



Racial Indigestion: Eating Bodies in the 19th Century (America and the Long 19th Century)

Kyla Wazana Tompkins

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The act of eating is both erotic and violent, as one wholly consumes the object being eaten. At the same time, eating performs a kind of vulnerability to the world, revealing a fundamental interdependence between the eater and that which exists outside her body. *Racial Indigestion* explores the links between food, visual and literary culture in the nineteenth-century United States to reveal how eating produces political subjects by justifying the social discourses that create bodily meaning.

Combing through a visually stunning and rare archive of children's literature, architectural history, domestic manuals, dietetic tracts, novels and advertising, *Racial Indigestion* tells the story of the consolidation of nationalist mythologies of whiteness via the erotic politics of consumption. Less a history of commodities than a history of eating itself, the book seeks to understand how eating became a political act, linked to appetite, vice, virtue, race and class inequality and, finally, the queer pleasures and pitfalls of a burgeoning commodity culture. In so doing, *Racial Indigestion* sheds light on contemporary "foodie" culture's vexed relationship to nativism, nationalism and race privilege.

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