

Michael K. Goodman
University of Reading

Eating Bioeconomies

In *Biological Economies: Experimentation and the politics of agrifood frontiers*, Eds Richard Le Heron, Hugh Campbell, Nicolas Lewis, Michael Carolan. London: Earthscan.

It's in between lunch and dinner, and I have just finished off a rather large bag of Cheese and Jalapeno Crunchy Snack Mix. I shopped for and purchased these today at Aldi, a local, small-scale discount supermarket desperately expanding its numerous ranges to capture the growing numbers of middle class shoppers like me looking for bargains. This is not, by any stretch of the imagination a healthy snack at 27 grams of fat—and I do know this as I looked at the nutritional information on the label—but they are good and I wolf down the whole bag. In the meantime, I have prepared some dinner for the family that I would be eating later: A spaghetti sauce in the slow cooker full of vegetables and using a ground meat substitute known as Quorn. I have used this 'fake meat' and protein substitute to produce a much healthier meal for myself and the family—as Quorn's annual report puts it, it has '90% less saturated fat' than spaghetti made with beef (Quorn, 2015)—and to cut down on the family's carbon footprint by not eating livestock for at least one meal this week. For us it will be a Meatless Wednesday and *not* a Meatless Monday.

But why did I eat this way today? Why did I enter into these rather contradictory engagements with these unhealthy and then more healthy foods over the day? Again, shouldn't I have clearly avoided the snack mix (that turned into my lunch) even if I (mistakenly) thought it might be cancelled out by the healthier dinner? Essentially there is no satisfactory or profound answer to these questions I think, beyond the fact that what I ate today ended up being *what I ate today*. I inhaled the snack mix because I hadn't eaten lunch and it did really look like it would taste great: I had a visceral, affective response to the 'tasty' colours of the packaging, to the memory of eating this stuff before (but was it sour cream and chive? Ah, no matter!), and I was just plain hungry after making my spaghetti sauce that needed to cook on low for another four hours. I prepared the spaghetti to make sure that I—and the family of course—would get a hot, healthy meal. I thought that cooking and eating this way would lower our carbon 'foodprint' and I had to make sure I had food on the table that we would all enjoy. I was *eating* and acting like an *eater* and not—as many an economist and even food scholar might put it—merely consuming or acting like a consumer. Indeed, what we as humans do *is* eat, in all of its material, meaningful, visceral and (un)conscious contradictions, complexities and complications.

We as food scholars need to recognize, account for (at least partially) and work with this messy complexity in our efforts to understand food/society relationships and the networks they effect, create and inhabit. This is certainly the case with respect to the development of a Biological Economies approach as put forward in this book and as this invaluable perspective is taken forward. What we need, amongst other things, are more theoretically and empirically rich—but also specific—ways to explore food/society relationalities. For me, this begins with a rhetorical and conceptual shift that moves from those rather narrow, economic notions of 'consumers' and 'consumption' to those of the more messy, complex and perhaps theoretically and empirically deeper notions of 'eaters' and 'eating'.

Before I get ahead of myself, however, I want to better position the contents and intentions of this chapter. Overall, in the spirit and context of working with and on a Biological Economies approach to food and food studies, I offer here a polemic and several short provocations designed as possible interventions to this approach but also the field of agrifood studies more broadly. My polemic surrounds this desire to shift our rhetoric and conceptualisations from consumer to eater. Three short provocations then follow. The first begins to question the ways that the ‘vital materialisms’ work by Jane Bennett and others has been applied to food and eating. The second short provocation here is one that looks to bring in the inescapable role of the media in governing the Biological Economies of food, especially with respect to eating. One look around and, in the Global North at least, the media’s obsession with food and telling us how and what to eat—as well as exposés, documentaries and other forms of food media—becomes abundantly clear. In effect, a Biological Economies approach to food and food politics must have contemporary food cultures, whether that be about the cultures of eating or those with respect to food media, front and centre to its understandings of the social worlds of food and how we might make them less unequal and more ‘non-human’ in concern. The final provocation is one that encourages the development of more enactive and performative research methods and encounters, specifically through the use of autobiography by food scholars. For too long, we as scholars *and* eaters have been asked to step out of the way in describing the contemporary social life of eating and food and I want to make a plea here for more and better autobiographies of our own encounters with food as a form of social engagement, experimentation and legitimised methodology in Biological Economies research. There is value in this approach, perhaps as evidenced in my opening above; not only as one important way to get at the complexities and complications of food itself, but also as a way of ‘doing’ and ‘enacting’ more and better food scholarship and food politics.

