and Leah that day. First, because white people benefit from white supremacy and structural racism, that structure is nearly impossible for a white person to discern without purposeful effort (McIntosh and Cleveland 1990). Second, white supremacy requires perfection of white people in order to maintain their supremacy (Jones and Okun 2001), and this perfectionism can be redoubled upon white women who must also contend with the rigidity of allowable female behavior under patriarchy. To 'tell the truth' as Leah

⁴⁰ White fragility is a term describing defensive responses by white people when confronted by information about racial inequity and injustice.

asked, would mean that the story that was previously being told was wrong. Here, perhaps surprisingly, we find the intersection of nostalgia and white supremacy that is more commonly identified in populist nationalism, especially following Trump's presidency (De Genova 2019). Nostalgia relies on an unchanging story, even if that story wasn't so great, as Stewart's ethnography of coal mining communities in West Virginia (who were poor, white, and southern like Trish's family) demonstrates (1996). This form of nostalgia is concerned with reproduction rather than regeneration.

Like the settler colonial nostalgia described in Chapter Three, heirloom seed nostalgia can be clonal rather than recombinant. To clone the future, the present must hold, and Trish's appeal for unity can be read in this light. Leah's insistence that it was not a question of division or unity, but of consent offers a novel approach to reconciliation. Seeking consent to tell another's story is an acknowledgment of the myth and the countermyth that brings both into dialogical relationship; this illuminates how myths interanimate each other, troubling 'any counter-dominant myth binary' (Sheridan-Rabideau 2001:465). Stepping away from binaries and the univocal stories they presuppose, reconciliation calls for polyvocal storytelling. Haraway may recognize polyvocal seed stories as 'compost stories' that harness the power of life and death towards regeneration (2019:567). In the remainder of this chapter I turn my attention to attempts to compost seed stories to see what futures may grow from that reclaimed fertility.

Kitchen Cultivars

I've become convinced of the need and possibility for consent-based reconciliation in seed work through a Glynwood project that I helped to conceive and later co-led, Kitchen Cultivars. The project went through significant evolution from its inception in 2015. What began as a project steeped in the heirloom seed ethos transformed into a project about seeds, food, and people in diaspora. The trajectory of Kitchen Cultivars followed shifts in the broader food movement during these years, and the ways in which new and returning project participants grappled with the concept of cultural appropriation demonstrates the provocations and possibilities of a consent-based approach to reconciliation as a strategy for collective future making.

A bean was the impetus for the project. The bean is called Hank's X-Tra Special Baking Bean and it has a charismatic story. When K Greene was beginning the seed library, their colleague at the public library where K worked brought them a seed that her father, Hank, had grown for decades in his garden in Ghent, New York. The bean had been selected by Hank, season on season, to be best suited for the traditional dish of New England baked beans. It had just the right creamy flesh for the savory sweet preparation and sturdy skin to withstand the slow cooking that distinguishes a really fine version of the dish. Hank had died, and his daughter had nearly eaten her way through what was left of the beans before realizing it, at which point she brought a half-filled mason jar to K and asked for their help. This seed became the inspiration for the Hudson Valley Seed Library, later renamed the Hudson Valley Seed Company.

I met K a decade later, in 2015, when I was employed at Slow Food USA and managing the agrobiodiversity folk conservation project The Ark of Taste. Sara Grady, who worked at Glynwood at the time, brought us together to develop a project to increase the supply and fame of Hank's, we called the project Kitchen Cultivars. In that first year the goal was to bring together small-scale farmers to grow the bean and high-end chefs to cook with it and promote it, the ultimate aim being to create a market for regionally grown dried beans. Under Sara's leadership, that first year was by all accounts a great success. Promotional dinners featuring Hank's X-Tra Special Baking Bean quickly sold out at the eight participating restaurants, we presented the project at an event produced by the Museum of Food and Drink in Brooklyn, and the project was written up in the New Yorker (Owen 2016). It was, in fact, so successful that the stock of beans grown by the seven participating farms increased from fourteen pounds to over one hundred, pounds which then nearly sold out. Ironically, this left only a small amount of beans to be replanted.

In spring of 2016 there were so few beans to plant, that Sara and K decided to forgo bean dinners in order to regenerate the supply of Hank's and to focus culinary promotion on the Bridge to Paris Pepper and the Long Island Cheese

Pumpkin instead. I was not engaged with Kitchen Cultivars in 2016, but am aware of some challenges faced that year. The pumpkin and pepper proved to be less charismatic than the bean and more difficult to store and transport than the shelf-stable bean had been. Still, chefs and the public were engaged and excited by the idea of rescuing endangered foods, as the Ark of Taste catalogue describes the foods it lists (Shields and Kennedy Lord 2023), which includes both Hank's X-Tra Special and the Long Island Cheese Pumpkin. This enthusiasm is demonstrated by the increased number of participants that year: seventeen farms and fourteen restaurants.

During the first two seasons of the project, only passing reference was made to the fact that all three crops, like the Otto File corn, would have been developed and cultivated first by peoples Indigenous to the Americas. Indeed Hank's, Otto File, and the Long Island Cheese Pumpkin⁴¹ are representatives of the famous 'three sisters' that Indigenous peoples of the Americas interplanted as part of their agricultural practice based on the understanding that each plant provided beneficial habitat to the others. However, the predominantly white farmers, chefs and eaters who engaged in these years of Kitchen Cultivars were oriented to the world of seed saving through a settler colonial and neoliberal narrative that something nearly lost had been 'rediscovered' and was now being 'saved' through our righteous consumption. The project enacted determinate future making praxes, with the clear goal of a future wherein these foods were plentiful. I detail the trajectory of the project to illustrate how despair at the loss of agrobiodiversity fueled a nostalgic approach to the loss that manifested as market-oriented conservation to recreate a past era of seed and food production.

The first fundamental shift in Kitchen Cultivars came in 2017. I had just joined Glynwood as an employee. K, Sara and I met to discuss what heirloom seed we

⁴¹ The Long Island Cheese Pumpkin once was the centerpiece of a 'large project' based on the belief that the variety was 'an heirloom saved by a singular seed saver when it was freely available', but subsequent research revealed that it was in fact an 'indigenous squash to the Americas' and is likely a newer cross rather than a specific varietal heirloom. The project has been disbanded, and the reason given is that 'Unfortunately, as a general rule, singular perspective narratives of seeds are sometimes told with an agenda', and the project will no longer amplify the uncomplicated narrative. (LIRSC n.d.)

would champion in the coming season. So, we discussed *why* an heirloom at risk of extinction was compelling, and what elements of that interest would continue to speak to the cohort of chefs and farmers engaged in the project. One goal was to increase the availability of regionally adapted seeds that were available outside of the centrally controlled seed industry to create the conditions for a robust regional seed economy. Another goal was to increase the viability of regional farms by developing a high-end market for crops chefs prized. Additionally, we wanted to improve the viability of restaurants utilizing regionally grown foods by identifying crops that would increase the diversity of tasty and useful foods grown regionally that are available to chefs. Our line of thinking in this project design clearly demonstrates the market imperative present in alternative food systems thinking that was and is shaped by both previous successes and the need to demonstrate to funders with philanthrocapitalist goals (as described in Chapter Four) the potential for scalable production and economic impact of the project to get their financial support.

Our articulation of goals called for a new approach. Instead of championing one variety, we would conduct trials of a crop category that had potential to answer these criteria for ecological and market viability. We termed this ‘creating tomorrow’s heirlooms’. In conversation with previous Kitchen Cultivars participants, the chefs and farmers identified a shared need for late season crops that could withstand medium-term storage and be tasty raw. In short, we wanted seeds that would grow to be delicious winter salads. The 2017 crop categories we chose to trial were escarole and color-fleshed radishes. The trial model we utilized is known as the mother-daughter model. The mother farm conducts a rigorously designed and monitored trial of all varieties while the daughter farms each grow a subset of the varieties with less rigorous trial design. The purpose was to gather both useful quantitative data on yield, vitality, etc. and more qualitative data as to how these varieties responded to the varied real-world practices of the participating farms. Instead of public events, we hosted an end-of-season evaluation that brought farmers and chefs together to review the growing data and perform cooking and taste evaluations. An important finding from that day is that no human should attempt to eat a dozen varieties of escarole in one sitting. Not even on a dare.

