

tackles the problem of *how* an infrastructure developed to “maintain the standard quality of decomposing objects for a mass-merchandizing system” (175). The discussion of standardization, perishability, and logistics is fascinating. Drawing on interviews with diverse intermediaries and observations of different logistical sites, Deener takes us beyond the well-known case of refrigeration to speak to controlled-atmosphere warehouse owners and representatives of particular varieties of fruit. We learn that assembling the produce aisle entails not simply logistical coordination but also efforts to educate consumers and sellers.

The book ends by taking us back down to Philadelphia to look at how the demands and contingencies of this global, standard-driven, just-in-time food infrastructure creates problems and demands that can then be turned into new distributions circuits and forms of knowledge. Key here is the insight that standardization creates hierarchies of value and compliance, as well as economies “at the margins” of the norm, that exploit the opportunities offered by failures and uncertainties. In this sense, we can see infrastructure as a law-like normative system in which “the cracks in the system get converted into institutional methods of distribution” (202). Thus emerge “channels” of varying levels of formality, together with intermediaries who help funnel foods into new consumer markets, from food banks to brokers, as well as those who eschew the economy based on standards and mass marketing, such as local food or ugly food movements.

*The Problem with Feeding Cities* is a theoretically and empirically ambitious book. It draws on a wide variety of methods—from participant observation to interview to archival work—and a broad range of theoretical discussions from urban studies, anthropology, science and technology studies, and beyond. While the introduction attempts to draw the different chapters together into an overarching argument and (somewhat jargon-heavy) discussion of infrastructure, the beauty in this book is in the diverse stories and voices that appear in the chapters. One of this book’s greatest contributions is the act of illuminating and giving voice to a series of actors who have been too frequently overlooked in studies of food systems: intermediaries of various sorts. Along with the familiar figures of wholesale merchants and vendors, we are introduced to brokers, owners of atmosphere-controlled warehouses in international ports, produce board employees, US Department of Agriculture officials, packing house owners, packaging providers, and more. Approaching infrastructures through the lens of (inter)mediation—what the anthropologist Sally Merry (2006) calls “mapping the middle”—allows for what may seem like totalizing systems (“food regimes”) to be disaggregated and understood pragmatically. It also reveals

the importance of understanding what stands between the proverbial farm and table in terms of crafting policies and theories that can adequately confront the “problem with feeding cities.”

—Tiana Bakić Hayden, *El Colegio de México*

#### REFERENCE

Merry, Sally Engle. 2006. “Transnational Human Rights and Local Activism: Mapping the Middle.” *American Anthropologist* 108.1: 38–51.

#### *Peach State*

Adrienne Su

Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2021

110 pp. \$17.00 (paper); (eBook available)

The words “hunger” or “hungry” appear perhaps more often than any other in *Peach State*, Adrienne Su’s evocative new collection of food-centric, Atlanta-centric poems that grapple with the contours of Chinese American identity in a changing American South. “Father” and “Mother” and other familial relations appear frequently as well in a book that pays homage to the “generations / who have departed, but left instructions” (9) via the words of recipes and the imprints of memory. Although hunger is a consistent presence, Su writes that “the shape of hunger has progressed” (69), foregrounding the fundamental orientation of these poems toward modes, conditions, and moments of transformation, and toward the role that form plays in poetic and food practices. “Satiety” shows up just once, while “full” appears more often, in reference to a basket (5), an agenda (45), a house (49), a table (68), and a life (98).

In between hunger and fullness, however, are processes of change. Whether grappling with transformations of food, place, ingredients, recipes, identity, or poetic form, Su skillfully navigates the progressions from one form to another, the constants that remain amid the changes, and the moments of freedom and flourishing that exist and thrive alongside and amid constraints.

Some of Su’s work can be read as a meta-statement on methodological and conceptual elements of poetry itself. She works as a professor of creative writing and poet-in-residence at Dickinson College, and that combination of skillful practice and poetic theory comes through clearly. In “Peking Duck Three Ways,” Su locates her reader at “A meeting of imagination and economy” (68), an intersection at which duck is prepared and presented to the table, and an intersection, on the level of poetics, that begins to describe what

poetry *does* and where it *is*. The duck moves from animal to abstraction to essence (68), an approximation of the poetic process: material or imaginative experience, crafted and coaxed into poetic form, elevated upward and outward to a poetic essence that initiates connections and associations where they may not have existed.

