

# Race in the study of food

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## Abstract

Recent reviews of food scholarship in *Progress in Human Geography* have begun to engage with racial identity but have not considered the breadth of work on the subject. Once we look outside what is known as agri-food studies to research in international development, environmental history, feminist theory, cultural studies and anthropology, it is evident that a large body of research exists relating race to the production, distribution and consumption of food. However, to see how this work actually refers to *race* often requires reading between the lines. Authors may refer to ‘difference’, ‘alterity’ or ‘Otherness’ instead of race and some are not explicit about the theory of race upon which they draw. Consequently, it is not always evident how race matters to the study of food. This paper’s contribution is to propose how theories of race are being used in this literature. It does so by drawing on the work of geographers, but the paper seeks to engage with research outside the discipline as well. Most literature implicitly relies on the social construction of race to consider representations and performances of race in contexts of eating or producing food. A smaller body of work theorizes racial embodiment as a material process. Explicit engagement with the concept of race and its diverse theoretical foundations is important because it allows scholars to make arguments about how racism shapes food systems, to understand how race changes through food and to consider how food might enable different theorizations of race.

## I. Introduction

The study of race is critical to understanding food. Bringing together anti-racist theory and food research, this paper proposes that we can better understand farming and provisioning, tasting and picking, eating and being eaten, going hungry and gardening by paying attention to race. If food studies is understood narrowly, it will be difficult to see the variety and abundance of scholarship on race and food that exists. By ‘food’, I mean all the processes that make animal, vegetable or mineral into something to eat and then all that is involved in what happens next to bodies and societies. Food and race are both charged

subjects. Consequently, food must be understood within circulations of power and race must be analyzed with a keen awareness as to what is *politically* at stake in the use of this concept. In making explicit the centrality of race to the study of food, one might ask, *what is race* politically, ecologically, institutionally or historically in this context, and what does that definition mean to our subject of study? We might ask, what does food become when we consider race and, conversely, how might we view race differently through food practices? What difference does race make in the fields where food is grown, the places it is sold and the manner in which it is eaten?

This paper's contribution is to reveal the breadth of work on the subject of race and food within and outside geography and to categorize this work according to the theoretical framework authors use to address race. While other papers in this journal have reviewed work on racism, patriarchy and nationalism (Smith, 1990) race and radical politics in critical geography (Glassman, 2009), race, youth and masculinity (Hopkins, 2007) and race and indigeneity (Panelli, 2008), none has focused on the subject of food. As Ian Cook (2008) pointed out, an earlier report on antiracist cultural geographies (Nash, 2003) could have drawn entirely on food studies—but did not. The paper builds on Cook's discussions in 'Mixing', whose central theme is 'otherness', and on similar conversations in 'Afters' (Cook et al., 2008; 2010).<sup>1</sup> A US understanding of race (and food) informs this author's perspective and I review only the work of those authors who write in English, nonetheless, the theoretical observations are broadly applicable.

## A. Theorizing race: materiality and representation

All of the scholarship reviewed in the paper is critical and antiracist. Most authors address manifestations of racism and efforts to confront it, although race is more than racism, which, in turn, varies around the world (Morris, 2001). In addition to revealing the way racism works, theorizing race may also enable an understanding of how difference brings people, places and ideas together in ways that enable different future worlds. Through race, scholars engage conceptually with life and change.

For this review, authors are categorized as using either a social constructionist or a 'new materialist' framework.<sup>2</sup> The poststructural critique of essential difference remains central to most scholarship on race in the social sciences and humanities. The shorthand for this critique is the 'social construction of race' whether the actual framework is Butlerian, Derridian or Foucauldian. Some tenets of this position are as follows: Race is a fiction. It exists only as a discursive category, the result of societal norms privileging paler skin and the practices of bourgeois whiteness that became salient through colonialism's engagement with nonwhite and poor white groups. White, wealthy and masculine epistemologies shape spatial relationships, history and aspects of daily life, becoming invisible. In this hierarchy, whiteness has gathered and achieved stability around the world as a result of constant challenges to its edges (Stoler 1995). Privilege settles into institutions that benefit white people and provides discursive pathways to block attempts to change them. But more than

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<sup>1</sup> Geographies of food: afters was produced from blog posts. See <http://food-afters.blogspot.com/>. I refer to authors who participated in the blog as (author in Cook et al., 2010) but in the bibliography as Cook et al., 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Psychoanalytic theories of race (see Lane, 1998; McClintock, 1995; Nast, 2000) should ideally be discussed but are beyond this paper's scope.

benefiting white people, racism actively undermines nonwhite groups. Stuart Hall (1980) urged analysis of the ‘work’ of racism. This work is evident in the state-sanctioned exploitation and maintenance of “fatal power-difference couplings”, organizing life within and between nations (Gilmore, 2002: 16; 2007). Many scholars have considered representations of race with the understanding that to represent is not to merely reflect but to intervene, to create worlds. Because representations become embodied through many scales, authors focus on the ways discourse materializes race.

Differences exist between social construction and performativity as well as between epistemological and ontological arguments about identity, but only a summary is possible here (for explanations see Cheah, 1996; Colebrook, 2000; Grosz, 2005; Nash, 2005; Nayak, 2006; Saldanha, 2006; Saldanha, 2007; Slocum, 2008; Slocum and Smith, 2009; Veninga, 2009). In the emphasis on the way society inscribes identity onto a pre-existing blank body, social construction accorded too much power to discourse. The strength of performativity is in its capacity to show how the racialized body is both inscribed by discourse and able to spatially perform both normalized and transgressive identities or, to disrupt, reinforce and create new divisions (Thomas, 2005). Identity is never completely accomplished yet norms solidify through the repetition of performance. Though embodiment is clearly of interest to these scholars, nonetheless, as the argument goes, performativity requires the mediation of the social to allow us to understand the body.

Alternatively, work falling under the ‘new materialism’ or corporeal feminism, is interested in what bodies do. Bodies are in a state of constant becoming through their acts and encounters, in assemblage with other bodies. Racial identities are circumscribed and facilitated by forces both social and physical. Thus some access to matter apart from its mediation by the social is necessary. Nature or materiality is understood as a biophysical outside that induces subjectivity but does not determine destiny (Grosz, 2005). To re-ontologize race means to ask, ‘what is race?’, but the question does not lead in the same direction as phrenology, ‘races’ or racism. Both environment and genes can be acknowledged in the proliferation of raced bodies while at the same time rejecting environmental and genetic determinism. Movement, smell, phenotype, practice and tendency within particular spaces, in combination with certain material objects, separate and connect bodies, creating race and racism (Saldanha, 2006). Race is “a complex assemblage of phenotypes and environments rearranged by colonialism and capitalism” (Saldanha, 2009; forthcoming a). It is possible to think about race not only as the erasure of difference, but also in terms of how race gets made in connection. What gets connected may well solidify and expand inequality or may lead in other, better, or at least unexpected, directions.

