

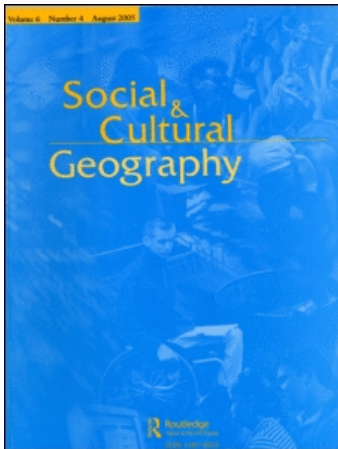
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Thinking race through corporeal feminist theory: divisions and intimacies at the Minneapolis Farmers' Market

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Race is, in part, made and remade through the practices of growing, selling, purchasing and eating food. Consequently, some food practices are also 'racial practices'. Drawing on a study in progress of the Minneapolis Farmers' Market, the paper covers two sub-themes of embodiment: racial division and intimacy. The corporeal feminist theory of Elizabeth Grosz offers the view that the body has explanatory power. This framework enables a discussion of the materiality of race rather than its representation or performance. Race emerges through the movement, clustering and encounter of phenotypically differentiated bodies. Through small segregations in which bodies move toward some vegetables and not others and through attractions that propel bodies to touch bitter melon and talk with growers, bodies shape the Market's meaning. This reflection on tendencies connecting phenotype, space and leaves is meant as a step toward a politics of bodily practice.

Key words: embodiment, race, farmers' markets, food, feminist theory.

Introduction

The Minneapolis Farmers' Market is simultaneously constituted by connections made through difference as well as multiple forms of exclusion, by bigoted ideas but also clear curiosity and pleasure. A theory of race that rests on the raced body's practices in connection to food, market space and different visitors needs to recognize racial inequality, non-racist acts and anti-racist encounters. Drawing from an ongoing ethnography, this paper explores the divisions and intimacies of

everyday practice that produce the embodied racial geography of the Market. It does so in order to explain how racialized bodies emerge through this food space.

Opening in 1876 as a wholesale market with over 400 growers, the Minneapolis Farmers' Market (hereafter the MFM or the Market) is now a retail enterprise scaled back to 240 vendors, including both producers and 'dealers' who resell goods purchased wholesale. The Market's three red-roofed, open sheds stand opposite the interstate. When not in full swing, it is a desolate location absent of

pedestrians, dwellings or shops; its soundscape, the hiss of cars rushing by on the highway ramps above. The Market provides space for vendors through permanent places, some of them handed down through generations. 'Dailies', vendors without a permanent spot, get assigned different locations depending on the availability of temporarily unused stalls. The market manager answers to the board consisting of ten older men and two women who govern the MFM. The majority European-white population of growers, some of whose families have been at the market for five generations, was augmented by the arrival in the 1970s of Hmong immigrants.¹ Hmong people now constitute almost 1 per cent of the Minnesota population, but approximately 40 per cent of the vendors, and two of the twelve board members.

To some, the Market is a crowded, bustling, confusing urban space on the weekends. It serves a diverse group of urban and suburban customers. In this diversity are Latinos, Russians, Eastern Europeans, Scandinavians and various other white ethnicities, Vietnamese, Hmong, Chinese, South Asian, Somalis, East Africans and American Indians. On summer weekends up to Labor Day, in addition to being a shopping place, the MFM is also a tourist attraction during which time the throngs of people are noticeably more white. But prices at the MFM for local and non-local goods are typically not high and the fact that the MFM is *not* a growers-only market makes it more inviting to a greater race- and class-diverse population.

This space is also constituted by the globalization of food production, transport and consumption that pushed the MFM from wholesale into retail and which today makes it more difficult for some smaller vendors to market their goods. In the context of the neoliberal discourse of personal responsibility

(for one's body size, health and welfare), the new urbanism and alternative food, the Market's presence is awkward. The Twin Cities is home to newer immigrant communities, arriving under different terms, including peoples from Laos, Somalia and Latin America. The nostalgia for quiet, safe 'American' communities meets the Market: a rambunctious place for Minnesota, with diverse customers and, for some publics, strange vegetables. The Market troubles the pervasiveness of hyper-commodified, sanitized and segregated public spaces (which is not to suggest it is not itself sanitized, commodified and segregated).

This paper contributes in three areas. First, the literature on embodied geographies has tended to focus on representations of bodies, revealing how bodies are inscribed by society or has relied on the concept of performativity. In contrast, this paper deploys corporeal feminist theory in which the body's materiality is foregrounded. Second, the paper enhances scholarship on race by claiming, through this materialist framework, that it is important to speak of race through phenotypic differentiations, connections, tendencies and what bodies do. Third, by focusing on embodied racial geographies in a farmers' market, this study contributes to a growing body of work on such markets in the Global North.

Farmers' markets, corporeality, race

Farmers' markets

To the sites of the dinner table, the kitchen, recipe books and supermarkets (Bell and Valentine 1997), this paper adds a less studied area: the farmers' market. Farmers' markets have recently experienced a renaissance in the USA and their numbers have burgeoned

(Brown 2002). A valuable public space, the market is a crossroads for different foods, bodies and discourses that shape the city and the agro-ecological region. Spatial processes and varying mobilities of people and goods converge to constitute the MFM within uneven relations of power (Massey 1994). Here, there are brief, pleasurable meeting points that need to be recognized alongside the comparatively invisible violence of systemic processes.

Farmers' markets have been constituted by discourses of quality and nationalism as well as consumer distrust of the state (Ilbery and Kneafsey 2000). Ideals of localness and quality become conflated as consumers assume something local is more authentic or healthier (Futamura 2007; Holloway and Kneafsey 2000). Some research suggests that these markets may encourage social networks (Gerbasí 2006) through the 'relations of regard' that develop (Sage 2003) or via consumer requests for sustainable practices (Hunt 2007). While the farmers' market could enable practices that change social relations, they may also reaffirm entrepreneurialism and individualism (see Gregson and Crewe 1997). Markets should not be seen as only the location of celebration and community; such nostalgia renders invisible the conditions that shape the market (Stallybrass and White 1986). This nostalgia is deeply racialized (Watson and Wells 2005).

