

‘The porcupine was a feast’: The Tastes of Luxury and Necessity in Ruby Langford Ginibi’s Storytelling

Steven Farry, University of Melbourne

Abstract

This paper brings Bourdieu’s concepts of the tastes of luxury and necessity into dialogue with the alimentary habitus that Bundjalung woman Ruby Langford Ginibi records in her lifewriting. The paper argues that Langford Ginibi’s alimentary disposition has much in common with the taste of necessity that Bourdieu attributes to the French working class. The analysis identifies two further characteristics of her relationship to food that Bourdieu does not describe: an emphasis on recounting the adverse material circumstances in which meals are procured and prepared, and a practise of indiscriminate eating in which foods are deemed uniformly and reliably desirable. The paper finds that, despite some public censure, Langford Ginibi maintains much of her habitus as she accrues social, cultural, and economic capital. It concludes that maintaining and valorising the taste of necessity and its associated habitus may be read as a positive strategy that seeks to restructure the colonial field from below.

Keywords

Indigenous literature, working-class food, working-class habitus, Bourdieu

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[P]resenting a family recipe and figuring its circulation within a community of readers provides a metaphor nonthreatening in its apparent avoidance of overt political discourse and yet culturally resonant in its evocation of the relation between the labour of the individual and her conscious efforts to reproduce familial and cultural traditions and values (Goldman 1992 p.172)

Food is an important medium through which difference and inequality are produced (Julier 2005 p. 164). Relationships to food stratify the social order and allow subjects, families, cultures, races, nations, and genders to distinguish themselves in a myriad of ways. French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu’s theorising of eating as a site of class-based distinction begins from the premise that ‘[s]ocial subjects, classified by their classifications, distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make’ (Bourdieu 1984 pp. 6-7,56; on food, see 1984 pp. 171-201). These classifications and distinctions, manifested as ‘tastes’, structure and are structured by the social order (1984 pp. 170-171). Bourdieu proposes a gradient of food distinctions moving from the taste of necessity, in which quantity and substantiality are

valorised, to the taste of luxury, ‘which shifts the emphasis to the manner (of presenting, serving, eating etc.) and tends to use stylized forms to deny function’ (1984 pp. 6-7). Such tastes and dispositions are the respective provinces of the working class and the *bourgeois*. Bourdieu also alludes briefly to a sub-proletariat characterised by ‘absolute poverty and insecurity’ and grounded in ‘an inescapable deprivation of necessary goods’; these conditions generate a habitus involving ‘a form of adaptation to and consequent acceptance of the necessary...a resignation to the inevitable’ that represents one pole of the taste of necessity (1984 pp. 395, 372).

In Australia, scholars assessing the portability of Bourdieu’s concepts and theories of the social order identify the need to explore Indigeneity’s irrupting and mediating effect on the colonial field (Bennett et al 2013 pp. 145-146). To advance this work, the following paper brings Bourdieu’s concepts of the tastes of luxury and necessity into dialogue with the alimentary habit(u)s that Bundjalung¹ woman Ruby Langford Ginibi records in her texts *Don’t Take Your Love to Town* (1988), *My Bundjalung People* (1994), *Haunted by the Past* (1999), and the collections of stories and sketches *Real Deadly* (1992) and *All My Mob* (2007). The paper argues that Langford Ginibi’s alimentary disposition has much in common with the taste of necessity that Bourdieu attributes to the French working class: a sense of food as ‘the primary need and pleasure’, an enthusiasm for eating and drinking well (i.e. heartily), a convivial approach to meals as informal and communal occasions², and a preference for ‘[p]lain speaking, plain eating’ (1984 pp. 178-180,194-196). It identifies two further characteristics of her relationship to food that Bourdieu does not describe: an emphasis on recounting the adverse material circumstances in which meals are procured and prepared, and a practise of indiscriminate eating in which foods are deemed uniformly and reliably desirable.

In addition to exploring the parameters of Langford Ginibi’s alimentary habitus, the paper observes that she accrues social, cultural, and economic capital (and thus improves her position in the social order) while expressing the taste of necessity. This suggests a devolution of Bourdieu’s model, in which tastes reproduce the social order (1984 p. 372). While there is some evidence that public censure of Langford Ginibi’s refusal to adopt *bourgeois* modes of food-related conduct affirms Bourdieu’s theorising, the paper contends that maintaining and valorising the taste of necessity and its associated habitus may be read as a positive strategy through which capital is accrued and a restructuring of the colonial field advanced to achieve change from below.