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The literature reviewed below is organized into one group of scholarship presupposing the social construction of race (reviewed in sections II and III) and another, much smaller group, theorizing racial embodiment (section IV). Sections II and III follow the enduring division in the food literature between consumption and production (Winter, 2005). Authors explore how representations of race discursively create identities through cooking and eating (section II) and scholars of labor, struggle and agriculture explain how the social process of race shapes landscapes and knowledge systems (section III). Section IV offers theoretical perspectives on affect, sensation, biology and embodiment that may provide routes toward an analysis of the materiality of race and food. These engagements are concerned with the capacities and ‘non-capacities’ of racialized bodies, embodiments and

matter. This section can be read as mildly speaking back to sections I and II. Nonetheless, I do not make claims about the exclusivity or preferability of my categorizations, merely that the scholarly tendencies I have outlined can be observed. The creativity and rigor of the work in each of these areas is generative of greater understanding and insight.

## II. Identity and eating

A material-semiotic substance used in the “creation and maintenance of social relationships, food serves both to solidify group membership and to set groups apart” (Mintz and Du Bois, 2002: 109). Food products “create the images by which we understand who we have been, who we are, and who we might or should be in the future” (Miller, 1995: 35). Producing and maintaining racial identity is dependent, in part, on holding onto food habits and tastes, which are themselves imagined as cuisines belonging to racialized groups or nations (Appadurai, 1988; Weismantel, 1989). Eating and cooking as acts at once intimate and public, empowering and complicit, are constitutive of racial identity and its politics. Scholars understand food preparation and consumption as central to the development and preservation of racialized identity and belonging for women, diasporic populations, immigrants and the displaced, enslaved and impoverished. Themes include how nonwhite groups are exoticized or demonized, how food histories of marginalized people are ignored, appropriated or maligned by dominant groups and how racialized groups discursively resist these oppressions. Authors have also written about the encounter that occurs through the preparation and consumption of ‘others’ foods’ and question the idea that food ‘belongs’ to particular racialized groups.

### A. Soul food, obesity and representations of race

The representation of nonwhite groups through food in the white imaginary is a means to understand whiteness, but it is also a source of political creativity for the making of racialized identities. For the US context, Krishnendu Ray (2007: 131-132) argues that there are authors who write about the connection of the material food to the African diaspora (e.g. Poe, 1999; Yentsch, 2007) and those who write about representations (e.g. Tompkins, 2007; Witt, 1999). The latter consider constructions of black identity and attempts to rewrite those narratives. Psyche Williams-Forson (2006), concerned with misrepresentations of food and women, is interested in what chicken meant, beyond nourishment, to shaping black feminist identity. Cooking and eating are theorized as means to resist assimilation and racialized heteropatriarchy inscribed on bodies. For instance, an analysis of Edwidge Danticat’s *Breath, Eyes, Memory* (1998) argues that cooking *is* writing; women’s food preparation becomes an historical text and mode of communication that helps to heal the experience of oppression. “Women’s previously written bodies...become the agencies of culinary constructions instead of predetermined works, inscribed by domestic labor” (Loichot, 2004: 93-94). Similarly, African American cookbook authors write against negative depictions of black food, seeking to eradicate culinary racism (Zafar, 1999). Black chef/activist Bryant Terry wrote his cookbook *Vegan Soul Kitchen* (2009) partly out of anger that soul food was being blamed for African American obesity. He also wanted to address the question of local food, arguing that

soul food originates in African American backyard gardens and through the practice of bartering.<sup>3</sup>

Decisions about what to eat are profoundly central to preserving racial identity just as choice is emphasized in the neoliberal condemnation of obesity. Both are biopolitically productive of a population's life. 'Eating black' becomes of primal importance to identity as African Americans fragment, stratify and become more diverse (Zafar, 1999). Embracing soul food is a statement of racial pride precisely because it reclaims foods previously despised—those animal parts that slaves had to eat and those that their owners would not (Bailey, 2007). While younger African Americans may not want to identify with the past of black America through its food (Zafar, 1999), people of color have often rejected vegetarianism and veganism as choices of the privileged (Bailey, 2007). Writing against whiteness' enclosure of veganism, Breeze Harper's (2010) call to decolonize the diet is a statement not only against junk food but for a black vegan antiracism that encompasses the rights of animals.

A 'fat tax' on junk food and calorie labeling as the universally applicable means toward better eating are part of obesity biopolitics in the US (on these biopolitics and the production of bodies and places as obese see Evans and Colls, 2009). This biopolitics makes everyone complicit in a Minneapolis YMCA fitness challenge display featuring a yellow, congealed 5 pound hunk of fat and a box in which one can donate one's 'fat pants'. Visibly invisible to society are the racialized causes and consequences behind statistics like 37% of African American, 24% of white and 33% of Mexican American women are obese (see Herndon, 2005).<sup>4</sup> Many analyses considering the production of fat bodies focus on body image. The deconstructionist discourse of 'fat acceptance' argues that representations reviling large size must be amended to allow for a diversity of body images. These arguments claim, for instance, that Mexican American bodies should not have to conform to the slim body image privileged by white society and formalized through the standardization technology of Body Mass Index (Azzarito, 2008). In contrast, cultural studies scholar Elspeth Probyn (2008) argues that despite 30 years of feminist thinking on subjectivity, authors tend to focus on how fat bodies are shamed and classed (see also Longhurst, 2005). Such accounts emphasize the body's docility as it awaits inscription and misunderstand Foucault's method of studying "the heavy materiality of discourse" (2008: 403). Sounding understandably annoyed, Probyn writes that arguments about shaming and docility "do little to intervene in a situation where people are increasingly terrorized and seriously damaged by what they eat" (2008: 402-403). She concludes,

In the stead of [Foucault's] meticulous scientific analysis of the laws of discourse, fat becomes objectified as a mode of resistance. As a viable strategy for social intervention this is painfully limited, and can have quite disastrous political consequences. In human terms, the focus on image and fat acceptance reduces woman's image to that of 'fat woman'. Whether she is a proud fat woman or not, this is a sad way to understand human subjectivity (2008: 403).

In the early 1990s Häagen Dazs launched an advertising campaign offering black

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.racialicious.com/2009/08/21/an-interview-with-bryant-terry-on-race-class-food-and-culture-part-1/>. Accessed August 28, 2009

<sup>4</sup> The Centers for Disease Control found that the prevalence of obesity to be 49.6%, 45.1% and 33% among US "non-Hispanic black women, Mexican American and non-Hispanic white women" (Ogden et al. 2010: 1)