The alternative food movement uses farmers' markets as vehicles to improve food access and encourage sustainable farming. Organizations and consumers interested in local food and sustainable farming tend to be wealthier, more educated and white (Allen 2004). As vehicles to augment grower incomes through better prices, some markets cater implicitly (organic-only, location, music, classes) to a well-off, educated and often

white demographic, which I have argued (2007) produces white food space (see also Alkon 2008; Guthman 2008). These accounts undertake important analyses showing how farmers' markets are formed through various discourses and what work these meanings do. This paper is concerned, instead, with the bodies, things, movements and clustering, that are necessary to meaning.

A sensual space where connections among particular natures and certain foods are more deeply valorized (Kirwan 2004; Parrott, Wilson and Murdoch 2002), farmers' markets are spaces of intimacy. Considering intimacy between the human and more than human brings the materiality of both into focus. Sarah Whatmore (2002: 162), for instance, writes that 'the rhythms and motions of ... intercorporeal practices [growing, provisioning, cooking and eating] configure spaces of connectivity between more-than-human life worlds; topologies of intimacy and affectivity that confound conventional cartographies of distance and proximity, and local and global scales'. Similarly, Emma Roe (2006) suggests attention to the visceral relations and embodied practices involved in eating and being eaten as a means to understand food fear or interest in organic. The biochemical and physical properties of vegetables sold at the MFM intimately shape human bodies and the city. The gut, after all, 'allows the outside world to pass through us' and in so doing, it maintains relationships with others (Wilson 2004: 44). In this public space, 'negotiation is forced upon us' (Massey 2005: 114). The paper is interested in those spoken and silent negotiations and even more so in the frisson of contact,² the mix of fear, surprise and wonder.

Embodiment, to which I turn next, is indispensable to this analysis of race, division and intimacy. Sensory exchange constitutes much of the sense of place of the Market.

Different bodies brush against one another, smell tomatoes, exclaim with curiosity and lean with heavy bags. Bodies respond differently to the properties of foods—their taste, smell, color, consistency, temperature, vitamin content, calories and ripeness. What counts as embodied in this paper encompasses *what* people do, say, sense and feel as well as *how* they do any of these things.

Embodiment in feminist materialist theory

Geographers have expressed great interest in the body, contributing to feminist philosophy by showing how space and embodied difference are co-constitutive processes (e.g. Ainley 1998; Bell et al. 2001; Butler and Parr 1999; Teather 1999; Nast and Pile 1998; Pile 1996; Rose 1995). Bodies become gendered through activities in place and the place itself is active in the production of capacities. But despite the apparent enthusiasm for the concept of embodiment, Robyn Longhurst (1997, 2001) proposes that in geography bodies continue to be represented while their fleshiness is held at bay. Yet the ways bodies fit snugly into airplane seats (Longhurst 2005), throw a ball (Young 2005) or are leaky, messy and rubbery are important to consider as part of a political as well as a conceptual argument.

A contentious point within feminist theory has been the question of how to talk about physically different bodies without reifying that difference (Williams and Bendelow 1998). One means was to focus on how society's norms shape bodies. But social constructionism understood matter as pre-existing and unintelligible and had not theorized how sexual oppression occurs at the 'level of the constitution of bodily materiality as sexed' (Cheah 1996: 111). The importance and sophistication of performativity as a response

to these inadequacies cannot be overstated. But as it has been articulated by Judith Butler (1993), the matter of bodies is mediated by discourse and therefore comprehensible only through that mediation. Pheng Cheah (1996) finds that Butler excludes natural materiality and instead confines matter to human morphology which the latter understands as already cultural. For Butler, 'materiality becomes present, is given body, ... only in being ... signified in language' (1996: 116). Yet, asks Jacinta Kerin,

If we insist on conflating ontological inquiry *per se* with the way in which it has worked historically within dominant knowledges ... then the possibility of thinking otherwise is foreclosed ... How can we decide what it means to affirm an array of materialities unless we are permitted some, however contingent, ontological concept of what those materialities are? (1999: 99–100)

Kerin points out that feminists cannot afford *not* to engage with matter—its existence, its necessity and its bearing on interpretation. For Elizabeth Wilson (2004: 8), engaging with matter means not sidestepping the neurological and biochemical, as she claims many humanities and social science accounts of the body have done. Exploring what may, at first glance, appear essentialist or reductionist is useful, she argues, to the feminist project.

Far from being a tired topic, the discussion of nature and culture has only just begun. Some of the most interesting contributions to that conversation have come from Elizabeth Grosz. Her philosophical positioning of nature and culture provides the ground from which to speak of the body's mattering.³ No dismissal of work concerned with epistemology occurs; the question for Grosz (2005: 5) is the debt representation owes to ontology. Culture, she writes, drawing on Darwin, is not the

completion of an incomplete nature. Instead, nature 'enables and actively facilitates cultural variation and change'; the biological incites culture, but nature does not limit the cultural. Culture and representation have an outside that impinges on the plans of the living (see Clark 2005). The competing forces of this outside induce subjectivity and make culture act and change (Grosz 2005: 30–31, 43, 47–49).

Earlier, Grosz (1994) had argued that all aspects of the subject can be just as adequately explained through bodies as through the mind or consciousness. Bodies are biological and sensory, not merely blank slates for inscription by society and not biologically-given entities with particular destinies. Generating 'what is new, surprising, unpredictable' (Grosz 1994: xi), bodies are the 'passage from being to becoming', thus what bodies do is to continually form themselves ('positive becoming') (Colebrook 2000: 86–87). Bodies become through what they do, the relations of which they are a part and the formations in which they act. Corporeality, then, refers to a dynamic capacity of human bodies to emerge in relation to each other and to things, within social and physical limits, and thereby to form sexual and racial identities (Grosz 2005). While these differences are not limited to those forms we currently acknowledge, they are not 'open to self conscious manipulation, identification or control by subjects' (2005: 89). A body's capacities, finally, are always enabled or limited by the socio-physical space in which they are located (Saldanha 2007).