Langford Ginibi and an Indigenous Australian working class

Since 2008, the Australian Federal Government has published annual *Closing the Gap* reports that detail the disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians’ health and wellbeing in areas such as education, employment, and housing. *Closing the Gap 2019* reports alarming but unsurprising measures of Indigenous socio-economic disadvantage: Indigenous child mortality rates are 2.4 times the rate of non-Indigenous children, non-attendance rates of Indigenous secondary school students are 14 per cent higher than for non-Indigenous students, and Indigenous men’s and women’s life expectancy is 8.6 years and 7.8 years less than their

¹ Bundjalung Country is located on the east coast of Australia, where it bisects the border between the states of Queensland and New South Wales. It extends from Logan in Queensland to Grafton in New South Wales and inland as far as Tabulam and Baryugil.

² Informality does not infer that proletarian meals are rule or values-free events. Bourdieu describes the norms that working class women are obliged to observe and the exclusionary implications of particular preferences (1984 pp. 190-191,194-195).

non-Indigenous counterparts (2019 pp. 33,69,123). The reports routinely find little to no progress being made towards most of the targets set to alleviate these markers of Indigenous disadvantage.

Walter's research on Indigenous Australian disadvantage demonstrates class's limitations as a way of describing and theorising this subordinate social location (see Walter 2009, 2015; Walter & Saggars 2007; Atkinson, Taylor & Walter 2010). Walter accepts that, '[i]f a consistently shared socio-economic position can be considered the basis of social class, then Indigenous Australians form their own class, firmly wedged at the bottom of Australian society' (2009 p. 2); however, she also finds that the socio-economic measures and norms through which class is identified and produced do not validly describe lived Indigenous experience. In particular, her research shows that conditions such as poverty have particular characteristics for Indigenous people, whose experiences and circumstances are not adequately captured in Western measures and descriptors (Walter & Saggars 2007). Walter does not explore whether Indigenous middle- and working-class tastes or habitus diverge, although she contends that achieving the conventional socio-economic markers of the middle classes does not produce the concurrent privileges of health, wealth, or well-being for Indigenous subjects that their non-Indigenous peers enjoy (Walter 2015). This suggests the need to explore taste's efficacy at securing or advancing Indigenous people's claims to a desirable location within the colonial social order.

Despite Walter's reservations about class's validity as a means of describing Indigenous positions within the social order, Marxist scholars Armstrong (2005) and Kuhn (2009) have produced viable class-centric accounts of Indigenous labourers' exploitation and emancipation and considered the roles that race and racism play in advancing the capital-owning class's interests in Australia. In terms of producing and administering a proletarian Indigenous population that serves the dominant class's needs, Scott and Evans have examined the way Queensland's system of education and patriarchal management of Indigenous people aimed to create and maintain 'an underclass of obedient, underpaid labourers' (1996 p. 140). They explain how education and training provided on reserves and missions³ 'neatly dovetailed with the primary needs of European employers for low-skilled, or, at best, semi-skilled black servants' (1996 p. 143). McGrath reaches a similar conclusion in her analysis of non-Indigenous representations of Indigenous labour, in which 'primitivist tropes' produce and legitimise exploitative class-based relationships (1995 p. 31). She posits that training in domestic work created a subordinate relationship between non-Indigenous employers and Indigenous menial workers that reproduced the class divides of England (1995 p. 38). Goodall's study of Indigenous women's paid and unpaid labour as carers and mothers in New South Wales in the first half of the nineteenth century argues that strategies for managing Indigenous women's reproduction, sexuality, and employment were derived from 'established mechanisms for management of white working class girls' (1995 p. 82). Like McGrath, she

³ Reserves and missions were established during the early nineteenth century to protect Indigenous populations from the increasing settler population. Reserves were originally designated as areas where Indigenous people could pursue a limited hunter-gatherer lifestyle and observe traditional customs and practices; however, as State and Federal Governments adopted policies of assimilation rather than segregation they became sites of instruction and training that pursued a 'civilising' agenda. They, and church-administered 'missions' where evangelicals sought to convert and minister to Indigenous people, offered basic vocational training and instruction in Christian and European conduct, customs, and religious beliefs. During the late nineteenth century and early to mid-twentieth century, many Indigenous people were forcibly removed to and confined on reserves and missions, where punitive disciplinary measures, poor diets, and unsanitary conditions substantially diminished their quality of life. See Anna Haebich's *For Their Own Good* and Tony Swain and Deborah Bird Rose's edited collection *Aboriginal Australians and Christian Missions*. For an Indigenous perspective on mission life, see Jack Davis's *No Sugar*.