masculinity as ‘phallic embodiment’ and the pleasure of miscegenation through ice cream flavors. Such imagery, both a fetishization of black sexuality (see also Sheller, forthcoming) and a destabilization of whiteness’ omnipotence, says more about whiteness than anything else (Nayak, 1997). Writing a few years later, Rafia Zafar (1999) wondered whether, with the updating of the image of Aunt Jemima on the pancake box, the consciousness of the American public about African Americans and food had been altered. Perhaps Western disgust over Asian consumption of dog meat, for instance, is more muted now than in the past (Okamura, 2010; Wu, 2002) and more ridiculed for its hypocrisy (Foer, 2009). In an intriguing comparison between the politics of race in his native India and the US, Krishnendu Ray (2007: 135) suggests that the “visceral disgust of blackness—the body, its appetites, and the comestibles that go into it...is still real and normal in India” (referring to racism against Dalits) whereas in the US, people no longer take seriously stereotypes about African Americans and chicken or watermelon consumption. But stereotypes are agile. A blog entry described NY city school lunch advocates “genuinely trying” to show their cultural sensitivity through the argument that it was “part of black culture to eat Wonder Bread, Cheetos and junk food”.<sup>5</sup> US alternative food networks make a point of defining food security as existing when people can access “culturally appropriate” food, but this intention may map static “races” onto inert food cultures. Meanwhile, McDonalds, the foodroute into the American way of life (Julier, 2005), manifests its cultural sensitivity via the ‘I’m lovin’ it’ campaign catering to the diverse junk food needs of people of color. With different ad websites for ‘races’—Latinos and African Americans—its black friendly ad<sup>6</sup> showing a well off, thin heterosexual man begging his light skinned partner for her chicken McNuggets, which she won’t share, is probably not the sort of representational updating that Zafar was after. Kara Walker’s ‘Keys to the Coop’,<sup>7</sup> features a silhouette of a black slave girl running after a chicken whose head she holds in one hand, suspended above her outstretched tongue and in the other hand, the key to the coop. Walker’s work is both a statement that positive representations of black bodies have not eradicated racism and that images can reclaim power from a stereotype by acknowledging some truth at its heart (Swindell, 2005).

## **B. Home cooking, nostalgic gastronomy and ‘ethnic spice’**

Movement on different terms to new places is fertile ground for considering cooking, eating and race. Racism against migrant food practices has had an active presence in public health and urban planning policy (Pilcher, 2008) as well as in the multicultural sentiment that once we eat others’ food, we all get along (Hage, 1997). Facing isolation, alienation and longing for home, some migrants use food to bridge a sensual gap (Ahmed et al., 2003). Working against efforts to ‘whiten’ their diets, migrants created their own food products (Gabaccia, 1998). Overcoming “the splitting of memory and lived experience” (Collins, 2008: 166) might be referred to as nostalgic gastronomy (Roy 2002; see also Roy forthcoming) because it recreates what one imagines as food from home often using substitute ingredients (Cwiertka, 2003). Nostalgic gastronomy allows migrants the opportunity to live sensuously in a Malaysian identity (Choo, 2004), to make grocery stores

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<sup>5</sup> The author, who refers to him/herself as BSK, is writing about an effort in the US to make the lunch offered in secondary school cafeterias more nutritious. <http://www.racialicious.com/2009/08/21/an-interview-with-bryant-terry-on-race-class-food-and-culture-part-1/>. Accessed August 28, 2009

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.365black.com/365black/index.jsp>

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.tate.org.uk/collection/P/P78/P78211\\_9.jpg](http://www.tate.org.uk/collection/P/P78/P78211_9.jpg)

serve these memories (Mankekar, 2005) and to engage in practices done in home countries (Bal, 2005; Collins, 2008; Longhurst et al., 2009). Different enactments of race difference and food are performed through class and gender as well as through relations with dominant groups (see Cook, 2008 for review).

Hierarchies of taste and value articulating with class, race and nation shape food systems, global and local, past and present (Wilk, 2006). Immigrant foodways in the US have been on the lower end of the hierarchy, associated with toil, whereas ‘true’ cuisine has been known for requiring a refinement of taste and considerable skill (Ray, forthcoming). According to Perera and Pugliese, “[t]he culinary, with its economy of enrichment and incorporation, signifies the palatable and always aestheticized element of multiculturalism precisely because it still effectively reproduces an assimilationist economy of cultural containment and control” (1996: 110 cited in Anderson and Taylor, 2005: 464). The metaphorical national body must be fed with food that is easily digestible and augments vigor. In mid 1990s Australia, one narrative suggested that the country’s multicultural mixture strengthened the nation by building a healthy cosmopolitan body. Simultaneously running alongside that narrative was the trope of indigestion from Asian food as the result of food poisoning. Today indigestion is part of the acceptable vocabulary of racism in Mod Oz (Edwards et al., 2000). Foods like milk were also promoted to strengthen the white American body (DuPuis, 2007) in a context in which most people in the world are lactose intolerant (Scheidlin, 2007). Similarly, race/food fear rising from the influx of still-to-become-white immigrants and instilled by safer, scientific bread-making techniques discouraged the consumption of brown bread made in small bakeries run by more recent immigrants (Bobrow-Strain, 2007; 2008).

With the increasingly rapid circulation of cuisines, scholars have sought to show how, in this racialized encounter, dishes from essentialized others are appropriated with delight, while recognition of past and present relations of race remain largely absent (Hage, 1997; Heldke, 2003; Henderson, 2004). In the debate about the colonizing gaze and the globalization of food (Bell and Valentine, 1997; Cook and Crang, 1996; Narayan, 1995), authors explore how food adventurers consume difference. Race “as emblematic of difference”, argues Duruz, is not just the spice but the staple of the cosmopolitan experience and appetite” (2004: 432). She reminds us that the power geometry (Massey, 1994) of cosmopolitan consumption means that the mobility and control of the traveler shapes, in potentially negative ways, the lives of those who service her tastes and romanticizes gendered and classed work. Molz suggests that food adventuring across a culinary landscape secures both white Western cuisine as normal and the tourist as daring and open. In effect, the tourist “gaz[es] with the tongue” (2007: 188). Eating chicken feet and bee larvae, the tourist collects experiences of difference. If cooking ethnic at home with Madhur Jaffrey is ‘appropriation by admiration’ (Duruz, 2004), then eating in settler societies is indeed a difficult business (Probyn, 2000).

But the monstrous, omnivorous eater of ‘ethnic spice’ (hooks, 1992) contrasts too sharply with the seemingly passive culinary world into which she’s traveled. Too quickly reducing connection through food to another expression of racism, imperialism or colonialism misses the ambivalence of encounter and the fragility of identity (Duruz, 2005). If we think in terms of foods as ‘crossing over’ from one dominated to another dominating culture, we will miss the “messy, mixed-up, interconnected nature of histories, geographies and identities” and continue to anchor stories in the West (Cook and Harrison 2003: 310). It is worth remembering that vendors of ethnic foods actively invent these cuisines for their host countries’ populations (Narayan, 1995) and white Westerners are not necessarily at the

center of attention in nonwhite food spaces (Duruz, 2007). While some might find that eating Irish or Italian is a means to recreate whiteness, making it “beyond or more than whiteness” (Bailey 2007), distinguishing difference within whiteness is important for a more complex understanding of racialization (Bonnett, 1996; Haylett, 2001; Nayak, 2003; Winders, 2003). Suggesting that culinary cosmopolitanism can invite engagement with a nation’s past and future, Elspeth Probyn (2000: 103) argues against reducing this mode of consumption to liberal pretence. For Ian Cook, there may be no “other-eating white personality that needs to be dismantled and reconstructed...because...people’s heterogeneous biographies and everyday lives are often *both* food colonialist *and* anti-colonialist” (2008: 8). Reflecting on ‘eating the other’ through Levinas, Angela Hirst (2004: 115) is attracted to the unresolvable paradox of his ethics: to savor the flavors of life but to know that her satiety causes the Other’s suffering. But unwilling and unable to live hostage to the alterity of a Levinasian politics that requires encounter, she keeps this suffering at a distance by choosing how much responsibility she assumes. For her, alterity is boundless, inhabiting bodies and cities; it cannot be excluded but it can be circumscribed to the contents of her 20 ml spoon. In this way she accepts a more manageable alterity and in doing so, rejects the wild excitement of eating that comes from seeking the Other’s difference with its potential to rupture security and happiness (2004: 141, 122). Hirst’s conclusions resonate as much with Jacques Derrida’s (1991) observation ‘one never eats entirely on one’s own’ as with Probyn’s suggestion that “[i]n the end, we are alone...eating is still that most radically solitary and subjective of acts” (2000: 20).