In geography, an interest in ethics and particularly affect and emotion has emerged to focus attention on material bodies. For instance, Sarah Whatmore (2002) argues that without the body being understood in terms of its corporeality, it will be difficult to develop ethical relationships

within more-than-human worlds. Some of this work has emerged from nonrepresentational theory (see Harrison 2008; Obrador-Pons 2007) and some is explicitly feminist (Ahmed 2004; Bondi, Davidson and Smith 2005; Tolia-Kelly 2006). The paper draws on the latter's work, which Grosz refers to as 'a phenomenology of everyday life' (Kontturi and Tiainen 2007: 252). Thus the examples I provide can be situated in both the realm of the intentional (disdain for those who bargain) and the unintentional: 'the impersonal or pre-personal, subhuman or inhuman forces ... competing microagencies' beyond the control of the subject (Grosz 2005: 6).

The feminist materialist scholarship that provides the inspiration for this paper can be read as arguing for an appraisal of race as embodied, non-essentialist being, not only that which is discursive or performed. I am not making the claim that this theory is useful because I think that what is true for sex/gender is also true for race. Sex, even though it is many, differentiates people biologically and socially in a way that is not true for race. But the point is that these feminist theorists have taken the important step of engaging with the body's matter rather than dismissing such an interest as pre-critical and dangerously essentialist.

The materiality of race

Race tends to be understood as a consequence of societies' ideas that become productive truths about people. Significant work has gone into underscoring the racist history, genetic irrelevance and arbitrariness of racial categories. From this, many have argued '*there is no such thing as race*' (Nayak 2006, his italics) and further, that the fiction that is race must be abolished (Gilroy 2000). Different

approaches to race and racism rely on these ideas. From sociology and legal studies, critical race scholars argue that racism has been perpetuated by institutions of law and emphasize deconstruction to undermine racist narratives, relying on personal experience and storytelling to build others (Delgado and Stefancic 2001). Drawing on the concept of performativity, Anoop Nayak finds that in some critical race writing, racial groups are positioned as at once fictional, relational and tangibly irreducible ... [unable to] 'escape the body politic' (2006: 416). He argues that figures such as 'white women' have to be understood as part of historically and geographically specific processes (see Kobayashi and Peake 1994) 'that constitute this subjectivity as intelligible, and [as part of] the symbolic regimes of language that summon this representation to life' (Nayak 2006: 417). Whether using the language of construction (Jackson 1998) and reconstruction (of whiteness) (Gallaher 2002), memories and performance (Hoelscher 2003), or performance and space (Thomas 2005), there is an emphasis on the social, on representations of the real and implicit or explicit use of the work of Judith Butler. Even a work dedicated to 'making race matter' (Alexander and Knowles 2005) is still primarily about performance and the dangers of linking race in any way to biology.

Building on these important contributions, the paper argues that it is not enough to talk about constructions or performance, leaving the body's matter out of the analysis (Saldanha 2006; see also Moore, Pandian and Kosek 2003). Indeed, fictionalizing race makes some of the most interesting aspects of race disappear, whether the focus is an affective historiography of race (Anderson 2007), the embodied experience of displacement and segregation (Delaney 2002) or the embedding of race in the body (Wade 2004). Writing on

white hyper-sensitivity to smell in the Ecuadorian Andes, Weismantel claims:

It is in the interactions between bodies and the substances they ingest, the possessions they accumulate, and the tools they use to act on the world [that] we can really see race being made, and making the society around it. This kind of race is neither genetic nor symbolic, but organic: a constant, physical process of interaction between living things. Little surprise then that it has a distinct smell. (2001: 266)

I turn now to the emphasis of this paper: the tendencies and actions of raced bodies.

Race becomes material through the body. Groupings of bodies do things and are 'done to', becoming racialized in the process (Grosz 2005). From this perspective, bodies are not only inscribed; they actively participate in the material production of themselves and other bodies. Race takes shape out of the physical gathering of bodies in which phenotype matters in its connection to material objects, practices and processes (Saldanha 2007). The term phenotype does *not* indicate any essential connections, but it and other visible characteristics (e.g. clothes) are recognized in real, everyday interactions and so play a role in what people do. Bodies stare at each other, or are glimpsed or ignored; they are moved or forced to stop; some meander, others stride; giving way and standing ground, they prevent and enable. In this sense, what happens to bodies, what they do and the fact that they tend to be white or brown in certain places are all important to consider with the aim of understanding how and why that happened. Race, then, is a process, made and remade not just by exclusions and erasures, but by its ongoing connections (Saldanha 2006).

Skin is 'a site of subjectivity, crisis, desire, instability' and thus has productive potential

in day-to-day practices (Ahmed 1998 cited by Johnston 2005: 112). In Lynda Johnston's example, beach space and the activities that take place there produce bodies with specific desires and capacities. Skin changes color, confusing one's sense of 'who's who'. Some white bodies lying on beaches became darker and were taken for Maori. Phenotype, of course, should not be understood as referring to the visible form of an interior essence. Phenotypic differences produce mobile and gradual groups, made through processes that change these groupings of bodies—their color, shape, size and health. Such change may occur over a lifetime, with inter-racial offspring, through generations or because of wealth or poverty. Equally, bodily changes may be a consequence of not having enough food or enough of certain foods and it may be due to how bodies are physically implicated in and shaped by capitalism, patriarchy, neocolonialism and so on. People are phenotypically different and structurally organized into populations that are endlessly disrupted, and therefore temporary, contingent upon class, sexuality, nationality, age and gender. The materiality of race does not refer to innate differences nor does it map phenotype, posture, clothes, language, accent, gestures or gait to 'a race', because there are no 'races', but it does refer to bodies.

The ways people sense worlds is part of how differences are shaped. Mark Smith (2006) proposes that restoring hearing, smell, touch and taste to an understanding of racial difference might shed some new light on how unthinkingly race is made and racism learned. In his account, white southerners had ways of determining whether someone was 'black' by smell, touch, taste and sound—because vision was not always reliable. Yet it is clear that 'seeing remains . . . extraordinarily important for locating racial identity' (Smith 2006: 3).