finds that representations of the Indigenous population facilitated the social order's reproduction: Indigenous women's framing as negligent carers produced them as a recalcitrant underclass on which the blame for failing government policies (such as those intended to improve Indigenous infant mortality and other measures of health) could be projected. Indigenous women who performed menial and minimally paid service in white homes recall their employers' negligence and disregard for *their* well-being (see Ward 1987). Huggins (1987) has recorded Indigenous women describing the exploitative conditions—particularly the provision of low quality, limited food and segregated eating—they endured while working for middle-class non-Indigenous families. Their testimonies evidence the important material and symbolic role that food has played in producing hegemonic relations between the property-owning class and those who labour for them. Such poor treatment led to strikes by Indigenous domestic workers, whose withholding of their labour obliged landowners' family members to perform necessary chores, leading to 'an inversion of the 'proper' class and racial order' (Haskins & Scrimgeour 2015 p. 99).

These intersections of class and race are evident in Langford Ginibi's lifewriting, which exemplifies the Indigenous Australian literary genre of relational, collaborative, and communally oriented telling of personal and national histories (see Moreton-Robinson 2000 pp. 1-3). Although *Don't Take Your Love to Town* (henceforth *Town*) does not invoke class explicitly (Syson 1993), it presents a socio-realist narrative that accords with Bourdieu's sense of working-class aesthetic and cultural preferences (1984 p. 376). *Town* describes Langford Ginibi's life of itinerant menial labour: she begins working as a maid at age 10, gives birth to her first child at 16, and supports her increasingly large family through employment as a farm labourer, fruit picker, fencer, cleaner, and garment maker. As Brewster observes, many of the experiences Langford Ginibi describes are 'shared...with white people who experienced poverty' (1996 p. 36). This facilitates *Town's* much-commented-upon marketing as the tale of a 'battler', which has been argued to occlude some of the text's racial politics and account for its popularity in Australia (Mudrooroo 1990 p. 149; Huggan 2000 p. 48; Neville 2002 p. 214; Schaffer & Smith 2004 p. 93; cf Perera 2012 pp. 75-76). While the text suggests some equivalence between Indigenous and non-Indigenous transient workers—'[w]e stopped for supplies and then pitched a tent beside a creek on the outskirts of town... plenty of people lived like that, poor whites as well as blacks...' (1988 p. 84)—it also describes her generation of Indigenous people 'living worse than the poorest of poor whites' (1988 p. 96).

Intersecting class and race consciousness is made more explicit in *Real Deadly*, where Langford Ginibi decries the '[b]ig landowners' who 'dispossessed [Indigenous people] of the land, and everything' (1992 p.1). Its first story foregrounds the Indigenous labourers who 'built up those big stations, as cooks, stockmen, housemaids and servants' but are now living 'in poverty compared to the affluence of THE MANSIONS ON THE HILLS' (Langford Ginibi 1992 p. 1-2). Similar concerns are evident in *My Bundjalung People*, which describes Langford Ginibi's visits to her ancestral Country, where she reconnects with friends, relations, and her people's past. Like *Town*, *My Bundjalung People* does not address class directly, but records and cites a number of non-Indigenous station owners and managers who affirm the valuable contribution Indigenous workers made to their pastoral enterprises (1994 pp. 65-71, 90-100). Some critics have discerned an evolving self-representation in the text, which presents a 'demonstrably cleaner, nicer and stodgier Aboriginal woman writer' than the narrator of *Town* and *Real Deadly* (Nyoongah Lyttle 1998 p. 34). As shown in the analysis below, some of the food and dining venues Langford Ginibi enjoys in the text connote increased economic, social, and cultural capital; however, her alimentary habitus remains largely unchanged from *Town*.

Part of *Haunted by the Past*'s narrative involves a similar journey to Langford Ginibi's ancestral Country as those undertaken in *My Bundjalung People*, however, she now presents herself as an elder—an authority on Bundjalung language and custodian of a number of traditional stories (1999 pp. 116-119, 130-135)—rather than the more deferential and tentatively belonging character of the previous work (see 1994 pp. 139-141). This infers an increase in her cultural and social capital across Indigenous and non-Indigenous fields. The text is a collaborative telling of Langford Ginibi's son's life that foregrounds his experiences of incarceration and the criminal justice system. Returning to the point made in *Town*, it asserts that although colonial society was 'bad for poor whites...we Aboriginal people had double the amount of oppression because we were singled out for unfair treatment on the basis of race as well' (1999, p. 171). Such claims, consistent across her three book-length texts, demonstrate the need to determine the ways in which Indigenous Australian experiences correspond with and exceed Bourdieu's analysis of working class culture and the social order's reproduction.