Each of these points in this chapter come in the form of relatively brief, short statements and arguments; they are somewhat reflectively fuzzy, open-ended and partial and will have to be fully enacted upon by others—if, of course, there is enough here and these points are worthy of being acted upon!. What links them, however, is a recent notion in the context of better understanding food/society relationships I have begun to work with (Goodman 2015). This is the idea of the ‘relational contingencies’ of food and eating. Building on food scholarship tied into what the editors call post-structural political economy in the work of Allison and Jessica Hayes-Conroy, Elspeth Probyn, Emma-Jayne Abbotts and Anna Lavis as well as the ‘critical fat studies’ approach of Julie Guthman, Robyn Longhurst, Rachel Colls and Bethany Evans, eating is a practice relational to/with bodies and foods and essential for this relationality to come into being. Indeed, food is only really ‘food’ when we, as eating bodies, enter into a relational engagement with it. But, as these critical scholars would have it, the nature of these relationalities is conditioned by and contingent upon a number of factors—taste, feelings, identity, class, culture, access, and political economies—as they shift over time, space and place. Thus, the practice of eating is and should be seen in non-determinist but contingent ways when we consider what, how and why we eat. The Biological Economies approach could, and perhaps should, consider this much more fully, as this lens is used for further theoretical development and/or empirical research. I hope the polemic and accompanying interventions in this chapter might begin to push on the open doors provided by this volume just a little bit more. Indeed, might it be the case that certain critical aspects of bioeconomies don’t even really come into being *until* we eat? Eating, as

concept, practice and empirical category is not simply a conceit of post-structuralists nor diverse economy-types but rather one of the key sites we can work to understand, engage with and incorporate both food cultures and political economies into a Biological Economies' approach to the 'knowing and growing' (Goodman and DuPuis 2002) of contemporary food networks, assemblages and politics.

Moving from Consumer to Eater, Consumption to Eating: A Short Polemic

Ever since agrifood scholarship emerged out of the multi-coloured haze of Marxism, political economy and the cultural and post-structural turns, food scholars (and others) have been waving the consumptionist flag in earnest. We must consider consumers and consumption as well as the relationships of consumption and production, many argued, demonstrated and theorised, through the numerous lenses of post-structuralism, political ecology, actor network theory and assemblage work. Consumers are actors in their own right and are worthy—nay, it is required!—of and for conceptual and theoretical consideration as well as empirical exploration as part and parcel of agricultural and food systems. Indeed, this is recognized in the moniker of agri- or agro-‘food’ and a great deal of valuable work has been done in this regard, from important theoretical and conceptual engagements (e.g. Goodman and DuPuis, 2002) to empirical work (e.g. Kneafsey et al. 2008) both in geography and across food scholarship more broadly (e.g. Belasco, 2009; DeSolier 2013; Johnston and Bauman, 2010).

