The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association

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Introduction: Consuming Cultures
Kathryn Dolan and Eloise Sureau

The 2018 Midwest Modern Language Association convention occurred in the wake of the #MeToo movement. The social concerns at the time were reflected at the convention, as the executive committee, in an effort to allow all our participants to focus on our scholarship, worked to make participants feel supported and safe. The theme of the convention was “Consuming Cultures,” a particularly apt refrain for the year. We live in an era of cultural tensions; at the same time, we are continually engaged with consumption. It is not an accident that the convention’s theme is a clear play on the idea of “consumer culture,” a prevalent and fragile element of our late-capitalist society. In a time of social movements like #MeToo, climate change, political extremism, and astonishing breakthroughs in the sciences, consumption of culture—in the multivalent uses of the phrase—is omnipresent.

In this issue of the Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association, therefore, we are interested in cultural engagement and appropriation as they reflect our theme of consuming cultures. We agree with Carolyn Korsmeyer that consumption and taste are “an intimate part of hospitality, ceremony, and rituals religious and civic” (3). The foods people eat and the stories we tell each other
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are some of the most vital components of human civilization, perhaps more significant now than they have ever been. In addition, food, consumption, and cultural discussions exist at the intersection of the local as well as the global; in an effort to broaden our cultural engagement, this issue includes two foreign language essays. Throughout, the theme of consuming cultures is approached broadly through the interdisciplinary lenses of the humanities as we discuss the power of food, material culture, protest, and consumer culture.

From the earliest meanings of the word, culture, like consumption, has been directly connected to elements of agriculture: food, the land, and production. The first definition of culture in the online Oxford English Dictionary is “the cultivation of land, and derived senses” or “the action or practice of cultivating the soil; tillage,” a use that can be traced back to Palladius on Hosbandrie, a Middle English translation of Palladius’s De re Rustica. Eventually, the word would become a political or civil reference—something one has or claims, rather than something firmly connected to the soil. In fact, the word culture has been consumed within itself. The French gastronome Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin’s famous quote, “Dis-moi ce que tu manges, je te dirai ce que tu es” (“Tell me what you eat and I will tell you what you are”), and Marcel Proust’s nostalgic writings on involuntary memory in Swann’s Way—using the example of a journey of memory brought on by dipping a madeleine in a cup of tea and eating it—have become narrative clichés (Brillat-Savarin ix). Culture and consumption are connected through Brillat-Savarin’s phrase and Proust’s descriptions of key food items in his novel, for example. As it had been for Palladius, this remains an important time to consider culture and consumption in terms of the most basic of human needs—like food and material goods—through the humanities, from reading a book for pleasure to watching movies and playing games to decoding cultural moments as consumable texts.

In addition, we use Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of taste as a potential method to challenge cultural hegemony in Distinction (1979). Bourdieu discusses food, “the archetype of all taste” as our earliest learned and most fundamental identity marker in his argument—noting that this “refers directly back to the oldest and deepest experiences, those which determine and over-determine the primitive oppositions—bitter/sweet, flavourful/insipid, hot/cold, coarse/delicate, austere/bright—
which are as essential to gastronomic commentary as to the refined appreciations of aesthetes” (79–80). Food is Bourdieu’s example, but his argument goes beyond the culinary and into larger cultural and class-related concerns with his observation that cultural hegemony is a means whereby one segment of society can dominate another. This hegemony can take the form of cuisine, as well as other productions—like film, narrative, performance, and even the act of protest. We must challenge this cultural hegemonic tendency through our humanistic work.

One work that critiques his era’s cultural hegemony is Henry David Thoreau’s *Walden* (1854). Thoreau theorizes what an obsession with material consumption has done to US culture during his time in a way that remains relevant to the present. A book that has influenced a number of interdisciplinary fields in the humanities and beyond, *Walden* makes an excellent focus for a journal issue, then, that questions consumption and culture as broadly and deeply as possible. Early in the text, Thoreau recognizes the importance of focusing on our “grossest groceries,” as he sought to learn “what are the gross necessities of life and what methods have been taken to obtain them” (12). He eventually whittles the basic human needs down to food, clothing, shelter, and fuel. In many ways, these are various ways of saying the same material thing: we are driven to be warm, fed, and sheltered—to be kept alive. Everything else is, to a varying degree, a comfort in life, therefore, rather than a necessity: in other words, culture. Often, that culture is hypocritical, wasteful, or shallow. Focusing on his overall theme of simplifying consumption as a way to reduce this wastefulness, Thoreau analyzes the early settlers’ practice of building simple homes upon first arriving in Concord—comparing these structures to his own cabin at Walden Pond.

In this course which our ancestors took there was a show of prudence at least, as if their principle were to satisfy the more pressing wants first. But are the more pressing wants satisfied now? When I think of acquiring for myself one of our luxurious dwellings, I am deterred, for, so to speak, the country is not yet adapted to human culture, and we are still forced to cut our spiritual bread far thinner than our forefathers did their wheaten. (39–40)

In “Economy,” the first chapter of *Walden*, where Thoreau describes his experiment in simplified consumption, he connects cul-
ture, not agriculture in this case but the civil form of culture, with a specific food—bread, one of the most symbolic forms of foodstuff—in his metaphor against wastefulness. He describes two of his necessities in this instance: shelter and food. His argument, though, is that we should emulate our ancestors in one thing at least: their original simplicity in habitation. He studied their culture, in today’s definition of the term, against what he considered a more “luxurious” form of culture that seeks to consume for its own sake, rather than for necessity. This is one of his core issues in Walden, the challenge to become less dependent on excessive consumption, an issue that has grown more challenging in the twenty-first century.

In this issue, therefore, we follow Thoreau’s concerns regarding a culture of consumption, using his critique as our guiding principal. The papers presented at the 2018 MMLA conference and the seven essays published here constellate around our concept of consuming cultures. They engage directly with depictions of food culture in literature; the consumption of gendered cultures in print media and film; the material culture of performance in live action, print media, and film; the representations of protest and war; and the analysis of consuming cultures in languages other than English. Each essay underscores our theme, considering the power of the humanities to consider culture through literature, film, performance, and art. Throughout, these essays demonstrate the hope of positive action through the humanities.

Alissa Burger begins this special issue with a literary food studies reading of “Consuming Culture.” In “Feasts, Family, and Fun: Food in J. K. Rowling’s Harry Potter Series,” she reads the popular Harry Potter series of books and films, specifically studying the Hogwarts feasts, the smaller and yet similarly festive family meals, and the snack foods and their fun associations in the stories. According to Burger, “Rowling’s detailed descriptions of food and eating are often tied to profound emotional experiences.” Burger notes that Rowling works on issues of identity through food: Hogwarts students eat traditional British fare, in contrast to what visiting students from other wizarding schools eat, for example. In addition, family and friendship units are sealed through the sharing of food, represented repeatedly by the dining scenes involving the Weasley family. The Weasley family is again represented with food and fun—through the siblings’ focus on
eating and developing delightful snack foods. These scenes are some of the most popular of the entire series. Interestingly, while the snack scenes are decidedly fun, they also become subversive through the larger discussion of the fight against Voldemort—the villain character, who does not have pleasant food associations in the stories. Burger observes that “while sometimes a sweet is just a sweet, other times it is integral to taking on evil, resisting tyranny, and bringing down Voldemort.” The positive associations of food throughout the stories are critical to any discussion of that story’s work on culture or identity.

Next, Jessica McKee and Taylor Joy Mitchell discuss how one element of 1920s jazz culture—the “flapper”—gets consumed into the Playboy industry as a 1960s “bunny.” In “From the Lindy Hop to the Bunny Dip: Hugh Hefner’s Jazz Age Redux,” they note how Hefner places jazz culture and its sexuality solidly within a heteronormative male structure of the era, as opposed to the more woman-focused sexuality of the roaring twenties jazz era. This act of Hefner’s paralleled the nation’s move away from loosening of sexual constraints and the promotion of the New Woman during the 1920s toward an era of paranoia, nuclear power, and a return to domesticity following the 1950s. They argue that Hefner’s work shows an anxiety regarding the inherent power of women on display with the figure of the flapper, one that he went to pains to make less threatening as the figure of the Playboy bunny, even though he would call himself a champion of the rights of women. Rather, Hefner’s primary focus was on promoting a bachelor lifestyle at a time of increased domesticity in the United States: it was a way to remain unmarried and masculine. Moreover, Hefner’s version of jazz was a commodified display, as it was “not associated with any particular product” and could therefore be “used to sell everything: potatoes, yachts, Pepsi, Reynolds Wrap, hamburgers, and Jeep Cherokees—even a Playboy lifestyle.” Indeed, for Hefner, jazz was not about 1920s jazz culture at all but rather a feeling of cultural rebellion (“toeing, but never really crossing, the line”); and that is one of the main differences between the cultural representations of women in the two eras.

Sarah Hirsch’s “‘Unmasking’ Culture: Mardi Gras Indians and the Materiality of Re-presentation” examines the creation of a particular material form of culture out of various earlier influences and markers—several of which engage with the fraught US history of
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racism, slavery, and removals. The Mardi Gras Indian tradition involves the creation of elaborate costumes displayed during parade days in New Orleans and influenced by the style of Northern Plains tribes, as well as those of the Northeastern nations. Hirsch argues that this re-presentation is an “amalgamation of culture, rather than a consumption that performs an erasure.” She thoughtfully traces the history of this tradition and the racialization of the Louisiana region through US history. Indeed, she notes the flexibility of racial definitions in US history. Racial definitions became fluid through mixed ancestry, various interpretations of privileged status based on racial coding, and the ability to remain in one’s native region during a period of removal, slavery, and enforced racism. Hirsch includes a quote from Big Chief “Monk” Boudreaux: “I am Choctaw and I am Black. We mask as Indian to celebrate that part of who we are. This is our tradition. When the Indian had to leave, was being moved to reservations, we took the Black. We said we Black, so we could stay. This is our home.” Hirsch argues that these costumes are part of a material rhetorics that creatively challenges a unified reading of a “Black Indian aesthetics.” in US history

Challenging notions of US history and culture continues into Eric Leuschner’s article, “The Literature of Protest and the Consumption of Activism.” He looks at the culture of protest, analyzing the 2011 Time magazine “person of the year,” who, following the Occupy movement, was “the protester.” Leuschner observes that the very element of protesting has thus become commodified, an element of popular culture, and practically an oxymoron in some cases. He therefore seeks to establish a literature of protest to complement the increasingly commodified established genre of protest literature. Expanding the role of protest literature, literature of protest moves beyond this to also engage the “call to action” with reflection. In this process, he examines the ways in which literature becomes focused on the element of protest itself, rather than a play on protest. He wants to focus on literature in which protest is the point—not the plot. As he argues, “[u]ltimately, where the literature of protest succeeds best is in humanizing the faceless representations of protest seen in the media.” Leuschner challenges genres, as well, finding examples of the “literature of protest” not only in literature but also in film and in music. Additionally, he tracks its deep history—finding that the literature of protest dates back to Aristophanes and remains very
much recognizable in the present moment. At the same time, we must be aware of the power of protest, the power of words: “As consumers of media, we consume a diet of words which, in turn, influence[s] the way we interpret events.” Leuschner asserts that we have a natural imperative to protest, as it is fundamental to human nature.

Continuing the discussion of the social impact of consuming cultures, this year’s graduate student paper prize, “Women at War: WWI, Patriarchy, and Conflict in Wonder Woman (2017),” describes the recent, popular Wonder Woman film adaptation. Zachary Michael Powell addresses the decision of the film’s director, Patty Jenkins, to move the original comic’s setting from World War II to World War I. In so doing, she is able to change a number of fundamental assumptions of war, as well as of patriarchy in terms of war. Fundamentally, if WWII is seen as a glorious war, WWI is decidedly not: it is a “pointless war.” In addition, WWII had a more active female presence; therefore, WWI makes more of a statement about patriarchy and war that Jenkins can manipulate with her female hero. Powell observes that the film spends more of its time on the role of women during the early twentieth century, for example, than in engaging with what might be useful historical context regarding WWI. The film’s focus is to engage with the role of women in war and the inherent patriarchal focus of war against a WWI setting that would resonate with twenty-first century audiences. Finally, Powell notes that Wonder Woman’s ending—with Diana leaving war-making and becoming an art historian—is ultimately futile, “for under patriarchy the villainous man will always ascend to continue patriarchy’s power, propagating violence for man and woman alike.” Indeed, the film ends with hints of a sequel and thus another war, as consumption and culture have become part of an overarching patriarchy deeply connected to war and violence.

Finally, for the first time, JMMLA includes two foreign-language essays, with the hope that the inclusion of articles in languages other than English will become a permanent part of the journal. In the interest of diversity and inclusion, we have chosen articles in French and Spanish. We hope in future issues to broaden our submissions and diversify the languages. In the first, “Du silence à la légitimation de soi: Bon Petit Soldat de Mazarine Pingeot,” Béatrice Vernier considers “Consuming Cultures” through the lens of French celebrities and their
mediatic attention. In 2012, Mazarine Pingeot published *Bon Petit Soldat*. In this text written in the form of a diary, Pingeot, the illegitimate daughter of former French President François Mitterrand, recounts her struggles with an identity she fostered under a well-known father whose last name she did not share and who had forbidden any mention of her very existence. In 1994, however, a journalist uncovered her parentage, and Pingeot became a public figure. Vernier emphasizes that Mazarine uses the distant “vous” (you) to talk to and about herself in an environment where the “I” is not only unfamiliar but taboo. Additionally, Vernier argues that the consumption process becomes twofold for Pingeot. While the media consumes and regurgitates an image of her that she does not recognize, she tries to consume, process, and reconcile the two conflicting images of her own father, the public and the private, in order to better understand her own identity. Vernier contends that the process of writing allows Pingeot to discover an image of, for, and by herself, free from the looming figure of a famous father and from the media craze. Inspired by stories of women who, like herself, lived hidden lives, Vernier argues that Pingeot “takes possession of her existence and of her public image,” leaving behind the “good little soldier” that her compliance to her father’s silence about her very existence had forced her to embody. Vernier claims that, thanks to the act of writing, Pingeot has started the painful process that will lead to overcoming her fear of being an object of public consumption.

In the second essay in a foreign language, “Un italiano en Lima: relaciones sociales y consumo en Herencia,” Rocío del Águila Carreno analyses consumption in various forms in the 1895 novel *Herencia* (Inheritance) by Clorinda Matto de Turner, a Peruvian author. Carreno tracks the evolution of the society of consumption in Peru, showing the manner in which the Industrial Revolution that swept Europe found its own expression in her home country. Set at the end of the nineteenth century after the War of the Pacific (1879–1884), *Herencia* portrays the changing social and economic values in Peru, and the advance of capitalism. Carreno follows various patterns of consumption in the novel in order to emphasize the dichotomy within each character between nature and nurture, physiology and success. Carreno argues that in Matto de Turner’s *Herencia*, nature and nurture are both necessary to climb the social ladder successfully, and that consumption is an
integral part of social movement. A Naturalist novel, *Herencia* touches on themes such as degeneration, eugenics, ethnicity, race, and immigration. Carreno contends that, according to Matto de Turner in *Herencia*, in late nineteenth century Peru, the color of one’s skin, coupled with certain patterns of consumption, signified the key to either grandiose economic success or inevitable social failure.

As the essays in this issue show, the theme of “Consuming Cultures” is a rich site for analysis: food is a powerful indicator of identity and relationships in the *Harry Potter* series; gender performance becomes one more consumable element of pop culture in the *Playboy* empire; Native American and African American cultures are re-presented in the Mardi Gras Indian parades; the nature of protest itself becomes a consumable entity that can be studied; war is read culturally as patriarchal in a way that allows Patty Jenkins to make a feminist commentary in the recent *Wonder Woman* film; a woman’s identity becomes a commodity through her connection to a powerful politician in contemporary France; and finally Peru’s historical dependence on foreign entities following the industrial revolution and its consequences shows how a nation and its culture can become consumed within Western imperialism. In each case, culture and consumption are intimately linked, and each author makes a Thoreauvian effort to engage with the “grossest groceries” of one particular form in what remains an ongoing effort in the humanities.

**Works Cited**


Feasts, Family, and Fun: Food in J. K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* Series
Alissa Burger

Food has always been significant in literature. From *Oliver Twist’s* meager gruel described by Charles Dickens, to Bilbo Baggins’s birthday feast in J. R. R. Tolkien’s *The Fellowship of the Ring*, to the Turkish delight that so effectively tempts Edmund in C. S. Lewis’s *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, to the socially coded negotiation of meals in Jane Austen’s novels, food in literature often sets the tone for specific scenes, provides a glimpse into characters’ motivations and truest selves, and highlights individual, collective, and cultural values. Following this larger literary tradition, food is notably significant in J. K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* series. Indeed, Rowling’s detailed descriptions of food and eating are often tied to profound emotional experiences. Though Harry’s early life is one of deprivation, once he enters the wizarding world, he is surrounded by a range of diverse culinary experiences and delights, which can be broadly addressed within three general categories. First are the Hogwarts feasts: whether special occasions or everyday meals, these experiences provide Harry with a sense of belonging he never had before coming to Hogwarts, and the magical self-filling dishes provide a sense of plenty he lacked with the Dursleys. Second are the more intimate family meals shared with the
Weasleys at the Burrow and with the rest of the Order of the Phoenix in Grimmauld Place, where Harry is loved and wanted as an adopted son, adored godson, and cherished friend. Finally, food often signals fun in the world of *Harry Potter*, as the students binge on sweets from the Hogwarts Express trolley, drink butterbeer, spend their pocket money at Honeydukes, and find themselves transformed by their taste-testing of Fred and George Weasleys’ Wizard Wheezes. Each of these three engagements with food highlights various elements of identity, community, and meaning within the *Harry Potter* universe.

Food is important to humans both as individuals and as part of a larger collective group, whether this is reflected in national cuisine, religiously observed dietary restrictions, or a family recipe passed down from generation to generation. As John Coveney explains, “the act of choosing, preparing and organising food has a role to play in communicating something about us to others” (25): humans use food choices, preferences, and dining habits to express themselves to the wider world and to claim a role and position of belonging within it. The field of food studies focuses its explorations on these expressions and interconnections. Gina M. Almerico writes that “[f]ood studies is an emerging interdisciplinary field of study that examines the complex relationships among food, culture, and society from numerous disciplines in the humanities, social sciences, and sciences. . . . It is the study of food and its relationship to the human experience” (Almerico 2). Following the common axiom that “you are what you eat,” the role of food has become a dynamic site for critical engagement in recent decades, as scholars critically consider the everyday practices of eating, dining, and foodways within a range of sociological contexts, an exploration that can also be productively applied to food in literature, film, and popular culture.

**Food at Hogwarts**

One of Harry’s first impressions of Hogwarts occurs at the start of term feast, a banquet of varied and generously provided food that is a stark contrast to the constant hunger, deprivation, and neglect he endured with the Dursleys. Rowling describes Harry’s wonder as the empty plates magically fill, writing that Harry “had never seen so many things he liked to eat on one table: roast beef, roast chicken, pork chops and lamb chops, sausages, bacon and steak, boiled potatoes, roast
potatoes, fries, Yorkshire pudding, peas, carrots, gravy, ketchup, and for some strange reason, peppermint humbugs … Harry piled his plate with a bit of everything except the peppermints and began to eat. It was all delicious” (Sorcerer’s Stone 123). These enchanted tables provide for the students every breakfast, lunch, and dinner, and, as Elizabeth D. Schafer argues, “The Hogwarts meals could truly be described as comfort food. Students never worry about not having access to food, and most menus meet their exact individual appetites” (106), leaving students free to choose and eat what they like.

Meals in the Great Hall are also significant from the perspective of identity and community. As part of the welcome banquet at each new school year, first-years are sorted into one of the school’s four houses: Gryffindor, Hufflepuff, Ravenclaw, or Slytherin. There are four house tables and once students are sorted, they sit and eat with their fellow house members at these tables, just as they also attend classes, play Quidditch, and score points for their house as a reward for a job well done (or lose points as a result of infractions or rule breaking). This affiliation is also particularly significant in establishing shared identity, as evidenced by each house’s unifying characteristic (Gryffindors as brave, Ravenclaws as clever, and so forth); the strong bonds that connect house members to one another; and first-years’ anxieties about the house into which they will be sorted. As food studies scholar Belasco argues, “According to the concept of commensality, sharing food has almost magical properties in its ability to turn self-seeking individuals into a collaborative group” (19); and bonding over food integrates Hogwarts students into an informal though powerful community. The role of food in building communal identity also extends beyond the Great Room tables to the common room gatherings at which Gryffindor students celebrate moments like Quidditch victories and Harry’s performances in the Triwizard Tournament, as when Harry returns to the common room from the second task to find “mountains of cakes and flagons of pumpkin juice and butterbeer on every surface” (Goblet of Fire 364–65) and his fellow Gryffindors waiting up to hear all about it. In these common room celebrations, the students not only express their individual identities but also affirm their connections with fellow Gryffindors and their position as a member of the house. In addition, they do so having escaped the supervision of adults, away from the watchful gaze of the professors who dine at the
Great Hall’s head table, teach their classes, and monitor the corridors. As a result, these common room revels simultaneously carry the thrill of the bacchanalian in their rule breaking while also being a place of safety and camaraderie, as they are surrounded by friends and fellow Gryffindors, with house affiliation being one of each student’s main identity characteristics while at Hogwarts and even into the world beyond.

Beyond group affiliation, food is also a means of collective identification and solidarity. While house identification is an important element of the Hogwarts structure, headmaster Albus Dumbledore also insists upon magical unity, both within Hogwarts and in the relationships of Hogwarts and its students with the wider wizarding world. At the start and end of term banquets that bookend most years, this shared identity is underscored, especially in the face of danger or loss, such as when Dumbledore raises a toast to Cedric Diggory at the end of *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (721) or when the welcome feast in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* is preceded by the Sorting Hat’s new song outlining the dangers of house competition within Hogwarts and counseling that “we must unite inside her / Or we’ll crumble from within” (207). The importance of a shared, common identity is also featured in the welcome feast that begins the festivities of the Triwizard Tournament, as Hogwarts plays host to its fellow witches and wizards from Beauxbatons Academy of Magic and Durmstrang Institute. Dumbledore emphasizes the importance of magical unity, recalling that the Triwizard Tournament was historically “generally agreed to be a most excellent way of establishing ties between young witches and wizards of different nationalities” (*Goblet of Fire* 187). In this particular feast, the dishes offered reflect the unique cuisines of the visiting witches and wizards, as well as serving as a self-reflective moment to critically consider British national cuisine. While the Triwizard Tournament opening feast is a symbolic moment of unity, the food served also highlights the differences among these schools, as “[t]he house-elves in the kitchen seemed to have pulled out all the stops; there was a greater variety of dishes in front of them than Harry had ever seen, including several that were definitely foreign” (251), such as French bouillabaisse and “an odd sort of pale blancmange” (253). In the feast laid out in honor of the Triwizard Tournament and its international guests, Hogwarts honors its own identity and traditions while simultaneously welcoming
its guests and celebrating the diversity of the global magical community, as reflected in each nation’s unique dishes.