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In her (2006) review of the anthropology of food, Lynn Phillips asked, “[i]f the ideas and practices of food mark human difference, what do current projects of food and globality tell us about who we are” by which she means, “...what kinds of markers of food exclusion and inclusion are being created in the current situation, how are these markers maintained by global projects, and what do they imply for developing sustainable places to live?” Or, as Mimi Sheller put it, eating the other is less apt a metaphor than “eating each other...eating the food right out of other people’s mouths...”, as she argued that scholars need to look less toward the consumption patterns of the wealthy and more to self provisioning practices of food producers (Sheller in Cook et al., 2010). The next section’s literature is concerned with these questions.

### III. Political ecologies and economies

The exploitation of people’s physical labor and knowledge in the making of capitalist economies and nations as well as the politics confronting this subjugation are central themes in the scholarship reviewed below. This work is interested in the spatiality of racial dispossession, recuperating knowledge systems, theorizing racialized labor and articulating the relationship between race and food politics. If race is studied in political ecology the emphasis tends to be on the way capitalism produces racial inequalities instead of racism being a force in its own right. Under the first subheading, I make an argument for the relevance of race to political ecology before moving in the subsequent sections to examples in which race is explicitly central or where it can be read between the lines.



## A. Why race matters to political ecologies of food

Political ecology seeks to explain human-environment inequalities through empirical studies that rely on close analysis of the articulation of local situations with global processes (for overviews see Robbins, 2004; Zimmerer and Bassett, 2003). It is in these global places that the question of race might usefully be raised. But with some exceptions, race tends to be absent from much of this research, particularly that work done in ‘third world’ contexts where no obvious white-nonwhite relationship to food and farming is evident. Few study the subject of race *and* hunger, food insecurity, landlessness or development in the global south. As one colleague remarked on the question of race and hunger in Africa, “it’s fairly obvious that white settlers don’t starve”.

Shadows of race tend to appear in writing on the relations of development and colonialism, but these are not usually theorized through race (Duffield, 2006; Kothari, 2006). Often in case studies of local scale injustice, race is understood as different from and less relevant than ethnicity, status, indigeneity or class (Schroeder et al., 2008). Researchers typically do not analyze explicitly how those bodies who produce food or who go hungry live within racial formations or epidermal schemas that are both local and global. This lacuna arises from the search for causal relationships, the use of structural explanations that point to class relations, the localized nature of many studies and/or the focus on inequalities in a north-south capitalist framework. Critiquing political ecology analyses of carbon markets for instance, Andrew Baldwin (2009) argues that the Marxist perspective linking neocolonialism, a global north-south divide and neoliberalism occludes an understanding of how the disciplinary technologies of racial rule are found in carbon management discourses and how the preservation of racial difference is central to the exercise of modern ecological power.

It is not necessary to limit a discussion of race to only those places home to white *and* brown people. Race is, everywhere, an organizing principle of societies (Omi and Winant, 1994) and biophysical environments. In order to understand how environmental justice is organized, justified and reconfigured, one has to see how race and environmental formations—imaginaries, resource allocations, patterns of environmental change—are mutually constitutive of subjects (Sundberg, 2008: 569). Understanding that the state is always already a racial state with specific historical and spatial form (Goldberg, 2002) will result in different explanations of human-environment questions. It is also not necessary to choose race *or* class as the explanatory category; race is even more interesting when it is complicated by other identities (Jackson, 1987; Saldanha, 2007). In critical nature-society contexts, race has to be not only about white-nonwhite structural relations and it has to be inclusive of and more than institutionalized racism.

Political ecologists might connect hunger and race, climate change and biopolitics, neoliberal disasters and antiracism. The sharp upturn in 2008 food prices, brought on primarily by biofuel production, is in part the consequence of white, middle class, suburban enthusiasm for these fuels (Huber, 2009). There are racialized effects of global food markets and racial patterns in local land use. Nations are presently leasing land for food production in other countries (Rice, 2009), while many remain, or are newly made, landless. We might see whiteness cannibalizing darker, starving bodies through images of famine (Escobar, 1995) or find that race can help to explain Haitians eating cakes of two parts mud, one part flour (Carroll, 2008). It may be obvious that largely white-populated nations are responsible

for the majority of the greenhouse gas emissions weakening ecosystems and increasing vulnerability in mostly nonwhite places. Not surprisingly, the proposal that wealthier nations provide places to live for poor, nonwhite climate refugees from the global South is not considered alongside other adaptive responses (Byravan and Rajan, 2005). But what do we make of one ecologist's suggestion that famine deaths from climate changes anticipated in the Sahel will be referred to, after the fact, as genocide (Pacala, 2008)? If racism has already been linked to the Washington Consensus for reducing life chances of people, particularly in Africa and the Caribbean (Klein, 2009) and anti-racism analyzed in the context of World Bank policy (Bonnett, 2006), then it is a short step toward questions of food. Analyses might connect migration, racism and development, as Mark Duffield has done, with the argument that sustainable development is a biopolitical technology for containing the non-insured, who are expected to "live within the limits of their own powers of self-reliance" (2006: 74). It separates useless from useful species life while managing the disappearance of the former. Disappearance of populations occurs, moreover, through the massive unmapping of parts of some African cities, into which the state neither looks nor ventures (Watts, 2005), while the biological security of the West requires preemptive strikes against the dangerous life enabled by the animal husbandry practices of people in the global south (Braun, 2007). Biopolitics in the way Foucault and then Ann Laura Stoler theorized it, that is with specific reference to race and state racism, could be deployed to speak to the process of race in these contexts.

## **B. Racial dispossession: slavery, labor, territory and trade**

Critical nature-society literature seeks to write indigenous and third world knowledges back into historical and current day narratives. Judith Carney's work (2001; 2010) repositions Africa in the making of the world. Spanning the Atlantic, Carney's research explored the gendered relations of rice cultivation in the Gambian post colony to the rice practices carried by slaves to the Carolinas. In *Black Rice* (2001), she makes the case that rice cultivars and knowledge from West Africa enabled the success of rice plantations and kept slaves alive through the food they could produce with these technologies. Scholarship on the Columbian Exchange, Carney argues, overemphasized European as well as Asian and American biological transfer, focused on seeds over African knowledge and failed to acknowledge that contact between Europeans and Canary Islanders marked the beginning of the transfer of food systems. She is less interested in the image of Uncle Ben than the Senegambian practices that shaped rice systems in the Carolinas. The subtext of both books is that race, a socio-historical process in the making, has to be understood through the material practices and embodied knowledge that these peoples brought with them. The trade in enslaved Africans is fundamental to a discussion of race and food; it was slave labor on sugar plantations that enabled the more rapid development of capitalism in Europe (Mintz, 1985) and slave gardens that fed colonists, slaves and later slave owners, creating foodways of the Americas (Carney 2010). Slavery was the condition of possibility for the art and philosophical ideas of modernity, from the coffee houses where sugared drinks provided glucose for thinking to the self fashioning of Europeans in the realms of morality, sense, sensibility and art (Gikandi, 2009).