The taste of necessity in Langford Ginibi's storytelling

Langford Ginibi's frequent references to food throughout her storytelling suggest its primacy as a conjoined site of need and pleasure. The most food-centric of her texts, *Town*, contains at least one reference to food, meals, or cooking on 160 of its 269 pages. Many of these references are labour-centric accounts of procuring food and preparing meals (1988 pp. 78,83,173). Langford Ginibi also describes repeated instances of running out of food and obtaining it in socially undesirable ways: soliciting charitable donations, pawning possessions, and stealing (1988 pp. 75-76, 123-125, 210). These foreground the sense of food as need. A complementary sense of food as primary pleasure is evident in her childhood recollections of eating to excess on special occasions (1988 pp. 12-13,50), 'tucking into' chops, and 'stuffing [herself]' with wild-growing fruit (1988 pp. 16,34). In adulthood, much of the pleasure Langford Ginibi derives from food involves preparing it for others, as she wishes for a stove on which to bake things, enthuses over having access to an orchard, and proudly recounts cooking communal meals for her family and friends (1988 pp. 64,121,167,194). These pleasures are consistent with her later valorisation of Indigenous women's as nurturers and food gatherers (1994 p. 58)⁴.

Privation mediates and contextualises much of the pleasure Langford Ginibi obtains from food. On one occasion, the family sell the tyres from their car to purchase provisions, but their dog consumes the corned beef they had been intending to have for dinner:

[w]e had nothing left in the camp to eat and I didn't know what to do. I was six months pregnant and felt like I'd used up all my energy...I sat on a drum and stared at the grass for a while. Then it came to me. There was a farmhouse down the road a piece, with a market garden. I was too ashamed to go myself, so I sent a note with the kids saying what had happened to our meal. In a while, Billy, Pearl, and Dianne came back with fresh fruit and vegetables and a couple of chooks already cooked. I was so happy I went to thank the good people.

(1988 p. 94)

⁴ The challenge of reconciling Langford Ginibi's aspirations with non-Indigenous feminist values manifests second wave feminism's difficulties in reconciling the disparate material circumstances and priorities of working-class and raced minority group women with those of the middle classes (Ferrier 2006). While Langford Ginibi at times decries her lack of autonomy, material deprivation leads her to covet the domestic sites—a kitchen and home—that some white middle-class women identify as sources of oppression (1988 105, 172).

While the taste of necessity is prevalent, on occasion the family also enjoys foods that Langford Ginibi deems luxurious:

I heard Peggy Sue barking at something and went to look. ‘Bunning,’ I said to the kids, ‘look, its quills are up. Get me a waddy, quick.’ Pearl came running with a stick and so I hit the porcupine hard on the head...I cut up potato and pumpkin and baked them beside the porcupine in the camp oven...A baked dinner called for bush sweets, so I made a scone mixture and boiled doughboys. The porcupine was a feast and after we had the doughboys with Golden Syrup (cocky’s joy) poured over them.

(1988 p. 89)

Langford Ginibi’s reticence about using such meals to assert symbolic capital—for instance, identifying the bunning as part of an ‘authentic’ Indigenous culinary tradition or of superior quality to non-Indigenous foods—means the privative context of limited economic capital and geographic isolation tends to overdetermine them as ‘starvation tucker’ (see Bradley 2006 p. 121). This diminishes the extent to which her sense of enjoying a luxurious meal is recognised as such.

Dualities of privation and pleasure are apparent in the alimentary habitus Langford Ginibi presents in *My Bundjalung People*, which makes reference to food, meals, or cooking on 109 of its 218 pages. Food-related childhood memories in the text’s first chapter oscillate between hardship and enjoyment. Alongside pleasurable memories of coconut iceblocks and fresh fruits from local orchards, Langford Ginibi recalls the privation of rationing, spoonfuls of sulfur ingested as a laxative, and being sent to bed without dinner after breaking a basket of eggs (1994 p. 7-11). Subsequent chapters recount distressing histories of Indigenous people enduring disrupted foodways, hunger, and fatal clashes with colonists over food (1994 pp. 72,178,185). Despite recording these undesirable food-related experiences and collective memories, Langford Ginibi exhibits considerable pleasure in eating throughout the text. On more than one occasion food is used to alleviate anger and sorrow, which suggests its valency as a source of pleasure (1994 pp. 13, 130)⁵. The text reveals some distancing from food-as-primary-need: unlike *Town*, most of the meals Langford Ginibi enjoys in *My Bundjalung People* are sourced from cafés, restaurants, and the homes of friends and acquaintances she visits during her travels to Country (1994 pp. 113,145,151,184); nonetheless, as will be shown below, the alimentary habitus she records in *Town* persists.