In contrast to the cuisines of the visiting nations represented in the Triwizard Tournament, Rowling frames the Hogwarts food as traditionally British, a national marker that goes largely unremarked upon elsewhere in the series as a result of its normative position. As Gillian Crowther explains in *Eating Culture: An Anthropological Guide to Food*, cookbooks provide insight into the role of food in creating and reflecting national identity through the construction of a national cuisine. Crowther argues that a national cuisine draws on a shared past to create a sense of cohesive, communal identity among citizens, as “[n]ational cuisines draw upon traditional regional ingredients, flavours, and dishes, amalgamating them as contemporary foods that reflect the nation’s diverse population and are shared by all” (139). While contemporary British cuisine reflects its multicultural population and imperial influences, the British food featured on the tables of Hogwarts and elsewhere through the series is “heavy, traditional British food” (“Food and Drink”) and “comes straight from classic British cooking” (Rupp). This establishes Hogwarts as a place outside the realm of the modern world, separate and insulated, with a strong foundation of tradition and nostalgia, as least where its foodways are concerned. The expanded menu prepared to welcome the students from Beauxbatons and Durmstrang is one indicator of their national differences and the challenges of communicating and collaborating across national boundaries in the wizarding world, with Ron refusing to try bouillabaisse despite Hermione’s ringing endorsement. While the food underscores the differences between the Hogwarts students and their international counterparts, when faced with the threat of Voldemort’s return, they come together, reflecting on Dumbledore’s reminder that “The Triwizard Tournament’s aim was to further and promote magical understanding. In the light of what has happened—of Lord Voldemort’s return—such ties are more important than ever before” (*Goblet of Fire* 723), as students from all three schools raise their glasses as one to honor Cedric Diggory.

**Food and Family**

While Hogwarts is Harry’s introduction to the wizarding world and, in many ways, where he feels most at home, it is with the
Weasleys that he becomes part of a wizarding family. Harry’s welcome into the Weasley family stands in stark contrast to his experiences with the Dursleys, where he is only begrudgingly tolerated and often mistreated. The sharing of food is of great personal and cultural significance; and Myrte E. Hamburg, Catrin Finkenauer, and Carlo Schuengel explain that “[f]ood offering can be used to show affection to loved ones [and] to show hospitality to strangers.” Even though Harry’s first arrival at the Burrow is unexpected and a source of conflict (as Ron and the twins have “borrowed” their father’s flying car to break Harry out of the Dursleys’ house), Molly Weasley immediately begins bustling about the kitchen and preparing breakfast through a combination of “traditional (i.e., Muggle) and nontraditional means” (Lacoss 76), frying sausages and slicing bread by hand, while getting the dishes washing with a flick of her wand (Chamber of Secrets 34–35). This use of magic typifies Molly Weasley’s approach to cooking and feeding her family, as she regularly tackles preparation, cooking, and cleanup with magic. For example, when Harry returns to the Burrow at the beginning of Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire, he watches as Molly put “a large copper saucepan down on the kitchen table and began to wave her wand around inside it. A creamy sauce poured from the wand tip as she stirred” (59), after which Molly used her wand to light the stove and to command knives to begin chopping potatoes. Though Molly’s cooking and the family’s meals often take place amid the chaos of the Weasleys’ larger and often hectic lives, the love with which Molly provides for her family and the degree to which the Weasleys prioritize meals together is evident. Molly loads her children down with sandwiches for the Hogwarts Express (Sorcerer’s Stone 101), sends them boxes packed with treats each Christmas and Easter, and bakes Harry an enormous snitch-shaped birthday cake when he spends his seventeenth birthday at the Burrow (Deathly Hallows 119). In Molly’s cooking and the Weasleys’ shared meals, for both everyday and special occasions, food signifies the central importance of family and its members’ caring and love for one another.

The affection with which Harry is wholeheartedly accepted into the Weasley family stands in stark contrast to his life with the Dursleys. In addition to Harry’s general deprivation in his time with the Dursleys, “[f]ood is often present during antagonistic moments for Harry at the Dursley home” (Schafer 105), such as Dobby’s smashing
Feasts, Family, and Fun: Food in J.K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* Series

of Aunt Petunia’s violet pudding in the midst of an important dinner party (*Chamber of Secrets* 19–20) and the postdinner brandy during which Aunt Marge attacks and antagonizes Harry until he loses control and blows her up like a balloon (*Prison of Azkaban* 27–29). Not only is Harry considered unworthy of an equal space in the Dursleys’ home or at their table, but the destruction of decadent and luxurious foods further signals the degree to which Harry has been excluded from family life, as “the Dursleys deprive Harry of basic nutritional needs for a boy his age, [while] they hypocritically overindulge themselves” (Schafer 105). However, even when Harry is enduring the neglect and abuse of the Dursleys over the summer holidays, Molly Weasley, Hagrid, and Harry’s friends do their best to make sure he is well provided for, often with care packages of comforting foods, including Hagrid’s rock cakes, “an enormous fruitcake and assorted meat pies” from Mrs. Weasley, and “four superb birthday cakes, one each from Ron, Hermione, Hagrid, and Sirius” (*Goblet of Fire* 28). These care packages not only provide Harry with physical sustenance, but also keep his spirits up, reminding him of the wizarding world to which he will soon return and the family and friends who will be happy to welcome him back.

Finally, Harry shares in family meals with the Weasleys and the larger surrogate family of the Order of the Phoenix when they are together in Grimmauld Place. Within the *Harry Potter* series, “[f]amily connections and loyalties are not bound by birth and genetics, but by more enduring factors” (Kornfeld and Prothro 124), as evidenced by Harry’s inclusion in the Weasley family and his devoted relationship with Sirius. The distinction between blood relation and chosen family is important here as well. For example, Nymphadora Tonks and Bellatrix Lestrange are blood-related cousins, but they could not be more different. In contrast, while none of them have a traditional, genetic family relationship with Harry, just about everyone within the Order of the Phoenix treats him as a son, a brother, a nephew, or a trusted friend, incorporating him as a valued and loved member of their chosen families. When Harry first arrives at Grimmauld Place with the others in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, a meeting of the Order is finishing up, and the kitchen is soon packed with a flurry of people, including the Weasley family, Sirius, Tonks, and Lupin. In this case, the kitchen simultaneously serves as not only kitchen but also dining
area, social and familial gathering area, and a meeting space, following a cultural pattern in which “the kitchen had emerged in public discourse as a place of socializing, of bringing family and friends together around food . . . [becoming] a multi-purpose cooking-eating-living room” in a tradition of “the kitchen as the centre of home life resonating through from Victorian times” (Crowther 124). The communal chaos and shared domestic labor of dinner preparation are soon bustling around Harry and the others as “a series of heavy knives were chopping meat and vegetables of their own accord, supervised by Mr. Weasley, while Mrs. Weasley stirred a cauldron dangling over the fire and the others took out plates, more goblets, and food from the pantry” (Order of the Phoenix 82). Despite the near-disasters of Fred and George’s magical setting of the table, as Harry, the Weasleys, and the members of the Order tuck in, Harry feels that he is once again home, surrounded by those who care for and understand him, nurtured and sustained both physically and emotionally by the food on the table and the loved ones gathered around it.

Food and Fun

In addition to the scenes of Hogwarts feasts and family meals, food in the Harry Potter books is also a source of fun, and some of readers’ favorites are the unique treats that flavor Rowling’s series, from Chocolate Frogs and Bertie Bott’s Every Flavor Beans to the suspect snack boxes of Weasleys’ Wizard Wheezes. Sweets are one of Harry’s first introductions to the wizarding world. When the witch with the trolley appears on the Hogwarts Express, Harry (given his life of deprivation with the Dursleys) “was ready to buy as many Mars Bars as he could carry—but the woman didn’t have Mars Bars. What she did have were Bertie Bott’s Every Flavor Beans, Droobles Best Blowing Gum, Chocolate Frogs, Pumpkin Pasties, Cauldron Cakes, Licorice Wands, and a number of other strange things Harry had never seen in his life. Not wanting to miss anything, he got some of everything” (Sorcerer’s Stone 101). The candy not only signals Harry’s newfound identity as a wizard and part of the magical world, but it also marks the beginning of Harry and Ron’s friendship, as the two share Harry’s sweets and Ron tells Harry a bit about magic, while Harry is introduced to “such wonders as trading cards of famous magicians who smile and wave when
you look at them” and “feels wonderful about sharing candy with Ron” (Steege 145). The candy even serves in a roundabout way to lead Harry, Ron, and Hermione to the Sorcerer’s Stone, when they recall the mention of Nicholas Flamel on the back of Dumbledore’s Chocolate Frog card. Furthermore, chocolate also proves lifesaving later in the series, especially in *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, as “chocolate is considered a remedy for physical reactions to the Dementors” (Schafer 106) and takes on powerful curative properties, both physically and emotionally.

Hogwarts students’ trips into Hogsmeade are also punctuated by sugary sweets and indulgences, between shopping at Honeydukes and sharing a few butterbeers at the Three Broomsticks. When Harry sneaks into Honeydukes under the cover of his invisibility cloak, he finds “shelves upon shelves on the most succulent-looking sweets imaginable,” including a wide range of “Special Effects’ sweets: Drooble’s Best Blowing Gum (which filled a room with bluebell-colored bubbles that refused to pop for days), the strange, splinterly Toothflossing Stringmints, tiny black Pepper Imps (‘breathe fire for your friends!’), Ice Mice (‘hear your teeth chatter and squeak!’), peppermint creams shaped like toads (‘hop realistically in the stomach!’), fragile spun-sugar quills, and exploding bonbons” (*Prison of Azkaban* 197). The Hogwarts students in Honeydukes are literally kids in a candy store, with the freedom to buy all the candy they can afford; and the allure of these magical sweets extends well beyond just the candy itself into mischief, novelty, and fun, all of which are often intended to be shared with friends. The Three Broomsticks is also a favorite gathering place for students on their trips into Hogsmeade and is where Harry gets his first taste of butterbeer, which is “the most delicious thing he’d ever tasted and seemed to heat every bit of him from the inside” (*Prisoner of Azkaban* 201). Like much of the other food featured in the wizarding world, butterbeer’s significance extends well beyond physical consumption: Harry is warmed, both physically and emotionally, by the drink itself but also by being in Hogsmeade and among his friends, who delight in showing him around the village and cover for him as he accompanies them under his invisibility cloak. Butterbeer appears frequently and in various settings throughout the series, often in moments of celebration or relaxation, the drink of choice at common room celebrations and at the Yule Ball in *Harry Potter*.
and the Goblet of Fire, with the taste of this “mysterious, but legendarily delicious” (Rupp) drink emotionally and psychologically connected to moments of happiness and festivity.8

Finally, the height of fun and mayhem in the foodways of the Harry Potter series has to be Fred and George Weasleys’ Wizard Wheezes. Fred and George’s Ton-Tongue Toffee, Canary Creams, and Nosebleed Nougat cause a great deal of chaos and no end of headaches for Arthur and Molly Weasley, especially when Dudley Dursley eats a dropped Ton-Tongue Toffee and Arthur has to reverse the damage (Goblet of Fire 49–53). At Hogwarts and within the larger wizarding world, however, Fred and George’s ingenuity is seen as chaotically whimsical and is enthusiastically received by their fellow students and, later, by their customers when they open a shop in Diagon Alley. Even when their eaters are caught by surprise, Fred and George’s creations are taken as all in good fun, such as when Neville unsuspectingly eats a Canary Cream and “caused a slight diversion by turning into a large canary. . . . Within a minute, however, Neville had molted, and once his feathers had fallen off, he reappeared looking entirely normal. He even joined in laughing” (Goblet of Fire 367). While these creations are an ideal expression of the Weasley twins’ irreverent and mischievous sense of humor, they also have their serious uses. When Harry, Ron, and Hermione need to sneak into the Ministry of Magic in Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, they offer Reginald Cattermole a Puking Pastille, and “[t]he moment the pastille touched his tongue, the little wizard started vomiting so hard that he did not even notice as Hermione yanked a handful of hairs from the top of his head” (238–39), the final ingredient for the Polyjuice Potion that will let the trio enter the Ministry undetected.9 Whether a fun diversion or a tool in forwarding the revolution and resistance, Weasleys’ Wizard Wheezes follow the larger Harry Potter series’ tradition of being more than just a simple, sweet treat.

Conclusion

Early in Food: The Key Concepts, Belasco argues that any critical consideration of food must begin “with the most ‘fundamental’ and ‘fun’ aspects of food—the way food serves to express personal and group identities and to cement social bonds” (15).10 Participation established through literally consuming culture via its foodways. In Rowling’s
Harry Potter series, food serves all these purposes: the sweets from the Hogwarts Express trolley help cement Harry and Ron’s friendship; and dining in the Great Hall underscores the importance of both house and school identities. Shared meals highlight the love, affection, and camaraderie between family and friends, whereas the giving and receiving of food signal inclusion and acceptance. And while sometimes a sweet is just a sweet, other times it is integral to taking on evil, resisting tyranny, and bringing down Voldemort.

Notes

1. Key works and resources on food studies include Ken Albala’s Routledge International Handbook of Food Studies (2013); Warren Belasco’s Food: The Key Concepts (2008); Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik’s edited collection Food and Culture: A Reader (2013); and Michael Pollan’s The Omnivore’s Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals (2006) and In Defense of Food: An Eater’s Manifesto (2008), among other excellent contributions that focus on specific regions, identity engagements, and theoretical lenses. John Coveney’s Food (2014) is part of Routledge’s Shortcuts series and provides a brief, accessible overview to this critical approach.

2. Though the preparation and origin of the food remains a mystery to most Hogwarts students, Harry and his friends learn later in the series that the magically provided food is the work of Hogwarts’ house-elves. The house-elves are one example of wizards’ interactions with other magical beings, as the house-elves work as servants, bound to a particular house or family, and this discovery results in some interesting elf-rights debates and raises compelling questions about the role of ethical choices and social responsibility, which are central concerns of food studies (Belasco 9–10).

3. The exception to likeable food at Hogwarts is when Harry, Ron, and Hermione attend Nearly Headless Nick’s Deathday Party, where the offerings include “large, rotten fish . . . a great maggoty haggis, [and] a slab of cheese covered in furry green mold” (Chamber of Secrets 133). This reversal works to reinforce the norm, which in this case is established as
the standard Hogwarts meals, with the norm symbolizing life and its reversal, death. Nearly Headless Nick cannot eat “live” (i.e., fresh) food since he is no longer part of living society, so his banquet has “dead” (i.e., rotten) food, to match his identity and culture.

4. In the years when there is no end-of-term banquet, it is the result of extraordinary circumstances that underscore Hogwarts’s connection to—and larger dangers within—the wizarding world, such as Dumbledore’s funeral at the end of *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* and the Battle of Hogwarts in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, through both of which the sanctity and security of Hogwarts (and the larger magical world) are traumatically disrupted.

5. Arthur and Molly Weasley also give Harry a watch for his birthday, “very like the one Mr. and Mrs. Weasley had given Ron for his seventeenth,” with Molly explaining that “[i]t’s traditional to give a wizard a watch when he comes of age” (*Deathly Hallows* 114), another example of the Weasleys symbolically claiming Harry as their son and making him a part of their family. Shortly after this, Harry is also magically disguised as a Weasley cousin so that he can attend Bill and Fleur’s wedding incognito (*Deathly Hallows* 137), further evidence of his inclusion as an honorary Weasley.

6. Sweets give Harry privileged access to the magical world and its knowledge throughout the series as a whole. The password to Dumbledore’s office is invariably the name of one of his favorite candies; and in the opening chapters of *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* Harry spends several happy afternoons in Diagon Alley at Florean Fortescue’s Ice Cream Parlor, where Harry finished “all his essays with occasional help from Florean Fortescue himself, who, apart from knowing a great deal about medieval witch burnings, gave Harry free sundaes every half an hour” (50).

7. The connection between Dumbledore and sweets is amplified throughout the series with candy names serving as the password that allows entry to Dumbledore’s office, associating Dumbledore with comfort, levity, and good humor, in addition to the leadership and disciplinary roles he fulfills at Hogwarts and beyond.
8. The only exception to the association of butterbeer with ease and happiness is Winky’s drunkenness in the Hogwarts kitchens, of which the other house-elves heartily disapprove (Goblet of Fire 536–38).

9. This almost, inadvertently, ends in disaster, as Cattermole is meant to meet his wife Mary within. Mary is being interrogated by the Muggle-Born Registration Commission. Harry rights things by freeing Mrs. Cattermole and helping her escape to be reunited with her husband (Deathly Hallows 259–64).

10. In Belasco’s framework of “fun” and “fundamental,” he draws on the work of Paul Rozin and his 1999 article “Food Is Fundamental, Fun, Frightening, and Far-Reaching,” which was published in the journal Social Research (1999).

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Before he became the pajama-clad founder of Playboy, Hugh Hefner was “Hep Hef,” adopting jive language, penning articles for his high-school paper about “staid” school dances, and requesting a jukebox for the cafeteria so that students could dance during lunch (Watts 31). A self-declared jazz purist, Hefner became a jazz crooner, billed as “the boy with the bop in his voice. The nickname dates back to his undergraduate days at the University of Illinois, when the ‘Campus Ballad King’ prophetically covered songs like ‘My Desire’” (Weiss). Decades later, Hefner funneled his appreciation for jazz straight into the concept for Playboy, a tactic noted by scholars and critics since the magazine first hit the newsstand. Pianist and musicology department chair David Ake claims, “Playboy was one of the leading proponents of jazz in the American press” (43). Historian Iain Anderson echoes this sentiment in his This Is Our Music: Free Jazz, the Sixties, and American Culture, stating that Playboy used jazz features to “engage the style-conscious” male reader (34). Expanding on the connections between Playboy, jazz, and sophistication, Patty Farmer’s Playboy Swings: How Hugh Hefner and Playboy Changed the Face of Music catalogues all the ways Playboy championed an interest in jazz:
publishing famous interviews; crafting jazz reviews; hosting annual, long-running jazz polls; and sponsoring forty years of well-attended jazz festivals. Farmer and other critics remind readers that Hefner elevated jazz from its sweaty-dancehall origins to the realm of intellectuals. From Playboy’s first issue, editors claim that entertaining a “female acquaintance” required a “quiet discussion on Picasso, Nietzsche, jazz, sex” (“Volume 1” 3). Hefner made jazz an essential component of the Playboy lifestyle; from getting the girl to making the best martini—jazz was the soundtrack.

But, for Hefner, the soundtrack was less about the music and more about the memory of the Jazz Age. In his reminiscing on jazz, Hefner claims that “[t]he original spelling of the word was ‘jass’ and it meant sex” (qtd. in Weiss). This association with sex reveals more about Hefner than it does about the music, and it echoes F. Scott Fitzgerald’s definition of jazz: “The word jazz in its progress toward respectability has meant first sex, then dancing, then music” (16). For Hefner, and Fitzgerald before him, pleasure and youthful rebellion inform the Jazz Age as much as the music does. In his fiction, Fitzgerald stages the era as one of decadence, a continuous party, hosted by sophisticated young men, where the Modern Woman—the Flapper—took center stage. Lucrative magazine earnings allowed Fitzgerald and his wife Zelda—America’s First Flapper—to partake in the “nonstop party, surrounded by the sounds of hot jazz and an oceans of bootleg liquor that extended from nightclubs to exclusive New York hotels” (Nilsson). That Jazz Age party was the antithesis of Hefner’s midwestern, Methodist childhood. As Hefner notes, in a 2003 interview with Kirk Baird, “I grew up in a very repressive, Puritan home in the 1930s in the Depression era, and I look back when I was a kid at the images of the Roaring ’20s -- F. Scott Fitzgerald, ‘The Great Gatsby’ and jazz, etc. -- as the party that I had missed.” By all accounts, Hefner was wildly successful emulating Gatsby. As a jazz and Jazz Age connoisseur, he orchestrated the next generation’s hedonistic dreams from his Playboy mansions. What we find most curious about Hefner’s Jazz Age redux, however, is what’s missing: the Flapper. In Hefner’s recreation, Playboys are given Fitzgerald, but where is Zelda? Flashes of the Flapper can be found, but she has been consumed, recast, and split between the Playboy and his playmate, the Bunny.
Given the obvious connections between the Jazz Age and the Playboy ethos, why would Hefner undermine the liberated New Woman, especially since he positioned himself as a champion of women’s rights? Hefner’s Playboy ethos emerged midcentury, during what some gender scholars and historians deem a “male panic”: a time when “men self-consciously rebel against real or imagined ‘feminization’ developing within the workplace, public spheres, and/or domestic relationships” (Gilbert 3). When speaking to Elizabeth Fraterrigo, Hefner said that “‘womanization’ meant the development of a ‘female-oriented society. . . . A matriarchy instead of a patriarchy’” (qtd. in Fraterrigo, Playboy 33). Hefner claims that the anxiety over the sex roles was the result of women being “pushed” into a more dominant position: “Women’s suffrage gave them the right to vote, etc. All very positive things.” But “we’ve gotten ourselves into a situation where . . . the [roles] of the sexes . . . are becoming less and less defined” (qtd. in Fraterrigo, Playboy 33–34; ellipses and brackets in original). For Hefner, less defined sexual roles meant that women were free to engage in sexual activities, but it also meant “more and more that women are competing with men whether they are married or not,” and, for Hefner, this competition existed “in a good deal more than” jobs (qtd. in Fraterrigo, Playboy 34). Hefner’s anxiety is not unique; in fact, it is emblematic of the backlash that can occur when a group, or individual, experiences a diminished ability to pursue interests and preferences. Jane Mansbridge and Shauna L. Shames contend that this loss of “power as capacity” results in the “dynamic resistance” to “shifts in power” (624, 626). As women gained more social, economic, and political power, some men perceived a loss in power capacity (Gilbert; Faludi; Osgerby; Riesman). Hefner capitalized on this perceived loss of power by advocating for women’s sexuality at the expense of their political and economic agency.

We argue that Hefner’s Playboy empire responds to this perceived loss of power-to with coercive power, the power-over. As Mansbridge and Shames explain, “coercive power” (power-over) manifests as the “threat of sanction and the use of force” (624). Force can be subtle (ridicule, censure) or overt (violence), but in any form it is used to reinscribe or reinstate power as capacity. We witness this need to reinstate power in the pages of Playboy, where women are not only objectified but made the punch line of Playboy jokes. The very first article in the
inaugural issue was “Miss Gold Digger,” a diatribe on the distribution of alimony. The magazine published a panel on “The Womanization of America” (September 1958) and nonfiction articles on “The Career Woman” (January 1963). *Playboy* depicted caricatures of nagging housewives who undermined individualism and masculine authority. Outside the pages of the magazine, Hefner molded women’s bodies into bodices and stripped them of their individuality. They always appeared in groups, “flanking” the men as if to protect them from accusations of homosexuality. While not overtly violent, these representations of women certainly function as a way to put women back in their place: silent, on the arms of men, and nameless (save for generic title of Playmate, Centerfold, or Bunny). Given Hefner’s affinity for the Jazz Age and the agency of the Flapper, the Playboy had to recoup what was lost from those “women of a dangerous generation”—the Flappers, whose “inescapable inner compulsion to be individuals in their own right” had “relegated” men to the sidelines, where they were “vouchsafed permission only to pipe a feeble Hurrah! Hurrah!” (Dorothy Dunbar Bromley, qtd. in Mackrell 8; Bliven). In the hands of Hefner, jazz provided a facet of sophistication that was necessary for any Playboy—but especially one who felt emasculated by these “dangerous women.”