Building on this earlier work, the deployment of the ‘foodscape’ concept has been used to more fully and formally incorporate food production and consumption within one lens (e.g. MacKendrick 2014, Potter and Westall 2013). As Josée Johnston (2015) and I recently put it in the pages of *Food, Culture and Society*, “the idea of a foodscape not only attends to the cultural *and* material dimensions of food, but it crucially and at its most powerful highlights the dialectical *relationalities* between and among food culture (values, meanings and representations) and food materiality (physical landscapes, ecologies and political economy)” (p. 207; emphasis in original). While, perhaps a slightly diffuse and unfocused lens, “a foodscape presents a culturally-mediated lay of the land wherein the material reality of food and people’s livelihoods matter—what kind of food is being sold, who controls the food system, who eats well (and who does not), as well as how resources are sustained (or deteriorated) through our food practices and engagements” p. 207). Similarly, the use of ‘place’ in food scholarship, especially in the work of Ben Coles and his colleagues (e.g. Coles 2013, Coles and Crang 2011), has also been (re)deployed as a way to explore the connected relationalities of food production and consumption. Coles’ work has uniquely explored the ‘topologies’ of place—how production and consumption are culturally, economically and materially linked—in the creation of more ‘ethical’ food/society relationships.

But even in this more inclusive work and these more inclusive frameworks, consumption and production have often stood apart as essentialised, albeit relational categories. Consumption, for the most part—the work mentioned above notwithstanding—has been much more of a residual category even in writings signalling the need to consider it theoretically and empirically. And, importantly, the body in all its multi-faceted, affective complexity has remained relatively inert in the more anodyne considerations of consumption and the figure of the consumer in food-related scholarship. This has been most recently pointed out in the two significant and debate-leading volumes produced by Emma-Jayne Abbotts, Anna Lavis and colleagues (Abbotts and Lavis, 2013b; Abbotts et al, 2015a, b) that

explore these relationalities of foods, bodies and affect in their vast technicolour hues. Indeed, a great deal of what is proposed here draws on and builds from the ground-breaking theoretical and empirical innovations of Abbots and Lavis' pioneering volumes and their own separate work (e.g. Abbots, 2011, 2013; Lavis, 2015a, c; see also Abbots, 2015a, b; Abbots and Attala, 2015; Lavis, 2013, 2014, 2015b). We thusly need—both across agro-food scholarship and in thinking about and engaging the bioeconomies of food—new language forms and conceptual tools that animate eating bodies, consider the complex and contradictory practices of food consumption more fully; tools that build on and further open up theoretical and empirical space that pays homage to these relational contingencies of the human/food and society/food relationships. Here, then, is my first polemic: I'd like to see us move away from talking about and considering 'consumption' and 'consumers' to begin to conceptualise, explore and investigate human/food and society/food relationalities through notions of 'eating' and the figure of the 'eater'. Importantly, this shift is both rhetorical as well as conceptual in nature: The use of these terms is meant to signal new theoretical conventions and considerations, conceptual engagements and lines of inquiry; and at the same time signal a rhetorical shift away from what I would suggest are the less vibrant and more narrow metaphors of food consumption and the food consumer. In short, considering eating and eaters has the capacity to do novel and deeper conceptual and rhetorical work that we as food scholars need in order to honour, do justice to and build on in the context the relationalities of foods, bodies and political ecologies as we continue to explore, critique and examine these human relationships to food through the lens of bioeconomies.

For me, there are four brief reasons for this suggested shift to eating and the eater. First, the uses of eat, eating and eater signal that eating is *different* from any other act or practice of consumption. While many might disagree with this given its essentialising logics, eating is a unique form of consumption. Through the act and practice of eating we incorporate the external world into ourselves, our bodies and our identities. It is always and only an intimate material experience that crosses the boundaries of the inside and outside in ways crucial to our survival and wellbeing. To eat, eating and being an eater literally and figuratively makes us what we are, should be and can become. Furthermore, the use of these terms and concepts signal, from the outset, the conceptual and empirical need to consider the intimate relationalities embedded in and created by the practices of ingestion and metabolism (Abbots and Lavis, 2013a).ⁱ Similarly, and again from the outset, the concepts of eating articulate the lively relationalities of food to bodies and minds through the practices of ingestion, incorporation and metabolism. My desire here is that—by taking up the charge of the likes of Abbots and Lavis as well as other critical food scholars mentioned here—through the deployment and use of the terms and concepts of eat, eating and eater, we begin to signal the very ontological difference of eating versus that of other forms of the consumption of say cars, books, clothes and computers. Eating and being an eater means that—in more post-structural, and post-disciplinary parlance—we are doing more-than-consumption and being more-than-consumers. This re-conceptualisation works to both specify but also open up novel terrain across the practices and forms of our very human—and indeed inseparable social and individual—relationships to the non-human world we so choose or are required to incorporate into our bodies. In short, working through the terms and concepts of eating and the eater is my way of working to add more meaning, meaningful resonance and more meaningful conceptual and empirical purchase to the food/society relationalities that inhabit our everyday practices and experiences.