Haunted by the Past contains alimentary references on only 59 of the text’s 191 pages. These references are often brief and temporally or geographically locative (1999 pp. 106, 116, 136). Privation continues to contextualise and mediate the pleasure derived from food, as when Langford Ginibi describes her son ‘makin [sic] up for all the good tucker he couldn’t get in jail’ (1999 p. 121,123). Langford Ginibi’s emphasis on providing food when visiting remote-dwelling relatives reiterates a sense of it as need:

I got Nobby to get some takeaways, and a couple of loaves of bread and some drinks. I never went over to Auntie’s without a feed. I knew they lived in hardship all the time. Nob bought pies, hot chips and cold meats.

(1999 p. 110)

⁵ Food as pleasure’s primary is overshadowed by the text’s emphasis on reconnecting with place and kin, which produces what Langford Ginibi considers ‘the happiest time of my life’ (1994 p. 57).

Alongside the diminishing frequency of reference to procuring and preparing meals in *My Bundjalung People* and *Haunted by the Past*, Langford Ginibi's food provision suggests her location in the social field has changed as a result of the social, cultural, and economic capital accrued from her storytelling⁶. Despite the distinction she had earned, continuing to observe food-sharing protocols demonstrates that she retains the dispositions associated with Indigenous culture and socio-economic marginality. Food mediates her relationships with a number of the elders from whom she seeks information and permission to write about Country and its people: throughout *My Bundjalung People*, for instance, she surreptitiously passes her Aunt money 'for nunghing' (food) while requesting her attendance at cultural events or introductions to extended family members (1994 pp. 38, 110, 180). This need not be read as attempted coercion; instead it is Langford Ginibi demonstrating, through correct alimentary conduct, her connection to kin and the propriety of her writing about and representing Bundjalung. In this way, maintaining the alimentary habitus of her earlier life plays an important role in allowing her to continue to accrue capital and maintain or improve her position in Indigenous and, consequently, non-Indigenous social spheres. This suggests the relationship Bourdieu poses between class-based habitus and location in the social field needs to be attenuated in Australian settings to recognise Indigenous culture's mediating effect and the value attributed to working-class and raced cultures (see Turner & Edmonds 2002).

Consistencies of taste in *Town* and *My Bundjalung People* further demonstrate that Langford Ginibi's alimentary habitus remains fixed. Like the working classes in Bourdieu's analysis, Langford Ginibi foregrounds meals' substantiality in both texts (1988 pp. 268-269; 1994 p. 145). Size and volume are frequent and common descriptors of items of food and meals (1988 pp. 6,10-11,84,198; 1994 pp. 68,178,199). A predilection for hearty eating is evident in *My Bundjalung People*'s account of dining at an outback café, where she enjoys 'lasagna and salads and...two big plates of vegetables—it was good home-cooked food and we got stuck right into it, washing it down with coffee' (1994 p. 203). While valorising home cooking suggests a *bourgeois* perspective, Langford Ginibi's enthusiastic appraisal of eggs on toast—'Boy I was getting spoiled! I lapped it up' (1994 p. 107)—manifests something of the partiality for plain foods that Bourdieu associates with the taste of necessity. As in *Town*, the sense that some of her meals are forms of relative luxury that the middle classes may not recognise is apparent when Langford Ginibi's travelling companion describes her as needing 'a good breakfast', which they obtain at a Red Cross café⁷ (1994 p. 199).

Unlike the French working classes, who Bourdieu records disparaging certain types of food, Langford Ginibi and her family rarely indulge or express preferences or reservations about different meals. Aside from an incident during her childhood in which she and her young siblings refuse to eat a goanna that their Uncle kills with an axe and cooks in front of them (1988 pp. 6-7), meals are uniformly framed as desirable. For Langford Ginibi, the taste of necessity entails enthusiastically and reliably consuming whatever foods are available. Such indiscriminate eating is distinct from the omnivorousness identified as a marker of the middle class, who exhibit an 'openness to appreciating everything' rather than 'liking everything indiscriminately' (Peterson & Kern 1996 pp. 904-905). One manifestation of Langford Ginibi's indiscriminate eating is a refusal to distinguish or valorise particular foods or meals in a hierarchy according to normative bourgeois or proletarian values. *My Bundjalung People*

⁶ In the years following *Town*'s publication, Langford Ginibi was awarded an honorary doctorate from La Trobe University, history fellowships from the New South Wales Ministry of Arts and the National Museum of Australia, and several domestic literary awards (see Haag & Westphalen 2012 p. 2).