### Setting the Scene: A Playboy’s Jazz

Of course, the jazz playing on a Playboy’s hi-fi differed from the jazz played decades earlier on the streets of New Orleans, where rich, poor, free, enslaved, white, and nonwhite people had all lived together in the most integrated city in the country. There, military tunes became rags—a polyphonic sound that blended religious and secular music. The music of the brass bands blended together blues and ragtime themes, creating a unique sound that could only be described as “jazz music.” This sound traveled with the six million African Americans who left the violence of the south for the safety of the north as part of the Great Migration. By 1923, the Creole Jazz Band recorded “Dippemouth Blues” in Chicago, marking a moment in music history, one that captured the now-recognizable *wah-wah* sound that would ironically become standard in a genre otherwise known for its emphasis on improvisation (Crawford). As big brass bands and their leaders dispersed across northern cities, from New York to Chicago, whole new regional
sounds emerged. Divided further by tempo and temperature, jazz music became even more difficult to pin down. “Hot” jazz had transitioned into marketable, “cool” mainstream sounds, swing swung into bebop, and Third Stream Jazz synthesized classical music with jazz, making the genre more challenging for artists and more appealing to niche audiences. By the time Hefner sends the first *Playboy* to print, the rebellious rhythms were smoothed over into a more “respectable” jazz sound—one that was contained, packaged, and marketable.

While Hefner may have genuinely loved jazz, he, like many other marketers, understood its appeal to audiences, precisely because it has always been associated with novelty, modernity, and individuality. Indeed, as Toni Morrison notes, jazz is “constantly invented, always brand-new, but somehow familiar and known” (Morrison 317). In the context of 1950s consumerism, jazz can function as a kind of ouroboros—exploiting the emancipatory associations of the genre while reinscribing the status quo. As ethnomusicologist Mark Laver explains in “Jazz Moments: Improvisation, Capitalism, and Time,” jazz offers “a shimmering glimpse of a way out that is actually just a way back in.” For marketers and “culture makers” (Koritz), like Hefner, jazz “offers an opportunity to break free from *something*—from stultifying American middlebrowism . . . from the dangerous encroachment of undemocratic, principally foreign, political ideologies like fascism or communism” (Laver, “Jazz Moments”). And because it is not associated with any particular product, it can be used to sell everything: potatoes, yachts, Pepsi, Reynolds Wrap, hamburgers, and Jeep Cherokees—even a Playboy lifestyle (Gladstone; Laver, *Jazz Sells*).

This Playboy lifestyle also used jazz to help men to “break free” from the Cold War’s stifling models of white masculinity. Shirking expectations of suburbia, marriage, and fatherhood, Hefner’s Playboy was bringing the “girl next door” back to his urban bachelor pad, where he mixed cocktails and listened to jazz. A far cry from the outdoorsy man or William Whyte’s “Organization Man,” the Playboy’s model of masculinity still included participation in consumerism, heterosexuality, and patriarchal ideology—but, notably, Hefner’s model challenged Jim Crow segregation within the pages of his magazine and on the stages of his clubs. He hired black writers, promoted Miles Davis in a *Playboy* interview, featured a black centerfold in 1965, and put a black woman
on the cover as early as 1971. Not only did Hefner hire black writers for the magazine, he also hired black entertainers to play at the Playboy Chicago club, which opened in 1961. Under the long shadow of Jim Crow, artists like Mabel Mercer, Bobby Short, and eighteen-year-old Aretha Franklin played there, sharing the stage with comedian Dick Gregory. Regardless of race, all club keyholders would enter through the same door. Hefner took the integrated club scene and broadcast it into the living rooms via *Playboy's Penthouse*, which aired in Chicago from 1959 to 1960, and *Playboy after Dark*, which aired a decade later. On these shows, Hefner welcomed guests into a bachelor’s penthouse, with black musicians like Ella Fitzgerald and Ray Charles entertaining and mingling with guests. Hefner’s commitment to integration added to *Playboy’s* hip credentials and “affirmed Hefner’s notions of democratic consumption” (Fraterrigo, *Playboy* 141). Thus, with his didactic lifestyle manual, syndicated television shows, and integrated club scene, Hefner created a specific, lasting image of American manhood—one that included the licentiousness of the Jazz Age to ease the anxieties of the Atomic age.

**Comparing the Characters: The Flapper and the Playboy**

The Playboy and the Flapper function as cultural touchstones for their respective ages. Both figures helped shape attitudes about women’s and men’s roles in a changing, consumer-based society. As Liz Conor observes, the Flapper’s increased visibility in film and later in advertisements is notable because it marked a “dramatic historical shift” whereby “women were invited to articulate themselves as modern subjects” (xv). Joshua Zietz’s *Flapper: A Madcap Story of Sex, Style, Celebrity, and the Women Who Made America* and Carolyn Kitch’s *The Girl on the Magazine Cover: The Origins of Visual Stereotypes in American Mass Media* discuss the way the Flapper’s flirty style and radical fashions embodied the triumphs—and anxieties—of the modern age. Similarly, the Playboy’s impact on midcentury masculinity has been the subject of many scholarly works, dating back to Thomas Weyr’s *Reaching for Paradise* in 1978. In *Playboys in Paradise: Masculinity, Youth and Leisure-Style in Modern America*, Bill Osgerby argues that *Playboy* moved midcentury, white, middle-class men toward an ethos of conspicuous consumption coupled with sexual adventure. Perhaps the most notable compar-
Comparison between these two iconic figures—Playboys and Flappers—is that both were featured in their own Chicago magazines. The first, Flapper magazine, emerged as a celebration of the ubiquitous figure. The second successfully made an unknown figure popular. Both emphasized a break from an “old fogey” past and asserted a unique philosophy about the Flapper’s and the Playboy’s role in a changing society.

The Flapper’s increased spending power provided a means for asserting herself as a “Modern Woman”; for the Playboy, however, consumption was a frivolous means to a sexual end (Simon, *Lost Girls*). The Flapper’s fashion and makeup choices not only functioned as a means of self-expression but also signaled her progressive attitudes about a woman’s place in society (Zietz). Flappers were featured in advertisements for products associated with modernity, mobility, and novelty: ready-made clothing, cars, and cosmetics. And, for the first time ever, advertisers targeted “Mrs. Consumer” (Gourley). As the Flapper exercised her purchasing power to buy modern goods, the Playboy got the upper hand; he got the goods and the girl. Adam Gopnik declares in “Hugh Hefner, Playboy, and the American Male,” a Playboy was “as much a creature of his living room as of his lusts. Desire became inseparable from decoration, carnality from consumerism. Only the bachelor with the right Breuer chair could hope to have an active bedroom.” Juxtaposing advertisements for high-end, domestic goods and centerfolds emphasized that women were not just the reason to buy: they were the priceless objects of desire.

Just as he exercises his coercive power in the realm of consumption, the Playboy enters the intellectual realm as well, one-upping the New Woman by reducing her education to a talking point. Post–World War I prosperity created access to institutions of higher learning, and women graduated from high school and attended university in record numbers during the 1920s (Simon, “Flappers”). For Flappers, in particular, education was another path to modernity, another means of throwing off the shackles of Victorian womanhood. As William Thomas declared in 1923, the Flapper “cannot be compared to her kind of a previous age” because of her emancipation and her education (85). While often dismissed as flighty and under-read, many talented and highly educated women were Flappers, “including the novelist and screenwriter Anita Loos, the satirist Dorothy Parker and the entertainer Josephine.
Baker, who went on to become a leading civil rights activist" (Simon, “Flappers”). The everyday Flapper was described as one who “will go to school. She will talk philosophy, physiology and art with you. She will be a stenographer, a school teacher, a movie actress. But she will not cook for you. She will not do your washing” (Panzini 4). Hefner’s Playboys expect their “female acquaintances” also to be educated, but only enough to be impressed by the men’s knowledge of philosophy and art. The Playboy essentially devalues the New Woman’s education as nothing more than a 1950s “Mrs. Degree.”

Besides diminishing the New Woman’s education, in Hefner’s vision, she becomes another prop in the Playboy’s heterosexual performance. Like the Playboy, Flappers were in no rush to marry and were as notorious for their “petting” as the Playboy was for his promiscuity. Flappers had a “revolving cast of male suitors”—a cast that is counterpart to Hefner’s Playboy with his many playmates (Zietz 6). Flappers famously participated in parties that were scandalous, viewed as immoral, and full of unchaperoned dancing to jazz music: “vulgarity and revolting badness,” as Mrs. Augustus Trowbridge described them in her 1921 address to Wellesley College students (Weeks). At these “petting parties,” or what Flappers called “snugglepupping,” young women would “grant the boys liberties. Encourage them to take them and if the young chaps do not, they are called ‘sissies,’ ‘poor boobs’ or ‘flat tire’” (Weeks). Petting parties and the like distinguished a Flapper from her Victorian foremothers; for the Playboy, however, a nude (and, presumably, sexually available) woman confirmed his heterosexuality amidst homosocial connotations. Because the single bachelor technically defied the traditional, social institution of marriage, he could be branded as a homosexual, a sexual deviant, or, worse, a Communist. Hefner claimed that gazing at the centerfold was enough to ease those concerns: “a picture of a beautiful woman is something that a fellow of any age ought to be able to enjoy . . . . If he doesn’t, then that’s the kid to watch out for.” Hefner later commented, “[T]here were two kinds of boys—those who liked to pull the wings off flies and those who liked girls. We confess to a preference in the latter. The deviants, the perverts, the serious juvenile delinquents—they’re not interested in healthy boy-girl relationships” (qtd. in Fraterrigo, Playboy 41). In Hefner’s articulation, the seemingly innocuous act of gazing at nude women takes on a greater significance,
affirming the Playboy’s heterosexual desire and patriotic fervor. The Playboy’s “girl” sacrifices her body to safeguard the nation against the Red Menace; the Modern Woman’s sexual prowess, however, merely altered the rules of propriety. Her desire to have a “life beyond marriage and motherhood” threatened the Playboy, who preferred to be the one on the prowl (Eldridge 114).

Beyond encroaching on the Playboy’s rules of engagement, the Flapper dared to penetrate spaces traditionally known only to men, or prostitutes, such as saloons and barrooms (Zietz). She attended male sporting events, drove cars, smoked cigarettes, and drank illegal liquor. Her purchasing power, education, promiscuity, and suffrage provided an entryway into the den of men, so much so that she became a “stranger to herself” (Thomas). The Flapper’s unisex fashion, also known as the garçonne look, reflected her desire to move more freely, as her day “now combined work, sport, and public leisure” (Zietz 153). The fashion, according to Morrison, was “alarming and sort of exciting in some places, short hair and skirts in which women could actually walk and work and move” (316). Donning leisure wear as couture, women not only attended sports events but participated in them (Grundy and Rader). Her mere presence in public spaces called attention to the separate, gendered realms—an attention that both challenged and affirmed the domestic sphere as the one for women and the public arena as the domain of men. The Flapper may have encroached into male spheres, but she was still the woman of the home, as the tagline for the Flapper magazine declared: “What’s a home without a Flapper? Impossible!” Hefner’s Playboy flips this script, asserting his dominance over the domestic space. In his first editorial message to readers, Hefner reclaimed “the indoors for men” (Ehrenreich 44; emphasis in original). The masthead editorial told Playboy’s readers that they should plan on spending “most of [their] time inside” (“Volume I”). The bachelor lifestyle did not require “thrashing through thorny thickets or splashing about in fast flowing streams”; instead, the Playboy “would be a consumer of domestic space in his own right” (Fraterrigo, Playboy 86). With this reclamation of domestic space, Playboy attempted to “reaffirm male privilege and power at a time when gender boundaries were shifting and the physical spaces of the city and of the family home were being transformed” (Fraterrigo 103). The Playboy converts the feminized home space to one suitable for the upwardly
mobile man. As Beatriz Colomina’s analysis of Playboy’s urban bachelor pad reveals, a Playboy “played in a domestic space for a domestic audience” (17). While the Flapper plays on the field and works in the home, the Playboy merely plays house.

Stripping the Flapper: The Bunny Push Back

Comparing the Flapper of the Jazz Age to the Playboy of the Atomic Age reveals a “cycle of gender imagery,” one that represents a prime example of backlash theory (Kitch 189). It also reveals the depths and limitations of Hefner’s misplaced longing for a powerful American bachelor with his passive plaything, the Bunny. In Hefner’s Jazz Age redux, the Flappers’ purchasing power is flipped, as the Bunny becomes the consumed product. Like the Flapper—an iconic predecessor—the Bunny has been both condemned and celebrated, depending on perspective and purpose. Most critics cite the obvious objectification of women posing nude for the male gaze. The introduction to Gloria Steinem’s 1963 “A Bunny’s Tale” in Show magazine compares Bunnies to “Follies girls” and “Wampas baby Stars” and exposes the “rampant sexism and casual dehumanisation Bunnies faced” (“A Bunny’s Tale” 90; Wang). Five decades later, Carrie Pitzulo complicates these specific criticisms in Bachelors and Bunnies: The Sexual Politics of Playboy. She argues that the figure of the Bunny in relation to the Playboy represents the magazine’s “renegotiation of postwar heterosexuality” as “more pro-woman, even quasi-feminist, than previously acknowledged” (7). Like other critics who claim the Bunny can be seen as a figure of female empowerment, Pitzulo’s work invites further analysis of this figure. We propose a reading of the Bunny as a tamed Flapper, plucked from Hefner’s vision for a midcentury Jazz Age. Just as the Flapper helped define the jazz scene, the Bunny was a crucial component for the Playboy lifestyle, but she was stripped of the Flapper’s agency.

As icons, the Flapper and the Bunny share striking similarities in terms of their visibility, but in the hands of Hefner, the agency of the latter is denied. The Flapper represented a new model of girlhood, a “new visibility of girl culture,” thanks, in part to films such as Flaming Youth (1923), A Social Celebrity (1926), Love ’Em and Leave ’Em (1926),and Rolled Stockings (1926) (Driscoll 18). With her shorn hair and shortened skirt, the Flapper moved from the screen to the streets
of urban America. Seemingly everywhere, she became emblematic of the Jazz Age. Likewise, the Bunny logo, which has become synonymous with the Playboy brand, is highly visible. Even if one has never held a copy of the magazine, the silhouetted Bunny is immediately recognizable. When art director Arthur Paul drew up the logo in less than an hour back in 1953, he was trying to encapsulate Hefner’s vision for something that was “frisky and playful,” adding the tuxedo for a dash of sophistication (qtd. in “Hef’s Frisky”). Paul admits that he had “no clue that the sophisticated, mischievous bow-tied rabbit with a cocked ear . . . would become arguably the most recognizable silhouette in the world” (qtd. in Suman 38). The Bunny is the “DNA of the brand” (Handy). The rayon bodysuit, black stockings, cufflinks, and bow ties symbolized the exclusivity of Playboy clubs and became the “first commercial uniform to be registered by the United States Patent and Trademark Office” (Norman). The Bunny logo was transplanted from the page to the bodies of the “25,000 women who wore satin ears and fluffy tails” while they served men in the Playboy night clubs (“What Is the Difference”). The cufflinks and bow ties harken back to the Flapper’s masculine attire, but Hefner replaces the square shouldered, flat-chested fashion for bodices and bosoms. Unlike the Flapper, whose public visibility emblematized 1920s relatively progressive attitudes toward gender, the Bunny is the physical embodiment of an abstract doodle.

Beyond their shared visibility, the Flapper and Bunny can both be classified as stunningly naked for their respective ages; however, the Bunny’s nakedness does not serve the same purpose as the Flapper’s. The Flapper shunned the restricting corset and confining codes of femininity that defined her Gibson Girl predecessor. She wore sheer, flimsy fabrics and loose clothing that revealed powdered knees and exposed elbows. Her fashion prompted Bruce Bliven of the New Republic to declare that “[t]his year’s styles have gone quite a long step toward genuine nudity.” Her nudity symbolizes her liberation and represents what Bliven claims was the “Era of Undressing,” the “New Nakedness,” and the “Great Disrobing Movement.” While Hefner celebrated the 1920s age of nudity within the pages of his magazine, he put the Playboy Bunnies back into corsets, a visual cue of their role as a sex object. Steinem’s tell-all exposé famously discusses the fit of the uniform, stating that “the boning in the waist would have made Scarlett O’Hara blanch, and the
entire construction tended to push all available flesh up to the bosom” (92). And with her body far more exposed than her neck, knees, and elbows, the Bunny’s nakedness was intended to duplicate the girl-next-door centerfold, who knows her place and does not ask for more. As Reverend Harvey Cox argues, the Bunnies were “detachable and disposable” women who presented “no danger of permanent involvement” (57). The high-waisted, rayon bodice and black stockings emphasized the Bunny’s sexuality, while her tail was described by Norman Mailer as a “puff of chastity” (qtd. in Chrisman-Campbell). This contradictory impulse reveals one way Hefner exerted his coercive power over the Bunnies. Unlike the Flapper, whose comparative state of nudity was a marker of self-expression, the Bunny’s exposed body served only the male gaze.

And while the Flapper’s actions were notoriously frivolous, the Bunny’s actions were notoriously restricted (Simon, “Flappers”). For instance, as Panzini asserted in 1921, “Flapper is a limitless, a widely embraceable term, to such a point that . . . all women between the ages of fourteen and fifty—make it sixty, if you wish—may be called ‘girls.’” Her youth was determined not by her age but by her attitude. The Bunny, on the other hand, referred to a woman between eighteen and twenty-three years old. The Bunny even had “vital statistics” that included “height 5ft 5in, weight 116½ lbs., eyes brown, hair brown, figure 35–22½–35, age 22.7, education two years of college” (Scott). She also had to embody the “Bunny Image.” The “public and Playboy expect” a Bunny to be a “beautiful, well groomed young lady who projects warmth and graciousness” (“Playboy Club Manual” 23). Unlike the Flapper, whose beauty is inherent by the very nature of her Flapper qualities—“if you’re not a Flapper you wouldn’t be considered beautiful”—the Bunny’s beauty required careful attention (“Announcing”). Her image was detailed, manicured, and inspected by the “Bunny Mother,” who reserved the right to dismiss those who violated rules (“Playboy Club Manual” 10). Violations included putting on too much makeup, wearing any accessories besides the Hefner-approved cufflinks, smoking more than one puff of a cigarette, drinking in public, and dancing too closely to club keyholders. As the Flapper proudly put on makeup in public, she gleefully engaged in all these restricted actions: cigarette holder in one hand, gin in the other, dancing to jazz whose “broken, jerky rhythm” makes “a purely sensual
appeal” of “low and rowdy instinct” (McMahon 34). The Flapper, like the jazz she danced to, was improvised and instinctual; the Bunny, however, was manufactured, recorded, and regulated by Hefner’s vision.

Obviously, some of these restrictions can be attributed to the Bunny being an employee of Playboy Enterprise; although, when this role is contrasted to the Flapper, the coercive power that Hefner exerts over his Bunnies becomes apparent. Consider that the Bunny was regulated in not just her appearances but her movements. Bunny Mothers preferred that the new Bunnies had no prior serving experience so that they could be more easily trained during “what was sort of a Bunny Boot Camp” (Scott). Women in Hefner’s Jazz Age had to perfect movements such as the “Bunny Stance, Bunny Dip, High Carry, Bunny Crouch and Bunny Perch.” The most discussed, the Dip, was a “graceful backward arch with knees together, employed while serving drinks to keep the girl’s overstuffed, over-extended breasts from popping out of the costume” (Scott). With this one Dip, the Bunny symbolizes all that Hefner wanted from the New Woman. The Bunny’s figurative and literal job was to serve male Playboy Club keyholders. To be a good server, the Bunny needed to anticipate and fulfill male guests’ desires. In stark contrast, the Flapper refused to serve men in this way. Panzini characterizes the Flapper as the “Implacable Aphrodite,” who won’t “cook for you” or “do your washing.” The Flapper proclaims: “Don’t expect us to be like the old-fashioned girls who went to church, and did the laundry, and looked up to their husbands as to their God” (Panzini 4). As Flappers rebuked the shackles of domesticity, the Bunny wears hers with pride, trading metaphorical handcuffs for literal cufflinks.

Decoding the Legacy: The Lasting Impact of the Bunny Backlash

Hefner’s Playboy attempted to reinstate what was perceived as a loss in the power-to with a power-over. To restore a perceived loss in masculine authority, Hefner stripped the Flapper from his childhood fantasy. He longed for a Jazz Age party but not the women who gave it life. Hefner’s exertion of coercive power over the Bunny is just one example of the depths of displacement the man of the Atomic Age felt. Midcentury critics, like Philip Wylie, “frequently charged” women with “trying to ‘dominate’ men” (Fraterrigo, “Answer to Sub-
urbia” 750). In “The Playboy Panel: The Womanization of America,” Norman Mailer characterized the Cold War as the “certain historical phenomenon” that “allowed penis envy to develop,” an envy that tended toward “this coming together of sexes” (139). Even family-oriented Life magazine claimed, in 1954, that women were “winning the battle of the sexes.” Esquire followed those critiques with questions such as this: “Whatever happened to the girl who was loving rather than just loved, serene rather than strident, comforting rather than competitive?” (qtd. in Fraterrigo, Playboy 33). Anxieties about Cold War feminization—or “womanization”—of America relied on cultural myths that men must relearn how to behave like men because the “sex roles” had been confused. The confusion could be traced to a variety of sources: the growing white-collar, masculine, corporate world of grey flannel suits; the feminization of the consumer society; or the burden of being a breadwinner. As Wylie and Mailer demonstrate, women made an effective scapegoat during the Atomic Age, just as she had a generation before when it seemed that “every social ill in America could be attributed to the ‘flapper’” (Zietz 5).

Throughout this cycle, the envious, dominant woman of the 1950s finds a sister-in-arms in the Flapper of an earlier era and another one in the women of the twenty-first century. We are currently witnessing another revolution in the backlash cycle; while the Playboy readership has declined, the Playboy mentality continues far beyond the Atomic Age and into the #MeToo Movement. For instance, as contemporary culture shifts to not only acknowledge but legitimate claims of sexual harassment in the workplace, the response has been to assert a power-over—much like what Playboy expressed more than half a century ago. Recently collected data on the #MeToo Movement, for example, revealed that “19% of men said they were reluctant to hire attractive women, 21% said they were reluctant to hire women for jobs involving close interpersonal interactions with men (jobs involving travel, say), and 27% said they avoided one-on-one meetings with female colleagues” (Bower). In other words, one in five men fear women’s “power capacity” so much so that they would be willing to deny her equitable treatment. This exertion of power underscores the way that “normative characteristics of masculinity—and of whiteness, middle-classness, and Americaness—require constant cultural work in order to appear the effortless
attributes of a privilege they simultaneously justify and disguise” (Gardiner 17).

Comparing these cultural icons—the Flapper, the Bunny, and the Playboy—reveals the depths of cultural work done under the guise of mere “entertainment for men.” Hefner’s nostalgia for the Jazz Age helped ease heightened anxieties about Communism, homosexuality, and restrictive gender behaviors, but the comfort is illusory, reinscribing the very structure that the Playboy seeks to escape. “After all,” as Laver explains, “it is far easier, safer, and more comfortable to feel like we’re breaking the rules than it is to actually break them” (“Jazz Moments”). In his Jazz Age redux, Hefner helps a Playboy feel as if he’s breaking the rules—toeing, but never really crossing, the line.