Second, more fully giving eating and the eater their conceptual and empirical ‘due’ works to not only situate the relationalities of food, bodies and people at the centre of our analysis but requires we see these relationalities in their ‘real world’ messiness, complexity and contingency. As I tried to show in my opening, eating and being an eater (and/or a food preparer for others) is conscious, unconscious, affective, rational, porous, bounded, material and fleshy, fleeting and indistinct, sometimes contradictory and multiple; and at other times it is perfectly sensible and singular. Eating is, as I have suggested, relationally contingent: its practice is fuzzy, partial, unformed, ever-changing, hard to articulate, engaging and fundamentally different across different people, families, regions, cultures and countries. Considerations of the multiplicities and complexities of eating and the eater are about accounting for and getting at the more ‘true to life’ experiences, engagements and practices of our relationships to food.

These more true-to-life considerations of eating sit directly at the centre of a number of key writings by food scholars. For example, the collective of Clive Barnett, Paul Cloke, Nick Clarke, Alice Malpass and Jennifer Pykett, through the twinned lenses of fair trade and organic foods (Barnett et al. 2011, Clarke et al. 2008), have made deep empirical and theoretical interventions on this front. For them—through the (more diffuse lenses) of ethical and politicised consumption—the politics of eating is “. . . a facet of integrated and dispersed practices” (Barnett et al. 2011, 200) of the ‘doings’ of responsibility that “is [much] less an individualistic economic act and more of a means of acting in relation to larger collective projects which...innovate new forms of shared responsibility” (p. 201). This more-than-consumption is not only held together by a whole network of institutions, feelings, economies and cultures, but a great deal of these eating politics are “...not undertaken as ‘consumers’ at all [but rather] embedded in practices where they are being parents, caring partners...good friends and so on” (p. 201). Important sociological, albeit spatialised, research here has been diligently pursued by Josée Johnston and her various colleagues (e.g. Johnston et al. 2011, 2012, Johnston and Szabo 2011). Her work sits directly at the centre of this eating-focused, more-than take on consumers/consumption by critically disturbing both the figure of consumers and their practices through research showing that, as both poor and rich eaters construct notions of ‘ethical’, ‘good’ food—accompanied by equally apparent moral quandaries—“place and privilege are just as important as personal taste and ethics in shaping daily food choices” (Johnston et al. 2012). In Johnston’s work, Sayer’s (2011) ghostly theoretical imprint of ‘lay normativities’ (see also Wheeler 2013) takes empirical shape in the context of ethical eating and the multiple foodscapes these practices and those of the figure of the ethical eater render.

Others—mainly feminist geographers—operating in this vein have sought to explore the multiple, complex and indeterminate relationship of food, bodies and eating. Building on the likes of Elspeth Probyn (2000, 2012), Deborah Lupton (1996) and Gill Valentine (1999, 2002),ⁱⁱ Robyn Longhurst (2011) has, through an innovative and rich autobiographical account, explored the deeply personal, gendered, embodied but also profoundly paradoxical ‘real’ and reflective experiences of eating (less) in efforts to ‘become smaller’. Allison and Jessica Hayes-Conroy (2008, 2010, 2010, 2010, 2013, 2013) have taken to exploring the visceral a/effects of the relationalities of bodies and food through the practices of eating and the potential for the re-capture of an everyday politics of eating through questions of taste. For them, and similar to Mike Carolan’s (2011) work on embodied food politics, because eating is indeterminate and malleable, it holds promise as a form of politics in the context of

health, access to healthy, nutritious foods, food ethics and alternative food networks. Further, as Emma-Jayne Abbotts and Anna Lavis (2013a, p 1) eloquently articulate,

