

***Intimate Eating: Racialized Spaces and Racialized Futures.***

By Anita Mannur

Duke University Press, 2022, 192 pp.

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A Book Review by

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Anita Mannur's *Intimate Eating* is a fascinating investigation of the current nexus of food, culture, and identity using a wide range of materials from literature, film and pop culture. Mannur contends that food has become a critical site for the performance of identity and the negotiation of social interactions, and that the ways we eat and talk about food are inextricably linked to our sense of ourselves and our relationships with others.

The book opens with a history of food studies, covering the establishment of food studies as an academic subject and the ways in which food has been researched in connection to racism, gender, and class concerns. While food studies has made significant advances in recent years, Mannur contends that there is still more work to be done in terms of comprehending the complexity of food and its role in defining individual and community identities. Throughout the book, Mannur emphasizes the varied and often conflicting connotations that food may possess. She investigates how food can be both a source of comfort and pleasure and a source of tension and conflict. She also investigates the connection between food and power, seeing how food may be used to exercise control over others and strengthen social hierarchies.

The book is organized into five sections, each focusing on a distinct element of the connection between food and identity. Mannur investigates how food is used to establish and negotiate ethnic and racial identities in Part I. She demonstrates, through a variety of instances from around the world, how food is frequently utilized to support or challenge existing social hierarchies and power connections. She explores, for example, how Indian food has been rebranded and promoted in the West as "exotic" and "genuine," but Chinese food has frequently been vilified as unhealthy and dirty.

The author then goes on to discuss a range of subjects relating to food and identity, including how food may be used for cultural resistance and political activity. She investigates the work of numerous activists and artists who utilize food to question mainstream cultural narratives and to promote their own cultural traditions. Mannur, for example, outlines the work of the Food Justice Project in Seattle, which aims to address issues of food insecurity and access in low-income neighbourhoods of colour.

Part II focuses on the gendered characteristics of food and eating. In this section, Mannur contends that food is frequently utilized to support or question established gender norms and

expectations. She explores how dietary restrictions and body shaming are often used to police women's bodies, as well as the growth of "foodie culture" and how it has often been connected with a masculine ideal of culinary skill.

Mannur delves into the importance of food in diasporic groups and how migration and transnationalism impact culinary practices in Part III. She demonstrates how food may serve as a significant link to migrants' and their descendants' homelands while simultaneously being modified and altered in new circumstances. She examines the complicated interplay between authenticity and creativity in diasporic culinary cultures, as well as how food can connect and divide people.

Lastly, Mannur examines food politics and the role of food activism in confronting established power systems in Parts IV and V. She demonstrates how food may be utilized to oppose colonialism and empire, as well as environmental degradation and social inequity. She highlights the emergence of food justice movements and their efforts to develop more sustainable and equitable food systems.

The multidisciplinary approach of *Intimate Eating* is one of its strengths. Mannur relies on anthropology, sociology, cultural studies, and culinary studies, as well as a wide range of examples from popular culture, literature, and everyday life. As a result, the book is accessible to a wide spectrum of readers, including those with minimal prior knowledge in these disciplines.

Mannur's utilization of personal experiences and insights is one of the most intriguing features of *Intimate Eating*. She discusses her personal experiences growing up in an Indian household in the United States, and how food influenced her feeling of self and belonging. These human stories give depth and authenticity to the work, making Mannur's ideas more sympathetic and approachable.

The book's focus on the complicated and frequently conflicting nature of food and identity is another asset. Mannur takes pains to demonstrate that food is never a simple manifestation of identity, but rather a place of contestation and negotiation. She also notes that, depending on the environment and the persons involved, eating practices may be both liberating and repressive. Overall, *Intimate Eating* is a well-written, stimulating, and engaging examination of the role of food in contemporary life. It contains a plethora of thoughts and examples that will appeal to experts and students in a variety of areas, as well as anybody interested in food and identity. Mannur's straightforward and entertaining writing style, along with her extensive theoretical and empirical expertise, make this a must-read for anybody interested in the complicated and intriguing realm of food culture.

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### About the Reviewer

**Eileen Naazie** is an aspiring academic who is currently pursuing a Master's in Women's and Gender Studies at Carleton University. In addition to a Bachelor's degree in Sociology with English, a Bachelor's degree in law, and a post graduate diploma in Public Administration, she has a Master of Philosophy degree in Communication Studies from the University of Ghana. Her research interests include but are not limited to advertising's influence on subjectivities and body image issues, women's and gender issues, and sexuality. She hopes to pursue a Ph.D. in Communication Studies.

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