Rather than posit the visual as an 'all determining foundation of race' (Brown 2005: 273, n14–16), the claim I make is that (observed) bodies are one part in a series of intersections. These bodily differences are noticed (in particular ways in this racist society) and they enable what occurs at the Market, in ways that limit and open avenues, supporting ethical engagement, mobilizing confusion, activating prejudice or reinforcing inequality. Though I acknowledge sound, smell and touch, vision remains central to this account. I also use vendor and customer vision because it *is* unreliable, contributing to raced imaginaries and productive uncertainty about raced bodies. That a physical knot of whiteness around some foods, for instance, happens is something that should be discussed. Equally, when diverse bodies encounter each other through leafy greens when they ordinarily might not, race should not be left out of the analysis.

When I use the term 'Hmong growers', rather than suggesting that this group 'has' a discrete and pre-formed identity, I understand 'Hmongness' as a process of becoming. Instead of an argument that makes uncritical use of descriptive demographic facts, I propose using the term 'white farmer' or 'Hmong grower' as something dynamic that includes phenotype and land ownership, clothes and speech, types of vegetables sold and generations at the market. I recognize that Hmong farmers are seen as different by some customers and known as Hmong by many vendors. Emergent 'Hmongness' is embodied through, for instance, the sale of bitter green and collards, facial features, wearing 'traditional' dress or a tie, having a CIA identity card. It becomes through the suggestion that I watch *The Fast and the Furious: Tokyo Drift* to understand Asian/Hmong fast car culture. 'Hmong' means vending for fifteen

years compared to four generations, renting as opposed to owning land, and, according to some white vendors, it means ‘under-pricing the market’. Race is an active process in which Hmong emerges as the object of white liberal interest which wants to help Hmong people through land donations. Hmong becoming at the Market is active in a question about my ‘racial background’ which arises because I have ‘such blue eyes’.

The aim here is to be able to talk about the material tendencies racially differentiating bodies without making racist statements or authorizing essentialist identity politics. Understanding how racially different bodies emerge through practices provides different insights into race. What follows is an attempt to work through the particular challenges that arise in talking about racial embodiment and to demonstrate how the Market makes sense through this lens.

Methods

Observation, inclusive of vision, sense of smell, hearing and touch, is a method necessary for this paper’s argument. I draw on participant observation as well as informal and formal interviews conducted from May 2006 to March 2008. The research has moved between naturalistic observation and participant observation—in other words it has ranged from conversation, interview, peripheral membership and active membership in a social crowd (Adler and Adler 1998). My observations have noted routines, rituals, spaces, organization, interactions, behavior and clothing (Denzin 1989). I took photos to study later and tried vegetables unfamiliar to me. I undertook naturalistic observation of the Market on most weekends in 2006 during the late spring, summer and fall months from

6 a.m. until 2 p.m. as well as during the week at different times and on different days. I have attended one board meeting, at which I discussed the research and one annual membership meeting in March 2008. The research also involves making sense of overheard exclamations and questions.

I have done structured interviews with the market manager, several vendors, a member of the Minnesota State Department of Agriculture, the Minneapolis mayor and a close associate, four local nonprofit leaders and a researcher working on Hmong agriculture. Additionally, I have followed Twin Cities food activism and visited other markets. Unstructured interviews took place at the Market with resellers, growers, customers and custodial staff as well as by email and letter with some vendors over the 2006–2008 seasons and off season as well. Typically, I speak to several of the same people each week. All told, I have done informal interviews with about sixty people (vendors and customers). Some of the quotes in the paper are from handwritten notes taken while vendors talked to me or while I listened to others’ conversations. Others are from taped and transcribed interviews. The interviews and observations that I draw on are illustrative of themes that have emerged so far in the research. The paper is not an exhaustive statement on the Market but instead offers a way of thinking about these collected observations.

Race as bodily practice

Racial difference in the context of the Market is a corporeal relationship to growing, selling and eating food. It emerges through what can be called ‘racial practices’: the production and marketing of certain plants, the location and quality of someone’s land, ideas about ‘good’ food and the gathering of racially identified

people around some vendors and vegetables but not others. Thus food practices that may not usually be associated with race can be called racial practices, but not any fixed sense. At the market, bodies are not just inscribed by food practices; they are materially produced through what people buy, who they talk to, where they grow vegetables, as well as through phenotypic differences (Saldanha 2007). The materiality of practice does not deny that meanings circulate through these actions, but wants to show how it is the matter of race and operating policies, land ownership, vegetables, laughter, pesticide use and touch within the space of the Market that is necessary to meaning.

In the following two sections (racial divisions and public intimacy), I attempt to show how bodies moving around the Market, attaching themselves to some foods, brushing shoulders and being propelled by curiosity are all ways of talking about race as bodily practice.

Racial divisions at the Market

Race emerges at the Market through four spatial processes: the clustering of bodies around tables; the avoidance of markets with resellers; dress and compartment; and racial imaginaries. As a zone of encounter in a racist society, it would be surprising if race did *not* emerge in this market space through prejudice and separation and so I first consider racial divisions.

Roots and leaves

Race emerges spatially as bodies ebb and eddy around vendors' stalls. Some bodies search for organic eggs, others move towards amaranth leaves and still others cluster around basil in a neat bunch, without roots, shut inside a hard plastic container. Clear cohesions of white

people are evident around the enclosed herbs laid out on a red and white checked tablecloth. Opposite this permanent stall is often a Hmong daily vendor selling much larger bunches of basil, fastened with a rubber band. Desiring food in plastic indicates a particular expectation of how food arrives and what quality means. Other customers come because they have established a relationship with these growers, whose produce also appears in area supermarkets. These clumps of white people are also visible around the locally grown asparagus laid in short, upright, brown paper bags that sells at \$6 for one pound, and later, the heirloom⁴ melons and potatoes (six dollars for about eight finger potatoes). The expense plus the relationship of these particular foods to the desire for local, fresh, non-conventional food is part of why white people are evident here. Finally, some trust and comfort may come from engaging with a white vendor.

There is something to be learned about race through plants. Racial divisions occur through greens and roots. Hmong tables carry cilantro and onions with bristling roots. These growers have learned that there are Asian and African populations who come to the Market seeking certain vegetables and demanding roots attached. Race emerges through connections among visible difference, a plant, its nutrients and politics, the soil it requires, the land used and the care given its growth. Thus one could say that race is in the leaves. Hmong growers have verdant cascades of amaranth, black nightshade, sweet potato leaves and pigweed. Most white growers do not leave the roots on and they do not supply amaranth or pigweed ('no I don't sell it, it's a weed').