Eating, as a conceptual and a physical act, brings both foods and bodies into view; food does not remain on a supermarket shelf, in the kitchen or on a plate, but is placed in the mouth, chewed, tasted, swallowed and digested. Its solidity is thus broken down and rendered into fragments that both pass through, and become, the eater's body. This is a process that concomitantly establishes and ruptures social relations between bodies, whether those of the food's producers, retailers, micro-biological components or even of the original animal sources. Unpacking the encounters between foods and (human and non-human) bodies then, offers a way to take account of the many networks and relations embedded in and performed by eating.

Finally, here, those writing from within the field of 'critical fat studies' (e.g. Colls, 2007, Colls and Evans 2014; Evans et al. 2011, Guthman 2011, Guthman and DuPuis 2006) have worked to situate considerations of eating and eaters at the centre of their analysis designed to not just make 'space for fat bodies' but question and reverse the 'received wisdom' of the causes and consequences of the 'epistemological violence' that the labels of 'obese' and 'obesity' do to individual and social bodies. Focus is thus directed to more indeterminate, situated and relational pathways of exploring, understanding and conceptualizing obesity/fatness that have inter-corporealities, inter-subjectivities and people's lifecourses—as *eaters*—at their centre.

At their most broad, these shifts to eating and eater are meant to fundamentally and more fully socialise and situate the practices of eating and the figure of the eater in the temporal and spatial networks of the co-creation, materialities and a/effects of human/food relationalities (Abbotts and Lavis, 2013a). These rhetorical and conceptual moves are designed to shed and indeed bury the accompanying implicit and/or explicit definitional baggage of 'individualistic', 'rational', and 'free chooser/choice' that comes with the continued use of consumer and consumption. Thus, from the outset of our research and theorising, the figure of the 'eater' is one that is always and everywhere embedded in food's multiple socio-material assemblages while it is the act of eating that co-creates these same multiple, (in)determinant socio-material assemblages. To put it more simply, as we shift to the use of eaters and eating, we might begin to throw off that old and unhelpful baggage embedded in the term consumption and the figure of the consumer. Such a shift will open up new and possibly more dedicated space to explore the powerful and power-filled food-eater-society relationship that form the rich mosaic of (increasingly unequal) everyday spaces and places of the foodscape.

Third, the uses of eating and eater work to encapsulate and capture both production and consumption within them and consider them as necessarily relational rather than essential categories. Eating is the practice of consuming and ingesting food that has, of course been produced somewhere by someone through other sets of practices. One cannot eat—at least as a material practice—without stuff that has been produced in some form, shape or another that is primarily designed to allow us to stuff ourselves. Additionally, being an eater is also about the production of one's identity, social reproduction and material reproduction. The conditions of 'being an eater' and of 'practising eating', thus, have at their ontological but

also practical core *both* production and consumption as thoroughly non-essentialised and intimately and always relational. In other words, the use of eating and eaters in describing the human/food relationship works to signal that this relationship is only articulated through the inseparable relationalities of production and consumption, which now, according to my polemic, are collapsed and conceptualised through the practices of eating and the figure of the eater. The practice of eating is both, everywhere and always, more-than-consumption but also more-than-production.

More can be said here in this context, however. Eating is ultimately a practice of intimate connection. It connects us, as articulated above, to the ‘outside’ world, to nature, to the environment, to others and other places of both production and consumption. If as Alkon (2013) has it, food is the ultimate socio-nature, then eating is the ultimate *relationship* to socio-nature for us humans. Eating connects us to places and spaces; it is the, if not *the*, most intimate practice of geography, that, once ingested, literally becomes part of us. For Annemarie Mol (2008), eating ‘figures’ and re-figures subjectivities, agencies and materialities, to which, I think we can and should now add the figuring and re-figuring of *geographies*. In important ways, eating and being an eater brings together the geographies of the production and consumption of food into novel conceptual framings designed to provide more analytical and theoretical purchase in more sophisticated, relevant and ontologically insightful ways.