Another critical conversation began at that evaluation day. Farmers were incredibly interested to take part in a sensory evaluation, something few had ever done before, and twenty-two crammed themselves into the clapboard house at the mother-site farm. Chefs were less keen, possibly because the distance to get to a farm seems long to chefs while few farmers I know think much of driving an hour or longer. In any case, only five were in attendance.

The day began with a brief overview of the project, during which K described sourcing the seeds for what we hoped would be ‘tomorrow’s Hudson Valley heirlooms’ from seed repositories around the globe. We then spent hours working our way clockwise around plates with morsels of escarole and then around plates with jewel-like cubes of pink, green, and purple radishes. I had explained to the group some of the principles and techniques for performing taste evaluations and handed out worksheets to complete. We also discussed our preferences and dislikes in a more freeform way, giving opportunity for farmers to talk about which radish might best aerate their soil by growing a long and sturdy root or for chefs to share their preference for certain sizes as suit aesthetic desires or storage limitations.

Some varieties of the two crops clearly won out over others. The unfortunately named but delicious Green Meat radish is one I have since seen on offer from many of the farms that participated in that year’s grow outs. Another radish fared particularly poorly. It had a pale green flesh and somewhat musty flavor and poor texture with no real snap. As we closed the day out, we offered those gathered to take home any of the unused harvest from the trial plots. I was surprised to see one chef, the only Asian person in attendance, go straight for the least popular radish. When K asked her why she wanted it, she let us know that we’d prepared it all wrong. This radish was meant for *dongchimi*, a Korean vegetable fermentation translated as water kimchi. Months later, K tasted the finished *dongchimi* and confirmed that it was delicious.

Heading into the 2018 growing season, we decided to stay our course with the new trial model and set a primary goal of improving quantitative data collection, better supporting daughter-site farms, and attracting more culinary participants. For those reasons, we chose miniature heading lettuces as the primary trial crop. Chefs told us they wanted these lettuces that matured at a small size because they were as aesthetically pleasing as baby lettuces but sturdier, while farmers wanted a single serving lettuce to offer in direct-to-consumer outlets like farmers markets. But throughout that season K and I were preoccupied with the accidental knowledge of *dongchimi* that we'd acquired at the sensory evaluation and the gap it revealed in our project design.

The end-of-season group evaluation was hosted at Glynwood that year. In the formal living room of Perkins House,⁴² we laid out our new formulation for the project. In the previous two seasons our aim had been to increase community knowledge of varieties that could be well suited to the agricultural and culinary needs of our regional food system. Moving forward, we wanted to add an additional element, to trial for cultural relevance. We wanted to understand how these varieties fit into the fullness of the more-than-human eco-society that is the food system. We challenged the thirty or so attendees to think with us about what crop category would give us the opportunity to find varieties that would have culinary, agricultural, and cultural value to the growers, cooks, and eaters of our region. The provocation to that room of predominantly white people was to work towards moving beyond the euro-centric ingredient list we'd worked with in previous years, when even crops originating on this continent were known by the names European settlers and their descendants had given them, and to identify crops that would be of value to the people who live here now. What crop would do well in the majority Black city of Poughkeepsie? Amongst the immigrants from Pueblo, Mexico who dominate the restaurant scene in Newburgh?

⁴² This building had been called the 'Main House'. In 2018 the name was changed after it was pointed out by Black women who arrived to facilitate an anti-racism training for Glynwood staff that they were uncomfortable being instructed to 'go the Main House' because of its echoes of plantation culture, including slavery.

It felt like opening the windows of a dusty attic. It felt like airing out the heirlooms. The season ahead was the most engaged and most challenging for the project.

The conversations that day set some parameters for crop selection for the 2019 season. Chefs wanted a new cooking green. Everyone was pretty sick of kale. K and I wanted a crop that was used in foodways across the globe, especially foodways that corresponded to people residing in this region. A farmer friend told me that the migrant Jamaican orchard crew where she worked had brought amaranth seeds to New York and asked the vegetable crew to grow them for them. I was excited and urged K to look into it further. Amaranth, best known to both of us as a grain common with the gluten free crowd, was eaten as a vegetable from Taiwan to Greece to Suriname. K set about sourcing seeds and overseeing work with an Extension Agent to lay out the trial design.⁴³ I reached out to two chefs I knew, young women of color deeply engaged in cultural recovery work through cooking, to contract as researchers on the cultural piece of the project. Anya Peters' work focused on Caribbean foodways and Chinchakriya Un's on Khmer cooking (Stanek 2018; Sontag 2019). Both engaged their family elders in documenting and sharing cooking traditions through celebratory pop-up meals. Both understood their work as healing intergenerational trauma. Together, K and I recruited farms to participate.

As the growing season set out, Kitchen Cultivars' participants were more demographically diverse than in any previous year. This had been the explicit goal in choosing a crop that would resonate beyond European inflected farm-to-table cuisine. It was still, however, a project led by two white people. This fact was lost on no one. Many hours of conversation with the project team, participants, and, as I heard secondhand, amongst people unaffiliated with the project were spent

⁴³ Extension Agents are employees of land-grant universities whose responsibility is to educated farmers and the broader community on crop production and yield, food and nutrition, animal husbandry, gardening, and other topics. Land-grant universities are those that are funded by the state legislature under the Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890. The 1862 act was signed by President Abraham Lincoln and gave government owned land to the universities. The Smithe Lever Act of 1914 established Cooperative Extension as a partnership between the United States Department of Agriculture and land-grant universities with the intent of disseminating research findings to those who would benefit from their implementation. In New York State, Extension agencies are organized by county and affiliated with Cornell University.

reflecting on the power dynamics this implied and the ethical dilemmas it presented. A gathering for the project in mid-summer exemplified the desire to do collaborative, pre-figurative work amongst actors in the Hudson Valley alternative food system despite its fraught nature as well as the proliferation of divergent expectations that complicate such collaborations.

In answer to the farmers' desire in previous seasons to better understand the trial design, we planned a tour of the mother-site farm in July of 2019. The mother-site this year was at the Hudson Valley Seed Company's farm, so we had the opportunity to offer education on seed farming, seed saving, and seed commerce. We designed received educational components to engage both embodied knowledge and horticultural education in equal measure, attempting make room for situated knowledge production (Haraway 1988). The intent was to give validity to each participant as both a creator and recipient of knowledge, and by extension disrupt the hierarchies of knowledge imposed by the schematics of Western science. Following this, K and I planned to facilitate a group discussion about seed origin, seed ethics, and cultural appropriation.

The day of the mother site visit was sunny and hot. The Hudson Valley Seed Company was then located at a former Ukrainian summer camp. The property has been converted into a communal housing project that K and his partner Doug were a part of founding. The Seed Company occupied two buildings of the rural complex. One was a clapboard building with offices upstairs, seed packing and shipping workspace downstairs, and an efficiency style apartment for housing guests and renting out on Air BnB for extra income. The other was a trailer unit with cold storage for seeds. The growing fields were behind these buildings and took up less than half an acre. As we prepared for folks to arrive, the assembled team laid out a table with water and snacks, set up a shade covering, and laid out a blanket with crayons and coloring pages illustrating a seed's lifecycle for the farmers' children to entertain themselves with during the event.

Tensions amongst the project team were under the surface of every interaction, as some of the program staff, employees of the non-profit Seedshed that K had

recently founded to house the educational work they did, had raised concerns about the project overall in the preceding weeks during planning meetings for the day. Specifically, they were concerned that the knowledge being produced through Kitchen Cultivars amounted to cultural extraction. I was keenly aware of the ways in which, amongst the people working to host the event, white bodies were in proximity to other white bodies, while bodies of color grouped together and I wondered what it might mean for the gathering to come. Farm teams began arriving at the appointed time.

About thirty people eventually assembled. The group included people from an array of ages, genders, and races though women and white people were most represented. After a welcome and land acknowledgement, the group was split into two. One group was led by K who brought people into beds of poppies to describe the process of growing plants for seed by asking them to engage sensorially with the plants – to focus on seeing, hearing, and touching the plants as a way of knowing them. The other group went to the rigidly ordered trial beds with the Cornell Cooperative Extension Educator who had designed the trials. Halfway through the time for this part of the event, the groups switched.

I joined one of the groups visiting the amaranth trial beds. The Extension agent described the studies she had accessed on trialing for this crop and how that academic knowledge had been translated to the physical layout of the beds in prescribed distance between the seeds when they were planted. She noted how little research there was available on growing amaranth as a vegetable, and described how the data being collected at this site and at the daughter sites was predicated on a select set of desirable attributes like plant vigor, leaf size, and height. Looking along the rows, the plants expressed a wide range of phenotypic diversity.