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In the first season of HBO’s series *Treme*, Chief Albert Lambreaux (Clarke Peters) returns to New Orleans in the wake of Hurricane Katrina to find his house flooded, muddied, and uninhabitable. One of the remaining photographs hanging on the mildewed walls is that of two Mardi Gras Indians, and it’s the only item Lambreaux takes from the home. Lambreaux’s storyline in this first season is all about creating his new Mardi Gras Indian suit—a hand-sewn garment made of “ostrich plumes, sequins, brightly colored satin fabric, and intricate beading”—in time for Mardi Gras day as a way of reuniting his tribe (Brown 104). The act of making the suit is a reflection of “a complex social process” integral to Mardi Gras Indian tradition. The Indians are in charge of making their own suits as all the sewing and beading is done by hand. The creation of the suits is a communal practice of craft, where advice is given, ideas are shared, and individual innovation championed. For Lambreaux, the suit’s assembly, more than the suit itself, is what will preserve Mardi Gras Indian customs and, by extension, his community. George Lipsitz notes the significance of the suit’s construction:

> Designing and sewing Indian
The making of the elaborate suits is labor intensive and is a work of collaborative effort that involves tribe members and their families; therefore, the act of making the suit in *Treme*, the materiality of its construction, serves to reestablish the tribe and Black Indian identity via tradition. Lambreaux’s character was modeled after former Mardi Gras Big Chief Donald Harrison, Sr., the creator of the tribe Guardians of the Flame, and he served as advisor to Peters on the project. But this article is not about *Treme*, as the show tends to be controversial when it comes to authenticity, debates about cultural commodity, and so forth. In this analysis, *Treme* isn’t the text; the suit is the text.

There are many theories as to the origins of Mardi Gras Indian tradition. One of the most prominent is that “masking” (the donning of the suit) was a way to resist white supremacy, racial discrimination, and racial segregation via subversive acts—what historian Robin D. G. Kelley terms “hidden forms of resistance” (qtd. in Becker 37). Mardi Gras Indian culture is a visual and material entity, the suit being the vehicle of agency and identity formation. Instead of looking at masking as an act of concealment, I argue that the innate materiality of Black Indian culture fosters a form of “deliberate display” meant to disrupt social constructs (Browne 23). This act of display is made even more prominent by the fact that most Mardi Gras Indians do not wear masks. What we see in these re-presentations of Native American culture, particularly that of the Northern Plains, is an amalgamation of culture, rather than a consumption that performs an erasure. The materiality of masking and the actual construction of the suit invoke a purposeful mode of consumption that challenges racial and cultural identifications.

The style elements of the suit mark the historical alliance between Native and African Americans that started in the mid-eighteenth century. One of the most prominent hypotheses as to the ori-
gins of Mardi Gras Indian culture is tied to the “cultural geography” of Southeast Louisiana (Brown 105). The masking tradition is a way to pay tribute to the Native American tribes that provided support and shelter to runaway slaves who fled into the swamps in order to escape bondage, forming maroon societies (Brown 105, Just 72). Yet, this alliance is complex due to the fact that the interrelationships between Native and African Americans were informed by slavery, genocide, colonialism, missionary work, segregation, and Jim Crow. Some tribes, like the Choctaw and Chickasaws, even engaged in the practice of enslaving African Americans. Though it has been documented that Native Americans did not inflict the level of “systematic violence and dehumanization embraced by white slaveholders in the Southern states,” slaves in the Native American nations were nevertheless exploited despite the relative freedoms they enjoyed (Krauthamer 105). For instance, slaves who could provide information critical to the tribe received a semblance of independence. Ironically, these freedoms came in the form of missionary contact. Blacks conversant in English and the tribal languages served as crucial interpreters. Despite these tensions, Native Americans did practice the sheltering of Blacks but not just those who were escaping the bondages of slavery. Many free people of color also resided within Native American nations. As such, African and Native American affiliation was poised as a threat to Manifest Destiny:

If Africans were feared for armed insurrections and Indians for unprovoked savagery, a coalition between the two required the utmost condemnation. To prevent such an occurrence it became incumbent upon military or government officials to determine the ethnic identity of both groups. This was accomplished through various efforts, as the American government sought to treat the two disparate groups as an organized entity. (Micco 128)

This led to many Native Americans being categorized as people of color and therefore labeled as Black, which was later complicated by the passing and implementation of Jim Crow laws.

“Black Indians were both a creation of and a challenge to the
color line” (Micco 125). Laws like the Indian Removal Act of 1830 and those that legally sanctioned segregation forced many identity negotiations and acts of subterfuge by both Black and Native Americans. For example, due to Indian Removal legislation, Native Americans were not allowed to own land in the antebellum South, but free Blacks could. Therefore, some Native Americans identified themselves as free people of color, in order to circumvent the law and retain a sense of sovereignty. In turn, African Americans disrupted the binary categorizations of segregation by identifying as Native American: “For individuals and families classified as ‘colored,’ appealing to Indian ancestry in family histories or public pageantry [as in the case of many of the Mardi Gras Indians] used Indianness, as they understood it, to undermine the very definition of the racial category assigned to them by segregation” (Lovett 193). Mixed ancestry and cultural exchange were utilized by both African and Native Americans to assert a sense of agency in deciding for themselves their racial affiliation within the confines of laws that defined race, in order to elude racist practices. As Mardi Gras Indian Big Chief “Monk” Boudreaux told Diane M. Grams, “I am Choctaw and I am Black. We mask as Indian to celebrate that part of who we are. This is our tradition. When the Indian had to leave, was being moved to reservations, we took the Black. We said we Black, so we could stay. This is our home” (510).

Though the Native nations of the South like the Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Cherokee have a shared history with African Americans of the region, dressing in the style of the American Plains Indians became the model for Mardi Gras Indian attire. Cynthia Becker describes the suit’s archetype:

In the early twentieth century, the typical Mardi Gras Indian suit was comprised of certain standardized components: an elaborate headdress (called a “crown”), long pants, shirt, a sleeveless vest, and an apron. Each component was decorated variously with beads, feathers, sequins, fringe, or sewn-on patches with geometric designs or pictorial images inspired by Native American culture. (37)
But many scholars, including Lipsitz, note that the rituals the Mardi Gras Indians engage in bear “little resemblance to genuine [Native American] celebrations and ceremonies” (102). The headdresses are based on those of the Native Americans from the Northeast, not of the Native American tribes of the Southeast and Louisiana. The theory as to why the Mardi Gras Indian suit ascribes to the model of the Native American Plains is fraught. Folklorist Michael P. Smith attests that the first organized Mardi Gras tribe coincided with Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show arriving in New Orleans in 1884 and the New Orleans International Cotton and World Trade Fair that featured Plains Indian culture. But as Becker notes, “most [Mardi Gras] Indians reject Smith’s thesis because it emphasizes imitation over originality and agency, attributing what they consider a sacred tradition to a cheap form of entertainment that exploited rather than honored Native Americans” (38–39). This rejection and insistence on originality further supports the configuration of the Mardi Gras Indian as a syncretic cultural entity. Moreover, it ignores the African and Caribbean influences also incorporated into the Mardi Gras Indian aesthetic. According to Lipsitz, “with the exception of some styles of bead work, few of their [Mardi Gras Indian] practices replicate crafts of local Native American Indian tribes” (103). But the suit is a material representation of the relationship Native American tribes and African Americans forged with one another—an association that ranged from that of master and slave within the practices of slavery to overtly subverting racially oppressive systems.

When looking at the suit as a material item, it is important to note that material objects often privilege certain histories and erase others. For example, rhetoricians Ben and Marthalee Barton in *Ideology of the Map* (2004) note the privileging of Euro-centric colonial narratives rendered in the standard Mercator World map that places an inaccurate enlarged Europe at its center. They state that “a critical study of the ideology of visuals focuses on the ways in which visual signification serves to sustain relations of domination” (233). Maps articulate certain histories through the visual representation of spaces they materially represent. This has created, what Amy Propen, in her discussion of the connection between visual and material rhetorics, calls a “critical cartography.” It is “a subdiscipline of cartography that sees geographic knowledge as tied to power relations, and understands mapping and the practices of visual-
ity as informed by cultural contexts” (Propen xxvii). In response to the Mercator’s biases, remappings such as the Peters equal area projection world map have been created. The map is an example of how material rhetoric and visual rhetoric are inherently linked. The visual element of the map works to both recognize and counter the dominant narratives that inform its material production in much the same way that masking Indian does.

The material rhetoric of the suit works as a disruptive agent that inserts a different historical narrative into that of the dominant one via visual depictions. Many of the suits’ patches, worn on the front and along the cuffs, depict an “alternative narrative, in which, instead of being defeated, Native Americans are shown as victorious” (Becker 46). For example, a patch sewn by Big Chief Nelson Burke of the Red Hawk Hunters shows what Becker calls a “revisionist version of a lynching,” with Native Americans meting out this violence against white cavalry soldiers (46). Other patches include designs featuring “pieces of Native American material culture like arrows, tomahawks and teepees . . . or wild animals, . . . bears, buffalos, or tigers.” Some patches, particularly of the downtown tribes, include three-dimensional shapes and aspects of “West African motifs” (Brown 108). The synthesis of African and Native American images can also be found in the practices and material items of the spiritualist churches in Louisiana that incorporate Native American iconography in veneration rituals. The spiritual entity Black Hawk is deemed a Black saint and, “though ostensibly Indian [Native American], is the divine representative of New Orleans’ African-American community” (Wehmeyer 437). Reverend Jules Anderson, a church minister, notes how Black Hawk figures in the connections between African American and Native American cultures: “I feel that Black Hawk has always been a part of the black spirit. . . . We was took from Africa and that left us—we didn't hear any of those drums. It was the Indians that brought us back to the drums and the music” (Wehmeyer 437). With regard to the Mardi Gras Indians, Ronald W. Lewis, the curator director of The House of Dance and Feathers Museum, speaks to the connected history of Native and African Americans through masking:

Coming out of slavery, being African American wasn’t
socially acceptable. By masking like Native Americans, it created an identity of strength. The Native Americans, under all the pressure and duress, would not concede. These people were almost drove into extinction to maintain their way of life. And the same kind of feeling, coming out of slavery. “You’re not going giving (sic) us a place here in society, we’ll create our own.” (qtd. in Lee 76)

Similarly, in her reporting on Mardi Gras Indian Queens, Emily Ramirez Hernandez quotes Big Queen Cherice Harrison-Nelson of the Guardians of the Flame, also known as Queen Reesie, who states that the tradition of masking is more than just the history of Native American and African American partnership: “It is a tradition of resistance. It is an homage to the mutual struggles of both African Americans and Native Americans on their quest for freedom, self-actualization, and self-expression in America” (Hernandez). The experience of subjugation and the rejection of it form a collective experience between Native and African Americans. Masking Indian is a practice of self agency, articulating identity and taking ownership of the narrative.

The visual counternarratives articulated in the intricate beading on the chest and large cuffs of the suits include an outright material articulation of a clandestine history that challenges traditional histories of slavery and colonialism. These conventional histories presented in black/white, colonizer/colonized binaries are especially reductive especially in New Orleans with its global layering of French, Spanish, and US systems of power. For instance, the crown or the headdress is especially prominent in the suit’s rhetorical makeup because it was a way for African Americans to “circumvent the local laws [administered by the Spanish governor in 1781] that made it illegal for blacks to wear masks” (Lipsitz 104). Mardi Gras Indians are particular to New Orleans and its culturally vibrant, yet complex interplays of race and class. In this city, the regulation and categorization of race has a long history of playing out via civic ordinances dealing with Carnival. The origins of masking Indian “began in the late nineteenth century, when the only sanctioned role for Blacks in the city’s main street spectacle parades was to carry flambeaux as torch-bearers for white businessmen enthroned
as royalty for the day” (Grams 510). Mardi Gras and Carnival in New Orleans have long been predicated on segregation reinforced by the public nature of the city’s authorized parades. In 1857, the formation of the Mystic Krewe of Comus, made up of non-Creole white business men, proceeded to reconfigure Mardi Gras as a way to consolidate and reinforce white dominance by taking on Carnival themes like “The Aryan Race” (Lovett 201). Ultimately, this move “signaled that the relationship between the civic display of position and power and the city’s racial order would become increasingly intertwined” (Lovett 200). By inserting the Native American racial interplay of masking, the Mardi Gras Indians disrupt the black/white dichotomy of segregation and thereby the social order that krewes like Comus tried to reinforce:

Where the old line sought to celebrate an “Aryan” lineage and to demonstrate the interconnections between the closed social world of clubs and old families, the Mardi Gras Indians celebrated a different genealogy. Indeed, Becate Batiste specifically cited his Choctaw ancestry as justification for his founding of the Creole Wild West Tribe and dressing as an Indian” (Lovett 202).

Masking serves as a visual counternarrative to that of the dominant social order; the materiality of the suit utilizes visual rhetoric to recontextualize and complicate these power dynamics. The suit is a product of visual culture. Propen explains visual culture using Cara Finnegan’s rhetorical theory. Propen states that “[p]rojects of visual rhetoric would then understand visual culture as able ‘to illuminate the complex dynamics of power and knowledge at play in and around images; they would also understand the ‘complexities of the relationships between images and texts’ as opening up rather than closing off interpretive possibilities” (Finnegan, qtd. in Propen xvii). It is not just the materiality and the visual aspect alone that create the narrative possibilities rendered in the suit; it is their interplay and embodiment. The suit is a rhetorical artifact come to life.

Space provides “the foundation for . . . a visual-material rhetorical approach, one that not only accounts for the multimodal, sp-
tially-situated artifact but is also mindful of its impact on the embodied subject” (Propen xxviii). Space is rhetorical precisely because this is where texts, both visual and material, artifacts, bodies, and discourse interact and how a sense of place becomes formulated from these interactions and exchanges. The construction of the suit and the way certain materials, beading, patch designs, feathers, and so forth are used designates the places and the histories that inform different tribes. Tribes from the Uptown areas in New Orleans, those above Canal Street, wear crowns (headpieces) made from “wide plume,” colorfully dyed ostrich feathers, and are known for their flat beadwork. Downtown tribes use long, slim feathers for their crowns and created the “mummy crown” a tall headdress that extends across the shoulders (Just, 76; Becker 43). The suit articulates the spatial routes of the Mardi Gras Indian parade, as their style indicates the different neighborhoods tribes come from. This is critical, as Ana Paulina Lee states, “Race is fixed to the geography and economy of the city [New Orleans], particularly its history of the slave trade and the Jim Crow laws that segregated public spaces” (72). This includes neighborhoods (which was shown in stark relief in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, in terms of which neighborhoods were susceptible to the flooding); thus, the places Mardi Gras Indians occupy and the cultural performance of masking, of parading through the neighborhood streets, becomes a geopolitical act. Lee argues that the act of masking Indian and the performances of blackface or whiteface during Carnival “are not merely a carnivalesque inversion of social order and disorder, but they enact the cultural memory of the city. The archival practices associated with them underscore the way that the memoryscape of New Orleans—its geographical dimensions of cultural memory—plays a critical role in confrontations with regimes of racial formation and representation” (72). Black Indian culture, the suits in particular, are an embodied example of the “spatial and material dimensions of cultural memory” (Lee 72). The act of parading or “stepping out” is an embodied performance that transforms spaces—“historical sites of segregation” as Lee calls them—into celebrations and competitions in determining which suit is the “prettiest” (75). For example, the Interstate-10 freeway, built in 1957, interrupted central Mardi Gras Indian parade routes and forced the removal and relocation of five hundred households (Lee 80). As a space that severed neighborhoods, the
I-10 underpass now serves as an integral stop for many Social Aid and Pleasure Club Second Line parades, Skull and Bone Gang processions, and Mardi Gras Indian exhibitions. The separating power of the highway is subverted by the convergence of parading cultures, interrupting and reinterpreting racist segregated practices that historically underpin Mardi Gras and Carnival in New Orleans. According to Lee,

> With a long historical and political tradition that can be traced to the carnivals of Catholic Europe, Mardi Gras utilizes strategies of satire, inversion, and revelry to express political critique. In southern Louisiana, the convergence of French and Spanish carnival practices that began in the early 18th century acculturated to racial segregation's violent conditions, which are still present today, even if obscured by the fetish of plastic beads and lagniappe. (77)

A lot of this political criticism is integrated into the suit via the patches, which is why so many of them display Native American warriors engaged in or victorious in battle. And though the use of the headdress and other portions of the suit may borderline on parody or consumption of culture, it's more purposeful than that. As noted, visual rhetorical inquiry can help us to recognize power systems that are in play but that aren't necessarily spelled out in plain text. Mardi Gras is an example of this. The suit and masking introduce a disruption to segregationist practices. The patches that depict Native American dominance revise the narrative and serve as models of resistance to racial constructs often borne out in Mardi Gras tradition.

The suits perform place as the material items that make up the suit articulate the locations within the city that Mardi Gras Indians come from, but they also indicate a reconstruction of racial identity that destabilizes binary systems. The fact that the Mardi Gras Indian combines African, African American, Caribbean, and Native American cultural influences and items in the construction of the suit illustrates how the material rhetoric of the suit, working with place, invokes a reshaping and taking ownership of the black male image in particular. As Propen notes, “material rhetoric considers the text from the perspec-
tive of its relative durability and reproducibility, its ability to work with and against other texts, and most important, its ability to understand space and place as rhetorical and as affecting both the mind and body” (xxvi). In masking Indian the putting on of the suit enacts an embodied rhetoric that stems from its materiality. In distinguishing between the body and embodiment, N. Katherine Hayles in *How We Became Posthuman* (1999) states that “[i]n contrast to the body, embodiment is contextual, enmeshed within the specifics of place, time, physiology [the branch of biology that deals with the normal functions of living organisms and their parts], and culture, which together compose enactment... Experiences of embodiment, far from existing apart from culture, are always already imbricated within it” (196–97). The body is the actual material corporeal self. Embodiment is how the body interacts with the world around it. An embodied knowledge gets expressed through lived experience. Embodiment is what happens when the body engages with space and, in particular, place as it interacts with all that makes up that place: texts, artifacts, discourses, and so on. The body’s interaction with place, or embodiment, leads to an embodied rhetoric that is tied to visual-material rhetoric in that it takes into account how the body interacts with the visual and material aspects of culture. With regard to the Mardi Gras Indian, the body is interacting and negotiating an interplay between various visual and material aspects of multiple cultures inherent to the Black experience of Carnival in New Orleans. It is an amalgamation of culture that is not simply Native American, African, African American, or Caribbean, but distinctly Mardi Gras Indian, a particularized identity intrinsic to place. New Orleans’s history of multicultured colonial slavery informs the material rhetoric of the suit and the embodied experience of masking. The Mardi Gras Indians represent a form of embodiment because they are “enmeshed within the specifics of place, time, physiology, and culture, which together compose enactment” as Hayles says, and are “imbricated within” culture. The suits are a part of visual rhetoric that reveals visual rhetoric’s “material and embodied components” (Propen xviii).

Mardi Gras Indian embodiment illustrates how the body interacts with the visual and materials aspects of culture. This is complicated, however, and is informed by race in that Black embodiment incorporates an idea of the black body that is “projected across actual physi-
Sarah Hirsch

cal bodies” (Young 4). In his book Embodying Black Experience (2010), Harvey Young makes the distinction between the black body, the concept or idea of Blackness, and the body, the corporeal flesh and bone. In making this distinction he illustrates how they affect each other to form the embodiment, the lived experience of Black persons across time and space. The black body complicates the notion of the body versus embodiment because the black body is internalized as “an abstracted and imagined figure [that] shadows or doubles the real one. It is the black body [the idea of blackness] and not a particular, flesh-and-blood body that is the target of a racializing projection.” Masking becomes a way to alter and change the ideas of the black body that objectify and other it through the embodied act of wearing the suit. The Mardi Gras Indian serves as a way to deconstruct or intervene in this doubling. If “the shadow overwhelms the actual figure,” as Young argues, masking serves to reverse this by complicating the racializing project, thus destabilizing the black/white binary. The materiality of masking subverts the abstraction by inserting agency into identity formation that serves to show how “[b]lack is always an imprecise projection or designation” (7). It’s a misidentification and a fiction that the Mardi Gras Indian intends to expose and re-identify via the Mardi Gras Indian culture of masking. Mardi Gras Indians complicate the concept of Blackness via the materiality of masking because masking plays with identity markers of race and culture. Mardi Gras Indians take control of the “compulsory visibility” of the black body in the physical makeup of their suit and its material design (12). Young notes that “[d]espite being an abstraction, [the black body] is conceptualized as possessing a sociogeographic materiality” (8). The Mardi Gras Indian embodies this sociogeographic materiality. The materiality of masking illustrates the “ways in which history and culture inform both place and the body” (8). In the case of the Mardi Gras Indians, the place is New Orleans; the history of slavery, segregation, and genocide inform a Mardi Gras Indian body that marches and takes to the streets.

As seen by the way they navigated the interruption of I-10—taking ownership of the underpass along with other parading groups—the Mardi Gras Indian parade is also spatially purposeful. They are loyal to the neighborhoods represented in their suit designs, but the makeup of the suits also illustrates their role in the Mardi Gras Indian hierarchy.
The key figures in the Mardi Gras Indian procession besides the Big Chief, on which the parade centers, are the Flag Boys, Spy Boys, and Wild Men. Becker describes the procession and the roles these Indians play:

The Spy Boy leads the Indians through the backstreets and is the first to meet members of other Indian tribes. His [suit] is usually the lightest of all the Indians, as it allows him to move quickly through the streets and warn the Big Chief that another tribe is approaching. The Flag Boy carries the symbol of his tribe, and uses it to relay signals to the Big Chief. Tribes also have a Wild Man, who clears the path for the Big Chief, making certain no one damages his [suit]. (41)

The materiality of the suit—its construction as well as what the Mardi Gras Indian carries—determine his role in the performance of procession. Material items like the beaded patches, flags, staffs, and other regalia are central to the visual rhetoric of Black parading culture. Material items also play a prominent role in Social Aid and Pleasure Club parades as “club members dress up in matching tuxedo-like suits, with silk embroidered sashes across their chests, birds or other ornaments on their shoulders, and carrying fans, baskets, or walking canes” (Grams 502). The Skull and Bone Gang uses “wire, newspaper and flour to make the skull-heads; they wear sweatpants or long johns (‘long-handle drawers’) with bones painted on the chest, hips, arms, and legs” (Wade 62). The ways that items are utilized in the construction of the suit have evolved over time, giving Black Indians more power when it comes to their visual representation. According to Becker, in the 1980s Uptown Indians changed the production of their cuffs. Instead of cuffs decorated with ribbon, they added long beaded patches surrounded by large ostrich feathers to create “wings,” which, as Becker notes, “they could open and close to reveal the detailed beadwork underneath” (45). Becker continues in her analysis stating, “Aesthetic devices such as these allowed [Indians] to encourage the viewer to engage with this spectacle of display. They could slowly open their [suits] or selectively lift their patches, allowing Indians to control who saw which part of their suits. . . . [T]his
gave Indians increasing control over their self-representation” (45). The materiality of the suit, its actual and purposeful construction, provides agency in that the wearer chooses what the viewer sees or consumes visually. This can also guard against touristic consumption that tends to sentimentalize the narrative of the Mardi Gras Indian and erase the history of racist practices and structures that Black Indian culture is calling attention to in the assembly and theme of the suit.

The wings demonstrate how the materiality of the suit gives it an element of performance. The wings’ strategic design is part of the suit’s “deliberate display” as what it reveals and when are up the wearer’s discretion. An element of exchange that happens in the process of display sets up a rhetorical moment. Diane M. Grams in her field research speaks to this: “Terms like ‘pretty’ and ‘clean,’ and gestures, such as the open-arm displays of a big chief, provide clues to understanding the transformation of meaning that takes place during these parades” (525).