Crucial to a poetics of food is the gap that remains between a material thing or experience and the language a poet uses to describe it. A poem titled “Substitutions” makes this chasm clear, between material thing and language but also between past traditions and present conditions: “Balsamic, for Zhenjiang vinegar. / Letters, for the family gathered” (5). What transformations do these substitutions engage and shift into view? What does it mean to reside in this place of transformation, whether at a kitchen table in Atlanta or in the lines of a poem?

For students of poetics, Su’s work illustrates the power of form, meter, and rhyme to create meaning and to process ideas and images into poetry. She utilizes a sestina, which conveys a sense of circularity, to frame modes of hunger and consumption as both consistent and evolving across the years in “Abundance.” She employs a blues form in “Buford Highway” to pay homage to the blues music of the South and articulate what it means when one’s home no longer feels quite like it did. When Su writes, “What conjures our home is a seven-lane highway” (83), the reader can sense both the ground itself, and the definition of home, shifting.

For food studies scholars, this versatile book belongs on a Food and Identity syllabus as much as one on Food and Literature. To take its applications in the field further, it might be placed within a constellation of emerging work about the New South and diasporic foodways. For instance, placing *Peach State* in conversation with Julian Agyeman and Sydney Giacalone’s *The Immigrant-Food Nexus: Borders, Labor and Identity in North America* could help answer Agyeman and Giacalone’s call to conduct a multiscalar food systems analysis that synthesizes “the ‘macro’ approaches, which [focus] on policy and national narratives, and the ‘micro’ approaches, which [focus] on daily lived experiences, materiality, personal identity, and cultural practices” (2020: 8). This analytical framework enables a deeper understanding of immigrant foodways, modes of resistance, and daily survival amid structural constraints. Su offers invaluable poetic insights on the way these approaches manifest and interweave through food and across generations in a diasporic context. Su’s poems often foreground the micro, the daily practices, and the family traditions, but touch on the macro as well: “On the Recommendation That American Adults Consume No More Than One-Quarter Cup of Rice, Twice a Week”

ushers the reader into a macro-level food systems frame regarding the ecological costs of intensive plantation production as it notes that “Studies reveal, where fields were cotton / (Southern states), more contamination” (12).

Su follows that up with an unsettling micro-level imperative: “If your word for food is your word for rice, / change your word for food, or rice” (12). Pathways for analysis proliferate in those consecutive rhyming couplets, where Su in effect links the systemic with the cultural, the soil with the life lived from and with that soil, the material experience of the food and the poetics of that food, the retention of cultural ideas and ideals amid implacable forces of change and time. Earlier, and relatedly, she writes, “Already the days / overflow with imperatives” (8) and invites us to ask, how might food (and how might poetry) intervene?

Su demonstrates the pivotal role poetry can play in a multilayered food systems analysis: as a vehicle for identity formation and expression, for critique, and for a creative rethinking of relations in food ranging from sites and practices of production to those of consumption. If “the raw materials of circumstance” (57) shape recipes and what becomes of food traditions across space and time, then perhaps they also shape the elements that find their way into poetic form.

—Eric Himmelfarb, *New York University*

#### REFERENCE

Agyeman, Julian, and Sydney Giacalone. 2020. “Introduction: The Immigrant-Food Nexus.” In *The Immigrant-Food Nexus: Borders, Labor, and Identity in North America*, edited by Agyeman and Giacalone. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. 1–15.

#### FAT

**Regina Hofer, translated by Natascha Hoffmeyer**  
**University Park, PA: Graphic Mundi, Pennsylvania State University Press, 2021**  
**120 pp. 118 black-and-white illustrations, \$17.50 (paper)**

From its arresting cover through its final ambiguous page, Regina Hofer’s graphic novel *FAT* provokes and disorients the reader. Hofer, an Austrian artist and author, battled with anorexia and bulimia from her teen years in the context of family abuse and dysfunction. The memoir promises to resonate with anyone grappling with, or trying to understand, an eating disorder. Armed with sharp lines and indeterminate symbolism, Hofer confronts readers with the reality of distorted perception, mirroring her own experience with anorexia and bulimia: “When you have an eating disorder, you lose a sense for your own appearance—among other