In the third shed, white vendors are clumped at the western end, while most of the rest are Hmong permanent or daily vendors, hence among vendors, it is called the 'Hmong shed'.

There are white vendors here who enjoy the company of nonwhite people and also those who refuse to be situated next to Hmong vendors. In the third shed, as well, are the two Hmong resellers, the only African American vendor and a white flower reseller who employs two African American men. This grizzled reseller spends the morning shouting at customers, one minute cajoling them with a bouquet, and the next, daring them to look away from his aging blossoms. In 2006 a white wild rice daily vendor was situated next to the sole African American vendor in the third aisle, but in 2007 moved to a place in the middle shed. Regardless of how vendors have come to be positioned in the sheds, the cohesions of bodies among the three reveals a racial division of the space.

Caring where your food comes from

The movement of people at the MFM is also toward other food spaces and this is partly due to the presence of six larger food resellers at the MFM. While vendors of asparagus, certain herbs and meat receive greater concentrations of white customers, a markedly diverse gathering of racialized and classed populations is evident around reseller tables. Some MFM vendors I have spoken with accept the resellers in their midst but some customers do not. Nationwide, farmers' markets are typically for growers only. Alternative food consumers denigrate the resale of non-local foods, going so far as to shop at other markets to avoid the MFM because it allows the practice. One middle-aged white man at the local-only St. Paul market explained to his friends that unlike St. Paul, the goods at the MFM looked like they had 'fallen off the truck on the way to the market'. On the Nicollet Mall downtown (Thursday's MFM location), an older white man in a suit asked a strawberry

vendor if he knew where pineapples grew in Minnesota, indicating, with his head, the Hmong-owned reseller behind them. The vendor replied, shaking his head, 'yeah, I call them banana sellers'. This vendor was working for a fairly large-scale conventional farmer—but a more local one.

What I am describing is not as simple as a distaste for resellers or prejudice against the more mixed (class and race) clientele that comes to the MFM, drawn, in part by resellers. Whiteness emerges through the thinking that local is necessarily best and that the St. Paul market is 'more local' as well as through the fact that alternative food tends to be a white movement. It comes into being through the spatial separation of a more white and more middle-class (socially and economically) group from more brown and more working-class people.

There is a sense that the products available and the prices at the MFM bring people who do not recognize the close-to-the-edge profitability and the work involved in sustainable, organic or smaller-scale farming. The fierce demand for cheaply priced food has been observed by some customers and vendors as coming particularly from newer immigrant nonwhite populations. Indicating toward the flow of people around a reseller, another vendor told me, 'they don't care where their food comes from'. White growers claim that Hmong farmers encourage ignorance of the difficulty of farming by typically charging one dollar for ample bunches of vegetables. But for some it is the established members of the Market whose habits participate in the preference for cheap. Referring to the white, longer-term vendors, one grower remarked, 'they shop at Cub [a local, conventional, low-cost supermarket] and eat at McDonalds'. Finally, a white grower recounted how a white, woman customer told him 'I don't

know if I feel like peeling potatoes tonight'. The grower said to me, shaking his head, 'if people don't even want to *peel potatoes*, that's it, I'm finished'. It should be pointed out here that the gendered division of labor is a factor that should not be discounted in discussions of such shopping practices.

Baby strollers and lattés

Bodies present themselves differently at the Market. Few shoppers I have seen charge through the Market intent on getting through in minimum time; the experience tends to be more exploratory. Some Asian and African visitors wear high heels, skirts, dress pants or wax prints. Others go to the Market in shorts, sneakers and oversized t-shirts, with coffee in one hand—and these people tend to be white. This same group tends to stroll through the market as they talk with their companions. Advises Beth Dooley (2001), 'Nearly twice as big and much busier than St. Paul's, [the MFM] can be downright daunting. My strategy is this: First, go to Neon Coffee in the northwest corner for a latté...'. White people can be differentiated as middle class because they have a canvas bag from the expensive organic chain, Whole Foods, over their shoulder. Elderly bodies are also here, but I have seen only a few with wheeled baskets to tote food. Women originally from an African nation in bright cotton prints come at 5:30–7 a.m. to negotiate for large bags of greens, moving these to the trunks of cars and coming back for more. In a quantity sufficient to last the winter, these greens will be cooked and frozen. This group may come so early because it suits their schedule, because the leaves are more fresh or it may have something to do with the increasing presence of white bodies the later it gets. Regardless of the reason, the composition of bodies changes and

changes the meaning of this space over the hours of the morning.

Children are brought to the Market as part of a shopping or a tourist experience. Strollers pushed by men and women of color tend to have bags full of produce slung over the handles of strollers and under the seat. Strollers are evident even during the busiest part of the day when the aisles are nearly impassable. One white middle-class father, pushing his child in a baby carriage, said, 'We're going to see lots today'. He falls into the tourist category. Vendors call tourists 'basket kickers'—people who come to look but not to buy. While not always a white practice, basket kicking is the domain of those who have the leisure time and no need or wish to purchase anything from a farmers' market. Market tourism is also associated with cooking demonstrations and musical guests. Having fun at the farmers' market is encouraged as one of the key aims of the Mill City Market. Last year its website called on residents to '[j]oin local healing art practitioners for health lectures, demos & mini-sessions exploring mind and body work such as Qi Gong, Tibetan medicine, Thai yoga massage, herbalogy, homeopathy, meditation, acupuncture, dance, boot camp fitness and eating like food matters'.⁵ The Eastern emphasis often associated with the new age movement can be loosely linked with a white, middle-class demographic.

Comfort zones and confusion

Constituting this space are racial imaginaries in which the perceived clarity of race is brought into relief through observations that are sometimes prejudicial. Vendors mistaking East Africans for African Americans appears to be the norm, but a woman vendor observes

that she can clearly pick out features of African American, Somali and Ethiopian customers. One vendor suggested, with considerable enthusiasm, that the ‘Somali’ women who come early to buy large bags of ‘okra’ (noted in previous sub-section) might be engaged in something illicit. An older white vendor, told me that there are lots of African Americans who come to the Market, contrary to what I had noticed. When I said as much, he told me, ‘if you turn around, I think you’ll see they’re here’. I did and there were people standing further down the aisle, but they were from an African country. I could tell because of how they were dressed (button down shirt, tucked in, slacks), what they were buying (bitter green) and the quantities they were purchasing. Had I been closer I might have discerned differences in gestures, stance or accents. There is no point calling this ignorance. Instead, I am intrigued by the wish to see, the act of seeing something else and the inexorable fuzziness of race.