Some were tall with lush, green leaves the size of your palm that came to a crisp point. Others were a rich maroon and only a couple inches tall with tiny, crenellated leaves. The Extension Agent admitted that she didn't actually know what should be measured – was a small leaf or a big leaf preferable? Could or should it be

harvested several times or just once? Amaranth wasn't a part of her own agricultural or culinary experiences so she had no tangible reference point. The questions the group asked displayed the multitude of perspectives they held. Some farmers asked technical questions about preventing the plant from going to seed and commented on differences between how the plants were growing in their own trial plots. Others questioned the validity of double-blind scientific process for this kind of work. One asked if we knew whether we had the right to be planting these seeds at all. Because of the double-blind, trial participants could not know the communities of origin of these specific varieties and did not know if they were sacred to their communities of origin. This farmer expressed concern that we may be trialing plants for market that it would be unethical to sell because of their cultural significance. Consent had not been figured into the trial design.

As the group came back together, K and I set out to frame and facilitate a conversation about cultural appropriation. Though I wouldn't have used these words at the time, we were attempting to collectively educate hope (Dinerstein 2015). The large group sat in a wide circle. K and I laid out the evolution of Kitchen Cultivars and the format of the trials this year. We defined cultural appropriation as it relates to seeds and plants as a process whereby the seed and the crop are stripped of their cultural context and presented by white people as newly discovered novelties, or in other cases white farmers and chefs may exoticize a crop based on its culture of origin to sell it to a primarily white consumer at a high price. Naming these harms opened the possibility for collectively grieving them. I introduced the research we had engaged chefs Chinchakriya and Anya to do as an attempt to address the hazards of cultural appropriation and encourage cultural appreciation instead. Placing the food we were working with, amaranth, in cultural context had the potential to metabolize grief into educated hope. The chefs then spoke to the research they had underway, which included visiting and interviewing chefs and growers who had long relationships with this crop, designing an in-kitchen trial element for partner chefs to participate in, and trialing the varieties in their own kitchens. The discussion amongst participants that followed was in some ways unsurprising, but also reinforced the fact that immigrants and People of Color are not a monolith with one viewpoint any more than white people are. Their

opinions varied on what constitutes cultural appropriation and whether we ought to worry about it at all.

Several of the first voices to speak were from white people in high status positions who praised what they perceived as the progressive approach of this project. They marked its inclusion of cultural concerns, sensory data, and *in situ* conservation. As People of Color began to ask questions and weigh in, the discussion became more critical. Some described how this project had given them the opportunity to learn to grow callaloo (as amaranth is known in Caribbean foodways) and that their existing customers were glad to have it. They asked who the intended customers were for the white lead farms. The farmers of color who spoke then assumed that the white led farms were looking to sell their crops at farmers' markets and to fine restaurants, following the virtuous consumption logics described in Chapter Two.

At this point an Indian farmer broke in. His farm was just a couple of seasons in and his business model was to sell specialty Southeast Asian crops to high end chefs and the wealthy classes of the Indian diaspora. 'I want to know where I can sell this too. Do you have chefs ready to buy it from me at a good price? Isn't that what this project is supposed to do? I don't care what color they are, I just want to get a good price. Otherwise, why plant this crop at all'. He admitted he liked amaranth and was familiar with it, but saw no reason to work with the project if it wasn't building a profitable market. Others saw the profit motive as at the core of what was suspicious about the project. Still others were concerned as to how knowledge created by the project would be disseminated.

While K and I had assumed that open-source sharing was the ideal, others noted that it's only open source if you know where to look. Some farmers questioned whether by putting it out for anyone to use it might be made available for extractive profiteering – the same contradiction faced by seed conservation facilities like the Svalbard Seed Vault that are legally obligated to make genetic material they hold openly available to anyone, including global corporations.

The conversation shifted for the rest of the afternoon when one of the Seedshed staff, who had worked on Kitchen Cultivars for several seasons, raised a concern she had expressed to the programming team on several previous occasions. She asked, knowing the answer, *who* had decided to trial amaranth in the first place. I said that it had been K and I. She called into question the appropriateness of two white people deciding to work with a crop they did not know, with a project that historically was primarily by and for white people, rather than shifting resources and power to people who were already connected to and growing that crop. This line of discussion continued into the group sensory evaluations held a few weeks later, in early August. In the notes that the same project staffer took for the meeting, she documents her contribution to the conversation:

‘I think these questions – how do we hold onto amaranth’s cultural importance, how do we avoid making it the next superfood, how do we feed lots of people with a culturally relevant crop while still valuing the labor behind growing the crop – are all framed by a perspective of people who do not already have a connection to this crop that is culturally important to so many others. These questions become much simpler to answer when we start prioritizing and addressing the question: What can we do as institutions, as programs, as individuals, to share resources and power with farmers of color and communities of color? Amaranth holds cultural significance to many communities of color, and there are already farmers growing it and a lot of us are growing it for our communities who already know it. (Added note: Our main concern is not avoiding committing cultural appropriation, we’re trying to resist cultural appropriation/erasure of our foods.) What resources do we [farmers of color] need to connect the produce we’re growing with the communities who want it? Access to land, access to channels of distribution to reach markets in NYC when production scale/transportation is a barrier?’

These questions are not so simple to answer. Neither the ones that are answerable with the trial plots, sensory worksheet, and recorded interviews that produced data for the 2019 season of Kitchen Cultivars, nor the ones that ask how to address structural oppression of farmers of color. The prefigurative work that Kitchen

Cultivars invited, to draw strength from diversity of participants and aims and ultimately of seeds, also stretched it to the point that it could no longer hold within the (white) frames of the institutions and ontological practices that housed it.

Due to difficulty in regaining project mission alignment amongst the organizing team as well as shifting organizational priorities and staffing at both Glynwood and Seedshed, Kitchen Cultivars has been on hiatus since 2019 and no summative report on the data collected has been released. Like one of David Harvey's failed utopias, Kitchen Cultivars succeeded in creating spatio-temporally grounded moments of embodied learning and connection, while also demonstrating foundational errors that serve as a cautionary tale to other enactments of our variably possible futures (Harvey 2000). There is value in the rupture, because it begs us to ask what is better? What other ways could we do this?

Rematriation

I began this chapter with the story of corn as exemplifying the commodification of seed as it became further and further disembedded from its cultural origins (Kopytoff 1986; Polanyi 2014). In contrast, Rowen White described her approach to seeds as an Indigenous woman, and is quoted speaking of corn as her elder, teacher, and friend. White's relationship to corn moves past even a more-than-human perspective to include seeds in her kinship network. In her book chapter 'Planting Sacred Seeds in a Modern World', White asks, 'Can we envision the "seed commons" and coordinate collaborative efforts to care for and protect our seeds in an appropriate relationship to our Indigenous cosmologies? How do we re-create regenerative seed and food economies that treat seeds not as objects or as commodities but as living and breathing relatives?' (White 2019:194). In the Hudson Valley, an attempt to answer White's questions is being made in the rich soil of Ulster County.

A collaboration between the St. Regis Mohawk/Akwesasne community of far-northern New York,⁴⁴ the Hudson Valley Farm Hub, and Seedshed initiated work to rematriate seeds from Indigenous foodways to the Hudson Valley.⁴⁵ The Farm Hub (as it is commonly called) provides land and technical support like preparing the soil with tractors and K oversees the planting of seeds that have been provided or identified by the people of Akwesasne as needed in their community. I went to participate in this work by volunteering for a community workday at the Seed Rematriation Garden in May of 2018.

I drove the winding road to the Farm Hub in Hurley. The day was warm but gray, sodden. Upon arriving at the Farm Hub the first thing I always notice is the fleet of massive farm machinery. The financial resources of the Farm Hub are a frequent subject of conversation in the farmy circles of the Hudson Valley. The Farm Hub is a non-profit that was established with a \$13 million investment by the NoVo Foundation, which is still its sole funder (NoVo Foundation Helps Create “Farm Hub” n.d.). The foundation is led by Peter Buffett, son of multimillionaire and tenth richest man in the world Warren Buffett. Peter Buffett lives 15 minutes’ drive from the Farm Hub in Kingston, where his philanthropy has had an oversized and transformative effect on the small city (Gunther 2020). The 1,500 acres of land that the Farm Hub occupies is itself very valuable; more than one person has told me that they think the Farm Hub’s noblest mission would be to give that land away to people who can farm it.

