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Hanna Garth, *Food in Cuba: The Pursuit of a Decent Meal*. Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2020. xv + 214 pp. (Paper US\$ 25.00)

If social life appears to the ethnographer as a uniquely patterned, yet always incomplete, mosaic of practices, understandings, identifications, and values, then *Food in Cuba: The Pursuit of a Decent Meal* captures the ethnographic process admirably. Hanna Garth's reliance on storytelling to develop the book's narrative enables readers to trace the ethnographer's footsteps through a series of snippets about her research participants' lives and encounters with them. The result is a highly readable ethnography, which contributes to a number of debates in anthropology, food studies, and Cuban studies about the nature of social change under (post)socialism, cultures of food (in)security, and racial and other disparities in Cuba. Garth's analysis provides a crucial counterpart to similar ethnographies of food in Cuba, such as Anna Cristina Pertierra's *Cuba: The Struggle for Consumption*, which reveals gender relations that underpin everyday consumption, and my own *Everyday Moral Economies*, which discusses the role of political capital in enabling or limiting access to food provisioning networks. Yet these works largely exclude racial and sexual hierarchies and their relation to food provisioning practices and possibilities in Cuba, which is the focus of this book.

Food in Cuba is structured around what Garth calls "the politics of adequacy": local definitions of food (in)security determined by the availability of culturally valued foods. Her concept is in keeping with a long line of anthropological work that emphasizes the symbolic nature of food and its importance for understanding scarcity and hunger. Yet Garth pushes this work further by explaining socially differentiated and visceral experiences of Cuban food acquisition. Her ethnographic stories illuminate social measuring rods that shape who can access what, why, and how in Santiago de Cuba. As she argues, while categories of "race" were dismissed as irrelevant in a newly socialist Cuba of the 1960s, racialized distinctions continued to permeate everyday life through "race-coded" social categories such as "levels of culture" (p. 36). Her ethnographic narratives demonstrate how such social categories emplace Black people, homosexuals, and "unvirtuous" women in Cuba outside the domains of trust and respectability, restricting their access to formal and informal food provisioning networks.

Chapter 3 provides deep insights into the author's positioning in relation to these hierarchical orders. When Garth wanted to conduct interviews at night, she faced a dilemma. Both of her choices—to walk home alone or to ask a male friend to walk with her—put her in "danger" of transgressing cultural rules of when and how a woman should leave the home. By walking home at night,

she risked acquiring a negative reputation as a “slut.” Here it would have been interesting to explore the different socialities of public and private spaces in Cuba, and how these relate to the hierarchies examined in the book. Moreover, I would have liked to know how Garth gained access to the 22 households under study. What were the terms and conditions of her research visa? How did her specific positioning open up or limit possibilities for the research? Was her presence in the field (as a Black queer woman or as a North American with a research visa) risky or otherwise uncomfortable for herself and/or her research participants?

The stories narrated in Chapter 5 are especially revealing of Cubans’ anxiety, stress, trauma, and anger in the face of long-term food scarcities. Stories such as those of the man who broke down in tears and anger when singing the popular song, “El Cachito” (“A Little Piece”), during an all-night party for Santiago’s Carnival, are poignant reminders of the deeply affective and embodied nature of food scarcity. Stories in this chapter provide a powerful reminder of Cubans’ long *lucha* (struggle) for food provisioning since the 1990s, and may help scholars decipher the recent, unprecedented protests across the island.

Each chapter of *Food in Cuba* invites readers to piece together disparate parts of the Cuban food insecurity puzzle. Crucial pieces of that puzzle (such as the workings of the black market) become apparent only as the narrative unfolds. Since the majority of analysis remains at the “community” scale, a background picture of Cuba’s unique political economy of food remains obscure. Garth’s arguments about changing levels of food access and how these relate to “conflicting ethical frameworks” (p. 113) and shifting relations of care could have been sharpened by an exploration of the diverse food supply systems in Cuba (socialist/[black] market/tourist) and their variable integration into global market networks. Such a political economic framing would provide a solid backdrop to Garth’s colorful mosaic of food provisioning in Santiago, deepening our understanding of why some Santiagueros regularly eat a “decent meal” while others do not.

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