⁷ Red Cross shops are charitable organisations that provide inexpensive meals, often to a homeless clientele.

mentions the ‘real healthy’ fare at a vegetarian restaurant (1994 p. 191), but also enthusiastically recounts the purchase and consumption of hot chips (1994 pp. 109, 131); *Haunted by the Past* segues without distinction from the ‘delicious’ vegetarian food that Pam Johnston, a ‘deadly cook’, has prepared to the ‘good feed of Kentucky Fried Chicken’ Langford Ginibi’s son craves after his release from jail (1999 pp. 96-97). Such indiscriminate eating prevents Langford Ginibi’s occasional enjoyment of luxury foods distinguishing her from exhibiting the taste of necessity in these texts. Although *Haunted by the Past*’s references to food occasionally consider variety, novelty, and the relief of a monotonous prison diet (1999 pp. 96, 125), the luxury foods it mentions, such as avocados, macadamia nuts, and pineapples, are not deemed to be more or less desirable than the chips and pies that she and her son eat during their journeys (1999 pp. 121, 123). Similarly, *Real Deadly* and *Mob* contain passing references to Langford Ginibi enjoying champagne (2007 p. 253, see also 1992, p. 108), but hearty feasts of fish and chips, enjoyed on the bonnet of a car, are equally appreciated (1992 p. 77). Langford Ginibi’s indiscriminate eating may be attributed to conditions of food insecurity, limited economic capital, and a large family that precludes the indulgence of individual preferences. While indiscriminate eating suggests the ‘adaptation to and consequent acceptance of the necessary’ that Bourdieu associates with the sub-proletariat and the taste of necessity (1984 pp. 395, 372), Langford Ginibi’s reluctance to valorise or disparage luxury foods in relation to those associated with the working class is a distinct element of her alimentary habitus.

Langford Ginibi occasionally accrues social capital from her knowledge of foreign foods; however, its value is largely limited to her standing within the family: having been embarrassed in front of the children on one occasion, she recalls, ‘I had to restore my dignity so I got some meat and string and showed them how to catch yabbies in the dam and later I made a curry’ (1988 p. 89). Towards the end of the text, she describes cooking several foreign dishes:

...there were twenty-seven of us planning our trip to Ayers Rock. We cooked for the pensioner luncheon each month, made hot meals for the medical service staff, sold cakes, held fêtes, and eventually we had \$3000...I’d make a boiler of spaghetti sauce and cook noodles and make three dozen rolls of garlic bread and sometimes I made chow mein and it sold like hot cakes; anything to raise money.

(1988 pp. 231-2)

While this passage conveys Langford Ginibi’s ability to prepare cuisine originating in or associated with other countries, the social and cultural capital that cooking across cultural boundaries affords her is curtailed by the observation that she would prepare ‘anything to raise money’. This reiterates her proximity to the taste of necessity rather than of luxury. The brief, functional reference to the dishes she prepares does not invoke the conventional class markers applied to ethnicised food, such as invoking its authenticity, geographic specificity, historicity, or rarity (see Johnston & Baumann 2007); instead, the commercial emphasis reifies existing class (and racial) divisions premised on the Other’s servitude (see Hage 1997). This distinguishes it from the enjoyment and knowledge of foreign cuisines that affords the middle classes distinction in Anglophonic society (see Johnston & Baumann 2014 pp. 61-112). Similarly, although Langford Ginibi consumes a considerable amount of foraged and wild-caught game in *Town* (1988 pp. 63, 83-84) she makes no overt attempt to valorise this aspect of her diet and improve her position in the social field by deploying the dominant class and culture’s food discourse, which would identify such meals as more desirable than the mass produced foods perceived as constituting working-class diets (see de Solier 2013 pp. 21-23).

The aspect of meals that Langford Ginibi foregrounds most frequently is the difficulties and means of procuring and preparing them. She tends to emphasise the limited facilities and provisions available rather than the qualities of the food she produces. When her daughter gets married:

[m]oney was scarce so I rallied all the mates to help with sandwiches and Bob McDonald was out the back with a boiler full of eggs, cooking them on the open fire. We had no gas. Neddy and Gert wrapped Alfoil around sandwiches and packed them in cartons. Mum and my sisters from Beaumont Street made cakes and savouries, Aunt Beryl made angel food cakes.