People of color from global non-US cultures are said to disturb the ‘comfort zone’ of white customers and thus the lower sales volume can be attributed, in part, to their presence. This (racist) comfort zone is placed with equanimity alongside other reasons for fewer sales like gas prices, the weather or construction. A young white vendor with whom I was talking about the purchase of greens by Africans asked me if I saw whether they used cash. He proposed that I would ‘see a lot of them using food stamps’. His statement is familiarly prejudiced as it connects skin color to something opprobrious in the mainstream national imaginary—the use of government support. Some white farmers claim that Hmong growers get special assistance, which they do not deserve and are able to succeed largely through this and the help of children. A customer remarked, as she walked by some

Hmong kids behind a table, ‘I thought child labor was illegal’. Other imaginaries mobilized are claims made by Hmong people that farming is something Hmong women and elderly Hmong do. An African American man complained that Somalis refuse to talk with blacks (‘we got bombed by Somalis’), Asians always want cheap produce and Latinos are ‘not invasives’, implying that others are. One middle-aged white male farmer noted that it is people from the Middle East who bargain most fiercely. ‘Those people’, he said, pointing in an obvious way to what appeared to be a South Asian family walking past at that moment. As he pointed, they looked back at him.

This section has offered examples of how racial division emerges through stereotypes, movement, location and production of plants—bodily practices. If embodiment concerns the characteristics of bodies and what people do, race is embodied at the Market through attractions to vegetables that segregate the space as well as the ways some racialized groups think other racialized groups act.

Public intimacy and encounter

So far I have discussed racial divisions and essentialist productions of racial difference. Now I turn to a public intimacy that also constitutes the Market and could be productive of other, non-racist ways of living and doing race. Writing about race and domestic intimacy, Ann Laura Stoler suggests that ‘strangely familiar “uncanny” intimacies ... may leave room for relations that promise something else, that activate desires and imaginaries less easily named’ (2006: 14). Guiding this section is Stoler’s point that intimacy provides a view into both structures

of dominance *and* the promise of ‘something else’. Race emerges through the encounters I discuss below as well as through the separations outlined above.

Intimacy, a spatial process of tense and tender ties, does not require proximity but needs to consider alterity (Thien 2005, see also Fortier 2007). The world becomes intimate with the gut through the alterity of food; stomach problems indicate the breakdown of relations with others (Wilson 2004). Echoing this, a local food advocate at a Twin Cities gathering to ‘build community and dismantle racism’ suggests ‘we have two things in common: food and isolation’. In this paper, intimacy refers to the domestic, public act of food provisioning. It is embodied through the seemingly mundane yet critically important acts of seeing, smelling, touching, anticipating, wondering about food, all of which are shared in public space by different bodies. A practical politics of the intimate reveals the home in the world, a realm of untidy, unruly bodiliness (Fidecaro 2006: 255).

The Market enables an intimacy absent in other spaces of consumption such as malls, supermarkets and gas stations. Figure 1, taken while I was observing the Market in late spring 2007, is an intimate connection made in public space that might not have occurred in other spaces of consumption or leisure. The Hmong musician, invited to play, and the Market that sunny day, viscerally beckoned this white woman to approach. Race emerges bodily in his song, her steps toward him and the intimate act of donation. Alphonso Lingis (1998) writes of encounter through travel (even to a market), which people undertake to lose their identity. Travel forces the imprisoning skin of privilege to become recognizable to some. The more meanings we ascribe to others’ ways, the more bodies become hidden and the violence

of stereotype arises. It is the inexpressiveness of the body, unconnected from the lines of inscription that excites.

The intimacy present at the Market is one of contact, connecting people’s lives outside the Market to this food moment through small talk, questions asked about food, seeing the same farmer, the smell of earth on the wind and touching vegetables. Pleasure, in this context, is not only an individual experience; it emerges among bodies and things in place. Looking at pleasure shows the intimacy of human contact in which race matters though it may not be the only or primary organizing feature. I will cover four types of public intimacy: public eating and desire, curiosity about foods, chatting and bargaining. These minutiae are food practices that are also racial, bodily practices.

Roasted corn and honey space

One of the most popular sites for public eating is the roasted corn stand. On one end of the stall next to boxes of Florida-grown sweet corn, an eight-foot roaster stands, slowly rotating unhusked corn up and out of sight until they return, blackened on the outside and brilliant cooked yellow on the inside. The corn is removed from the roaster, a green ear taking its place, the cooked corn moves on to be husked, dry leaves pulled back to hug the stalk, then to the butterer, a woman who also collects your two dollars and then finally to the customer who goes off to shake cayenne, lemon or just salt on the redolent, dripping ear. The corn is sweet, crunchy and hot. The workers are usually one Latino man and two Latina women. On summer weekends there is a line of ten to twelve people waiting patiently. Standing in the scent of hot butter and corn, people bite into their ears, or, cob in hand they walk through the Market.



Figure 1 ‘There arises the permanent temptation to encounter the stranger’ (Lingis 1998: 185).
© Rachel Slocum.

Sharing in this pleasurable intimacy of eating publicly, market goers make this stand the most racially diverse place in the Market.⁶ Because the stand is here and because it is corn that is sold (which appears to appeal to different populations), different bodies are concentrated and thus come into eating contact when the other spaces of their lives would probably not enable such interaction.