The Farm Hub uses the land as an educational tool to provide farmer training, conduct research, and demonstrate farming technological advances in order to ‘foster an equitable and ecologically resilient food system in the Hudson Valley’ (About n.d.). Past the tractor fleet, the fields stretch out along a creek and include intensively farmed vegetable crops such as broccoli. Other plots are used by researchers trying to establish meadows from various seed mixes that they

⁴⁴ Akwesasne is territory of the Mowhawk Nation that sits in both what is otherwise known as Canada and the United States.

⁴⁵ Seedshed closed in 2021, but K Greene continues the work begun through this partnership as a Farm Hub employee responsible for their Seed Project.

evaluate for their efficacy as ecological pest management. The hypothesis is that these meadows will attract pests away from the food crops while providing habitat for beneficial insects. It is such a lot of land that for my volunteer shift to plant at the Rematriation Seed Garden a van had to be sent to fetch me from the parking area to drive to the garden location.

Contrasting with the shiny metal of the farm equipment and low sitting buildings at the entrance of the Farm Hub, the entrance of the garden was an arch of woven branches with small 'insect hotels' perched within.⁴⁶ I pulled on my gardening gloves and joined my fellow volunteers as K began the welcome for the day. K initiated with a land acknowledgment and description of the aim of the overall project to grow plants of value to the Akwesasne and return the crop and the seeds to the Akwesasne, at which point they would control how they would be shared or used.

Then we were set to our different tasks. I chose to pitch in with moving dirt about. I can no longer remember the purpose of this bout of shoveling, moving dirt is a task so common to volunteering to help out in a farm or garden that I'm sure I didn't much care why we were doing it and may not have known in the first place. My fellow dirt movers were two middle-aged, white women. I asked why they had volunteered, and they said they were avid gardeners and customers of the Hudson Valley Seed Company, and it seemed like a nice thing to do. The conversation moved on to their kids and eventually dwindled along with the pile of soil.

Casting about for a solo activity, K suggested that I help to plant the tobacco seedlings. As a crop that likes long hot summers, this tobacco had been planted earlier in greenhouses to give it a head start. I'd never encountered the plant in its living form, but was aware of its status as sacred medicine in many Indigenous cosmologies. It looked like any garden flower to me, and I'd wanted to be part of producing food, but I was there to do whatever needed doing. I dug shallow holes

⁴⁶ An 'insect hotel' is a human made structure meant to provide refuge to beneficial insects, in this case constructed primarily of small bamboo tubes bundled together.

in the moist earth with a spade, and as I began to relate with the tobacco plants I was overcome by their beauty. Their perfume was heady and rich, like nothing I had smelled before and their leaves velvety. As I teased their coiled roots a bit looser so they could make a firm grasp in the soil, I enjoyed the physical intimacy of the act, and felt protective as I patted them into their new location. Ken told me in a later interview:

‘A big part of my work with seeds is also about joy. There’s so much involved in people forming a closer relationship with plants and understanding the full lifecycle of plants that is not just about food – that’s not just about what are we getting from this, that’s not just about the commodity piece or the nutrition piece, but is also about our spiritual and emotional and psychological health in terms of the separation that has been created between the earth and humans and between plants and people’.

Up until that time with the tobacco, I had felt disappointed in the day. I had been looking for an intercultural exchange, for a window into Indigenous cosmologies that I believed could only be achieved through contact with an Indigenous person, or barring that at least some like-minded settlers. Instead, I felt profoundly that the tobacco plants were showing me something I hadn’t seen or experienced before and were teaching me a simple lesson that I struggle to find words for.

The feeling of these plants in this place with me in this moment was visceral. My senses were filled fully by what was happening in the square meter of tobacco seedlings that I had placed in the one place that they would live for the rest of their lives, maturing and producing seeds to sprout the next generation. I felt a connection of care to these plants because I was helping them to do something they could not do alone. My experience, like all human experience, was ‘grounded in bodily movement within a social and material environment’ (Jackson 1983:330). Knowing the social reality of the dispossession of this plant and its people from this land, I related through that knowledge to the material world, and felt that this educated hope was enabling the prefigurative practice of planting the tobacco. These plants held the generations before them and those to come, in land their kin had inhabited generations before and may do again for generations to come. The

future the tobacco plants and I were making together was both real and indeterminate.

Returning the seed to the land is only one element of the concept of rematriation, for which the garden where that tobacco grew is named. The word is related, White writes, to the more familiar concept of repatriation of items of 'cultural patrimony' that were obtained 'usually through an act of theft in the context of imperialism, colonialism, or war' to native communities (White 2019:195). She continues, 'In the seed movement we have begun to use the term "rematriation" in relation to bringing these seeds home again. In many communities, including my own Mohawk tradition, the responsibility of caring for the seeds over the generations is ultimately within the women's realm. Both men and women farm and plant seeds, but their care and stewardship are part of the women's' bundle of responsibility. So the word "rematriation" reflects the restoration of the feminine seeds back into the communities of origin' (White 2019:195). At a summer solstice event presided over by Rowen at the Native Seed Sanctuary at the Farm Hub, I was struck by the many challenges to fully rematriating Indigenous seeds.

When I arrived, I said hello to friends as we walked past a large swath of blooming sunflowers, a plant native to North America, and down to the check-in tent. In the shade tent were Rowen White and Mary Arquette, both formal partners on the Native American Seed Sanctuary (as it was then called) as well as Rowen's daughter. The other twenty or so people were mostly white and young, some I recognized as apprentices on farms in the region and others as employees of food and farming non-profits. We gathered in a loose circle to begin the afternoon. The solstice sun beat down in waves of heat as the programming commenced with land acknowledgement, welcomes from the executive director of the Farm Hub, K and Rowen. Rowen explained for the group the concept of rematriation. She told the story of the seeds that had been planted in this bit of land, one a gourd that could grow to well over a meter long. We were invited to step into the three sisters garden and spend time with these plants as we would visit our relatives, to step beneath the nodding heads of sunflowers as large as hubcaps, to feel the rough-smooth flesh of the gourd, to admire the plump seed pods.

When we reassembled Rowen reminded us of the reason for the Native Seed Sanctuary, in the process inviting us to practice collective grief. The lands here had once been Mohawk territory, but the forces of genocide and colonization drove the people and the seeds from this land. Some of these people and their descendants eventually arrived in Akwesasne; some of the seeds and their descendants traveled there but very few. Indigenous seeds found their way into the hands of settler farmers, of seed catalogues, of seed banks. Now the people and the seeds were reunited on this land. The Native American Seed Sanctuary was established in recognition that there is a relationship between the seed and the people and the land that was severed, and in an attempt to heal it.

But full rematriation of these seeds cannot be done synchronously. The seed can be planted in the land, but the Mohawk cannot return to live the season there with the plants, to grow and harvest them throughout their life cycle. Instead, the seed is gathered and brought to Akwesasne at the end of the growing the season. This project prioritizes addressing the harm done to the relationship of seed to land, and in so doing decenters the human. It is taking seriously equity in more-than-human kinship, and attending to the needs that can be attended to while framing the relationships that are mended or arise between humans in the doing of the work as an ancillary benefit. The story of these seeds is uncertain, it is layered temporally and relationally, it is a story that makes indeterminate futures visible.

Even as we gathered that day to perform acts of exchange, appreciation, and rematriation across cultures and species, the external factors that made a full return of cultures and seeds to the land impossible were also present. Between the three sisters garden and the parking area was a large swath of smaller headed sunflowers, the kind that produce sunchokes that are part of Indigenous American foodways. When one of the speakers was noting the significance of this land as part of ancestral Mohawk territory, they pointed out that those sunflowers grew on

the planned path of the Pilgrim Pipeline⁴⁷ (Farmland-Pipeline-Handout-170127.Pdf n.d.). This proposed gas and oil pipeline was poised to overtake the regrowth of Indigenous plants and culture, even as the pilgrims for whom it was named had been the first wave of colonists who exploited and uprooted the ancestors of the living things hosting the present-day settlers gathered under the solstice sun.