It is the material and visual rhetoric inherent in the performance that allows for meaning making to occur. Via the parade or performance, an interplay is enacted between the performer and the viewer, between the material and the visual. It is the ability of this display to alter meaning that destabilizes traditional narratives of race. As noted before, in the performance of masking, Mardi Gras Indians disrupt the black/white binary that serves to uphold racist structures and institutions. Masking involves a syncretism that challenges racial categories as absolutes. Ricardo Guthrie discusses how Mardi Gras Indians dislocate identities by playing with iconic imagery and subverting it. He states,

Masking Indian elevates resistance and resistance to accepted modes of identity and engagement—creating new possibilities of an inherently tension-filled embodiment of indigeneity, but ostensibly from an African-diasporic perspective. . . . [T]he pleasure of resisting dominant modes of expression creates liberating identities which confound racial regimes that marginalize both Black and Native Americans. Embracing ambiguities—and mocking stereotypical images of savage Indians and Africans—Mardi Gras Indians find pleasure in multilayered identities (560–61)
I argue that these multilayered identities are performed by masking. Masking is inherently tied to the wearing of the suit, an embodied rhetoric that is articulated by the suit’s materiality but also by its accouterments. Jeffery David Ehrenreich of the University of New Orleans points out that the suit is a vehicle of through which rich cultural histories emerge. He says, “Wearing an Indian suit is a form of embodiment that often facilitates entering ‘into the spirit.’ Drums, chants, tambourines, and cadenced rhythms are all associated with Mardi Gras Indian performance, which is reminiscent of spiritual, shamanic, and trance-like states from other traditions. ‘Masking’ permits the expression of dissent” (117). The wearing of the suit evokes a rhetorical performance that incorporates narratives of Native American and African cultural practices, as well as those of slavery, genocide, oppression, and resistance.

Black Indians reject referring to the suit as a costume because it displays tribal individualities. The suit works as an active identity agent. It is a “visual marker of tribe membership” (Lee 79). The bold visual rhetorical utterance of the suit facilitates a rendering of identity that is material, tangible, and therefore notable in its physicality. Sascha (Alexandra) Just explains that “[i]nstead of temporarily assuming a fake persona, by masking, [Black Indians] reveal their true Indian identities” (75). Masking Indian is not a mimetic performance. It’s not an imitation (as previously noted, Mardi Gras Indian masking rituals are quite distinct from actual Native American practices); rather, masking is an actualization of identity. Some tribes, like the FiYiYi, are known for their elaborate facial masks and adherence to African culture in their suit aesthetics. But Darryl Montana, Big Chief of the Yellow Pocahontas Hunters, tells Just that he “prohibits [the facial masks] to ensure . . . that each Indian presenting him- or herself can be identified” (75). The visual and material culture central to Mardi Gras Indian performance is where cultural memory plays out. The suit is a rhetorical embodiment of the counternarrative of resistance that emerged in response to a Mardi Gras history based in racist practices. Masking Indian is a performance of identity, but it’s not one of subterfuge, obfuscation, and erasure. It’s a disclosure of an authentic otherness. Lipsitz speaks to the difference between the Mardi Gras Indians and other Carnival participants:
While carnival masking for all groups proclaims a generalized “right to be other” (as Bakhtin asserts), the Mardi Gras Indians adopt a very specific sense of otherness. Most other carnival celebrants might dress as pirates or crows or cowboys in any given year to escape from their everyday identities, but the Indians are always Indians. Furthermore, the Indian image calls attention to the initial genocide upon which “American” civilization rests. It challenges the core dualism of American racism that defines people as either white or black. (104)

The insertion of the Mardi Gras Indian identity destabilizes the binary and thus has worked to subvert segregationist practices since the inception of the New Orleans Mardi Gras celebration. As Lee notes, “Krewes, Mardi Gras club organizations, sustained racial segregation from their founding years that date to the mid-19th century until 1991, when the City of New Orleans passed an ordinance requiring all Mardi Gras float sponsoring clubs to desegregate or stay home” (77).

The lack of a physical mask in masking Indian not only asserts the wearer’s identity but is a reminder of racial constructs that determine Mardi Gras politics and, by extension, the city’s. “Other revelers may use carnival masking to escape the repressions of their everyday existence,” Lipsitz asserts, “but the Indian tribes’ disguise brings out into the open dimensions of repression that the dominant culture generally tries to render invisible” (104). This is why the suit is more about revealing than concealing. The creation of the suit is an act of remembering, of bringing out into the open the histories of slavery, genocide, cultural erasure, and oppression. The suit is a postmemory response to trauma. Postmemory, according to Marianne Hirsch, is made up of the “personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before.” Postmemory works much like oral history performance, in that it “works through collective amnesia by bringing erased histories to light” (Lee 76). Much of Mardi Gras Indian culture is spoken through song, particularly the call and response prayer-like song “Indian Red,” which opens and closes Mardi Gras Indian gatherings, the seminal lyrics of which are these: “We won’t bow down / On that dirty ground / Because
I love to hear you call my Indian Red.” But if we apply analysis of oral history to that of the material history of the suit, we see that the suit is not an erasure or a consumption: it’s a corrective materialized recollection. The suit is postmemory materialized as its “connection to the past is . . . mediated not by [exact] recall, but by imaginative investment, projection, and creation” (Hirsch cited in Lee 76). Masking is an act of “critical memory.” It acknowledges “that related histories of discrimination, violence, and migration result in similar experiences” (Young 19). The Mardi Gras Indian suit is not a mere replica of Native American tropes but is an ongoing creative endeavor that links the colonial past of New Orleans and its history of slavery to the present moment. Masking connects Native American and Black American experience.

The creativity in postmemory comes from the repurposing of materials from the suit. In the making of the suit, the Mardi Gras Indians “utilize objects to . . . transmit memory” (Lee 83). The repurposing, or to use Laurie Gries’s term “remixing,” takes the material aspect of the suit and transforms it into a multifaceted rhetorical agent. The suit’s material renderings cause it to acquire its “thing-power”—the suit’s ability to activate rhetorical transformations. In turn, this works to incorporate alternate, erased, or excluded histories. Gries states, “[A]s images materialize in different versions and enter into divergent associations, they become rhetorically diverse as they work alongside other entities, human and nonhuman, abstract and concrete, to alter collective life” (27–28). The repurposing of the headdress (adopting it from the American Plains Indians and redirecting it into Black Indian aesthetics), in connection with the absence of the facial mask, is a response to the trauma of slavery; and it changes the narrative as a rhetorically material identifying marker: the once hidden fugitive slave has now emerged and is out in the open, unmasked as a Mardi Gras Indian, who “won’t bow down.”

Notes

1. The term Indian is the one Mardi Gras Indians use to refer to themselves. The term Black Indian is also used, but the term has its complexities. Writer Ron Welburn of both Native American and African Amer-
ican descent says that the term is “ambiguous” and that he believes, “as do most Indians, that one is either an Indian or not an Indian. To be ‘part-Indian’ may be important for non-Indians, but is superfluous for Indians” (306). The term Black Indian is used by William Loren Katz, in his book of the same name, and in Katz’s case it refers to Blacks who are part of the Seminoles and other Southern tribes. See Katz, Black Indians: Hidden Heritage. Aladdin Paperbacks, 1997. According to Welburn, the term “Indian Blacks” might be more appropriate: “African Americans who cite Indian ancestry without desiring entry into Native life” (307). Some Mardi Gras Indians do claim to have Native American ancestry and some do not. For this paper when referring to Indians, or Black Indians, I will be referring to Mardi Gras Indians. In references to the indigenous people of the Americas, the term Native American will be used.

2. Some Mardi Gras Indian tribes, like the FiYiYi and Mandingo Warriors, do wear actual masks.

3. The House of Dance and Feathers describes Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs this way: “Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs can be traced back to 19th century benevolent societies that provided healthcare and burial services for their members. Besides these benefits, the clubs also encouraged leadership skills and provided a space for discussing social issues, as well as entertainment in the form of picnics, parades, dinners and balls” (houseofdanceandfeathers.org/marchingcultureneworleans/socialaidandpleasureclubs/).

4. The performance of the North Side Skull and Bone Gang, the group that is the inheritor and keeper of this tradition of African American Carnival, is attributed to Haitian immigration to New Orleans in the early 1800s. The skeleton costumes the Skull and Bone Gang wear are seen in Carnival celebrations in Africa, the Caribbean, and Latin America. Like the Mardi Gras Indians, members of the Skull and Bone Gang create their own skeleton suits by hand and wear headdresses. The skull headdresses are made of papier-mâché and “revelers wear butcher-aprons sporting such phrases as: ‘The Worms Go In, The Worms Go Out’” (Wade 58). Much like the Mardi Gras Indians, the “skull and bones masquerade has operated both as a critique of the powerful and a pur-
veyor of community, honoring the dead while drawing awareness to the politics of the present and the promises of the future” (57–58).

5. Mardi Gras Indian culture is primarily patriarchal and hierarchal, but the role of the Mardi Gras Indian Queen or Big Queen is crucial to the tribe’s function in various ways. The Big Queen, like other family members, helps in the sewing and making of the suits, especially that of the Big Chief’s. She also makes suits of her own masking to embellish the Big Chief’s prettiness. Though the main roles of the Mardi Gras Indian procession—like the Spy Boy who runs ahead to notify the Chief if other tribes are approaching—tend to be male dominated, the Big Queen can also play the role of a peacemaker.

6. Young utilizes the lower case “b” in his analysis and so will I in this case to keep in line with his inquiry and to provide consistency.

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The Literature of Protest and the Consumption of Activism

Eric Leuschner

In 2011, Time magazine named “the protestor” as its person of the year. In the cover story, Kurt Anderson notes how “[o]nce upon a time . . . protesters were prime makers of history.” But by the 1990s, protests were more or less a distant memory and, for many Gen Xers or millennials, were read about only in featured boxes in a history textbook. This suddenly changed as almost daily reports of protests from Charlotte, Ferguson, and Baltimore and of the activities of groups such as Concerned Student 1950, Black Lives Matter, and Fight for 15 dominated the news cycles. Shepard Fairey’s cover art for Time featured the face of an anonymous and seemingly androgynous individual, whose wool knit cap and cloth face-covering reveal only piercing brown eyes staring directly at the reader. Just as the monochromatically red-saturated background consists of images that could be from any number of contemporaneous protests, so could the individual. A sign in the background reads, “We Need Good Jobs in LA,” recalling the 2011 Occupy movement, but in the bottom center of the face-covering is superimposed a woman wearing what appears to be a hijab, broadening the context to include the Arab Spring protests that also occurred that year. If anything, the Trump era has magnified this: the
day after Trump’s inauguration in 2017 witnessed the most massive single-day protest in US history with the Women’s March; NFL players kneeling during the national anthem has become a touchstone of modern race relations; and, internationally, protests in the UK, Venezuela, France, and Hong Kong have dominated the news. What is mostly seen through the media, though, are sound bites from fleeing in-the-moment interviews and video clips of marchers with picket signs flashing by on the screen. Neatly packaged and delivered, protests are curated and narrated to attract more viewers and readers. Depending on who you are and where you are, the dichotomy of us versus them or right versus wrong is simplified and perpetuated in the way it is presented and consumed. Now commodified, protest is easily consumed by a desensitized public.2

**Literature of Protest vs. Literature as Protest**

Literature has long been an integral part of the protest tradition. At its worst, protest literature slides into propaganda; at its best, it changes the world. In the United States, for instance, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852), *Life in the Iron Mills* (1861), *The Jungle* (1905), *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), and *Howl* (1956) have become the staples of what has been identified as a protest literature subgenre, targeting slavery, industrialism, and capitalism. When read or taught as the protest subgenre, effecting social change is assumed to be the primary purpose. These examples mirror the status of American protest that Ralph Young describes as inherently American: “Dissent is one of this nation’s defining characteristics” (2). While many times, protesters are maligned as being unpatriotic or un-American, according to Young, protest is “one of the consummate expressions of ‘Americanness.’ It is patriotic in the deepest sense” (3). As such, in American literary history, protest literature has been a valued tradition and has been recognized in anthologies, university courses, and academic criticism.3 John Stauffer defines the genre broadly: “protest literature functions as a catalyst, guide, or mirror of social change. It not only critiques some aspect of society, but also suggests, either implicitly or explicitly, a solution to society’s ills” (xii). Most of these works, though, target the social ills—the factories, the slaughterhouses, the meatpacking houses—by depicting the sites in memorably graphic terms. They attempt to elicit empathy and create shock value by what they show.
Seldom, however, do these works depict actual protests; they are literature as protest. In contrast to the genre of protest literature, I define a literature of protest that attempts to confront the simplification and commodification of protest action. Ultimately, where the literature of protest succeeds best is in humanizing the faceless representations of protest seen in the media. While examples of the literature of protest exist as early as Aristophanes, recent events have sparked a seeming upswell of texts that take protests, demonstrations, and riots as their setting and plot. The literature of protest responds directly to Paul Lauter’s question regarding protest literature, “How do we distinguish between works directly involved in social conflict and those that, retrospectively, shape our memory of that conflict?” (Saul 404). That is indeed what the literature of protest does: it shapes our memory but, in contrast to media representations or even historical representations, it allows us to enter into the experience and not merely consume it. It plays a role in developing our understanding of protest, counteracting in part the media’s coverage to offer an alternative to how to consume protests.

The literature of protest, for instance, reveals the range of vocabulary used in identifying such action. The rhetoric of protest runs through a continuum of terms from demonstration, rally, protest, and sit-in to occupation, riot, and mob, each term having its own connotation, tone, and use. Nic Subtirelu, for instance, offers a linguistic analysis of the media coverage of the 2015 Freddie Gray death in Baltimore. Focused on two days of reports on major cable news outlets (FOX, CNN, and MSNBC), Washington DC-based newspapers (the Washington Times and the Washington Post), and online news magazines (Weekly Standard, National Review, Slate, and The Nation), Subtirelu found an expected preponderance of the use of “riot” in conservative outlets and a more extensive use of “protest” in progressive ones. Subtirelu and others note that the word “protest” in particular connotes having a political purpose (protest against something) and is not necessarily violent; “riot,” on the other hand, usually refers to senseless, anarchic, violent acts, without any specific purpose. Subtirelu concludes that his analysis “tells us that conservative venues have tended to erase the political messages and purposes of people in Baltimore and have instead presented the events there as involving needless perhaps inexplicable violence.” Likewise, Katy Waldman, writing in Slate, identifies the connection between protest
and “intimations of virtue, . . . principled disapproval and moral fiber. . . . Protest’s connotations of self-discipline seem to counter the threat of wanton violence.” As consumers of media, we ingest a diet of words, which, in turn, influence the way we interpret events. The truth of the situation, though, is that the media are describing the same situation with both protest and riot. To return to Time’s Person of the Year, it is significant that it is the protester and not the rioter, or the demonstrator, or even the revolutionary. What the literature of protest reveals is that the protest is a web entangling the protester, the police/authority, the administration, the radical protester, and the bystander. Instead of simplifying to a sound bite or video clip, the literature of protest explores the real relations among all involved. ⁴

Mirroring the narrative in Anderson’s Time article of the waning of protest in the 1990s and its sudden resurgence in the second decade of the twenty-first century, the number of examples of the literature of protest published since 2000 has been significant and seems primed for classification. A preliminary survey of this genre would include Dana Spiotta’s Eat the Document (2006) and Hari Kunzru’s My Revolutions (2007), both Weather Underground–inspired stories of the consequence of radical activism; Jonathan Lethem’s Dissident Gardens (2013); Sunil Yapa’s Your Heart is a Muscle the Size of a Fist (2016), a tragedy set during one day of the 1999 Seattle/WTO protests; T. Geronimo Johnson’s story of a staged protest, Welcome to Braggsville (2015); and John Lewis’s graphic novel trilogy March (2013–2016), which is bookended by the events that occurred on the Edmund Pettus Bridge on Bloody Sunday in 1965. Recent films of protest include Ava DuVernay’s Selma (2014), Spike Lee’s Chi-Raq (2015), and Ken Loach’s Bread and Roses (2000), which is part of a related genre of union/labor films. ⁵ Even music could be considered and is subject to the distinction being made here. “Protest music” would include examples like Billie Holiday’s “Strange Fruit” or Bob Dylan’s “Masters of War” (the list is seemingly endless), which work to indict the system. However, others depict the act of protest (and some that straddle the line): Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young’s “Ohio” places the listener at the scene and allows us to share the experience. The song describes in present tense as if we are present at Kent State on that fateful day: “Tin soldiers and Nixon coming / . . . / This sum-
mer I hear the drumming / . . . / Soldiers are cutting us down” (italics added). The insistent chorus, “Four dead in Ohio,” absent any verb, emphasizes the atemporalism of the historical event; it is past and present. Neil Young described seeing the images of the Kent State shooting in Life magazine and immediately disappearing for several hours, returning to his bandmates with the song “Ohio.” The band went to the studio and, in only a few takes, recorded the song, which was quickly released by the studio. Historian David Bianculli wrote,

> It was the quickest and best reaction to Kent State, with Neil Young acting as 50 percent songwriter and 50 percent journalist. And nobody stopped to think, ‘What will this do to our other hit? What will this do to our image? What will the advertisers think?’ They just thought, ‘This is important and needs to be on the air. (qtd. in Hutchison)

However, this synchronous commentary mode does not always bear out when it comes to fiction, which tends to be more reflective commentary. Perhaps due to the trajectory described by Kurt Anderson—that is, during the 90s, awareness of protest was minimal, confined to “pop cultural fantasy”—one pattern revealed in this study is that the literature of protest, except for music, seems to appear after much reflection. As yet, only a few examples of fictional representations treat the prevalence of protests past 2010, to cover, for example, the Occupy Wall Street Movement (2011), the Women’s March (2017), or the anti-Trump protests. The examples cited in this essay, although published after 2000, are generally set decades before and treat primarily historical events. However, it appears that they are a response to the current interest and prevalence of the issue of protest. Perhaps they show that it is now time to reflect on this past. For example, Black Lives Matter and the Baltimore and Ferguson riots evoke Civil Rights demonstrations such as the March to Selma, and the 1992 L.A. Riots. The anti-Iraq protests and Antifa recall Berkeley, Kent State, and the radical activities of groups such as the Weather Underground. As such, a text like Lewis's March remains resonant today. Lewis foregrounds this as he opens and closes the book with scenes from Barack Obama’s 2009
inauguration. We look to the past to understand the present, and the literature of protest assists in that understanding.

This temporal reflection suggests what Jeffrey Insko identifies as an alternative historiography he locates in nineteenth-century abolitionist rhetoric and literature. Rethinking the critiques of presentism (judging the past by the standards of today), Insko distinguishes between those who argued for gradualism and those who argued for immediate action. Each side views the past differently: on the one hand, as a “living present” (or in Emerson’s phrase, the “ever-present now”); on the other, a “dead past” (2–4). In his analysis of the narrative prolepsis in Herman Melville’s *Israel Potter*, Insko outlines the novel’s “movement away from a foreshadowing that knows, that is certain, and toward one that doesn’t, but that hopes” (25). Abandoning a historiography based on a progressive teleology allows one to focus on the present, the now, as a time of uncertainty of the future. Insko concludes his book by applying this alternative historiography to the present, as he theorizes wokeness in current discourse on protest, specifically Black Lives Matter:

In our own day, spontaneous protests, organized marches, political petitioning, and sundry confrontations with the legacies and ongoing manifestations of white supremacy (checking one’s privilege, ascending a flag pole to tear down the stars and bars, witnessing police interactions with people of color, spontaneously tearing down a cheap Confederate statue, and punching a neo-Nazi) all constitute forms of wokeness. Not surprisingly, the forces of gradualism, of lethargy and delay, have responded to those provocations in familiar ways: by insisting upon sober deliberation, by seeking to temper or delegitimize passion and rage with pleas for civility, by counseling patience, by stoking fears, by making false equivalencies, and with endless deferrals. This more moderate disposition, wary of intensified affective states, distrustful of spontaneity, and leery of sudden change seeks to evade or avoid now, the heat of the present moment. (188–89)
By collapsing the temporal divide between the past and present in works like *March*, or abstracting time in “Ohio,” or scrambling the chronological plot in Spiotta’s *Eat the Document*, Kunzru’s *My Revolutions*, or Mailer’s *The Armies of the Night*, the literature of protest makes the present now and becomes, as Insko argues, a “means of revivifying and revitalizing the past, not of evading or avoiding it” (25).

Many examples of the literature of protest focus on an actual, historical protest. With no shortage of eyewitness accounts and subsequent memoirs, however, the need for a fictional recreation is questionable; but even with—or perhaps especially with—the firsthand experience, how does one digest such traumatic events? The techniques of fiction, if not fictionalizing, is one strategy. For *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* Anna Deavere Smith interviewed two hundred people connected in some way to the 1992 L.A. riots, choosing twenty-five voices to perform as monologues, using their words verbatim, and presenting the testimonies as distinct voices. Similarly, David Hassler draws upon archival resources in the Kent State Shootings: Oral History Project to create his play *May 4th Voices*. Both plays are designed to be performed on a minimal or bare stage. Smith’s one-woman show takes each voice in turn, from Mayor Tom Bradley to Congresswoman Maxine Waters to Reginald Denny, Elaine Young, store owner Richard Kim, and an anonymous female USC student, “scared to death . . . that they might try to attack the row, the sororities and fraternities. Because they did do that during the Watts Riots” (156). However, she is more frightened that a bottle might damage her father’s prized ’41 Cadillac as he is in town for a visit. Hassler abstracts the characters to “male student 1, 2, 3,” “female student 1, 2,” “national guardsman 1 or 2,” their voices juxtaposed and in dialogue, but not coterminous. Both plays retain the historicity of the testimony yet create an aesthetic experience out of it.

In reality, most protests and demonstrations are relatively dull. Yes, there is energy; yes, there is community. But protests, generally, do not lend themselves to a bestselling narrative. As a result, the literature of protest can be defined as featuring scenes of resistance, which become the critical moments for analysis and genre determination; some may be on the front lines of the protest, but others may be elsewhere. When violence is incited, though—when the protest turns to riot—dramatic
potential is realized, but that ends up skewing the representations; most protests are not violent. Some spend a significant portion building up to the actual protest or play out the consequence of a protest action. Many of these texts enter domestic spaces in order to emphasize the wave of effects caused by protests. DuVernay’s *Selma*, for example, opens with a scene between Martin Luther King, Jr., and Coretta Scott King, as they prepare for his Nobel Peace Prize award. King is frustrated by his inability to tie his cravat, which his wife then helps with. Close-ups and medium two-shots of the couple emphasize their intimacy in contrast to the public spectacle of the Nobel ceremony, and the film continues to cut to domestic scenes during the public event to offset the heightening tensions of the movement, locating the effects of the public protests on the private, domestic sphere. Similarly, when the union organizer Sam shows up at Rosa’s house to discuss the union in *Bread and Roses*, the scene takes place at the kitchen table as Rosa continues to iron clothes and her husband Bert tinkers with repairing an electric fan. When mapped out, the domestic spaces depicted in the film, including Rosa’s house and Sam’s apartment, encircle the workplace. This juxtaposition reflects how Clifford Odets presents the domestic vignettes surrounding the strike meeting in his labor play *Waiting for Lefty* (1935). While the play focuses on the union meeting where the cab drivers are waiting for the organizer to arrive, Odets opens the play on a bare stage with the drivers in a semicircle. As they debate the upcoming strike, certain characters step out and perform small scenes, most depicting the home life of the drivers. By doing so, Odets, like in *Bread and Roses*, underlines the importance of the domestic sphere as it relates to the actions of the potential protesters, just as the other examples cited do.