(1988 p. 156)

The passage presents some of the taste of necessity's positive social elements. The communality and informality of the meal preparation suggest working-class preferences—although Langford Ginibi usually attributes food-sharing practices to Indigenous rather than class-based culture and low economic capital (see 1994 p. 195)—while the disjunction between the meal's commemorative function and the paucity of fare connote the taste (or, perhaps, practise) of necessity. The passage also exhibits some of the emphasis upon form that Bourdieu attributes to the middle classes who exhibit the taste of luxury by emphasising meal-related conduct. Langford Ginibi orients her account towards the manner in which the meal is produced rather than consumed. Her capacity to prepare meals under adverse circumstances may be considered one of the 'distinctive forms of cultural competence and expertise' that Smith-Maguire proposes the working classes exhibit through food (2016 p. 16). As Brewster describes,

[r]ather than being ashamed of her struggle to survive and the measures she had to take, Langford gives it pride of place in her narrative. We learn, in the course of reading *Don't Take Your Love to Town*, how to make a firebucket, an oven from an empty four gallon drum, some metal stakes and some bricks in an inner Sydney suburb when you can't pay the gas bill...how to make damper (269), how to sterilise babies' bottles in the bush, how to live off the bush, and a shopping list of the basics you need to survive in the bush with a large family; how to fish for various kinds of fish even if you can't afford bait, and how to catch and cook porcupine.

(Brewster 1996 pp. 35-36)

Brewster apprehends these details as evidence of 'subjugated knowledges'⁸. She argues that revealing and recording them in autobiographical writing resists the imposition of class-based European norms that determine the appropriate subject matter of biography or novel (1996 p. 36). While Langford Ginibi's lifewriting may challenge traditional hierarchies of knowledge and cultural parameters of appropriate expression, the use of food and cooking as a political signifier and means of constructing the self has traditionally been seen as a class marker: as Anne Goldman argues, '[f]or those writers whose gender, race, or class may seem to preclude access to 'high art' and its literary forms, the very domestic and commonplace quality of cooking makes it an attractive metonym for culture' (1992 p. 172).

In terms of meal-time conduct, in accordance with Bourdieu's reading of the taste of necessity, communality, conviviality, and informality are the dominant aspects of the meals Langford

⁸ Brewster invokes the second of Foucault's meanings of the term—those knowledges 'which are 'located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the 'required level of cognition or scientificity'' (Brewster 1996 p. 49 citing Foucault 1980 p. 82). The first sense in which Foucault defines subjugated knowledges, as 'the historical contents that have been buried and disguised' (1980 p. 81), is also appropriate to Langford Ginibi's account.

Ginibi and her family enjoy. The scatological humour in which the family participates after a guest nearly cracks a tooth on a date pit in a Christmas pudding is characteristic (1988 p. 239; see also 2007 pp. 186-187). Her accounts of meals make no reference to non-Indigenous norms concerning table manners or appropriate behaviours and expressions of appetite, although she does express dismay at the conditions of a friend's house to which the family have been invited for a Christmas meal:

Neddy and I were standing out on a corner of King Street, Newtown, holding ten chooks and a leg of pickled pork, the hot sun on us, joking about what it would be like at James' place. We got ourselves, the food and the kids to Wattle Street, Ultimo, and looked in the door. Horrible mess. Without a word, Dianne and Pearl started to clean the place up and set the table. Neddy and I began cooking. As fast as I stuffed she was sewing them up and by two o'clock it was on the table, including a big ham baked.

(1988 pp. 139-40)