Neither the Mohawk culture that existed in the Hudson Valley nor the more-than-human society it valued can be recreated as it was. It was nearly eradicated and so conservation is not an option, but creating futures wherein Indigenous relationships can thrive under these changed circumstances is a task furthered by educated hope. The prefigurative work done by the Native American Seed Sanctuary is based in reconciliation through consent of all parties, peoples and plants, and the assemblage of their differences into a more deeply connected community.

Through the work of the sanctuary, indeterminate future making praxes happen mentally and physically. Within individuals' minds, in bodies both individually and collectively, in physical space, and within the specificity of the historical moment, futures proliferate. In the winter, I attended a harvest event at the Native Seed Sanctuary that exemplified this. The weather threatened rain, and everything for the event had been set up inside of a hoop house covered in plastic sheeting that thwacked with the wind against the steel ribs of the structure. Several folding tables were set up. One had some snacks including baked treats made by a Russian émigré and forager, from her forest findings. Other tables displayed gourds and corn cobs that had been harvested from the sanctuary.

In the center of the hoop house, on the ground, were piled dried corn cobs with blue-black, ruby, ochre, white, and citrine kernels, and flaring tails of papery husk. Nearby a heap of dried bean pods lay on a cloth. Blue buckets from a hardware store were scattered about, some filled with more bean pods. The group was called to order, and an elder began the gathering. Steven McComber is a Mohawk seed

⁴⁷ Coordinated efforts to halt this pipeline, chief amongst them the Ramapough Lenape Nation, succeeded when developers abandoned it in 2017.

saver, and that day he wore a headdress of turkey feathers with beaded headband, a shirt patterned in light blue with ribbon decorating the chest that was belted with another fine piece of beadwork, blue jeans, and sturdy tennis shoes. He sang a song to the seeds, then introduced himself and welcomed everyone there in Akwesasne.⁴⁸ He told us that the seeds had asked to come to this land, to grow here where their ancestors had grown, and that we were there to help them on the next step of their journey back to Akwesasne and their people. Steven spoke of the corn, telling us it was an important variety for use in the coming-of-age ceremonies in Akwesasne and that this harvest would make it possible to use the correct variety for those ceremonies this year. His words were interpreted for the group into both Spanish and English.

This multi-lingual approach to programming a gathering is an example of what practitioners call language justice. It is a community organizing tool that goes beyond interpretation to create inclusive spaces where all languages are valued equally and people are able most fully to express themselves. Rather than the dominant language being translated for speakers of a marginalized language, all languages are translated and all participants are encouraged to speak in the language in which they are most comfortable. While it can be time consuming, it is also a powerful tool for decolonizing spaces. Even the spaciousness of time required to practice language justice can be viewed as oppositional to white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy's valuation of efficiency. I also saw in the multi-lingual communication a recombinant approach to relationship building that mirrors the way in which seeds reproduce plants. Weaving the multiple linguistic traditions of the peoples present that day into one relational space created a novel mixture of thought and expression, reminding me of seed produced through open pollination, that was both diverse and whole unto itself. In this way, language justice is mental prefiguration taking embodied form through speaking and listening, both as individuals and as a group. It practices reciprocity of communication towards futures undivided by language.

⁴⁸ Akwesasne is both a region of the Mohawk Nation and a dialect of Kanien'kéha (the Mohawk language).

Raúl Carreon, the Farm Hub's Post-Harvest Coordinator, was there that day as one of the Spanish/English interpreters. He grew up in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas before coming to the Hudson Valley. He was also a panelist on the Organic Seed Conference panel at NOFA described earlier in this chapter where he recalled the first gathering for this project in 2016:

'The ceremony began, and it was held in the native language of the Mohawk, when first hearing that language my body froze up and it felt like I had traveled hundreds of years back in time, because I realized that I was hearing the original language of this land being spoken by the original people to the original seeds, thanks to their descendants. Those three sisters [the squash, bean and corn seeds] had chosen us to be a part of Akwesasne heritage and traditions, in order to help preserve them, but also to remind us that we had our own traditions. And that relatives of those three sisters are also a part of my culture. They helped my peers and I to reestablish a connection with seeds that had long been forgotten. As well as granting us the opportunity of inclusion through the languages that were being spoken ... Being in a space where people can truly be allowed to be who they are, and understand one another on common ground is something breathtaking to me. Seeing communities that have historically not always been on the best of terms come together and do so in the honor of one's culture and one's traditions is something worth celebrating'.

The poly-lingual practice of language justice created the conditions for imagining futures shaped by educated hope, and that was cause for celebration.

The harvest day I joined had an air of celebration about it too. Though the power structures of society outside the hoop house cast a shadow on them that I both felt and observed in the white bodies gathered there. Before we got down to the tasks of threshing beans and braiding corn, Steven McComber invited us to dance. He sang a song in Mohawk while another person from Akwesasne played a small drum, and he modeled the movements of the dance. We all turned to our left and made a procession along the same circle we'd been standing in. The steps to the dance were a rhythmic shuffle step and raising alternate arms with body tipped slightly forward. My mind immediately went to old Hollywood 'Cowboy and Indian'

films depicting pow-wows or 'war parties' and I felt the muscles in my body tense at the racist connotations, making it hard to do the fluid movements or keep track of the rhythm. I nervously glanced at the other white people in the circle and saw a mix of sheepish begging off, self-mocking exaggeration, or self-conscious shrinking into themselves. By contrast, the Indigenous and Latine people seemed more comfortable, though I don't presume to speak from a perspective I cannot share and acknowledge my observation may well be colored by racialized thinking. I do know that as a white person I recognized the awkward coping mechanisms of other white people trying to participate in the dance.

Following de Certeau, the white discomfort during the dance can be read as people operating in a familiar social structure, that of racism, with the learned physical tools used to navigate that structure (de Certeau 1984). They found that the result was abhorrent because the structure and its associated actions are abhorrent, but they were unsure of an alternative mode of navigation. What I mean by this is that the dance Steven invited us to join was physically uncomfortable to me because my body remembered doing dances that resembled it as a small child wearing a paper feather in my hair when I had been assigned to the 'Indians' at my elementary school's Thanksgiving celebration. My mind held many images of football team mascots in cartoonish foam heads or white actors in brown body paint in technicolor films doing a similar dance. And all of it set off internal alarm bells. I did not know how to do this dance without feeling it was a mockery of Indigenous culture rather than a participation in it. It felt like a shameful thing for my white body to do and to witness other white bodies doing. White food activists' desire to be anti-racist does not mean that they will not still arrange their bodies according to racist structures (Alkon 2012). This bodily discomfort can be read, moreover, as an internalized discomfort at having white identity decentered. As a white person, I felt I knew how, intellectually, to celebrate another's culture and traditions but I found that I did not know how to do it physically.

The processing of the seeds was, for me, an opportunity to learn how to participate physically in this space of reconciliation. Steven McComber sat in a folding chair by the heap of corn. Several of us sat on the ground around him. In his gentle voice,

with flat vowels and rounded consonants, he instructed us and showed us with his work-hardened hands how to braid the husk tails of the corn cobs together to create a long strand that could be hung from the supports of a long house, the communal building for Mohawk communities, for the winter. None of us could reproduce the tidy braids he made, but the fiddly work was satisfying in a tactile way, bringing us into relation with the crackle of the husk and the polish of the corn kernels.

I made space for others to try braiding, and went to the bean threshing. This was done by laying bean pods on a cloth on the ground, then, with stocking feet, shuffling on them to loosen the dry pods from the dried beans inside. Torso tilted slightly forward to see the progress of my work, arms loose to keep my balance as I trod, and feet barely leaving the ground as they felt for the seeds to come loose with each movement, I was physically entirely consumed by the task. The rhythm and rustle of the work was meditative. The thought slowly emerged that *this* was the dance. Being connected to a near-term outcome, removing the seed from the chaff, that fit broadly within my understanding of seed keeping practice, allowed me to engage in the same motions that my self-consciousness and the social poison of racist thinking had made me unable to comfortably reproduce before. Like Michael D. Jackson learning to make a fire in the Kuranko way (Jackson 1983), I had accepted these motions as both learning from and appreciation of Indigenous knowledge without intellectualizing it. The lesson people had invited me to learn, I learned at last from the seeds.