Fourth and finally, in addition to calling for the further and better socialisation of eating in ontological terms, I wish to have these rhetorical and conceptual shifts also do work to ‘humanise’ the act of eating and those who eat. There is, thus, a normative logic to the use of the language of eating and being an eater, at the same time it contains within this logic the attributes of understanding, empathy and commonality. We all eat, but we all eat in different ways, through different means and through different logics, practices and cultural a/effects. Eating is complex, slippery, contradictory and irrational and when we work to understand why certain people eat the things they do, these multiple, competing and paradoxical rationalities need to figure into our scholarly and wider understandings of eating patterns and behaviours in as non-judgemental a fashion as possible. This is critical in our current era of austerity, poor shaming and creation of ‘bad’ food citizens as, in the UK in particular, foodbanks have continued to spread and the poor, more and more now, have to choose between eating and other critical ‘modern’ services like petrol and electricity (Lambie-Mumford 2013, Lambie-Mumford et al. 2014). Eating and eater-centred work can, in my mind at least, work to cut across and disturb these media-generated and sustained debates on good/bad foods and good/bad food citizens as we work for more and better understanding, situatedness and an exploration of the complexities of the everyday decisions marginalised citizens make as they shop, cook and eat. It is my hope that working to understand and study eating and eaters in their messy, unsettling and opaque splendour might begin to stand as a rhetorical and conceptual bulwark to the contemporary revanchist food politics of the moment and their growing impact of the biopolitics of the bioeconomies of food.

A short tale of three provocations for bioeconomies

There are three provocations that, I think, follow from the rhetorical and conceptual shifts to eater and eating as suggested above. The first works to engage with and question the ‘vital materialisms’ of food as presented in Jane Bennett’s theorisations of the same (Bennett 2007,

2010) and the ways that this perspective might be slightly tempered through the lens of the eater and the practices of eating.

For Bennett—in building as she does on both previous and contemporary work that has explored the socio-material lives of things from the likes of Latour (1993), Appadurai (1986) and its application in the specific context of food (e.g. Goodman 1999, Murdoch 1997, Murdoch et al. 2000, Cook et al 2004, Probyn 2012)—there is a longing to recover and re-purpose the material agency of food for ontological, empirical as well as affective, moral reasons. Here, modernist and other dualisms get chucked onto the dustbin of history to be replaced with agent-like, food(y) things, assemblages and networks and that do this vitalist work on foodscapes and bodies. Yet, even this is too minimalist and politically inert for Bennett, who wishes to take us into a ‘post-relational’ ontological era (Braun 2011). For her, “food is an active inducer-producer of salient, public effects, rather than a passive resource at the disposal of consumers. . . . [F]ood . . . possess[es] an agentic capacity irreducible to (though rarely divorced from) human agency” (Bennett 2007, p. 145). She formulates this through an analysis of the ways that fat acts to shift bodily moods and affective states as well as the political a/effects that Slow Food has on the relationalities of eating. Recent findings from the nutritional sciences confirm and further describe the impacts of the eating of fast food on rates of depression (Buchanan 2015) and the ways that sugary drinks contribute to global morbidity rates (Owen 2015). In more scholarly work, critical nutritionistsⁱⁱⁱ have begun to explore the ways that eating can begin to change our very genetic make-up (Guthman and Mansfield 2012).