Explaining the relationship of race to territory, Donald Moore writes of how Rhodesian governmentality racialized agricultural space through "constitutive exclusions", its multiple rationalities of rule and the violent dispossession of land rights producing discursive formations of race (2005). Aimé Césaire's "special geography of Negritude" oriented

racialized identity by the “compass of suffering” (Moore, 2005: 15). By invoking assemblages of bodies, representations and territories to displace accounts of systemic logic and the human as the maker of history, Moore describes the multiple territories of Kaerezi—white farm, chiefdom, rainmaking territory and postcolonial resettlement scheme—in which its residents still suffer (2005: 23; and on rubber agro-forestry, race and territory, see also Peluso, 2009).

The industrialized agricultural landscape of the US is made through racial ideologies active in the labor market and the institutionalized racism that removed African Americans, Mexican and indigenous people from the land. In *Lie of the Land* Don Mitchell proposed “an ontology of labor” (1996: 8) that connected representations of landscape to its material form. Labor, spatially and socially organized through struggle, makes places (1996: 7). Race and gender ideologies are not just reflected in landscapes but are also actively incorporated in them. Mexican workers toiled in a landscape defined by race from the start (1996: 91, see also Mitchell forthcoming). This landscape was partly produced by changing gender relations that came with Mexican American women working in packing houses. Under the *Bracero* program, these migrants displaced resident Mexican-Americans from jobs in the citrus groves. Matt García (2001) analyzes the subsequent violence against *braceros* as a crisis of masculinity irreducible to an effect of material relations.

The trade routes of food—the physical path and the uneven process, the food followed and the racialized, gendered, sexualized relations that shape it along the way—can be differently understood through race. The Gaza Strip and the West Bank are an important site for the study of race and food. Food author Joanna Blythman begins to document Palestinian dispossession, writing that a million olive trees have been uprooted by the Israeli state to make way for settlements. Her focus wavers, understandably diverted toward “confections worth getting fat for” and the “buttery, peppery” oil of Nabali olives. Her story is about the efforts of fair trade organizations Equal Exchange and Green Action to bring Palestinian-grown produce to the Israeli and European market. Apparently Green Action had to ask their Palestinian grower to trim his beard and “smarten up a bit” because his original photo made him look like a terrorist to potential buyers (Blythman, 2009). It is this sort of photoshopping to make the marketable image that concerns Michael Goodman (2010), who sees little space for solidarity in difference emerging through fair trade, particularly now that clueless celebrities have become involved. Though feeling food through the senses and emotions is important (2011), Goodman argues that food’s elementariness to life or viscerality should be understood in terms of inequalities in both quantity and quality of consumption. The lure of exotic food and its ephemeral pleasures is differently productive of groups along the food supply chain. This sensual pleasure is performative, disciplining consumers to seek goods of distinction and constituting African identities through the stereotypes about African cultures that shape import company relations with African farms (Friedberg, 2004). Western supermarket codes against child labor, for instance, reflect culturally specific anxieties that are imposed on African growers. Fair trade standards will not disarm the prejudice underlying the sense of who ought to grow our food. But it is important to understand the complexity of *racialized* desires (for desire and fair trade see Fischer and Benson 2006) to participate in fair trade and the tangled relationship between race and consumption as well as the capacities and perspectives of racialized growers.

## C. Segregated foodscapes and food politics

Race is produced and racism reinforced through foodspace. In her study of fitness programming for East Austin, Texas, Claire Herrick (2008) shows how the idea of radical cultural difference and the spatial segregation of white people and Latinos are jointly involved in producing fitness programming. Despite greater numbers of obese white people, Latinos were the targets of these programs because of their presumed cultural proclivities toward consuming great quantities of unhealthy food. White flight, their higher wealth and income levels, and more parks in white neighborhoods are involved not only in the process by which Austin and East Austin are spatially separated but also in how the people living in each place are represented in public health policy. In some places, however, Latino communities have better access to small chain stores and independent grocers (Block et al., 2008; Raja et al., 2008; Short et al., 2007). In these latter areas, assuming that these are food deserts makes these spaces appear more marginalized than is the case. Access, then, can be understood in terms of powers, a framing that moves the discussion from a right one has or does not have toward the tangles of relations and negotiations that constitute how people get things (Ribot and Peluso, 2003). For instance, historically, chain stores offered a less judgmental space for women and people of color, rising as they did at a time when women were under intense pressure to racially segregate food spaces and to provide proof through food that they were good mothers/wives, but the supermarket also removed the possibility of negotiation between shoppers and store owners (Deutsch, 2010).

‘Nutritional apartheid’ in availability of grocery stores (Garrett, 2008), the scarcity of unpolluted land for urban agriculture in nonwhite neighborhoods (McClintock, 2008) and zoning *against* urban gardening but *for* white hobby farms, among other forms of development (Barraclough, 2009) affect food sovereignty. For the Nation of Islam, healthy food protects against the ravages of a racist society. Advocating separation for preservation, Muhammad Farms aims to provide one meal per day for 40 million black people (McCutcheon, 2009). The Black Panther Party’s breakfast program, organized in the late 1960s, sought to ‘bend the bars of empire’ by sustaining community through alternative food spaces. It stands in contrast to food welfare programs that aim to pacify (Heynen, 2009) and articulates a revolutionary, masculine politics in which men were required to feed kids breakfast, altering, to some extent, the patriarchal relations within the Party (Heynen, forthcoming).

Urban agriculture is increasingly heralded as a solution to food insecurity and future catastrophes. In South Africa, it is assumed that urban food insecurity can be solved by making more food available through urban agriculture when it would be more useful to determine access to transportation and storage as well as the location of shops near work or home (Battersby, 2010). In the UK, the cordial relationship between the environmental movement and allotment gardeners, who are working class, older, and white, but also West Indian, Indian and Pakistani, broke down over land scarcity (Wiltshire, 2009). Largely white and middle class, environmentalists take Cuba as their icon (for surviving through gardening) and “feed off a moral panic about global warming and the end of cheap oil”. Among the gardeners, racist sentiments are articulated overtly and covertly, while an ageist discourse identifies older allotment gardeners as “in the way, in part because they are not maximizing the output of polar bear-saving vegetables using oil-free methods”(Wiltshire, 2009 personal communication). Race is one part of the process that makes gardening a ‘solution’ to

Detroit's collapse, Northern England deindustrialization, South African food insecurity and peak oil.