I don't think I was alone. I saw other white people moving with pleasure amongst the bean pods. The softening of our bodily relations to each other, people and seeds, in the hoop house was so different from the tensions that arose in discussions at the Organic Seed Conference and during the Kitchen Cultivars project. Jackson writes:

'It is because actions speak louder and more ambiguously than words that they are more likely to lead us to common truths; not semantic truths, established by others at other times, but experiential truths which seem to issue from within our own Being when we break the momentum of the

discursive mind or throw ourselves into some collective activity in which we each find our own meaning yet sustain the impression of having a common cause and giving common consent'. (1983:339)

Consent, reconciliation, rematriation – our bodies could learn prefigurative relationships to each other and to seeds when we set aside the discursive need for storytelling. We went outside and lifted the cloth to toss the seeds in the air and catch them again, allowing the wind to winnow the beans from the chaff. Smiles emerged on faces of many shades.

Seed Lessons

That harvest day invited discomfort and pleasure. All participants, seeds included, were there with consent and each experience and expression of the living beings there given equitable right to participate in the work of the day. However, those few hours of pre-figurative creation of a more multi-voiced and decolonial seed community were available within an inequitable framework. The land the seeds grew on was owned and controlled by a white-led non-profit founded with millions of dollars from philanthropic wealth made through real estate, the sale of land that one can safely assume was stolen from Indigenous peoples. The project was coordinated by a settler-led non-profit that also received funding from the NoVo Foundation. The agency afforded to the Akwesasne in the work is remarkable amongst similar initiatives, but progress is not justice. K reflected to me,

'Would it be better for [me] to step out of the way once the relationships are formed and say Farm Hub should be doing land reparations to Indigenous communities? Why are we in the middle of it? But the way I think about it right now is...we are building the relationships...[and seeds] are part of the conversation, they are living beings that are part of our decision making as in what ways have seeds been harmed and what work needs to be done to make up for the ways that seeds have been harmed? ...And when I go to our plot of land at the Farm Hub and I see how happy the seeds are, and how well they are doing, and I know where the seeds are gonna go, and the sort of spiraling of benefit that is going to happen when those seeds leave the protected seed sanctuary and go back to their communities – we are doing the work'.

The utopia created by the Native Seed Sanctuary is imperfect, but invaluable even so. It embodied in mind and practice a seed keeping community that was able to work through consent towards acknowledgement of past injustice and reconciliation of diverse peoples and plants who had survived those injustices to see this day. The praxes of seed rematriation composted seed stories through grief, generated situated knowledges through consent, and thereby created the circumstances for futures to proliferate.

Returning to the winter day when conflict erupted over black-eyed peas in a sterile conference hall, Rowen White soothed that room with these words:

‘Inside the seeds that sit before me there’s a seed song. Our people we know, we sing the seed songs to our plants when we plant, when we stir them from their wakening in the middle of winter, and when we are harvesting, when we are tending. There’s a seed song of resistance inside of these seeds and there’s a seed song of remembrance, and also these seeds hold a seed song of reconciliation. Because these particular seeds that are sitting in front of me were grown by many hands, and many hearts coming from many different lineages and diasporas, right? We are, many of us, far flung from our Indigenous and native village hearths’.

It is possible that by following the seed’s lesson of making a future through recombinant reproduction, by existing fully into the spaces that were, are, and will be, we may learn how to gather warmth and cook for one another from the hearths at which we have arrived. By practicing consent, acknowledgement, error, and reconciliation, pre-figurative food and farming projects can engage our situated bodies in germinating more equitable and joyful futures.



*Fig. 10 Contactless, free food distribution at the North East Community Center
Photo courtesy of Glynwood. Photographed by Jennifer Young (2021)*

Conclusion

HUNGER

On March 15, 2020 President Trump declared a national state of emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic (FEMA 2020). As of 8:00 pm on March 22, all non-essential workers were ordered to stay at home and all people to maintain at least six feet of distance from each other when in any public space (U.S. Department of State 2020). We were under lock down. Many things were uncertain in those weeks and months, including how I might complete this research when all in-person field work was forbidden by the University, the state, and good sense. It is impossible to forget that disorienting, surreal time. Horrified grief surged from the epicenter of the U.S. outbreak in New York City and through the Hudson Valley as quickly as the virus spread. The question of how to create futures in the face of existential threat was visceral and urgent.

In the early weeks of the pandemic those of us in the alternative food movement of the Hudson Valley wondered again, as we had following the election of Donald Trump in 2016, what this crisis might mean for our work and what our work might mean for this crisis. We worried that our funding and jobs would be lost. Then longer, more concentrated supply chains for essentials such as medicine and food stuttered and froze (Fonseca and Azevedo 2020). Food systems were suddenly on everyone's mind. Unprecedented philanthropic funding became available, with a speed none of us had witnessed before. In this context, I met a colleague, Gabriella (Gaby) Pereyra, in a video call to discuss how we might get food from farmers who had lost their markets to emergency food programs that had lost their supply. Gaby is a queer, Latine woman who organizes Spanish speaking and BIPOC farmers. At the time of this meeting she worked for GrowNYC supporting entrant farmers, and is now the Land Network Leader and Land Network Program Co-Director at the Northeast Farmers of Color Land Trust. She is as likely to break into an infectious laugh as she is to give razor sharp critique. We began our meeting just checking in, asking after each other's loved ones, and then shared our amazement at how funders' priorities were shifting in this pandemic landscape. 'For the next decade, it won't be about food access. It's about hunger now', she said.

The Pandemic

Gaby's distinction spoke to the shift she predicted in our sector, a prediction that has largely been borne out. Work to improve food access focuses on increasing the availability of food, and, in our work, food specifically from local and regional producers. While access could be in any form, the emphasis for decades had been on increasing access to regionally produced food through market development and the promotion of virtuous consumption (Finn 2017), as described throughout this thesis. Hunger relief, on the other hand, tended to focus on increasing caloric intake and nutrient density amongst food insecure populations, usually by distributing food for free that has been recovered from commodity food production's waste streams (Poppendieck 1999). Gaby was observing the potential, in the midst of this existential crisis, for the historically divided efforts on food security and (re)localizing food systems to converge.

Quickly, advocates of alternative food systems did reorient their work in response to this changed context. Pixie Scout could no longer operate as a catering business. Katy and Jonathan opened their kitchen to hospitality industry folks who were also active in the Food Issues Group (FIG), many of whom had often gathered at Pixie Scout's community dinners, to prepare meals for no-cost distribution. Alongside others in the network, Pixie Scout helped get the equivalent of 70,000 meals to hundreds of households struggling to feed themselves during that first year of the pandemic (FIG 2023). GrowNYC staff made herculean efforts to keep market channels open to their farmers by introducing online ordering and keeping their New York City farmers' markets and Fresh Food Box distribution sites open,⁴⁹ as essential businesses, with major operational adjustments (GrowNYC 2020), and lost fewer sales than anticipated that season. My role at Glynwood changed from organizing a first-of-its kind regional cider conference, originally scheduled for March 17, 2020 and cancelled on March 10th, to developing what would become the Food Sovereignty Fund. That project advance contracts farms led by BIPOC, LGBTQ+ people and women to grow for no-cost distribution through community food access partners like food pantries and after school programs.

Consumer behavior changed dramatically too. To the astonishment of many, CSA farm sales exceeded all previous years across the Hudson Valley, the country, and internationally (Seo and Hudson 2022; Black and Duran 2022; Durant et al. 2023). The cider industry secured the right to ship direct to consumers under an emergency order from the Governor, something that years of legislative lobbying had failed to accomplish, and regional cideries' sales surged (McGrath 2021). And as mentioned in the last chapter, households purchased seeds for gardening at double the normal annual rate (Higgins 2020).

There was a lot of talk of silver linings at the time. Rather than being sidelined, alternative food systems work became an object of popular attention and support during the pandemic. Markets had changed in ways that supported alternative food

⁴⁹ The Fresh Food Box program allows customers to purchase pre-packed boxes of food from Northeastern farmers on a sliding-scale payment model.

networks, in ways that were unimaginable in 2019. Social relations seemed to be on the verge of upheaval too. The everyday precarity of most Americans could not be ignored when the rate of food insecurity tripled in the wake of lock downs and job losses (Wolfson and Leung 2020). In the summer of 2020, the state-sanctioned murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police officers prompted a racial reckoning in the form of the Black Lives Matter movement and stoked national discourse on structural racism. Across industries and sectors, organizations and businesses were compelled to perform solidarity with racialized groups (Bui, Kuo, and Washington 2022). It wasn't transformation, but it felt possible that the conditions for transformation were growing.