Honey space is also more fractured: the single-source raw honey vendor with the more labor-intensive honey-collecting practice and the more expensive glass jars has high racial diversity. Standing by his stall, I heard people driven to seek honeys similar to those from other places they called home. I listened to conversations the vendor initiates about the epidemic of bee deaths

and the low quality of heated honey sourced from China and sold in conventional supermarkets. He knows about the shades and tastes of honeys from other parts of the world and suggests which of his honeys—the dark amber Buckwheat to the lighter Basswood—might be similar. He provides samples to taste. With a good location, a range of products (pollen, dried apples, candles, honey comb) and a glass case full of bees at a child’s eye level, this honey vendor draws many older and younger bodies. In 2006 I heard a woman from a European country talking with the vendor about how the honey is like that from her country of origin. I recognized her again in 2007. We talked about honey, the coarse, brown bread that is no longer available in



Figure 2 Touching the bitter melon. © Rachel Slocum.

her other country, and then about blue eggs that were once sold at the Market. Honey space and the conversations that shape it suggest that the MFM is potentially a zone of interaction in which different bodies meet through desire for foods lost and found.

Curiosity toward the unknown

The pleasure of curiosity can be associated with some bodies. Curiosity about growing practices and unknown vegetables is mostly a white middle-class tendency at the Market. They ask, 'What's this?' as they touch the bitter melon, feeling its chartreuse ridges (see Figure 2). It is more often than not someone white who asks a Hmong grower, 'Did you

grow these? Did you pick these this morning? Where do you farm? Where is your garden? How big is it? Do you use pesticides?' These questions may be provoked in part by skepticism about the Market's localness because resellers also vend there. They may indicate the intensity of alternative food fervor. A discourse productive of the Market is Hmong misuse of pesticides ('Hmong growers think if some is good, more is better'), which may also explain these questions. Alternatively, the questions may emerge from customers' interest or desire to talk.

It is true, as some vendors claim, that white people shop at white vendors' stalls. But white people shop at Hmong tables as well and those that do may want to interact with different people, hold 'foreign' objects and try

vegetables that are strange to them. Some middle-class white people may travel more, fear less, be more curious and more enabled to try new things than some nonwhite people. Whiteness at the Market is the security of having all of your vegetables available in many venues. But there is something more going on than security and availability, something more than the impulse to appropriate that moves white shoppers to reach for unknown fruit. Through that reaching, is it possible that other ideas about people and food that open more avenues for ethical engagement might obtain? Of course white people are not the only ones who try new plants. For instance, I watched a Hmong vendor attempting to get a Latina woman to try basil. He told her ‘it’s used in Italian food’. ‘Italian food?’ she said dubiously, taking it, smelling the leaves and passing it to an older woman shopping with her. ‘Just try it’, the grower said, giving it to her. She took it.

The joy of small talk

Pleasure is part of the sensuousness of bodies in this space. People walking in the aisles meet the eyes of people passing. They smile, they look interested or their faces are blank because one can be non-reactive, unthinking, guided forward, without effort, by the swell of the crowd. One woman recounted how she sometimes visits a farmers’ market near her home twice during its hours of operation. Her emotional attachment to this market is so great that she felt left out when she overheard the vendors talking of meeting for dinner but did not invite customers. A white MFM producer whose spouse died recently tells me details of the spouse’s death and burial during our first conversation. I watched her tell the story to other customers, using an album of photos of her spouse’s burial site. She can do

this in part because she is a woman and maybe because she has the confidence of middle-class whiteness supporting her. She seemed to think that customers would want to know, would want an explanation. Another white vendor brings beer every weekend, keeping it cold in his refrigerated truck in order to drink and talk with homeless African Americans after the Market closes. His black friends, he tells me, say he’s ‘black on the inside and white on the outside’. The Market is also one of the few public places in Minneapolis in which I have seen white gay men walking hand in hand and pausing to smell soap.

People are drawn to markets for the opportunity to have conversations with growers. The market is one of a few places where one can speak easily with someone who is not a friend or relative. This opportunity to converse with vendors is routinely mentioned by denizens of farmers’ markets as the part of the experience they love. Hmong growers came to realize the importance of this conversational interaction—the possibility of small talk and the desire of consumers to converse with the person who has actually grown the food they buy (Kerr 2007). Hmong farmers bring their children who have grown up using English. It is the youth who call out, asking shoppers to try something new. Through small talk, race emerges in connection to age, English fluency, time and farming practices. If there are not younger people present, it will be more difficult for customers to have the interaction some desire, but curiosity, as noted earlier, and willingness on the part of the vendor, propels the encounter forward.

There are different sensibilities toward the joy of chatting. Some farmers view these conversations as a chore, a job that must be done to make a living. Not surprisingly, vendors seem to find more pleasure in their

relationships with other vendors and long-term customers. Intimate knowledge about people's lives is conveyed, particularly among vendors, especially within racialized groups (but not entirely) and to some extent with customers. Vendors know who is ill and recovering or who has died as well as who has retired and not been replaced by family members. An older white woman vendor comes to the Market for the company of other vendors (not the customers), not for the money she might or might not make. An African American vendor's father came 'for the people' and suggested that his sons understand that this was what the Market was about, not necessarily for making a profit. For one middle-aged vendor, the Market used to bring regular customers with whom he established friendships, but he laments the fact that there are fewer and fewer of such customers.

The time of bargaining

Hmong and white vendors have conveyed to me their distaste for bargaining, another type of intimate interaction. They claim prices are already low. To bargain or not to bargain is a racial practice that varies over time. One white grower said his father's best customers were 'the blacks, because they never argued about the price'. It is possible that in white, largely rural 1950s Minnesota, African Americans did not feel comfortable haggling or did not do so for reasons that are more complicated than fear. His father sold them mustard greens, which his family grew but never ate. Organic eggs sell for \$4.50 a dozen but one Asian woman asks the white woman vendor, 'for four dollars, right?' Vendor: 'Well I need \$4.50 so I won't lose money'. Customer: 'These are so good, you know I always buy from you'.

The vendor, clearly reluctant said, 'Ok, this time, Ok. But don't tell anyone'. Having lost her husband and being unable to pay for organic certification, the price this vendor asked is critical to economic survival. I listened as a Hmong grower told two South Asian customers asking for a lower price, 'I grow these [fenugreek plants] for thirty days and at the end of that time, I ask for a dollar a bunch'. He told me 'I don't sell my vegetables for less than a dollar. That's the price. They can try to get it cheaper somewhere else'.

This section has suggested that the public intimacy afforded by the Market is a site for potentially productive encounter. These intimacies are part of racial embodiment at the Market. Intimacy is not separate from racial division; plants racially divide the Market but they also invite curiosity and spur encounter.