This work is clearly exciting and opens up new avenues for how we might theorise about food, its agency and political a/effects. The problem I have however, is the ways that this vital materialisms perspective has the potential to obfuscate not only human agency—and that of the wider vital materialisms of food’s political economies—but also that of the ways food is only and ever relational to humans and societies. Food becomes vital *through* its relationalities to the human body, its tastes and psyche and *through* its collective, socialised and/or individualised materialisations *as* food. Foods don’t become vital through some sort of ‘immaculate conception’: They are made and (re)made in particular politicised, material and social ways that are, in the case of industrial food networks, embedded in corporate relations of profit and market expansion. Our bodies and tastes, as Mike Carolan (2011) has it, are thus *tuned* to and for particular foods, with food’s vital materialism only realised through the foods that people choose or are able to ‘tune in’ to through the practices of eating.

Thus, my suggested eater/eating ‘turn’ not only firmly situates the food/human connection as fully relational, but works to argue that there is a ‘relational activation’ of food’s vital materialism that can only be realised through the practices of eating and through the figure of the eater. My wish would be for us to focus our attentions on how eating activates various vital materialisms—rather than them being ontologically given or somehow innate—but also how these different forms and moments of activation are situated in time and space and across questions of race, class and gender. This focus on eating and the eater might work to, in a slight way, correct the ontological ‘exuberances’ of the vital materialism approach to food by not only centring the relationalities of foods, bodies and affects in our analysis but also by working to uncover the powerful social, spatial and economic relations that *get* foods into the vital material states of say, ‘healthy’, ‘unhealthy’, ‘industrial’ and/or ‘alternative’ in the first place. Most importantly, however, in these times of austerity eating, inequality and nutritional insecurity, analysis of food’s ontological agency as presented to us

in Bennett's vital materialisms lens should not overtake its practical nor biological agency as food. Rather, the lens of eater and eating can and should work to build up the power of a vital materialisms approach as *political critique* by articulating and fundamentally critiquing ways that food's vital materialisms are absent for some (i.e. not enough to eat) or are relational in particularly harmful or unhealthy ways in the constructions of the bioeconomies of eating.

The second provocation builds on the first to suggest that if food's vitalities and specific materialisms are crucially brought to vibrant life through ingestion and metabolism—eating, in other words—serious theoretical and conceptual consideration needs to be had of the cultural and media grammars that articulate what is appropriate or not to eat and what it means to be a 'good' or 'bad' eater. In this, bioeconomies, and indeed, eating and being an eater are as much vibrantly discursive and 'spectacular' as they are material and materially vibrant. Food's vitalities as media object is a function of its bioeconomy at the same time these discourses work to also invariably create its bioeconomy. Indeed, media is one of the key ways we get to know the biological economy of food and farming as eaters, and one of the ways that the discourses of good and bad foods and good and bad eaters circulates in the public sphere. In short, media surrounding eating and being an eater have infiltrated almost all aspects of our everyday, ordinary food spaces—from television, to magazines, books, social media and the internet—such that they form a key area of analysis of what and how we are supposed to perform the biological economies of food.

Specifically, recent writings have, much as has been argued here, stated that food media is an inseparable and embedded component to the foodscape and should be theorised as such (Johnston and Goodman 2015).^{iv} Other work, hailing from the classical cultural studies approach of critical discourse analysis, has explored the role of celebrity chefs (Hollows and Jones 2010a b, Bell and Hollows 2011, see also Slocum et al. 2011) and the 'campaigning culinary documentary' (CCD) as intermediaries that impact upon our relations to food. Bell et al.'s (2015) findings are particularly interesting given the nuanced way that CCDs can work to both uphold but also critique the neo-liberal approach to healthy eating. Some television programmes work to fully responsabilise eaters in their food choices while others work to critique and responsabilise both the state and corporations in the context of unhealthy food provisioning. Indeed Jamie Oliver personifies this conflict through his *Jamie's 30 Minute Meals* programme that worked to responsabilise those (most likely women) watching to make cheap, healthy family meals while his UK and US *School Meals* programmes worked to hold the state responsible for providing healthy meals to school children. Still other work has looked to uncover and analyse audience reactions and 'uses' of food media, intermediaries such as food celebrities and the biopolitics that these encounters create. For example, Piper (2015, see also Piper 2013) has traced the ways that audiences take celebrity chef ideas, practices and information, interpret all this differently and then work to incorporate this lifestyle advice in ways that make sense to them as eaters. Barnes (2015), in related research, has explored the ways that audiences have, through social media, both worked to perform themselves as eaters by publicising their engagements with celebrity chef programmes, but also how audiences have worked to 'talk back' to these same celebrity chefs also through social media. Overall, analysing food media and its role in the creation of food politics—let alone the role that food media plays in constructing eating and what it means to be an eater—is crucial for understanding the shifting and complex food cultures that make up its bioeconomies.