Prefiguration and opportunism overlapped within activist and advocates' projects. As one would expect, in their enactment these projects mingled indeterminant future making praxes based on reciprocity and care with determinate future making praxes premised on dominant economic and social systems. While the work by FIG that Pixie Scout participated in was explicitly care and aid oriented, other responses named above have at least an element of market-oriented self-interest at play. While, like FIG's response, Glynwood's Food Sovereignty Fund aims to collapse the divide between food security and food access, it does so on the premise that farmers will make market-rate earnings on the food they grow. Still, that money is mobilized as an investment in marginalized communities from which resources have normally been extracted. In the case of GrowNYC farmers markets, CSA farms, and small-scale cideries, it is yet to be seen if consumers who shifted their food procurement habits to regionally grown food, because it was more available when global supply chains failed them, will continue with those buying habits. Did the acute existential crisis of the pandemic open new horizons of hope? Did it sharpen a hunger for utopia?

This is why Gaby's words stuck with me. Hunger is not appetite. As described in the introduction to this thesis, through the beginning of the twenty-first century the good food movement can be understood as a growing appetite for higher quality food, more delicious food, food produced with care for the environment, and less commodified food. It was the intervention of food justice that insisted that the

movement deepen its socio-political analysis and seek not only satiety of appetite, but transformation of food systems (Slocum and Cadieux 2015). In the early months of the pandemic, food systems were transformed by necessity and everyday people responded in decentralized, anarchistic ways that demonstrated the possibilities of other, more utopian, food systems. The ever-growing body of literature on mutual aid networks that arose in response to the pandemic to supply food, amongst other forms of collective care, attests to this fact (Délano Alonso and Samway 2022; Lofton et al. 2022; Carstensen, Mudhar, and Munksgaard 2021; Ferrari 2022; Swann 2023; Travlou 2020). The question I sit with today is whether in the next decade the good food movement's attention to hunger, and to hunger relief, will encourage indeterminate future making in our efforts. I hope so.

Hungry Hope

Ernst Bloch identifies hunger as the primordial drive responsible for humanity's insistent search for utopia. Contesting Freud's philosophy of the libido as the definitive human compulsion, Bloch argues that while human drivers are complex, none of these drives could 'get by without a body' (1995:49). A body cannot survive without food. 'The stomach is the first lamp into which oil must be poured. Its longing is precise, its drive so unavoidable that it cannot even be repressed for long' (Bloch 1995:65). An empty stomach longs to be filled, and for Bloch the 'something missing' that all humans experience in the present is the emptiness that utopia will fill (Moiso 2006:250). Hunger, Bloch says, 'proceeds to the rejection of deprivation, that is, to the most important expectant emotion: hope' (1995:11). I have theorized that grief and grieving are critical to the process of educating hope. This is, in part, because grief acknowledges specific deprivations, which is necessary to reject them. A hungry body rejects the deprivation of food, and that hunger is only satisfied when food is eaten. So it is with utopia too. The 'full and adequate satisfaction' of the hunger for utopia is, for now, 'a matter of the future', but most importantly for Bloch there is already the potential to 'overcome this hunger' (Levy 1990:1990). In the ensuing decade it will be worth paying attention to whether the good food movement's attention to hunger and its deprivations, rather than what Bloch would recognize as the bourgeois pragmatism of market building, will lead

more people to reject deprivation and believe the reality of the 'Not yet' (Bloch 1995).

Reflections on Future Making

In this thesis I have tried to identify which future making praxes amongst advocates for (re)localizing food in the Hudson Valley are focused on realizing the Not yet, those I call indeterminate. Praxes that I have understood as focused on restoring or increasing the already known or preventing its loss I call determinate. Marking the similarities and differences between future making praxes at different loci in Hudson Valley food systems (food, drink, land, farms, and seeds) during my field work may support future research to understand how future making happens in our post-pandemic present.

I have explored the pull of nostalgia, born of despair, and its tendency to motivate determinate future making that clearly identifies the outcome it seeks but does not seek to transform society in the present. In Bloch's words, determinate future making produces abstract utopias of thought (Bloch 1995). 'It is wishful thinking, but the wish is not accompanied by a will to change anything... it often involves not so much a transformed future, but a future where the world remains as it is except for the dreamer's changed place in it' (Levitas 1990:15). This is appetite, desire for something recognizable, something presumed to be known.

I have shown that Dan Barber's *Third Plate* does not so much envision a transformed food system (Barber 2014), but imagines a cuisine in which American settler colonial ideals are codified. This cuisine is legitimized by aligning itself with virtues attributed nostalgically to European peasant foods. Rather than rejecting deprivation, it embraces deprivation as a positive constraint. In this abstract utopia, American cuisine is the dreamer whose place in the world changes from an ethnically unmarked cuisine (Morris 2010), or a non-existent cuisine as Barber claimed, to one with the same status as European cuisines. Of course, Barber's restaurants are not only abstract utopias, they are also real places where a generation of chefs, like Katy, Jonathan and Mavis Jay, have learned the practical skills of experimenting within regionally produced foods. Moreover, while working in

the Blue Hill kitchens, these chefs felt that something was missing, rejected that deprivation, and cultivated educated hope to drive their prefigurative work towards transformation of the hospitality sector.

The strong correlation between nostalgia and determinate future making is shown also in heritage narratives, philanthrocapitalism, the legacy of Jeffersonian agrarianism, and heirloom seed saving. Svetlana Boym's theorization of restorative nostalgia, that yearns to resurrect what was lost, has been most useful in my research (2002). In attempting to build a commercial cider industry in the Hudson Valley and New York State, advocates crafted a narrative of heritage for American cider. In this abstract utopia the apple growers who were being forced out of the market would change positionality to be drivers of the market. Cider makers and market makers employed restorative nostalgia that both despaired the loss of orcharding as a widespread practice in the region and asserted cider's continuity with a colonial past. This narrative obfuscated the complexity of the drink's history and of the industry's present realities. In this way heritage discourse abetted settler colonialism and reinforced racialized hierarchies in the sector.

Philanthrocapitalism maintains classed hierarchies of power in Hudson Valley agricultural projects through control over land access for entrant farmers and the imposition of bureaucratic management structures meant to improve efficiency and efficacy at non-profit organizations. Philanthropists, past and present, imagine abstract utopias where their place in the world changes from extractor of resources to provider of resources. Their compensatory efforts are motivated by nostalgia for the very things that were destroyed by the means through which they accumulated their wealth: the conservation of natural resources by industrialists in the Progressive Era and the restoration of thriving rural communities by global financiers in the present.

In farmer training programs, the backward-looking temporality of contemporary agrarianism constrains who can successfully enter the farming profession because it too rarely critiques Jeffersonian agrarianism as an abstract utopia, making of it an object of restorative nostalgia rather than realizing that the yeoman farmer was

mostly a figment of the imagination. Judging would-be farmers by their similarity to mythic yeomen disappears the potential farming futures that other types of people can manifest. Seeds become objects of restorative nostalgia as well. When seeds' vitality is reduced to replication, rather than recombinant reproduction, as in *ex situ* conservation, or when their story is frozen in time as it is by some heirloom seed savers, seeds are relegated to being semaphores of romanticized, brittle pasts rather than agents of resilient future making.

Indeterminate future making praxes are also evident in each of these areas of work in (re)localizing food systems in the Hudson Valley. The urgency associated with hunger, with the 'no' to deprivation, is often demonstrated by prefiguration. Prefigurative work looks to the near future. Prefigurative actions are aligned to desired transformations and the purpose of these actions is experimentation and discovery, rather than achieving predetermined 'impacts'. Hunger seeks satisfaction but is more urgent and less specific than appetite.

Often those making futures indeterminately metabolized the past by grieving, especially publicly or collectively. The community dinner hosted for the I-Collective by Pixie Scout invited public grief at the genocide of Indigenous North Americans while encouraging radical hospitality in an attempt to subvert and transform the normalized hierarchy of power in the restaurant industry between diners and hospitality workers. Women in the cider industry have publicly grieved settler colonialism and enslavement, the twin original sins of the United States, in writing and by making financial reparations to Indigenous and Black led projects. These efforts seem so small in the face of the durable barriers of settler colonialism, structural racism, and degradation of the laboring classes that uphold raced and classed divisions in the cider and hospitality industries. But following a food utopias research agenda and reading for difference (Stock, Carolan, and Rosin 2015; Gibson-Graham 2014), the imperfect attempts to realize beloved community at Pixie Scout's dinners and in the counter-narrative to heritage cider illustrate how naming and metabolizing grief can be a tool for collectively educating hope (Dinerstein 2015).