Langford Ginibi's more frequent refusal to observe *bourgeois* norms of food-related conduct and form renders her liable to class-based censure: one journalist's vituperative review of *Real Deadly*, which draws attention to the author's regular consumption of fast food and perceived inattention to 'creating an attractive home', is almost parodic in its performance of middle-class disdain for the working classes (Liverani 1992 p. 6). The journalist asserts that Langford Ginibi, 'seems to lack the self-regulating mechanism that normally operates in adult humans' or the 'formal education and a literary or social context within which to appraise her experiences'. She describes a gleeful food fight recounted in the text as 'pack behaviour' (Liverani 1992 p. 6). As Beagan, Power, and Chapman note, '[e]xpressions of disgust and repulsion at working-class lives entrench the middle classes as superior to the subordinate Other' (2015 p. 94). Following Pini and Privite, Langford Ginibi's unwillingness to 'express an appropriate sense of inferiority in their dealings with the middle class...explains the ferocity' of such responses (Pini & Privite 2013 p. 262). The pair go on to point out that, 'what Bourdieu (1984 p. 56) labels the violence of 'aesthetic intolerance' may be magnified for a 'group not demonstrating imitative behaviours or shame and deferential dispositions in terms of their supposed lack of appropriate capitals' (2013 p. 262). The negative review evidences how the taste of necessity determines social, economic, and cultural capital and reproduces the social order: the disciplining of Indigenous deviance in which the journalist indulges has potential material consequences: a damning review in a major broadsheet potentially diminishes the sales of a book that might otherwise help lift the author from socio-economic marginality and facilitate her upward class mobility. In accordance with Langford Ginibi's belief that Indigenous people experience greater oppression than the white working class, race explicitly colours the critique, which reiterates a civilised/savage binary and social structure in which Indigenous people are deemed to fall short of normative bourgeois standards of non-Indigenous conduct.

Conclusion

Langford Ginibi's alimentary habitus has much in common with Bourdieu's description of the taste of necessity. She exhibits a strong sense of food as a primary need and pleasure and a preference for generously sized and hearty meals, which she enjoys communally and informally. This alimentary disposition persists as she garners increased social, cultural, and economic capital, although some changes do occur in her food-related conduct. In contrast to *Town's* accounts of foraging for food and cooking on makeshift stoves, *My Bundjalung People* and *Haunted by the Past* describe her dining in cafés and restaurants. Langford Ginibi mentions food-as-need less frequently in her later texts and performs acts of food provision more often

than food receipt. While these behaviours manifest her increased economic capital and distance from the taste of necessity, continuing to observe food provision and sharing protocols indicates that she retains a habitus grounded in Indigenous tradition and associated conditions of social, cultural, and economic marginality. Rather than distancing herself from those possessing lesser capital, she continues to behave in accordance with their race and class-based expectations of appropriate food-related conduct.

Langford Ginibi's improved social position does not lead her to exhibit or aspire to the taste of luxury. Her texts do not reproduce *bourgeois* ways of assessing and evaluating meals or use taste in food to secure an improved position in the social order. Instead of critiquing or contesting class-based food discourse and distinctions, Langford Ginibi largely ignores them. While this resists the dominant class and culture's symbolic violence, it also facilitates readings consistent with the raced and working classes' representations as a negative foil for the tastes of those with more privileged dispositions. Langford Ginibi's indiscriminate eating is the most prominent example of what middle class discourse construes as a lack of taste. While her eating habits are omnivorous and she enjoys some luxury aliments, her practice of reliably and uniformly representing all food as desirable distinguishes her habitus from that of the middle classes. Reading Langford Ginibi's lifewriting as a primary source, however, provides an important context that allows such practices to be read positively. While her indiscriminate eating may be attributed to privative circumstances and low economic capital, it is not an unthinking or unagential practice. *Town* reveals that Langford Ginibi grapples with the possibility of relinquishing her children to the State because she cannot feed them (1988 pp.102-103). The food-related choice she makes is not between different aliments or meals, but between feeding her children and giving them up for adoption. Understood in this way, a positive case may be made for her alimentary habitus and the skills and knowledge she deploys. Her indiscriminate eating is in part the consequence of a discriminating choice.

Langford Ginibi's emphasis upon detailing the privative conditions under which she and other Indigenous people procure and prepare meals allows her to make a virtue of the survival practices that, in Bourdieu's analysis, would locate her in an undesirable position within the social order. Contrary to Bourdieu's sense that such adaptation to the necessary leads subjects to internalise tastes that reproduce their subordinate social positions, Langford Ginibi's account of her raced and working-classed disposition generates much of the economic, cultural, and social capital she acquires. This suggests that exhibiting a working-class disposition can serve as a means of improving one's position within the colonial social order. Valorising the survival tactics of Indigenous people and the resulting dispositions they exhibit may serve to gradually reshape the social order from below by restructuring the field. This strategy may be contrasted with seeking to improve one's own position by acceding to the dominant class and culture's hierarchies of dispositional taste and conduct. The potential for change to occur from below in this way suggests an important devolution of Bourdieu's argument that tastes serve to reproduce the social order.

Author Bio

Steven Farry is a PhD candidate at the University of Melbourne's School of Culture and Communication. His research interests include Indigenous Australian literature, food studies, and biopower.

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