As the range of setting from public protest to domestic backgrounds adds complexity to the situation, the literature of protest also succeeds, perhaps most importantly, in humanizing the faceless representations of protest seen in the media. Protests are mass actions; the individual is subsumed into the crowd; the mob becomes an organic entity. In Dickens’s *Barnaby Rudge*, the crowd “raged and roared, like a mad monster as it was, unceasingly, and each new outrage served to swell its fury” (408). Alternately, in Kate Clanchy’s short story about the 2003 Iraq War protest, it is at first a “crowd huge and slow as a frozen sea of grinding icebergs” but morphs into a crowd “like grass, . . .like
turf on a ruin: long furrows and crop circles. It was a miracle of gentleness” (432, 440). The Time cover epitomizes this as well. The figure/protester’s eyes are distinct, but gender, race, ethnicity—any identifiable characteristic—are unknown. Likewise, the image of the police presence at protests is often represented as the gas mask or face shield of riot gear, again providing a faceless force, or the metonymic boot or baton. Successful examples (defined as escaping the accusation of propaganda) go so far as to provide multiple perspectives. Indeed, this polyphony of voices opens up the participants in order to show how wide ranging the effects of protest can be. While the media simplifies the system into protester and authority (the police), the literature of protest shows how, on one side, the protester can be the activist, the anarchist, the organizer, the bystander who is caught up in the protest (willingly or unwillingly), or the protester with motivations seemingly unrelated. The crowd in Dickens’s Barnaby Rudge, in response to the Catholic Relief Act of 1778, is described at one point as this:

Many of those who were banded together to support the religion of their country, even unto death, had never heard a hymn or psalm in all their lives. But these fellows having for the most part strong lungs, and being naturally fond of singing, chanted any ribaldry or nonsense that occurred to them, feeling pretty certain that it would not be detected in the general chorus, and not caring much if it were. (402)

Barnaby himself, seduced by both the swarm of blue cockades and the rhetoric of Gordon, is “whirled away” (403). Given the standard to hold, Barnaby is “mindful only of its flashing in the sun and rustling in the summer breeze, ... proud, happy, elated past all telling” (404). On the other hand, the protagonist of Clancy’s story attends the rally to try to reconnect with her ex-boyfriend, although she too is later caught up in the excitement. The protesters become individualized through these works.

However, it is not just the protesters who stand as protagonists. The authority side of protest includes the police officers and National Guard in riot gear, city officials, as well as state and national politicians.
We see the Bull Connors; we see the George Wallaces and Lyndon Johnsons; but what we also find out is that the police in Seattle “didn’t have any lunch breaks, some hadn’t eaten in eighteen hours, some hadn’t peed in eighteen hours, hadn’t slept” (Wu). We find out that at Kent State a National Guard soldier’s glasses interfered with his gas mask: “I didn’t have my glasses on. I couldn’t see very well through my gas mask” (Hassler 33). We realize that it is because his glasses didn’t fit under his gas mask, that the only reason he had joined the Guard was to avoid the war; that the registered letter waiting at the post office that caused him to join was actually a “notice from [his] insurance company saying [he] had money coming back because [he’d] just changed [his] automobile insurance” (Hassler 12). The authority is often seen as adversarial, perhaps due to, at least in the US-based examples, the underlying assumption that protest or dissent is fundamentally American. Even before we read *March*, most of us look back at the civil rights marches and agree that protesting was the right thing to do. We may have less clear views when we look back at the Vietnam protests although we understand some decisions made may not have been the best no matter where you stand. It may be too soon to know about recent protests, especially as we navigate the media coverage, both mainstream and subversive. Yet, even as we are shocked by police brutality, the literature of protest shows us the face of that officer and allows us to stand in his or her boots.

We also see the interactions and repercussions of individuals around the margins in literature of protest and within the genre. We see the stockbroker trying to get to work (Bender) or the Sri Lankan deputy minister trying to meet with other delegates (Yapa). In addition, we see the tourists who decide to “check out Occupy Wall Street” just as they “check out the Museum of Modern Art” (Espach).12 We see Korean store owners in the wake of the L.A. Riots as their stores are burned to the ground (Smith). Finally, we see the journalists, there to document and report; but as Yapa points out, they exist at a certain remove, always separated from the conflict, always somehow superimposed on the action: “Hurricane winds tossing the reporter’s hair, waves crashing behind her. A city in flames behind her. A war behind her. Everything always behind her” (289). As Matt Blackwood in his story in “Blink” writes, objectivity comes at a price. Witnessing a police officer accost a female protester at a fictionalized representation of the Occupy Mel-
bourne protest in 2013, the protagonist, a photojournalist at the scene, imagines himself intervening, finally making a difference: “The camera began a slow tilt forwards with no-one to hold it upright. Adam had fled its side, dashing between the wire fence, and with a running jump, he hip-and-shouldered the officer to the ground.” Reality interrupts as he is awakened from his reverie by “another camera op . . . trying to squeeze in the space between. . . . [P]ulling away from the eyepiece, Adam flicked a switch and the wailing pain of the university girl blinked to something nearing black” (Blackwood). Blackwood’s story asks his readers, even if they are photographers, to question their involvement, especially in a social media age of easy “likes” and “shares” that somehow replace activism. Whether it is in a novel’s polyphony or a short story’s limited focus and ability to highlight the single unexpected perspective or point of view, the inclusion of these perspectives in the discourse of protest defines the genre.

**Empathy and the Literature of Protest**

The hallmark of the literature of protest, though, is its ability to elicit empathy. It is important, first, to distinguish empathy from sympathy in this context. Writing of nonconfrontational protests related to science education (evolution/creationism or climate change debates, for instance), Josh Rosenau, former Programs and Policy Director at the National Center for Science Education, writes that effective protests strategically elicit sympathy and, hopefully, empathy from both the audience and the target of protest: “[A] crucial element of successful advocacy is an attempt to elicit empathy, in this sense, to put the audience and target of your protest in your shoes.” Rosenau builds upon the argument of Martin Luther King, Jr., from his “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” in which King attempts to resolve the issue by provoking internal debate in both the audience and target that results in external action. In other words, empathy causes a change of heart that results in a change in behavior. Where sympathy goes awry is when it turns to pity, which engenders moral superiority and objectification, eventually transforming the object of sympathy into victims. In her definition of protest literature, Trodd argues it has, at its core, a “politics of connection,” in which writers strive to connect with their readers and work to create a community (xxi). Some writers “imagine themselves as their
subjects," while others place the reader in the subject position, inviting them to "accept a part" (xxii). Trodd cites James Agee as an example of the latter: "Agee says that he wrote repetitiously because he wanted the reader of *Let Us Know Praise Famous Mean* to experience the boredom of tenant farmers’ work" (xxii). The emphasis on perspective is essential to effective protest literature’s ability to elicit empathy.

Just as novelist Richard Wright claims that “all literature is protest” (Baldwin 197), it is also perhaps true that all literature creates empathy. However, I see the literature of protest as a special case of empathy. Partly this is because no one comes off well in media representations: both police and protesters are demonized. Spiotta raises the issue of empathy explicitly as it relates to protest. In a chapter of *Eat the Document* aptly titled “Rules of Engagement,” the young sixties radicals watch a film made by one of them (Bobby) about a chemical industry executive accused of developing weapons. Their responses are telling:

“You make us pity him.”
Bobby turned off the projector and flipped the lights back on. He shrugged.
“He looks haunted, pathetic, old,” Mary said.
“He is haunted, pathetic, old.”
“But he bears responsibility for atrocities, and he won’t admit it. He doesn’t even desire our sympathy. You hold the camera on him. You dwell on his shakiness. You let his humanity play on us,” Mary said.
“Yeah, you seem like a tiresome asshole, a bully, and he seems like a victim,” Will said.
“That’s the truth. I showed the truth. The truth is complicated. More complicated than we would like,” Bobby said. (226–27)

By dramatizing the planning stages of a protest, the scene raises questions of the dynamics of protest action: how does one inspire others to take a stand and participate, sometimes at a risk to their freedom or life? Just as media depictions of protests promote a simplified, polarized “us vs. them” dynamic, Spiotta’s novel shows how that same dynamic is necessary for the protests to begin in the first place. Mary claims,
“Your film makes things complicated, and that doesn’t inspire action, that inspires despair. , , , Besides, who says that’s the truth? That’s sentimentality. Is that what the world needs right now? Empathy for all the powerful careless old men.” Nevertheless, Bobby continues to invoke the tools of art: “When I am behind the camera, I feel a desire to understand and empathize” (227). As seen here, the important distinction is between pity, sympathy, and empathy. Pity and sympathy preclude action; actual engagement is best sparked by empathy.

Sunil Yapa’s *The Heart Is a Muscle the Size of a Fist* and the Literature of Protest

However, empathy can cut both ways. Sunil Yapa’s novel *Your Heart Is a Muscle the Size of a Fist* perhaps best captures the scope and power of the genre. Published in 2016, the novel is a fictionalized account of the 1999 World Trade Organization (WTO) protests that occurred over three days in Seattle, Washington. Set during a single day of the protests, the novel presents a cast of characters that includes the range of protest participants. Victor, the nineteen-year-old stepson of Police Chief Bishop, had run away three years earlier after his mother’s death but has now returned with no real purpose except to sell drugs to make money to leave again. Victor stumbles upon the protesters and connects with King, a hot-blooded activist who hides a dangerous past, and John Henry, the old-soul organizer. Victor moves from bystander (detached, ironic observer) to committed participant (not so much with the social issues but with the necessity of human love). The novel alternates chapters between these characters and the police, represented by Bishop and two officers, Park and Julia. Park is brusque and short with the protesters and bystanders, while Julia is more reserved and cautious, having been involved with the 1992 L.A. riots several years earlier. The novel is internally framed by a series of “intermissions” that feature Dr. Charles Wickramsinghe, the Sri Lankan Deputy Minister of Finance and Planning, as Sri Lanka’s delegate to the WTO talks, Wickramsinghe’s primary mission is to meet with US president Bill Clinton to get his signature, the last one needed to secure Sri Lanka’s entry into the WTO. By alternating perspectives, readers identify with characters on both sides of the protest line and may ultimately empathize with a perspective initially at odds with their own.
The five intermission chapters provide a dramatic framework for the novel, which can then be loosely read as a classical tragedy. Viewing it in such a way poses the question of who the tragic hero is. Arguably, while Victor may be the apparent protagonist, the tragic hero is more likely Chief Bishop. In the anagnorisis, as a result of Bishop’s own escalation of police force, Victor is shot—just at the moment when Bishop recognizes him as his son. Bishop’s tragic flaw is assuming the city is his. As he briefs the police officers before engaging the protesters, Bishop says, “Sergeant, . . . these are our streets. Don’t ever forget that” (86); and as the novel nears its climax, he thinks to himself, “If he couldn’t have his son, at least he could have his city back” (207). This hubris leads directly to his downfall. The artifice of the tragic form occasioned by the novel’s structure highlights the aesthetic dimension of the novel and raises it from the level of a documentary. What is lost in historical accuracy is gained in the increase in empathy.

The novel’s climax occurs when all the plot threads converge. Bishop orders the police, including Park and Julia, to clear the intersection where Victor is in lockdown blocking the street. When he finally escapes lockdown, Victor staggers to reach Bishop, whom he recognizes as his father, but is shot by a rubber bullet (from Park on orders from the chief) and crumples to the ground before other officers converge on him with batons. King, caught up in the emotion, rushes the police vehicle; and when the narrative switches to follow Julia, as she stands on top of the police vehicle and watches what she perceives as one of the faceless protesters race toward her, Yapa puts the reader there in the moment:

Time was moving slowly. This was how it worked. She was processing information. She was making decisions. She was trained. She knew what to do. . . . [S] he was reacting calmly, she was in control even if she felt the buzz of stretched nerves as she reached for a rubber bullet and found she had none left. Things were happening slow and fast. She was trained. She was responding to a threat to her life and body. She was making decisions. (275)

The repetition makes the reader question the veracity of the statement, “She was trained.” Is this free indirect discourse suggesting she is just
trying to convince herself? Nevertheless, at least in some way, the reader understands when she “goes live” and fires—just as we begin to understand King, the young woman racing toward her, and the protester we have also been following throughout the novel. In an interview, Yapa explains, “Julia . . . was one of my favorite characters to write. How do you write a cop so that she’s not just a cop, but she’s a human? She has a family, and in writing her, I was trying to find ways that I could empathize with her choices and not just fall back into things ‘as seen on TV’” (Patrick). Yapa’s choice to manipulate the time of this passage is emphasized as he repeats the scene from various perspectives (alternating the points of view of Julia, Park, King, Victor, and finally Bishop), circling around the moment, both spatially and temporally, creating that ever-present now.

Yapa concludes his novel in a remarkable way, breaking away from this moment in the action to tell us what people at home or at work were seeing on their televisions: “In their living rooms and dens. Gathering outside the café. Dozens in the street watching through the window. Their hands going to their mouths” (289). They see running and jumping on the streets. They see the tape loop of the black-hooded protester smashing a window: “On the TV black-hooded protesters threw a newspaper box into the window of a Starbucks. The footage was on a loop. They smashed the window. They smashed it again. Smash. Smash. Smash. They smashed the window. They smashed it again” (290). This one event, magnified and repeated ad infinitum becomes a metonym for protest as a whole. This strategy mirrors similar scenes in other texts, such as Selma, in which the now-iconic televised scenes are incorporated into reenacted reaction shots. Yapa flips the media-controlled sound bite by juxtaposing next “[w]hat the TV did not show,” which picks up with the characters we have been following. One police officer, Park, threatened by a mob, is recognized as a hero of the Oklahoma City bombing, having rescued over thirty people. One of the organizers, who had kept his distance, lays down in the street in acquiescence. Julia must come to terms with just having shot a live round at a protester. Yapa expands the focus: “The TV didn’t show the hospitals or schools or prisons” (298) that would be affected by the events. The chapter concludes with the protester who had been shot and was being taken to the hospital: the TV “didn’t show all she knew or all she believed and it didn’t show how she might in some way live in this world the way it was”
To drive the point home, Yapa then shows us one more image of what is displayed on TV, in this case, President Clinton arriving by plane, with the scrolling banner summing the whole event “VIOLENT PROTESTERS CLASH WITH POLICE. And then the TV cut to a commercial of a family eating hamburgers in their car” (302). The sum of the events is expressed in the sound bite of the news caption. Unable to contain the experiences of those involved, empathy is cut off, and the consumption of activism is complete.

**Conclusion**

As protests continue in the United States and around the world, it is imperative to be able to comprehend the motivations and experiences of this phenomenon. If the United States was born of protest, it is also true that protest is part of a fundamental human nature. Where protest literature in the traditional sense is a call to action, the literature of protest is both an act of understanding and at times a call to action. Understanding that distinction is certainly a project of the humanities—as one of the national guardsmen says in David Hassler’s *May 4th Voices*, “[t]o put yourself in the mind-set of the four or five days the led up to that. On both sides” (36). If left to the media, their representations of protest will only further strengthen the binary and partisan divisions that already exist. The literature of protest, through its ability to effect reflection and evoke empathy, can break down those barriers and allow a productive discussion to happen. It is not guaranteed that this genre will continue; it may be just a momentary blip, like the 1960s or 1840s England, caused by a confluence of historical events, but whether starting in the local book club or the classroom, these texts will provide a powerful remedy to the media’s oversimplification of these events.

**Notes**

1. Fairey’s cover is based on a Ted Soqui photograph of Sarah Mason, an Occupy L.A. protester. Responding to the stylized use of his photo, Soqui noted, “I think what they’re trying to do is not make it about the
person, but the feeling” (qtd. in Wilson). I would certainly extend that to what I call the literature of protest; it is not so much about the plot or character but the feeling elicited.

2. The website rallylist.com, in addition to being a clearinghouse for upcoming protests, rallies, and demonstrations, features a store where one can purchase T-shirts with protest-related sayings, “resist” bumper stickers, and both MAGA hats and Trump toilet paper.

3. Scott Saul’s 2009 review essay in American Literary History, “Protest Lit 101,” includes Zoe Trodd’s anthology (2006), as well as Coles and Zandy’s American Working-Class Literature anthology (2007) and T. V. Reed’s The Art of Protest: Culture and Activism from the Civil Rights Movement to the Streets of Seattle (2005). If the review essay can be viewed as further evidence of the establishment of the field, the title is more than apt. Essays on teaching protest literature are numerous, including Lauter and Thill.

4. Many novels contain isolated scenes of resistance. Depending on how central they are to the plot determines how they may be classified. Elizabeth Gaskell’s North and South (1854), while an example of the “condition of England” novel, arguably does not focus critically on the factory protests, although in one important scene Margaret Hale inserts herself between factory owner John Thornton and the uprising workers and is accidentally injured, affecting the behavior of the men. Similarly, Winston Groom’s Forrest Gump includes several scenes in which Forrest is caught up unwittingly into the anti-Vietnam protests (much like Barnaby Rudge in Dickens’s novel). While only a small part of the overall plot, these scenes, in both Gaskell and Groom, reveal aspects of the dynamics of protest.

5. In what could be considered a subgenre of the literature of protest, the labor union/strike film is an exception to the general lack of examples before 2000. On the contrary, labor and union films actually witnessed a spike in the 1970s and 1980s, with examples such as The Molly Maguires (1970), Sometimes a Great Notion (1970), Norma Rae (1979), Matewan (1987), and the documentaries Harlan County USA (1976) and Roger & Me (1989) likely highlighting the turbulent period in actual
labor history during the 1970s that was later suppressed in the 1980s. For an account of the historical period, see essays collected in Brenner, Brenner, and Winslow.

6. The Arab Spring movement has already produced several accounts, but as with the 1960s student movements, most are documentary in nature. I have limited this preliminary study to American and British examples, but for Egyptian examples, see Mona Prince’s Revolution Is My Name and Ahdaf Soueif’s Cairo: My City, Our Revolution. The 1989 Tiananmen Square protests have also sparked a subgenre of sorts. For a detailed account, see Kong. One well-known example of the Tiananmen Square protests is Ha Jin’s The Crazed, although it is only in the last third of the book that the protagonist literally stumbles onto the protests.

7. More recent significant protests provide material for reflection: the 1999 WTO protests in Seattle are the focus of not only Yapa’s work but also Stuart Townsend’s film The Battle for Seattle (2008); the Occupy Wall Street events in Zuccotti Park, while not engendering yet a full-length novel, have elicited short fiction as well as a number of documentaries.

8. I would argue that two significant strands exist within the literature of protest. One is the narrative of protest and riot, where the plot revolves around participation in the action: Yapa, Lewis, Johnson, and the films Selma and Bread and Roses are good examples that provide firsthand experience of either historical or fictional protests. Norman Mailer’s The Armies of the Night (1968) is an earlier example of this and blends fiction and nonfiction during Mailer’s personal experience on the 1967 March on the Pentagon. Most of these climax at the moment when protest turns to riot. For a treatment of riots in literature, see Bell and Porter’s collection of essays. The literature of protest demonstrates how the line between protest and riot is thin, and a variety of causes, large and small, can cause a tipping point. And two is the narrative of consequences, which follows a radical protester or activist usually from age twenty-something into middle age, when the former activist must then deal with the ramifications of youthful actions that had fatal results: Spiotta and Kunzru’s novels raise the question of personal responsibil-
ity during a politically charged moment in time. Both strands, though, challenge the readers or viewers to question their understanding of and their sympathies with those involved in protests, revealing motivations to actions that seem in the media to be random and senseless. The latter strand, especially, challenges traditional historiographical approaches by upsetting received notions of radical activists through nonchronological narrative techniques.

9. As another example of a contemporary subgenre, the literature of protest can be viewed akin to the academic or campus novel, which is ostensibly set on a college campus but whose action may range widely. Commentators on the genres have identified the academic or campus novel as relying on scenes of instruction, which may or may not be in a classroom: the dorm bull session, the cafeteria, the quad, the road trip. The genre often bears out received wisdom that “real education” happens more outside the classroom than in. As a corollary, then, the literature of protest may suggest the dynamic between external and internal protest: in other words, the change of heart that occurs based on what is happening on the streets.

10. Both Selma and Lewis and Aydin’s March: Book 3 dramatically begin with the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing in September 1963. Lewis begins directly, but DuVernay chooses to segue into a scene showing the children descending the church stairs from the opening scene between King and his wife at the Nobel Prize ceremony, which actually took place in October 1964. King’s voice-over of his acceptance speech connects the two scenes as one of the children remarks that she wants her hair to be like Coretta Scott King’s before their discussion is cut short by the explosion. The temporal, chronological connection is ambiguous, mainly as King, in his speech, seems to foreshadow the deaths with the line, “I accept this honor for our lost ones, whose deaths pave our path,” but in a chronological/historical sense is eulogizing them.

11. See, for instance, Julia Hollingsworth’s CNN Style article, “Why Protests Are Becoming Increasingly Faceless.” Hollingsworth describes, in particular, the methods protesters use to outwit facial recognition technology used by police. Become faceless is necessary to avoid arrest, especially afterward.
12. *Salon* published a cluster of four stories inspired by Occupy Wall Street in October 2011, including Karen Bender’s “The Stockbroker Who Deep Down Wanted to Join In”, Alison Espach’s “This Sunday”, Fiona Maazel’s “We Was Twins”, and Marcy Dermansky’s “Whole Foods Was around the Corner.” What is represented in these stories is the variety of participants and the level of participation in protests. These stories reflect what Ra Page writes in her introduction to her anthology of protest stories: “The short story rejects this version of events [Thomas Carlisle’s Great Man theory] because, as a form, it has evolved to prioritise the non-heroes—the bystanders, the disenfranchised, the ‘submerged’ (as Frank O’Connor would say). And when it comes to ‘world events,’ none are more suited to the short story than the protest. In a protest. we’re all bystanders” (xiv).

13. Part of the international Occupy movements, Occupy Melbourne started on October 15, 2011. After six days, like at Zuccotti Park, city officials “evicted” the estimated five hundred encamped protesters, sending in police forces who injured forty-three people and arrested ninety-five. Because the violence at these events was not as sustained or intense as the 1999 WTO protests in Seattle, media attention did not seem to last long and has since attracted more documentary projects than fictional responses. A quick search reveals over fifteen documentaries concerning Occupy Wall Street, including 99%: The Occupy Wall Street Collaborative Film (2013) and *Occupy Love* (2013). The narrative elements of these documentaries are, of course, interesting to examine as a corollary to the fictional representations.

14. Wright’s statement came in response to Baldwin’s 1949 essay “Everybody’s Protest Novel” published originally in *Zero* magazine and later in *Partisan Review*. Baldwin recounts the story that on the day the article was published in *Zero*, he encountered Wright at the Parisian restaurant the Brasserie Lipp. Wright felt betrayed by Baldwin when he insisted, “What do you mean, protest! . . . All literature is protest. You can’t name a single novel that isn’t protest.” Taken aback, having not intended the essay as a critique of Wright, Baldwin recounts that “he could only weakly counter that all literature might be protest but all protest was not literature” to which Wright replied, “Oh, here you come again with all that art for art’s sake crap” (197).
15. To follow up on the comparison made earlier with the campus novel, *Your Heart Is a Muscle the Size of a Fist* is akin to Jane Smiley’s *Moo*, which alternates perspectives from all aspects of university life, students, faculty, administration, alumni, townspeople, and state government officials, including the governor. While most campus and academic novels focus on one perspective, *Moo* successfully captures the oftentimes clashing viewpoints.

16. In a somewhat problematic scene, DuVernay shows what would appear to be “live” news coverage of the Edmund Pettus Bridge crackdown, when the technology did not even exist to allow such coverage. However, the immediacy of watching Martin Luther King’s reaction to seeing the violence—when he was supposed to have led the march—works to elicit the desired emotional response in the viewer. Another iconic scene used similarly is the Rodney King beating and subsequent L.A. riots. In an episode of *Doogie Howser, M.D.*, which was filmed in the immediate aftermath, television screens with the filmed news coverage feature prominently in the background of many scenes and much of the story’s action is based on characters’ reactions to what they see (“There’s a Riot”). In a sense, these texts, like other examples of the literature of protest, teach us how to react.