Alternative food networks articulate white ideals of health and nutrition, offer whitened dreams of farming and gardening that erase the past and present of race in agriculture (Guthman, 2008a; 2008b), mobilize funding to direct programming toward nonwhite beneficiaries and create inviting spaces for white people (Alkon, 2008). Racial inequalities are largely invisible (Allen, 2004; Allen et al., 2003; Slocum, 2006). Absenting those nonwhite foods and foodspaces from the hegemonic local skews the alternative food map, creating 'white food space' (Slocum, 2007). Because whiteness, as the norm, is largely invisible, none of this appears obvious or problematic. Instead, alternative food claims it is just about good, healthy food and bringing people into the 'foodshed'—as if they were foolishly standing outside. For the most part, those activists in alternative food who seek to raise the subject of race do so through four strategies: inclusion in the movement, enabling access to food by offering vegetables, garden space and knowledge to the food insecure, relationship-building between white and nonwhite people and essentialist constructions of whiteness and non-whiteness realized through emotion-driven antiracism training (Slocum, 2009).

The racial story of local food is not only a feature of US or European society and it looks different in other places (like Belize, see Wilk, 2006: 191). Moreover, other interpretations of the projects of alternative food are possible. For instance, Jessica Hayes-Conroy found in her study of African American children participating in Alice Water's Edible Schoolyard "a mix of rejection, curiosity, joy, humor and transformation" (Guthman in Cook et al. 2010, cf Pudup, 2008). Alternative food's progressive form of whiteness potentially enables different economies comprised of different ethical relationships with soil, bees, chickens and farmers than what the conventional food system allows and, possibly, different racial politics (Slocum, 2007). One of Time Magazine's 100 Most Influential people, Will Allen, the African American man who created an urban farm in Milwaukee,<sup>8</sup> could be seen as the non-threatening figure of black success that white people love to like or the man who challenged the local fetish of alternative food by saying that one can make soil and grow food anywhere.<sup>9</sup> He could be the entrepreneurial urban redevelopment success story that troubles neither capitalism nor racism and the man who inspires those white and nonwhite food advocates who seek more significant food system change. Similarly, there may be a warm and fuzzy patriarchy at the heart of Barbara Kingsolver's (2007) *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*, and many may not be able to see themselves in her shoes because of her privilege, but as she learns about growing, cooking and eating through turkey sex, mozzarella making and mushroom hunting, she may invigorate a desire in others to try growing or cooking something. Eating seasonally at home looks more interesting if we see it as invoking the "pleasure of control"—power working through the pleasure of managing the self or a blurring of who controls and who is controlled or "who is eating whom" (Probyn 2000, 18, 24) and through the lens of race.

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<sup>8</sup> [www.growingpower.org](http://www.growingpower.org)

<sup>9</sup> I am indebted to Valentine Cadieux and Jerry Shannon for these insights about Will Allen.

## IV. Racial embodiment and alimentary identities

Feminist theorists have been at the fore of the effort to think about the body in material and political terms. As is evident from the collection *Material Feminisms* (Alaimo and Hekman, 2008), which brings together authors drawing on divergent theoretical frameworks, there are many ways to talk about materiality. This perspective is different from but not inimical to Marxist thought. In the latter, capitalism, a social process, mediates our sense of nature and, for that matter, the gendered and raced subject. In this section, I have included scholars that draw from feminist ‘neo’-materialism and phenomenology. Here too are ethnographers of substance and racial embodiment as well as critical scholarship on health and race that engages with the physical realities of racial embodiment rather than critiques scientific discourse. Attending to this corporeality requires a theoretical framework that does not assume ontological questions are necessarily essentialist. The matter of food, its spatiality and what food ‘does’ is key and interest turns to “what bodies...do when they eat” (Probyn, 2000: 14). These works share an interest in ethics, affect and politics.

### A. Biology, sense, politics

Eating is a social and biological process, but the emphasis given to discerning the power of the social to form food and bodies directs attention away from the materiality of both. What if the idea that “[f]ood does not merely symbolize social bonds and divisions; it participates in their creation and re-creation” (Sutton, 2001: 102 cited in Duruz, 2004: 442, n411) were considered from the perspective of neurobiology? From this standpoint, the stomach is an organ that engages ingestion and digestion, not only in a metaphorical sense as in the national body politic or the performance of identity, but in the sense that ingestion and digestion are active in the biochemical maintenance of relationships (Wilson, 2004). Elizabeth Wilson suggests that few feminist analyses of the anorexic body, for instance, pay serious attention to the biological functions of the stomach, the mouth or the digestive system (2004: 8). She notes that the gut has not always been understood as part of the neurological system but that “[a] psychologically barren enteric nervous system becomes implausible when we consider one noteworthy aspect of the gut: that it is one of the most important means by which the outside world connects with the body” (2004: 43). Elspeth Probyn contends that “the question of how to live today can be best seen at a ‘gut’ level” (2000: 7) both in terms of ethical relations—“a visceral reaction to who and what we are becoming” (2000: 14) and in understanding the tangible aspects of power—what it tastes like, what bodies it produces (Probyn, 1997).

Critical epidemiologists and physical anthropologists have added their voices to arguments *against* genetic reductionism and medical imprecision on the subject of race and *for* an understanding of race that addresses biological difference. Physical anthropologist Clarence Gravlee argues,

The idea that it is politically dangerous to discuss biological differences among racially defined groups makes sense only if we (or our audience) implicitly reduce biology to genetics and minimize or ignore the causal influence of external, environmental factors on human biology. The

tacit conflation of genes and biology in the conventional critique of race unwittingly perpetuates this form of reductionism (2009: 51).

The focus on gene frequency—classifying people into broad genetic groups with the intention of finding group-specific medical treatments—has been used to suggest explicitly or by implication that there are ‘races’ with genetic basis. Countering the idea that the frequency of specific genes can specify groups, Nancy Krieger reminds us that there is greater genetic variability within rather than between racialized groups and that the recent rise in obesity, hypertension and diabetes for populations with West African ancestry can only be explained by changes in gene expression—the way interpretation of genetic code results in a particular phenotype. The concept of embodiment is used to understand people as social and biological and implicates racism in adverse health consequences for nonwhite groups (see Krieger, 2004; Krieger et al., 2005). More useful than plasticity, embodiment situates phenotype at the intersection of two axes: 1) change over the lifecourse or through development for the individual or historical change at the population level and 2) the causal influence of genome, global political economy and ecology (Gravlee, 2009: 51). Embodiment “represents the direct and indirect influences of sociocultural context at multiple scales and levels (Krieger, 2008) on gene expression and biological functioning” (Gravlee, 2009, 51).

This perspective has relevance to diagnoses linking race and disease as well as arguments around ideas like the thrifty gene that posits a genetic reason for obesity among nonwhite populations (see Diamond, 2003). Testing genetic and sociocultural classification systems revealed for Gravlee and colleagues, that color in Puerto Rico better predicts hypertension than genetic difference. A sociocultural variable, color allowed researchers to detect allele-phenotype associations that had previously been obscured because researchers did not seek to understand sociocultural heterogeneity. The use of Ancestry Informative Markers in health research has been increasingly used as a proxy for a presumed genetic aspect of racial inequalities in disease incidence, obscuring the relative importance of genetic or environmental factors and their interaction (Gravlee et al., 2009). Panelli and Tipa voice a similar interest in incorporating the socio-cultural meaning of food into health interventions. According to these authors, some Maoris’ sense of food encompasses “the ability to access the resource, the site where gathering occurs, the act of gathering and using the resource, and the presence and good health of resources” (2009: 459).