My final provocation is short and it's this: In order for us to get at more enactive and vibrant bioeconomies of food and eating, I'd like to see more autobiography and autoethnography in our work on the bioeconomies of food, eating and food politics. Longhurst (2011) has done this successfully in her fascinating discussion of working to eat differently and lose weight as she developed a critical feminist perspective to understanding an eater's relationship to (less) food. Carolan (2011) begins his ambitious book on *Embodied Food Politics* by exploring the ways he was, as a child, tuned to canned mushrooms. His analysis is then built around the ways our bodies have been tuned to industrially produced foods and how a 're-tuning' might be the basis for an alternative food politics. The Hayes-Conroys have worked to inject a strong autobiographical voice into their work on alternative foods and school food projects as well as their research on social movements more broadly. Allison Hayes-Conroy (2010) in particular has explored the ways she did 'visceral' fieldwork with the Slow Food movement and how this approach allowed her to garner novel and interesting insights that would have been unavailable to her through the use of more conventional methods (see also Longhurst et al. 2009). Ian Cook et al (2004) has also injected a strong autoethnographic voice into his work, namely through his all-encompassing desire to 'follow the thing' in the shape of a papaya. I've (Goodman 2014) even flirted with autobiography in my own work as a way to explore the multiple and conflicting ethical and moral character of eating and food choice (see also Goodman and Sage, 2014; Sage, 2014). Clearly, my opening to this chapter, successful or not, was designed to highlight the possibilities of this approach and showcase how it might contain within it academic potential and social relevance.

Further, more and better autoethnography in our work on the bioeconomies of eating food is not merely a conceit of the privileged or a solipsistic exercise that remains in the realms of the personal. Rather it suggests that this shift to eaters and eating is taken seriously, as we too are people who eat and engage with food on a daily basis. As Longhurst suggests, exploring and critiquing our own embodied geographies as eaters can work to, as in her case and in her words, "offer an account that positions my paradoxical experiences as central to my critical scholarship on fat bodies". Autobiography can, in Mark Purcell's (2009) words, produce powerful writing that can "...combine cultural analysis with stories of the self, resulting in thick description that helps to further understand individuals' and groups' (i.e. eaters' in this case) lives" (Longhurst 2011, p. 875). Insurgent autobiography is key here. This is a form of autoethnography that works to destabilise and question dominant assumptions about eating and being an eater and is well positioned to develop a critical voice to the current state of food politics. In this, enactive and enlivened bioeconomies—something this book calls for—could and indeed might just start with ourselves and our own experiences as eaters.

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ⁱ For more in this vein, see FitzSimmons and Goodman (1998).

ⁱⁱ For more contemporary but equally inspiring work on food and bodies, see the collections of Abbots and Lavis (2013b) and Abbots et al (2015a) but especially the latter's superb introduction (Abbots et al, 2015b).

ⁱⁱⁱ Many of whom have been concerned with the vital materialisms in the context of bodily health and well-being for a quite a while now (see Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy A. 2013, Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy J. 2013, and Mansfield 2008, for more).

^{iv} And while I don't have space to elaborate this here, I would argue that food documentaries and investigative reporting is one of the key ways we have been able to uncover and learn about Robbin's (2013) 'cries from along the chain of accumulation' and those for food specifically.