17. Ralph Young notes that “[o]f course dissent is not sui generis an American idea, but Americans have instinctively understood, even if mostly unconsciously, the interrelatedness of dissent and what it means to be an American. Dissent created this nation, and it played, indeed still plays, a fundamental role in fomenting change and pushing the nation in sometimes-unexpected directions” (1–2).

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Women at War: WWI, Patriarchy, and Conflict in Wonder Woman (2017)
Zachary Michael Powell

On hearing I was writing about 2017’s Wonder Woman, a female film scholar asked, “But why on earth did they give it a WWI setting?” Half a year later my male professor exclaimed in a one-on-one meeting, “My take on the film is that it’s just one big political ad for Hillary Clinton.” These views account for two of the most engaging aspects of Wonder Woman: it is both a historical portrayal of WWI in a superhero universe and a political pronouncement about the power of women. Thus, as a central methodology for the analysis below, genre theory recognizes that all genre films contain a mechanism of some cultural clash through the narrative in order for the genre to stay relevant (such as the poor boy and the rich girl in dance films) and that these conflicts are often shown as unsolvable or are repressed in fictive and unbelievable resolutions (Schatz 24). Therefore, I argue that Wonder Woman presents the cultural clash of a superpowered female with the historical setting of WWI in such a way that ignites the film’s core conflict: how is female power to be negotiated alongside the legacy of patriarchal violence and warfare.

In what follows, I first analyze why the historical setting of WWI and its remembered and forgotten aspects work better
than WWII to engender the genre’s inherent cultural conflict in Wonder Woman through the representation of a woman in a male war. Second, I discuss how the complicated politics of the superhero genre create a contradictory characterization of Diana when faced with the male patriarchal violence of WWI. Third, I argue that the film uses POV identification to align spectators with Diana’s superpowered perception. This perception is shown formally to suggest that her combat effectiveness is motivated by a will to help the downtrodden. Narratively, however, Diana’s perception actually reveals a misperception as she kills the wrong person, a German general who is not her supervillain antagonist. This perception and misperception allow a reading of how the movie reflects the complexities of women negotiating patriarchal dominance.

In adaptation, the film eschews the setting of WWII for WWI to heighten the clash between women and patriarchy’s wars. Throughout the comics, Diana found herself in WWII, not its precursor. These comics debuted during the actual war and responded to the imperatives of their own historical moment: they took part in American propaganda efforts against fascist ideologies. Thus, concerning the film’s adaptation, Ciara Wardlow challenges director Patty Jenkins’s assertion that Wonder Woman was changed from WWII to WWI because the latter’s nationalism, deadly rhetoric, and confused justifications mirror the contemporary moment. Disagreeing with Jenkins, Wardlow reads the film as not actually invested in displaying WWI’s historic conditions and their connections to today. Instead, she argues that the film seeks to paint the Germans of WWI like the Nazis that came after them and, at the same time, to distance itself from the WWII setting of Disney’s rival film Captain America: First Avenger (2011). In the end, Wardlow admits Wonder Woman occasionally makes good use of WWI as a backdrop, but she believes it missed an opportunity to make a larger statement using this particular historical moment. I assert that Jenkins’s use of WWI was well purposed but not for the reasons she maintains. My intent is to build on Wardlow’s criticisms as I see the film creating a clash between its female hero and the patriarchal violence of its time period, one that speaks to audiences today. War as a concept is important in the film, but it is not WWI’s historical particularities that are significant here but rather the remembrance of WWI as a bad war, a pointless war. For though liberty and freedom were also proclaimed
Women at War: WWI, Patriarchy, and Conflict in Wonder Woman (2017)

to be on the line in 1914–1918, as WWI progressed, popular opinion became unsure if this was true; thus, disillusion set in during and after the war. In American memory, if WWII is seen as “the good war,” WWI is understood as a meaningless war, where wholesale slaughter and carnage prevailed, young men were sacrificed by older men in power, and war changed everything that had come before. Hence, by moving its setting to WWI, the film can easily incriminate patriarchal power’s destructive violence through the memory of one of the worst wars in modern history.

However, even in Paul Fussell’s highly acclaimed book on WWI’s legacy, The Great War in Modern Memory, the predominant focus is on men. This leads Lynne Hanley to call out Fussell’s portrayal of male soldiers as victims in war. Instead, she argues that in order to put an end to war, the first step is to expose how patriarchy begets its violent destruction (34). Whether or not humans can ever end war, I take seriously Hanley’s critique of the characterization of male soldiers as victims in wars that stem from patriarchy, and I acknowledge that, as war has been waged throughout much of history, it is men who fight and propagate its violence while women have been forced to flee, nurse, or stay at home while loved ones die. Hanley makes clear that to challenge patriarchy is to challenge war, and vice versa. Likewise, Gilbert and Gubar, in their three-volume No Man’s Land, argue that during WWI “the gender transformations connected with the decline of faith in a white male supremacist empire” and “the rise of the New Woman” all “seem to have issued in a crisis that set the ‘whispering ambitions’ of embattled men and women against each other” (259). Thus, the war not only caused gender conflict but also saw women begin to contest male power because war exposed the flaw of patriarchy and its particular Western “white male supremacist” power structure. Hence, by setting Wonder Woman in the WWI era, Diana’s power conflicts with male power at the precise moment of patriarchy’s weakness.

Additionally, the film uses its historical setting to cognitively estrange audiences from contemporary gender relations, and this contributes to the significance of how Wonder Woman works as a genre film. Genre theory recognizes the importance of a new film’s cultural conflict staying relevant to its audience (Basinger 74); therefore, for those seeking to understand the superhero genre, Diana’s conflict with
the male leaders of the WWI time period is significant as it reflects tensions audiences may feel in the twenty-first century and explores how the genre attempts to stay relevant. For example, while the film does little to teach about the history of the political and belligerent situation, it does make several references to women’s position at this period in time. Women, audiences are alerted, do not have the vote. When Diana follows Steve into the war meeting of British leaders, the men hush and get angry that a woman is allowed to be present. Diana does not understand their hostility, which continues even after she discloses that she can read Sanskrit. Instead, women at this time are secretaries, like Steve’s secretary Etta. They are not soldiers, and the closest they come to war is through secretarial duties, as the role of nurse is left out of the film—one of the many elisions the film makes of its setting. During the 1940s, however, the boy’s club was being more specifically challenged in work, culture, and war. When Wonder Woman in her comics came to popularity during WWII, she showed the historical moment wrestling with “the implications of gender in representations of the nation” (Murphyao 42), where heroines such as Wonder Woman could “subvert male dominance” (52). To put it bluntly, WWII saw women with more power than in WWI, and therefore the film uses the latter to create a starker conflict between a superpowered woman and the dominant men in power. By putting Diana into conflict with the societal and political power relations that see women’s power diminished and male power seemingly absolute, the movie challenges contemporary spectators to contemplate their own moment through this window on historical gender relations. However, as the Western Front takes over the home front, the movie pushes this critique into an evaluation of women and war.

Thus, the original comic and 2017’s film adaptation navigated two very different wars regarding historical facts and cultural memory. The original comic saw Diana’s enemy Ares in a larger diegetic, where Ares was behind Mussolini and Hitler’s ideas and actions (Murphyao 47). In 2017’s Wonder Woman, it is not Mussolini and Hitler whom Ares urges on but General Ludendorff of the German army and his evil scientist accomplice, Dr. Poison. Here, Ares helps Ludendorff prolong WWI and the attrition of trench warfare, for Ludendorff is invested in furthering the technological developments, seen as created by Dr. Poison, that made the war so deadly. And it must be supposed that if the
filmmakers had kept WWII as the film’s setting, the killing of nine million in concentration camps with Zyklon-B and other methods would have to be implicated with Ares or would be an obvious ellipsis in such a plot. While the original comic artists might not have known of such atrocities, a contemporary story with any political resonance could not avoid them. Additionally, in such a hypothetical use of WWII for political critique, Ares would have to be implicated in inspiring the incendiary carpet bombing of Dresden and Tokyo as well as nuclear weapons, all used by the Allies. However, Wonder Woman, as a Hollywood superhero film, cannot be directly political in this way: it might hurt profits. Instead, it must subvert its politics into the cultural clash of genre, which is understood as a ritual where consumer audiences return again and again to witness cultural problems and their (im)possible solutions (Schatz 31). And the film does so by evoking WWI’s memory of meaningless slaughter through film clichés depicting the horror of that war—the mud, trenches, barbed wire, entering of no man’s land, and more (Sorlin 20). All these are connected to Ares, who in turn stands for the patriarchal instigators of war—leaders in the WWI era who blindly urged war on. Therefore, rather than going against the grain of cultural memory of the two wars, they used WWI’s mythos and visual clichés to propel the film’s core conflict, as such visuals stand for the terrible outgrowth of male violence.

One last comment on WWI’s memory is this: while WWI does have a standing memory of horror, its specifics are less clear for the American public, allowing Wonder Woman to shape for its own purposes what is a vague history in the minds of viewers. Beyond the images of the Western Front and the knowledge of the war’s overall meaninglessness, there is not much a normal viewer might bring with them to contend with the film’s portrayal. Thus, the film avoids WWII not only because of Captain America but also because a more thorough political engagement with that war, implicating it in atrocity, would be harder as it is ensconced in American’s memory as “the good war.” Additionally, WWI allows a historical setting in the film that is less about understanding the factual specifics of WWI than about highlighting gender conflict through the use of its memory as a bad war. The trench as a place of men fighting while they are urged to their death by distant and clueless male leaders; the war as a conflict that has no point except that
it should end (as opposed to WWII’s more positive call to end fascism and liberate countries and peoples from its grasp); and a visual aesthetic of devastation—all are used in the film to underscore the destructive capability of patriarchy.

In her comic book history, Diana’s contradiction between destroyer of patriarchy and a destroyer as a female soldier has been played out. Superheroes and their comic books have a double-faced relationship to politics, a relationship that is made even more complicated when they are put into film. Marc DiPaolo chronicles this relationship when he admits the genre seeks a delicate balance between political content and sales (25). DiPaolo also comments that liberal writers’ use of the conservative adventure format is not always effective (23) and that when the whole of Wonder Woman’s comic history is examined, two Wonder Womans exist: a “traditional-yet-still-progressve Wonder Woman” and “a militant Wonder Woman” (86). All this goes to say that the conflict between patriarchy and Diana Prince concerns her navigating the battlefield and the choices she makes in doing so. If there exist a feminist call to end wars that are perpetrated by patriarchy and another call for female participation in war as necessary activity, both calls are rooted in the character of Diana Prince. This duality is part of the film’s clash of a superpowered woman with its WWI moment. She is a warrior, trained because she wanted to be—even against her own mother’s wishes. Throughout the film, she seems eager to kill Ares, though her character up into the 1970s was known for and heralded by Gloria Steinem for not killing her enemies (Duncan and Smith 833). In the film, her sword is even called “The God Killer.” When given the chance, she kills Ludendorff without pause, who as it turns out is not Ares after all. Thus, Diana’s own service to end the war speaks of contradictions and ethical dilemmas that exist for women in such an endeavor.

As the film seeks resonance with contemporary audiences by using WWI for a cultural clash around its setting and its female hero, it engages in visual and narrative contrasts in order to make the viewer experience such a clash. Through identification with Diana, the audience is presented with her superpowered perception both formally and narratively, a perception that is sharper and more accurate than those of her male comrades. Such identification straps viewers in the seat to feel the conflict of the cultural clash between Diana and patriarchy most
intensely. Formally, Diana’s perception is most obvious when she crosses no man’s land halfway through the movie. This is because WWI trench warfare is mainly communicated in film by shot/reverse shot, which is also used to situate audience identification with a character. The shot/reverse shot structure of film editing is common practice to show a person in the first shot and what they are looking at in the second. In the film, Diana is introduced to the Allied lines via this editing format when she sees civilians fleeing, a horse being beaten, a civilian boy calling for his mother, and a man with a missing leg screaming in anguish. And though Diana is distressed, Steve tells her there is little she can do as this is the nature of such a war: it is too big to help everyone and be everywhere.

When Diana resolves to take back a captured Belgian town for the refugees she meets and propels herself into no man’s land, one reading is that the film—through Diana’s will to help these people—reinforces the myth of females having stronger emotions than men. At the same time, it is important to remember that Diana is also trained as a warrior, a path she chose in the first half of the movie, and thus her perception gained from this early training is shown in the formal process of the scene’s editing. When Diana decides she will go over the top, slow motion accompanies her decision. This becomes a part of the movie’s aesthetic when depicting Diana in combat, suggesting the character’s hyper-perceptive ability, for she is seemingly invincible to bullets via her ability to track and block each one with her gauntlets and shield. When she climbs into no man’s land, the first bullet POV occurs: the audience hears the shot on the soundtrack first, and the bullet is followed by the camera above and slightly to the side. This shot tracks the bullet as it traverses no man’s land only to be blocked by Diana’s gauntlet in a shower of glittering sparks—all in slow motion. Then, in the shot that focuses just on Diana’s legs running, regular motion is used. She runs while bullets spray the ground at her feet. Bullets kick up dirt and fill the air around her. Thus, she is forced to block the machine guns with her shield. Along the way, the shot/reverse shot is used. And although the shots of the Germans getting on their firing step and loading a mortar seem not to be from any POV, Diana’s reaction to their aim makes it believable that these shots are extensions of her perceptive powers. For example, when the mortar, which is deep in the trench where Diana
could not possibly see it, is loaded and fired, she instinctively takes off her shield and knocks the incoming shell off to her left where it explodes. Thus, in this scene, her main superpower is the power of perception, and the formal editing techniques of the sequence allow viewers identifying with Diana to share this perception. Thus, viewers are aligned with the superpowered perception and against a war that limits perception and immobilizes the men who fight it.

While the formal encoding places the viewer inside Diana’s perception, the film’s narrative causality sees to it that the audience shares the correct and incorrect perceptions Diana has on her search for the patriarchal cause of the war—Ares. A superhero film must have a villain just as most Westerns do, and Ludendorff takes the role of villain for most of the film. The Germans themselves are said to be bad, for the Belgian mother tells Diana that the Germans have enslaved her fellow townspeople. The movie uses this characterization of the Germans to supply the motivation for Diana to begin her attack. After this, Ludendorff, who has employed Dr. Poison to make a gas lethal enough to break through masks, uses said gas against the civilians of the town Diana and her companions have just saved. At the film’s end, he plans to bomb London with the gas. Thus, the movie banks on the audience’s cultural memory of WWII and Nazi brutality (and lack of WWI specifics) to play a longer end game with the viewer: it convinces the viewer that Ludendorff is Ares. Ludendorff becomes a mad, Hitler-like character. His villainy is for the sake of a German victory; thus, audiences believe—as Diana does—that he is Ares. But he is not, for Ares is actually Sir Patrick Morgan, a member of Britain’s Imperial War Cabinet. Diana’s perception, and the audience’s identification with her, is fooled by the “us” versus “them” mentality of patriarchal wars.

And it is this mistake that shows Diana’s warrior side most clearly, an error that sees her falling for war’s violent and divisive ideology, another extension of patriarchal power. Throughout the narrative, Diana keeps insisting that she must kill Ares for the war to stop. Other characters do not believe her and are motivated only by stopping Ludendorff and Dr. Poison’s manufacture of the deadly gas. Thus, while Diana knows that the patriarchy is continuing the war through the film’s symbolic simplification of the villain being the male god of war, her flaw is to mistake him as a part of the enemy of her lover, Steve, and to look for
Ares as German, not British. This is exactly the reason for the historical altering of WWI, the turning of a real German general into an evil villain: it points to a contradiction through history. In the movie’s narrative, Ludendorff is a maniac that should be stopped. In real history, he was simply another man propagating war as all the leaders were. Thus, Diana must negotiate patriarchy and its violence. As a warrior, she must take sides in a fight and kill the enemy. However, she learns she has been mistaken, been tricked alongside the audience—all are deceived by patriarchal corruption. Both Diana and audiences learn this when Sir Patrick reveals himself, understanding that the real enemy is those pulling the strings, the men leading the combatants.

While Diana kills Ares to bring about the end of this war, she is not able to end war altogether. Like the understanding that genre films contain cultural conflict but are unable to provide real solutions in the end, Wonder Woman’s ending understands the patriarchy to continue and wars to proliferate long after WWI’s armistice. Perhaps, this is another reason, besides trauma and loss, that Diana walks away from being a warrior, taking up the mantle of an art historian instead, for under patriarchy the villainous man will always ascend to continue patriarchy’s power, propagating violence for man and woman alike. However, the ending of the frame story sees her wielding her warrior side once again in the present day, possibly ready to jump into another war. The perceptive woman will continue to fight, but will it be to end war as outgrowth of patriarchy or can it only continue the cycle of violence?

In the end, the film doesn’t end. For just like our endless wars, superhero films are just one flashpoint in a longer narrative. Wonder Woman will have its sequel in Wonder Woman 1984. Both sides of Diana will be seen again, fighting. Whether that sequel uses the 1980s to critique patriarchy at the same time that it is inescapably wedded to its ideology is yet to be seen. But WWI will continue to point out patriarchy’s violent flaws, as do other wars of atrocity and male machismo: Vietnam, for instance—a war that Wonder Woman 1984 eschews, choosing instead to participate in a Rocky III style 1980s showdown. Most importantly, how will the sequel attempt to keep the superhero genre relevant and Diana among these heroes, as more and more films with superpowered women appear? Could contemplating war and patriarchy through genre’s mechanism of cultural clash still be the...
answer? In the twenty-first century, in the “contested and complex” relationship between women and war (Mohanty et al. 2), “there has been a female face to the wars on/of terror” that has been used in American capitalism’s gender rebranding of power (Eisenstein 27). Diana Prince gives us the chance to reflect upon this face, to understand the contradictions and labyrinths thrust upon women negotiating power under patriarchy and endless war. As for these wars and the wars to come, whether women become inculcated in patriarchal violence’s destruction or not—finding arenas of diplomacy perhaps unseen—it will be up to the wonder women among us to tell.

Works Cited


Depuis l’invention de la photographie au dix-neuvième siècle et de ses reproductions mécaniques et digitales au vingtième siècle, l’image d’un individu peut être aisément diffusée à grande échelle. Cette visibilité, indispensable aux célébrités pour leur renommée, n’est pas sans créer un rapport délicat avec leurs admirateurs. En effet, ces derniers les reconnaissent mais sans réciprocité. Nathalie Heinich souligne cette problématique dans son ouvrage *De la visibilité*: “Une autre difficulté constitutive de l’identité de star est la gestion de la frontière entre espace public et espace privé […] il faut l’envisager aussi dans sa dimension psychique, du point de vue du sujet, englobant l’image de soi telle qu’elle est perçue par lui, telle qu’elle est représentée à autrui et telle qu’elle est renvoyée par autrui” (474). Suite au tragique accident de la princesse Diana qui fut amplement attribué par la famille à l’intrusion des journalistes dans sa vie personnelle, les célébrités ont revendiqué le droit de protéger leur existence intime. Ainsi, la duchesse Catherine Middleton et son époux le prince William, duc de Cambridge, ont assigné en justice le magazine français *Closer* et le journal *Le Provençal* pour avoir publié en 2012 des photos de la duchesse seins nus sans leur consentement lors d’un séjour estival dans le sud de la France.1
En France, l’actrice Julie Gayet, partenaire de l’ancien président de la République française François Hollande, a récemment rappelé, dans le magazine *Le Point* sa position face aux publications des médias sur sa vie personnelle: “Je suis plus tranquille aujourd’hui. Peut-être que les journaux comprennent désormais que ma vie privée est ma vie privée. En tout cas, à chaque fois qu’il y aura quelque chose sur ma vie privée, j’attaquerai les journaux. Ils ont compris cela.” Cette revendication du respect de leur existence privée, certaines célébrités l’estiment essentielle à leur équilibre, comme Emma Watson le soulignait en 2015. Elle précise, lors d’une interview dans le magazine français *Madame Figaro*, avoir choisi d’interrompre momentanément sa brillante carrière cinématographique qui l’éloignait de ses propres centres d’intérêt:

Vous savez, cette industrie et la célébrité peuvent vous consumer. Je venais de passer plus de la moitié de mon existence à vivre la vie de quelqu’un d’autre. J’étais comme dans une boule en verre, protégée dans ma bulle mais scrutée et attendue par des millions de personnes à l’extérieur. Il devenait vital pour moi de passer enfin du temps à vivre ma vie, la vraie, afin de découvrir ce qui m’intéressait et quelle serait ma voie.

Dans cet article, c’est justement l’impact de la renommée sur la vie personnelle et la redécouverte de soi que nous étudions dans le cas de l’écrivaine Mazarine Pingeot qui fut impliquée enfant dans l’atmosphère médiatique de son père. Nous nous intéressons plus précisément à son ouvrage *Bon petit soldat* publié en 2012 dans lequel elle dévoile son enfance cachée, puis sa révélation soudaine dans la presse, et les conséquences sur sa relation à l’espace public. Lors de la parution de cet écrit, Pingeot avait déjà publié huit ouvrages (six romans, un essai, un récit de filiation) et ne cessera de poursuivre une activité littéraire soutenue jusqu’au roman *Se taire*, fort bien reçu par la critique en automne 2019. Dans son œuvre, le silence, les secrets de famille, la quête des origines, la mémoire sont des thèmes récurrents, souvent évoqués en rapport avec des événements médiatiques contemporains.

Fille de la maîtresse de l’homme politique François Mitterrand, Pingeot estime avoir été victime de la célébrité puisque son père décida
lorsqu’il accéda à la présidence de la République française en 1981 qu’elle ne devait jamais s’afficher à ses côtés en société afin de protéger sa réputation. Cachée à l’âge de six ans de la vie publique de son père, elle a donc grandi dans l’anonymat jusqu’au jour où, à dix-neuf ans, un journaliste l’a révélée brutalement aux Français. En effet, une photo d’elle prise à son insu en compagnie de son père fit la une du magazine Paris Match en 1994. Elle devint subitement une personnalité reconnue qui devait assumer à la fois, les positions politiques paternelles, auxquelles elle n’adhérait pas forcément, et sa situation d’enfant naturelle. Afin de corriger les idées qu’elle jugeait erronées sur son existence, elle rédige Bouche Cousue en 2005, qu’elle qualifie dans une interview avec Marianne Payot, de “coming out” puisqu’elle y révélait sa vie cachée d’enfant et d’adolescente par rapport à sa relation intime au père. Il lui avait été en effet nécessaire à l’époque de dévoiler l’homme qui lui était familier puisque la figure du Président qui lui parvenait par le biais de la télévision ou de la presse écrite lui était étrangère: “J’ai du mal à faire coïncider les images,” déclare-t-elle dans cette même interview. Cependant, cette prise de parole qui correspondait aussi au désir de se démarquer de son père n’eut pas l’effet escompté puisque la presse people a continué à l’associer à l’homme politique et à l’accuser d’avoir vécu à la charge des contribuables français: “Il y a comme ça des sujets interdits, on en fait un livre et on pense être délivré de la muselière. On se trompe, comme toujours. Quand ‘moi’ est un sujet tabou, il le demeure,” rappelle-t-elle dans son deuxième livre Bon petit soldat (14). Face à des attaques persistantes, elle tente ainsi de s’expliquer et par là même d’expliquer au public les rouages d’une existence médiatisée malgré elle.