The taste and smell of food as well as the aesthetics of its making are central to embodied racial identities. Racial identities form through the excessive allure of the ripe, salty, psychedelic and pungent and taste is made by the capacities of the papaya, the guile of the apple or the intransigence of the weeds that nourish cattle (Clark, 2002; Cook, 2004; Pollan, 2002). As we are permeated by the smell of food on others’ bodies, we are reminded of our vulnerability (Wurgaft, 2006). Sense-based food projects could motivate people by giving students a taste/smell education that does not discourage them from connecting political ideas and social representations with a felt world beyond the industrial food system (Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy, 2008: 468-469). Were the Slow Food movement to attend to the sensations associated with food of the visceral body, a “fully minded-body”, it might prove better at organizing across the social divisions that materially impact taste (2008: 462, 467). Drawing on feminist theorist Ladelle McWhorter (1999), the Hayes-Conroys suggest that ‘taking back taste’ means acknowledging its radical particularity as well as revealing the ways power produces our relationship with food.

Aesthetics ought to be considered as a force in its own right that does not stand in opposition to the political, where it has often been placed (Kingsbury, 2010). Exploring

multiculturalism and food in the context of Iranian-Canadian Noruz (New Year) celebrations in Vancouver, British Columbia, Nazanin Naraghi and Paul Kingsbury (forthcoming) find the aesthetic in the guise of culinary passions, senses and judgments to enable people to retain a specific “Persian” or pre-Islamic subjectivity as direct *aesthetic resistance* to fully becoming Iranian-Islamic subjects. Elizabeth Grosz refers to aesthetics not through a line of theory connecting it to high culture, but by an argument elaborating on the importance of sensation. From a Deleuzian perspective, sensations are “mobile and mobilizing forces” that are, unlike phenomenology, not quite subjective and experiential nor fully objective and measurable (Grosz, 2008: 76). Thus the affect of art, its intensity, is not something that happens between a subject and object, it is a third thing that connects the two (Grosz, 2006, 17). Gastronomy is “the art of the mouth” (2008: 256). Art’s intensity makes all of the organs function though it might be directed at only the tongue and the nose in the case of gastronomy. Art, “a celebration of the forces of the body and the forces of life”, is excessive, holding “too much” to be corralled completely by liberal politics or capitalism (Grosz, 2006: 11). With some echoes of Hirst’s analysis of Levinas earlier, art, for Grosz, is a provocation to live in excess of need, safety or survival, but without an ethics of self and other. In art, Grosz sees “possibility for us having a new body, more of a body, a more intense body than we have now...Art is where we become more than ourselves” (Grosz, 2006: 22). Rather than remaining in everyday life phenomenology, intentionality, functionality (Dolphijn, 2004) and the ways representations materially shape relationships with how things taste and smell, it would be interesting to see where these ideas might take us.

## **B. Racial becoming through ingestion**

Food consists of substances that have transformative capacities for human and human-nonhuman relations. Food often gets short shrift as that passive, mundane substance (Angier, 2009; Winter, 2005) that begins with its foundations on or in the ground and ends up in various receptacles from lettuce monster (Mitchell, 2010) to sewage vessel (Moran, 2008) to emissions in the atmosphere. Western society saves food whether the food is a rare breed, a cultivar squirreled away in far North seed banks or canned food saved for the hungry. As the director of a company that freezes rare farm animal embryos argues, “[w]e have to eat these animals to save them” (Estabrook, 2010). Food is rhapsodized in odes to locally made reductions on pricey menus and its properties of salt, fat and sugar dissected and decried by any number of critics, but it is still inert, described. Understandably, more attention is usually devoted to the labor that makes food and its relationship to capitalist accumulation and the biosecurity of empire. Objecting to the “mute pliancy” of food in much writing, Sarah Whatmore argues against the exclusion of the “affectivity of ‘things’ on their own account—affects that can resist and deflect the course of human designs” (2002: 118)

Race is not only the partitioning of the world by phenotype and suffering. For instance, less intuitively, climate change will play a differentiating role in human bodily variability by altering human-microbial relations. Race can thus be understood as the multiplicity of mobile, microbial components (Clark and Gunaratnam, forthcoming). Drawing inspiration from Emmanuel Levinas, Rosalyn Diprose and Rebecca Solnit, Nigel Clark (2007) writes of the inevitable indebtedness and vulnerability of bodies to the affect of other bodies, whether they be virus or hurricane. He argues for an ethical position that



acknowledges an excessive, unassimilatable materiality (Clark, 2000; 2006). The outcome of these arguments is not a determinist story of nature but a glimpse at the volatility of the world (Clark, 2010). Intriguing connections between race, the promotion of life forces and protection from pollutants lie in the cosmopolitics of fermentation (Bobrow Strain and DuPuis, 2008). Aaron Bobrow-Strain and Melanie Dupuis argue that yeast, a companion species, is simultaneously a participant in co-domestication, the politics of human safety, and the slow food movement. In the ethics of Sandor Katz, a white, middle class, HIV-positive bread maker promoting wild fermentation, are possible routes to negotiating the ambiguity of human-microbial relations (see also DuPuis, 2010). Researchers have recently found that bacteria present in Japanese (but not Euro-American) guts evolved by relatively recently acquiring genetic material from nori seaweed (Hehemann et al., 2010). Race is not only ‘in the leaves’ (Slocum 2008), but also in the gut bacteria. Human-centric views in discussions of race can be productively upset (see for instance Haraway, 2003) if racism is understood as the assertion of human exceptionalism relative to the animality of some humans and all nonhumans (Anderson, 2007). For Kay Anderson, it was the Australian aboriginal, living on a continent full of ‘vegetable vagaries’ that she did not cultivate, who fundamentally disturbed European notions of the human. While this led to racist biological essentialism, part of the story is the horror, wonder, dismay and bafflement Europeans experienced in their encounters with “enigmatic and anomalous” difference (2007: 203). If race is conceptually more encompassing, one could bring animal lives into ‘eating the other’ debates through the idea, for instance, that the “ethnicity of plants and animals enliven[s] our dishes” (Roe in Cook *et al.*, 2010).

Bodies are shaped in racial terms through their labor, what they eat and where they live (Weismantel, 1995a; 1995b; Weismantel and Eisenman, 1998; Wade, 2004). In ‘Making Kin’ Mary Weismantel described how infants become kin through the sensuous connections of taste, touch and smell—“the material bases of kinship” (1995b: 708). Racial identity, she argued, occurs through nonvisual senses and connection. Echoing feminist disenchantment with the impossibility of making ontological claims, Weismantel’s aim was to find a path between essentialism and social constructionism, between the notion of an active human against passive nature or a physical realm impervious to cultural creativity. Race, she suggested, was a “constant physical process of interaction between living things” and had to be understood as the “interactions between bodies and the substances they ingest, the possessions they accumulate and the tools they use to act on the world” (2001: 266). Only in this way could one understand how race is made and how it constitutes society. Similarly, in indigenous Bolivian food practices, identity is built slowly into the body through accumulations of work, weather, sex and eating with certain people. Racial identity occurs through nonvisual senses and connection, which is different from the more familiar visual method of separating people (Paulson, 2006).