Reconfiguring bodily relationships to place is another tool of indeterminate future making. At Farm Pride at Rise and Root Farm, queer bodies celebrating in a barn confounded existing narratives of queer metronormativity and heterosexist rurality (Halberstam 2005; Leslie 2017). Queer farmers living and working on land as a sustained practice, as at Rock Steady Farm, Rise and Root Farm, on landdyke settlements, and in Radical Faerie communities, has required those farmers to learn ways of securing land, training, and market access that are less reliant on systems of power and support tailored to heteronormative family units. One such example is cooperative farm ownership and management. As queer farmers have learned and lived prefigurative farming, farming towards the Not yet of queer utopia where they are safe and celebrated (Muñoz 2009), entrant farmers of all sexualities and genders in the Hudson Valley stand to benefit from their example and take up queerer ways of farming.

Embodied relationships to other bodies, human and more-than-human, can also orient us towards the Not yet. At the Rematriation Garden's corn and bean harvest I was able to participate in a different relationship to seeds and to other humans through my body. Rather than learning through story, semiotically, the embodied experience of threshing beans taught me how to be easefully in relationship with the people, cultures, and seeds with whom I shared space. This resonates with Jackson's conclusions drawn from field work with the Kuranko that, 'While words and concepts distinguish and divide, bodiliness unites and forms the grounds of an empathic, even a universal, understanding' (Jackson 1983:341). Through shared movement I understood the real possibility of reconciliation, of a future for seeds and people based on respect, consent, and mutual care, that had been envisioned but not enacted in conversations about seeds at conferences and during the Kitchen Cultivars project. This suggests a correlation between somatic knowledge and indeterminate future making.

As this potentially hungry decade unfolds, there is the opportunity to understand the projects that advocate for (re)localizing food systems as making the future determinately or indeterminately, by understanding several differentiating tendencies. Temporal stances differ in two ways. Determinate future making is

more oriented towards the past as a fixed object and approaches it with nostalgia, while making predictions about the future. Indeterminate future making is more oriented towards an open-ended future, while viewing the past as unstable and processing the harms of the past by grieving how they foreclosed potential futures. Another marker of indeterminate future making is prefigurative attempts at social transformation that can sometimes be read in rearrangements of bodily relationships. Determinate future making, by contrast, tends towards conservation and restoration and tends to replicate existing social and power relations. In simplest terms, determinate future making prevents or compensates for loss. Indeterminate future making, on the other hand, rejects existing deprivation. Indeterminate future making begins with the 'no' to deprivation that generates hope. Hope, when educated through prefigurative praxis, enables perception of the Not yet and leads to the proliferation of really possible futures. In this inherently unstable era of intersecting and exacerbating existential crises, the promiscuous fertility of indeterminate future making is better equipped to persevere.

Into the Not Yet

I would like to conclude that indeterminate future making is also more resilient than determinate future making, but I am not sure if that is the case. In the summer of 2020 the Not yet felt very close at times. The financial and social capital that had flowed in the same patterns for so many decades swole and broke its banks, and projects in the good food movement that had been considered on the radical fringe the year before gained visibility, momentum, and resources. An example is Sweet Freedom Farm in Germantown. The farm was founded by Jalal Sabur, who is also a cofounder of the abolitionist Freedom Food Alliance that has operated the Victory Bus since 2010 (Black 2022). The Victory Bus brings people from New York City to visit their incarcerated loved ones in upstate prisons and includes a box of locally grown produce in bus fare. The Victory Bus did not conform to common methods of organizing that stressed strategic, scalable impact; instead, 'The Victory Bus refused the destruction of Black, Brown, incarcerated, and working-class senses of place and belonging in the Hudson Valley, and it produced networks of people and places where that refusal is cultivated and maintained, where alternative logics are practiced, honed, and shared' (Black 2022:16). The Victory Bus and the Freedom

Food Alliance reject deprivation and demonstrate indeterminate future making. Their work had been difficult to explain in terms that grantmakers and traditional organizers understood (Black 2022:15).

When I began working with Sweet Freedom Farm in 2021 through Glynwood's Food Sovereignty Fund, Jalal, who had been stewarding land and making maple syrup on a fairly small scale for a decade, recognized the opportunity to realize ambitions he'd long held for the farm. In October of that year a successful fundraising campaign secured over \$200,000 that allowed them to build infrastructure, grow their staff, and expand their programming. It was an unprecedented surge in support for Sweet Freedom Farm. Other food and farming projects in the Hudson Valley that were advancing social justice and practicing indeterminate future making experienced similar growth.

Now, in 2023, it seems the flood of capital is receding and most of it is returning to the main waterways that have channeled it for decades. The pull of nostalgia for the so-called before times has dampened the revolutionary spirit of 2020 and 2021. Business and political leaders urge a return to normalcy. Little to no time or energy have been given over to grief; the relentlessly incoming crises eclipse it. In public discourse, crises of all shapes and sizes escalate unrelentingly. Equity, justice, and a deep relationship to the earth have not yet been realized, and some attempts at societal transformation have sputtered out or backtracked. Uneducated hope looks pragmatically at what was and what is to construct what will be. For example, government funding bodies took note of the racial inequities in food and farming that were highlighted by the pandemic, then applied the logics of determinate future making and so have earmarked millions of dollars to support BIPOC communities' production and consumption of food without transforming the mechanisms by which that funding is allocated and utilized. It is a targeted and pragmatic approach, with a predicted outcome, that compensates for omissions in the past without grieving and so metabolizing how the possible futures in the past were constrained. There are not enough farms run by historically marginalized people of the scale required by the government grantmakers to effectively and sustainably utilize the funding now available to them because centuries of

disenfranchisement and divestment in marginalized communities has kept them from owning land, establishing farm businesses, and growing those businesses. For the most part, the same organizations that usually control and manage government funding, that have not built relationships with marginalized farmers, control this funding. It is disappointing. And yet, in conversation with the farmers and activists in my networks about the state's failure to recognize and address root causes, we laugh. Because educated hope knows that hope must, by its nature, be disappointed. Those hungering for transformation, for the real but undefined future, do not stop hoping.

I don't know what comes next. This research cannot answer that. I am confident it will be as complex and filled with beauty and terror as what has come before. My research does show that the people in the Hudson Valley who seek to (re)localize food systems must contend with the United States' existence as a settler colonial nation and the ways in which the process of settler colonialism shapes our society. We must also attend to the history of forced migration and enslavement of African people and the continued harms of racialized exploitation that is that history's legacy. Similarly, we must sharpen our ability to analyze oppressions based on class and sexual identity. Without educating our hopes in this way, determinate future making praxes will continue to dominate and to replicate the inequities of white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy.

Reflection

When I began this project, in 2017, I was myself a recent transplant to the Hudson Valley. The same month I was meant to begin the PhD program of which this thesis is the culmination, I experienced the death of beloveds. As I have sifted through my work, I can hear in my voice in interviews, read in the notes I took, and see in the trails of thought I pursued, how the complex topography of my grief mapped onto the paths I blazed as I tried to learn this place. I recognize the tensions created as I, with an outsider's curiosity, asked interlocutors what makes the Hudson Valley the place it is and why it matters to them as I tried to forge my own connection to it.

I am grateful, writing this, to feel the ties of community and an intimacy with the geography and seasons of the place I now call home. From that perspective of belonging, I have analyzed and grappled with the data and research collected by an earlier self. Different sparks and shadows appear to me in that work now. I cannot step far enough outside of my own experience to fully articulate how the shifting layers of my own thought and emotion and experience have shaped the stories I have told here. In this way, this thesis and its arguments are themselves artifacts. It is a document presented as whole within itself, at this exact moment, but that moment is a product of my past and hopes in the past as much as it is of my future and hopes I have not yet conceived.

My hope needs continuous education. Horizons of hope dissolve and reconfigure as we move through time, acute grief is metabolized in profound realizations and in the interstitial spaces of daily life, nostalgia swells and folds back upon itself, bits of our worlds are conserved or lost or rediscovered. This thesis is about the American food movement, its focus on (re)localization of food systems, and what that looks like when situated in a social and material landscape. But it is also about what it is to be a human, to have the drive to contextualize our lives within the amorphousness of time through interpretations of the past and visions of the future, both of which happen always in this ephemeral, present moment.

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