Conclusions

I focused on the scale of bodies to suggest that the concept of racial embodiment as an emergent process of connection is a means to understand race, food and the Market. I argued that despite the importance of social construction and performativity to thinking race, these frameworks do not enable a discussion of matter. Rather, the work of feminist materialists, particularly Elizabeth Grosz, allows an exploration of racial embodiment through phenotypic difference and the things that bodies do. Embodied differences among racialized groups emerge through practices—growing, selling, purchasing and eating food. These are partially observable tendencies of bodies that exist dynamically in social and physical space. To think about race as what (phenotypically differentiated) bodies do helps to analyze this food space as one in which people are racially divided and brought

together. Racial embodiment can be a means to catalog the obvious, subtle, creative and changing forms of racism as well as note 'what else' happens in this place. I argued that racial divisions can be seen through the production of certain plants by one racialized group and the clustering of bodies around some tables and products. Playing out the intimate human acts of food sale and consumption, different bodies display dismay, wonder, frustration and delight. Race is one important part in the act of the encounter in which bodies are central. The process that is race consists of bodies interacting with amaranth, Market sheds, honey, other bodies and the Minnesota fields.

Elizabeth Grosz proposes that the task of feminist theory is to formulate questions that generate inventiveness. Feminist materialist theorists have been on the forefront of theorizing the body in ways that acknowledge biology and society. They have done so towards other politics. Exploring how race emerges, embodied, strengthens politics by expanding the discussion of race to include more than representation, recognition and intentional actions. What (anti-racist) politics would follow when bodies, formations in which they act and bodily practices are foregrounded?⁷ Grosz suggests that identity could be understood in terms of bodily practices. Thus a politics of bodily practices against oppression should be undertaken as a struggle of endless 'becoming other' in which categories of action, not the struggle for recognition, are affirmed. She writes,

Without an adequate acknowledgement of the material, natural, biological status of bodies (these terms being understood as vectors of change rather than as forms of fixity), we lose the resources to understand how to best harness these forces which invariably direct us to the future; we lose an understanding of our place in the world as beings

open to becoming, open to activities, if not identities, of all types. (Grosz 2005: 89)

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Notes

- 1 The Hmong, indigenous peoples of China, left their lands in the mid to late 1800s, eventually coming to reside in the mountainous regions of Laos. They were involved in various acts of resistance against the French and Laotian governments. Some provided assistance to the USA in its war against Vietnam and persisted in attacks against the government of Laos after the USA withdrew from the region. Many Hmong people fled Laotian retaliation and now live in refugee camps in Thailand. Since then, some have been relocated to other countries, including the USA (Yia 2000). US Hmong populations are concentrated around the Twin Cities, MN and Fresno, CA.
- 2 This phrase thanks to an anonymous reviewer who read an earlier version of the paper when it was under review at *Cultural Geographies*.
- 3 This term from Cheah (1996).
- 4 Heirlooms are cultivars preserved by passing seeds down through generations. Often they have been selected for flavor and have not been grown using industrial agricultural production methods (Kingsolver 2007).
- 5 See <www.millcityfarmersmarket.org> (accessed 9 June 2007).

- 6 Technically, this stand is in the Farmer's Market Annex, a privately owned space that rents to vendors of food and other goods that covers the block adjacent to the MFM. Together they make this Market space.
- 7 M. C. Emad, Institute for Advanced Study, University of Minnesota, personal communication, 5 May 2008.

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Abstract translations

Penser la race à travers la théorie féministe du corps: éléments de division et d'intimité au marché public de Minneapolis

La race se forme et se reforme en partie grâce aux pratiques de culture, de vente, d'achat et de consommation alimentaire. Certaines pratiques alimentaires sont donc aussi des «pratiques raciales». Reprenant les résultats d'une étude en cours sur le marché public de Minneapolis, l'article traite de deux sous thèmes relatifs à l'incarnation: la division raciale et l'intimité. La théorie féministe du corps conçue par Elizabeth Grosz avance l'idée que le corps possède un pouvoir explicatif. Ce cadre de référence favorise la discussion au sujet de la matérialité de la race plutôt que sa représentation

ou sa performance. La race se manifeste à travers le mouvement, le rassemblement, et la rencontre de corps distincts sur le plan phénotypique. C'est par l'intermédiaire de petits groupes isolés au sein desquels les corps se déplacent vers certains légumes en particulier ainsi que de la force d'attraction qui pousse les corps à tâter la margose et à s'entretenir avec des cultivateurs, que les corps donnent un sens à ce marché. La réflexion proposée sur les courants qui mettent en relation le phénotype, l'espace et les légumes feuilles est censée constituer une étape vers des considérations politiques de la pratique corporelle.

Mots-clefs: incarnation, race, marchés publics, aliment, théorie féministe.

Conceptualizando raza dentro del marco de la teoría feminista corpórea: divisiones e intimidades en el mercado de vegetales y frutas de Minneapolis

De una parte, el concepto de raza es construido y reconstruido mediante las prácticas de cultivación, venta, compra y consumo de productos alimenticios. Por consiguiente, algunas prácticas alimenticias son también 'prácticas raciales'. Haciendo uso de un estudio en progreso del mercado de vegetales y frutas de Minneapolis, el papel abarca dos subtemas de encarnación: división e intimidad racial. La teoría feminista corpórea de Elizabeth Grosz ofrece la idea de que el cuerpo tiene poder explicativo. Este marco permite una discusión sobre la materialidad de raza en vez de la representación o performance de ella. La raza surge como resultado del movimiento, de la agrupación y del encuentro de cuerpos diferenciados fenotípicamente. Mediante pequeñas segregaciones, en que los cuerpos se acercan a ciertos vegetales y no a otros, y mediante atracciones que impulsan a cuerpos a tocar el melón amargo y a hablar con agricultores, los cuerpos dan forma al significado del Mercado. Esta reflexión sobre tendencias, relacionando fenotipo, espacio y hojas, intenta ser un paso hacia una política de prácticas corpóreas.

Palabras claves: encarnación, raza, mercados de vegetales y frutas, alimentos, teoría feminista.