Bodies produce knowledge by walking through a market, getting groceries, watching the ground for mushrooms and smelling the earth in an edible schoolyard. These actions are skilled practices developing in a socio-environmental and political context (Ingold, 2000). Following the activity lines of matsutake mushroom hunters, Anna Tsing describes how these Lao, Mien and Japanese hunters learn through their bodies rather than through classification by name. Here, “language falters” and embodied memory is necessary to find the activity lines of mushrooms as well as of other hunters. These practices differ in part through the degree to which racialized groups have been assimilated (Tsing, 2008). To understand race as a process that emerges through agricultural practices would mean considering how growing vegetables in specific ways might link and break open ways of

becoming Euro-white and Hmong (Slocum, 2008). The materiality of race comes to light through agricultural decisions, methods and techniques that growers use, in addition to encounters at the market among people, space and vegetables. Looking at techniques of growing, embodied knowledge and particular plants as well as more familiar questions (access to land, credit, labor, assistance and markets) are ways to understand the material becoming of race.

### C. Corporeal antiracist politics

In this final subsection are theorists who use food to think more broadly about race difference. Again, some reading between the lines is necessary, but the point in this section is to illustrate where we might take the subject of race and food. Barbara Hooper, for instance, argues that the sacrificial meal's dialectic of negation—"it is, I eat it, it is me"—is central to the fantasy of transcendence. This meal's function in ancient Greece was to set borders between animality and citizenship; eating of the sacrificial meal was a performance of political power unavailable to various others. Today, the few continue to transcend bodily appetites by denying the bodies of those upon whom their lives depend. Its result?

...specters of a politics of transcendence that enters the present "dripping from head to toe, from every pore, with blood and dirt" (Marx, 1987 712) continue to haunt our cities...when a politician or businessman, a civilian or general, legitimates murder or hunger by invoking security or the freedom of the market or the difference between 'primitive' humans who live under the regime of appetite and violence and do not value life and 'civilized' humans who live under the rule of law and hold life sacred (Hooper, 2008: 2571).

People imagine, in the distinction preserved between war and peace, that everyday structural violence and declared war are radically different (Hooper, 2008). Recognizing the perils of invoking life in the context of the political, she proposes a materialist 'posttranscendent politics', that does not negate bodies. Ontology's political importance, she argues, is not whether it is true but "what it allows us to imagine" (Hooper, 2008: 2566).

Deleuze-inspired works have been criticized for privileging ethics at the expense of politics (see Saldanha forthcoming b). Jasbir Puar makes the case that these ethics are actually suggestive of a politics. She proposes "the assemblage that conviviality could generate" (2009a). Conviviality asks what it means to meet (see also Haraway, 2007; Laurier and Philo, 2006; Whatmore, 2002). From the Latin, 'living with' and defined as joyful feasting with good company, convivial assembling is not a politics of the "...inclusive common nor an ethics of individuatedness, [but] rather the futurity enabled through the open materiality of bodies as a Place to Meet" (Puar, 2009b: 168-9). For conviviality, unlike resistance, oppositionality, subversion, transgression, revolution or utopian social change that move in step with modernity's sense of progress, identity is an event not an attribute of subjects (2009b: 168). There is no Levinasian Other, but bodies whose intensities reveal that debility and capacity (the focus of her analysis) are both more and less inclusive than we might imagine.

A different ethics of existence is conceivable through "the materiality of eating, sex and bodies" that would be informed by the "rawness of a visceral engagement with the

world, and a sense of restraint in the face of excess” (Probyn, 2000: 3). Pursuing this ‘wild realism’ through a rhizomatic ontology, Probyn finds the way an activist on a hunger strike connected fasting and anti-homophobic politics, joining the mouth with sex with mouths that speak homophobia to be “decidedly rhizomatic”. She argues that “rather than merely being about connection, these links break open assemblages in ways that lead to something unexpected” (2000: 14). The notion of assemblage retains the body but not its subjectivity; Bodies ‘become more’ when a subjectivity like race is understood as a process produced in connection with things and other bodies. Studying race through the materiality of racial clusters that indicate the spatial emergence of racial differences (Saldanha, 2006) allows the interpretation that alternative food’s spatiality consists of gatherings of white people enabled by the structural advantages of whiteness (Slocum, 2007). The potential outcome of these clusters of whiteness is exclusion *and* spaces where this stickiness breaks open toward other racial formations. While there seems to be growing interest in viscosity and assemblage, reducing the latter to ‘connection’ does not facilitate the concepts’ power; aborting the biological from the visceral would allow the social to again speak for the enteric.

## V. Concluding comments

One of geography’s strengths is its interest in reading widely; the paper has made its case for the breadth and wealth of writing on race in the study of food by drawing not only on geographical research but also that of many other disciplines. But from a geographer’s standpoint, food provides especially good spatial opportunities to theorize race; I have reviewed work on ethical embodiments, laborious landscapes, culinary migrations, micro segregations, territorial dispossessions, sticky foodies and convivial encounters. Most of the accounts of agriculture, politics, tourism, cooking and trade fell into a constructionist framework in which the important aspect is that race is socially produced and performed. Far fewer have as yet engaged with new materialist theory.

It is politically important to be explicit about race in food research and dangerous to write about the concept without a commitment to its theorization. The dangers are, first, that racist analyses might be authorized. Second, race may be tucked away under the theorization of a more important process. Third, authors might think that to discuss a racialized group is to write about race, but this leaves its theorization implicit or absent. Rather than assume that social construction is the only means by which one can ethically write about race, more engagement with the other lines of thought outlined here would be welcome.

To avoid these pitfalls and to engage in antiracist scholarship, authors might answer the questions: *What is race* ethically, biologically, socially and spatially? What does this definition mean to our subject of study? What does food become when we consider race and, conversely, how might we view race differently through food practices? What difference does race make in the stomach, the supermarket, Saskatchewan or sorpotel? How does antiracism happen through food and what does it mean in places with different racial histories and geographies? More specifically, I have argued that race is relevant to political ecology, but it remains to be determined how and for which contexts. Critical accounts of neoliberalism have been a central feature of work on food and agriculture, but race has not been theorized in that arena as productive of neoliberalism or vice versa (see Roberts and

Mahtani, 2010). Furthermore, can political ecologies of the body expand on Gravlee's (2009) or Weismantel's (2001) accounts of the embodiment of race? In cultural geographies' discussions of taste, cooking, smell and race, what more can we add to our understanding of appropriation and connection? Section IV is largely an exploration of ideas that might apply to the study of race and food and a provocation to scholars to engage with Deleuzian-feminist work on corporeality, politics and ethics. From this perspective, it is the instability of race that invites its collapse, transformation and re-rendering in nonviolent differentiations (Saldanha 2006). As race comes into being in other organizing relations and events (patriarchy, a tidal wave), the productive nature of this process can be seen to have other affects and potentialities. In farming and cooking, where does race collapse, where do its affects lead? Through race and food, how do we theorize power, possibility and change?

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