Cet ouvrage se présente sous la forme d’un journal intime dans lequel Pinget consigne des réflexions tant sur sa vie personnelle que publique, pendant la course à l’élection présidentielle de 2012 à laquelle elle prit part, aux côtés du candidat socialiste François Hollande. Françoise Simonet-Tenant souligne que ce genre d’écrit est très en demande par les maisons d’éditions depuis les années 1990 afin d’offrir au public une optique personnelle du monde politique français: “il s’agit de confier à des personnalités bien connues du public le soin de tenir une année durant un journal qui confiera leurs réactions à l’état du monde” (Le Journal 157). Pinget précise cependant que le désir d’écrire lui vint au début de cette campagne puisqu’elle la replongea dans celle de son père.
de 1988 alors qu’elle n’avait que quatorze ans, et où elle ne pouvait revendiquer sa filiation au président de la République française. Elle souligne d’ailleurs dans son interview avec Payot: “l’effet de déjà-vu a enclenché la dynamique. Assez vite après le Bourget [le premier grand meeting de Hollande], j’ai commencé à écrire.” Elle aborde à nouveau son enfance par le biais d’une réévaluation de la condition à laquelle ses parents l’avaient assujettie et des conséquences de sa révélation au public. Cet ouvrage va cependant au-delà du récit d’une existence peu ordinaire adressé aux lecteurs, ces derniers étant toujours à la recherche de détails privés d’une personne connue. Selon notre hypothèse, par le biais d’une écriture rétrospective sous forme de journal intime, Pingeot dénonce la culture de la célébrité véhiculée dans les magazines people, en révélant l’impact sur une enfant en construction identitaire. Nous verrons dans un premier temps que l’auteure se place en observatrice de son existence afin d’en évaluer les particularités. La mise à distance de cette époque lui fait prendre conscience de la dichotomie de son enfance et des implications sur sa personnalité. Néanmoins, une résistance à poursuivre son travail de réflexion émerge face à ce passé qui la dépasse encore. Nous montrons ainsi dans un deuxième temps que le recours à des témoignages de vie, difficilement concevables pour autrui, qui occupent son écriture, contribue à cerner et à mieux accepter sa situation paradoxale d’enfant non reconnue d’un père connu. Cette démarche scripturale rejoint un travail thérapeutique psychologique dont Alex Mucchielli rappelle le processus:

Il y a d’abord la prise de conscience. Celle-ci se fait par une réflexion sur les frustrations éprouvées, les revendications énoncées, les perturbations ressenties… Cette introspection n’est pas facile […]. Elle nécessite la présence d’un analyste (psychologue ou sociologue) capable d’aider l’individu à élucider ses sentiments, mais aussi et surtout ses propres rituels, ses propres scénarii complexuels, ses propres manques, pour affronter autrement la situation. (L’Identité, 122)

Dans l’ouvrage Bon petit soldat qui nous intéresse ici, Pingeot parvient à s’affirmer à part entière aux yeux d’autrui en créant au sein de son
écriture un espace dont elle définit les frontières: avoir une vie privée qu'elle dévoile à son gré et avoir la possibilité d'évoluer dans la société non plus en tant que porte-parole des idées de François Mitterrand, mais bien en tant que Madame Mazarine Pingeot, professeure de philosophie au niveau universitaire, écrivaine, et à diverses occasions chroniqueuse littéraire à la télévision et à la radio.

**Point de départ de la quête: des clarifications essentielles**

Pingeot fait précéder son journal d'un préambule où elle souligne une certaine complexité quant à la forme de son entreprise scripturale. Elle y apporte des précisions autant pour elle-même, dans la prise de conscience de ce que furent ses conditions de vie, que pour le lecteur à venir: "Pour comprendre ce récit qui n'en est pas un, il faut expliquer quelques éléments biographiques, à l'instar des romans de Dostoïevski où l'on peut invariablement trouver une bible qui apprend qu'Aliosha est aussi Alexis, mais aussi Alexéi [...]. Vous-mêmes répondez à plusieurs prénoms et diminutifs — mais comme vous avez du mal à vous nommer, ils n'apparaîtront pas" (11). Elle choisit de se situer comme autre dans cette réflexion scripturale en reconnaissant l’impact persistant d’avoir été cachée, et d’avoir encore du mal à s’inscrire dans son écriture. Comme nous l’avons déjà évoqué elle précise donc sa préférence à utiliser le “vous” pour se désigner. “Quand ‘moi’ est un sujet tabou, il le demeure” (14), déclare-t-elle en rappelant sa situation peu ordinaire au sein de sa famille:

Vous êtes l’enfant d’une femme et d’un homme — jusque-là comme tout le monde bien que la science ait fait des progrès en la matière. Cet homme a une haute fonction dans la République, la plus haute en réalité, mais ceci n’est vrai qu’à partir de vos six ans. Par ailleurs, il a une femme, qui n’est pas votre mère, mais son épouse officielle, avec laquelle il ne vit plus mais dont il n’a jamais divorcé, et qui l’accompagne dans ses déplacements professionnels; deux fils de ce lit, que vous n’avez rencontrés qu’à sa mort. (11)

Le prologue, qui rappelle la place de chacun dans l’échiquier familial, met en perspective la problématique liée à sa relation aux espaces privé/
public auxquels elle dut faire face, mais dont elle veut se dégager. Elle
donne ainsi le ton de son entreprise, celui de la transparence, élément
justement absent de son enfance et rappelle sans ambages ce qui l’a défi-
nie pendant tant d’années: “Vous avez été chassée de l’histoire officielle”
(18).

Pingeot ouvre son journal à la date du 8 janvier 2012, jour
anniversaire du décès de son père, ancrage narratif équivalent à celui de
son ouvrage précédent. Notons que, dans la plupart des écrits qui s’at-
tachent à revisiter une enfance caractérisée par des incompréhensions,
les auteurs peinent à démarrer leur récit. Ils évoquent alors l’événement
qui les a profondément marqués sans saisir précisément la raison de leur
choix et l’orientation de leur quête à venir.5 Pingeot débute son écrit le
jour des funérailles paternelles en 1996 où elle put apparaître au côté
de la famille Mitterrand. Cet événement qui a officialisé son existence
semble l’autoriser à s’exprimer. Il ne s’agit pas d’une écriture romancée ni
pour elle-même ni pour autrui, mais d’une expression qui reflète à la fois
ses pensées vis-à-vis du présent et un regard distancié sur son existence.
Cette écriture hybride, diariste et autobiographique, se justifie pour
Françoise Simonet-Tenant lorsque l’auteur désire l’utiliser comme pièce
to conviction:

Cette rupture de la perspective rétrospective peut être
motivée par le désir de se servir du journal comme
d’une preuve (une manière de certificat d’exactitude
informative): le journal parce qu’il est rédigé à chaud
n’encourt pas l’accusation, réitérée à l’encontre de l’autobiographie, de recomposition altérée de l’existence ou
de reconstruction mensongère. (Le Journal 22)

Pingeot révèle en effet une propension à craindre la non crédibilité de
ses affirmations qui reflète une enfance où la construction de sa filiation
au père en société, donc son rapport à autrui hors de la sphère intime,
etait inexistante. Le choix du “vous” indique certes l’appréhension à
s’approprier cette histoire mais aussi une stratégie pour séduire le lec-
teur à venir. Il ne s’agit pas de l’auteure Mazarine Pingeot qui tente en
racontant son vécu de justifier sa position de victime au risque de s’atti-
rer de nouveaux détracteurs. Elle délègue ses affirmations à une “autre
écrivaine” qu’elle, ce qui peut atténuer la portée de ses propos pour le lecteur. Thomas Clerc note au sujet de la rhétorique de l’autobiographie qu’il s’agit avant tout d’un jeu de persuasion à l’égard du lecteur et de mise en scène de soi par le langage” (Les Écrits 8). Jean-Philippe Miraux note également un choix particulier d’expression chez Rousseau dans ses Confessions puisqu’il traite d’un sujet personnel, bien différent de ceux de ses écrits précédents : “Il s’agira alors de repenser la question du style. Mieux encore, peut-être, d’inventer une écriture susceptible d’épouser les contours flous d’un moi que le sujet doit dire” (L’Autobiographie 7). Gisèle Mathieu-Castellani souligne à cet effet la propension du biographe à se situer en coupable devant un “tribunal imaginaire,” en avouant des faits jusque-là inconnus d’autrui (La Scène 39).

Pingeot s’applique néanmoins à reconsidérer son existence de manière méthodique, en s’appuyant sur des souvenirs précis qui ont marqué son enfance.

Réévaluation d’une existence dichotomique

Le premier élément sur lequel Pingeot appuie sa réflexion est la prévalence d’antagonismes dans sa vie de petite fille: “On pouvait se voir, se toucher, s’appeler ‘papa maman chéris’ sans oreilles indiscrètes, en toute liberté. Au-dehors, il fallait se cacher” (194); “[En public], elle [votre mère] appelait votre père ‘Monsieur le Président’. Chez vous, c’était ‘Tchékino’” (12). Elle souligne également des oppositions au sein même de cette vie cachée où elle connut d’un côté les jets privés présidentiels, les voitures officielles avec gyrophares pour se déplacer avec son père, mais où au quotidien, sa mère l’amenait à l’école à vélo et, comme une enfant ordinaire, elle restait à la cantine et à la garderie. Les deux sphères privée/publique aux limites clairement définies lui ont forgé une identité “caméléon” qu’elle rappelle: “Vous aviez plusieurs identités et vous deviez passer de l’une à l’autre sans vous tromper” (28). Cette dichotomie qu’elle retrace correspond à ce jeu d’espaces bien particulier auquel elle a été contrainte. Ayant obtempéré au désir de ses parents de renier sa filiation dans l’espace public, elle prend conscience de l’état d’infantilisme dans lequel ils la maintenaient et qui ne pouvait conduire qu’à une impasse. Elle reconnaît que sa prise d’indépendance fut difficile à l’adolescence, dans une période où justement se mesurer au monde est crucial pour se distinguer des parents. Ainsi, la décision de ces derniers
impliquait non seulement une invisibilité publique mais aussi l’interdiction de pénétrer le monde extérieur pour se mesurer à autrui et affirmer sa propre identité: “C’était votre adolescence: au moment-même où vous auriez dû l’affronter, ce monde, vous l’avez mis à distance, pour un long moment. Votre identité s’effilochait, et ne se reconstruisait nulle part ailleurs que dans la cellule familiale qui gardait de vous la forme enfantine” (44). Elle se remémore toutefois une sourde révolte à l’adolescence par rapport à un père qui menait une double vie. Elle fut tentée d’exiger de lui de prendre position, de “hurler ‘prends ta place ou va-t’en’” (31). Cependant, face à un être aimant, le rejet n’était pas de mise: “Enfant mauvaise, enfant ingrate. On n’a pas droit de détester son père quand il revient” (30). Cette culpabilité qui l’accompagne encore, puisque cet homme l’a réduite à l’anonymat public, tout en la valorisant dans la sphère privée, complique sa démarche actuelle pour se différencier de cette figure.

Affectée indirectement par la célébrité du père, la mise en exergue de ses conditions de vie antithétiques l’amène à tenter une rationalisation d’une situation peu commune et, comme elle l’écrit, à “sauver l’enfant de là-bas. L’enfant étouffé par l’amnésie et qui continue de se défendre dans votre corps d’adulte” (194). Pingeot s’interroge alors sur ce passé révolu dans lequel persistent bien des incompréhensions. Ainsi, les questions qui jalonnent sa réflexion tentent de démêler les fils d’une histoire qu’elle peine à cerner: “De quoi aviez-vous peur?” (28); “Quel danger planait ainsi pour que vous soyez gouvernée par cette terreur animale dans l’antre le plus protégi de France?” (29); “A l’ombre d’un homme politique, en vue, et en fonction, a-t-on le droit d’exister?” (128). Ces interrogations, Lori Saint-Martin les considère nécessaires dans son étude sur la représentation du père dans les romans québécois lorsque les auteurs peinent à saisir cette figure souvent absente: “patiente interrogation des images du passé, [l’] ardent désir de faire la part des choses” (Au-delà du nom 148). Pour Pingeot, l’équation est des plus complexes puisque cet homme fut présent à ses côtés, remplissait son rôle de père, mais ne se présentait simplement jamais aux Français en sa compagnie. Transgresser cette frontière publique-privée, c’était à l’époque ne pas offrir à ses parents ce qu’ils attendaient d’elle, et c’était aussi rompre un pacte au risque de provoquer un séisme politique. Elle saisit qu’elle fut en quelque sorte prise en otage et a dû assumer une

Si l’entreprise scripturale parvient à évoquer avec précision sa situation d’enfant cachée, elle constate qu’elle en est encore empreinte puisqu’en public une certaine confusion la submerge malgré sa filiation reconnue depuis plus de vingt ans: “Le protocole justement. Pas facile de savoir où s’asseoir. Parmi les invités? Au milieu des badauds? Dans le rang familial?” (21). Soulignons que si elle n’aura eu de cesse de transgresser adulte cette obéissance d’autrefois en occupant les médias et la scène littéraire française, ce n’est que dans cet ouvrage qu’elle révèle sa relation complexe à l’espace public. Elle reconnaît sa façon particulière d’appréhender autrui, d’avoir honte à parler d’elle-même publiquement, de se sentir exhibitionniste, et si elle accepte de paraître dans un magazine, c’est selon elle, “faire un peu la pute” (115). De même, la sensation de se sentir illégitime dans des situations précises continue à la poursuivre: ne pas mériter ce qu’on possède, exiger une augmentation de salaire, hésiter à prendre rendez-vous avec un médecin de peur de le déranger. Elle parvient néanmoins à mettre des mots sur ce qu’elle estime la définir: “Vous savez être tous les autres sauf vous-même” (188). L’écriture l’amène ainsi, par le biais d’une réévaluation systématique de son passé, à prendre conscience de son manque d’affirmation en société dont la raison remonte à ses années d’anonymat. Jean Biarnès rappelle à ce sujet: “la construction de soi passe aussi par soi, c’est-à-dire par la compréhension de ce qui nous a modelés jusqu’à ce présent si fugitif” (Le Propre de l’écriture 120).
L’entreprise scripturale se doit également d’aborder sa brusque révélation à la société française, lorsqu’à l’âge de dix-neuf ans, le magazine *Paris Match* dévoile son existence au public. Alors qu’elle n’évoluait que dans un univers protégé bien délimité, elle est subitement obligée d’apparaître en dehors de la famille, et se sent jetée en pâture au public: “Votre visage vous échappe, il appartient soudain à des millions de gens qui vous connaissent et vous reconnaissent alors qu’à priori vous avez toujours le même rapport avec eux: ce sont des inconnus. Mais ils obtenient par une alchimie incompréhensible un droit sur vous” (52). Les limites contraignantes qui rythmaient sa vie jusque-là, qu’elle respectait, et sur lesquelles elle s’était construite, disparaissent. Elle se sent dessaisie de sa relation privilégiée avec son père quand bon nombre de personnes qui connaissaient son existence s’autorisent à raconter des anecdotes au sujet de ce secret. Ce qui aurait pu être une reconnaissance publique n’a été pour elle qu’une intrusion dans son intimité. C’est une nouvelle dépossession d’elle-même sans recours à un quelconque dialogue. “Vous, vous n’avez jamais fait l’objet d’un choix” (14) remarque-t-elle. Le vouvoiement pour se désigner trouve alors sa justification puisque se nommer avec le “je” ne peut avoir sa place chez un être qui s’est construit sur un projet parental bien précis, pour ensuite devenir ce qu’elle évalue être la propriété d’autrui: “Vous, vous n’écrivez plus à la première personne. Vous écrivez sur ‘vous,’ et ‘vous’ est un autre” (86). Enfant cachée, puis adulte connue mais non reconnue puisque le public en fit la honte de la République, Pingeot est à même de saisir que ces deux événements antithétiques ont profondément marqué son rapport à l’espace public. Mucchielli rappelle que les expériences tant au niveau de la sphère intime que de la sphère publique structurent l’identité d’un individu: “Ainsi, à tous les stades de la vie, l’identité intérieure et l’identité sociale se développent ensemble” (*L’Identité* 87).

Néanmoins, si au cours de sa réflexion Pingeot parvient à exprimer et à prendre conscience des particularités de son existence, une difficulté surgit quant à l’utilité de son écriture: “Cet état des lieux étant fait, vous vous demandez à juste titre pourquoi vous continuez d’écrire” (95). Cette réaction se rencontre fréquemment dans les écrits personnels au moment où l’auteur saisit la nécessité d’aller au-delà de l’évocation de faits passés, c’est-à-dire d’en saisir la signification.
Intertextualité: prise de parole scripturale

L’hésitation à poursuivre son entreprise d’écriture révèle une appréhension à mesurer et à comprendre la motivation des deux décisions prises à son encontre par autrui (l’avoir cachée et l’avoir révélée), et de pouvoir transmettre une histoire peu commune. Elle s’appuie alors sur d’autres récits qui se rapprochent du sien, en particulier sur leurs stratégies scripturales. Ces points de comparaison qui jalonnent sa pensée sont une pratique courante selon Simonet-Tenant: “paradoxe du journal, centré sur la singularité d’un moi, que d’être pétri d’intertextualité. La lecture d’un journal peut être une stimulation, une motivation redoublée à l’écriture de soi” (Le Journal, 119). Il s’agit également d’une crainte de ne pas pouvoir transmettre son propre vécu et, par ailleurs, de le rendre crédible tout autant à autrui qu’à soi-même.

Sa réflexion se double alors d’une intertextualité lorsqu’elle retranscrit fidèlement des extraits d’ouvrages d’auteurs qui relatent des épisodes de vie liés aux camps de concentration. Les écrits personnels d’Hélène Berr déportée à vingt-trois ans, de Christa Wolf qui vécut près de camps de concentrations et d’Aharon Appelfeld qui, après s’être échappé d’un camp, s’est caché dans la forêt pendant quatre ans, accompagnent son travail d’introspection. “Pourtant, si un gouffre vous sépare, vous parvenez à le comprendre. Son livre est en fait le récit de sa lutte entre l’oubli et les ‘forces ténébreses’ qui ne demandent qu’à rejaillir” (131), écrit-elle au sujet du récit d’Appelfeld dans Histoire d’une vie. Les témoignages directs de ces écrivains, tout autant que leurs réflexions sur un vécu inconcevable, contribuent pour Pingeot à mieux évaluer les enjeux tant personnels que ceux liés au public qu’elle a connus et qu’elle rencontre encore: “Dans les moments où ça va mal, vous avez besoin de lire ces récits pour restituer leurs justes dimensions à vos angoisses” (160). Ces récits qu’elle rapproche du sien l’aident à mieux évaluer son vécu en regard de conditions similaires (exclusion), même si elle les reconnaît bien plus inhumaines que la sienne. En effet, en inscrivant leur témoignage dans sa réflexion, Pingeot reconnaît des éléments de sa propre histoire. De plus, leur incapacité à évoquer leur expérience la rassure dans sa propre difficulté à retranscrire son vécu. Elle remarque ainsi au sujet des écrits de Christa Wolf:
Au fond, sa douleur est celle de l’impossible témoignage: elle n’a pas été témoin des camps et pourtant elle a vécu à côté d’eux [...]. L’écriture alors est le seul témoignage possible. Elle invente cet espace vierge où l’être humain ne se rejoint jamais; cet espace où il y a rupture d’identité entre le ‘je’ vécu et le ‘je’ pensant. L’écriture doit faire le lien. (192)

L’intertextualité permet à Pingeot de mieux se situer dans l’échelle des conditions de vie liées à la contrainte d’une liberté de mouvements, ainsi que de soutenir ses impressions d’un vécu hors du commun où, nous l’avons déjà noté, affirmer un “je” reste un problème. Ce regard sur d’autres témoignages, qu’elle intègre à sa démarche, la libère du sentiment d’avoir été seule à vivre ce genre d’expérience. Inscrire son histoire dans un ensemble de vécus dont elle estime comprendre la particularité l’autorise à s’intégrer à un groupe, ce qui de ce fait valide son expérience.

Pingeot parvient alors à assumer sa destinée et peut se repositionner vis-à-vis du public, en ne se considérant plus victime d’une décision parentale et de celle d’un journaliste. Elle revendique à présent une place légitime dans l’espace public en évoquant des opinions personnelles afin d’être identifiée comme un être aux idées distinctes de celles de son père. Elle dénonce alors sans hésitations certains propos hostiles qu’elle reçoit par la poste comme la remarque désobligeante d’une ancienne professeure de français au sujet du prénom de son fils, ou qu’elle entend, comme celui de la gardienne de son immeuble: “C’est pas parce que c’est la fille de Mittrand [sic] que son chien doit pisser partout” (198). Elle révèle l’attitude des rédacteurs de Wikipedia qui résument en vingt lignes sa vie basée sur des “sources contestables” (100), transcrit des échanges d’internautes qui font allusion à son enfance entretenu par les deniers publics, et y répond. Sa démarche scripturale qui ne nie en rien sa condition de fille illégitime de François Mitterrand pallie la voix que ce dernier lui a demandé de taire durant de longues années. Il s’agit par ailleurs de corriger les dires de la presse people qui continue à véhiculer à son sujet des propos qu’elle estime souvent erronés. Par le truchement de cet écrit, Pingeot reprend donc possession de son existence, de son image publique, et s’octroie dès lors le droit de refuser la publication d’un portrait d’elle entourée de ses enfants dans un maga-
Du silence à la légitimation de soi *Bon petit soldat* de Mazarine Pingeot

Elle dévoile également son rôle parental en évitant à ses enfants ce qu'elle a connu. Elle révèle qu'elle s'est insurgée lorsque son fils lui dit que personne ne croit à l'école qu'il est le petit-fils d'un des anciens présidents de la République.

L'écriture représente pour Pingeot non seulement le moyen d'effectuer une introspection qui l'aide à mesurer l'impact de la vie médiatisée de son père sur sa propre existence, mais aussi un lieu de défense où elle prend position face à des attaques persistantes sur sa condition d'enfant naturelle cachée. L'écrit devient le lieu où accusée et accusateurs s'affrontent; aux lecteurs d'identifier le coupable. Il est important de souligner ici que Pingeot a toujours fait front seule à ses détracteurs qui l'accusaient d'avoir profité de la République. En revanche, sa mère que l'on pourrait considérer tout aussi coupable, est toujours restée silencieuse. Lorsqu'en 2016, elle décide de rendre public les lettres que François Mitterrand lui adressa pendant une trentaine d'années, elle ne subit aucune critique comme si ces missives étaient déjà empreintes de légitimité. Elle ne s'est exprimée au sujet de cette décision que dans de courts entretiens (cinquante au total) avec l'historien Jean-Noël Jeanneney.

**Espaces privés/espaces publics redéfinis: création d'un nouvel espace personnel scriptural**

L'écriture qui enfreint l'interdiction ancienne d'affirmer sa filiation permet à Pingeot de se libérer de la personne contrainte à évoluer dans un espace restreint orchestré par ses parents puis par les médias, comme elle le rappelait au début de son écrit: “Vous êtes là où on ne vous attaquera pas, parce que vous avez été attaquée de toute part, parce que votre existence est en elle-même quelque chose qui dérange” (15). Elle reconsiderère dès lors une approche personnelle nouvelle de la sphère publique et privée dans lesquelles elle a évolué et où elle peine toujours à se repositionner en simple Mazarine Pingeot ou comme la fille de Mitterrand. Elle met ainsi en contexte des décisions d'adultes mises en parallèle à l'enfant qu'elle était qui ne saisissait pas l'ensemble de sa situation. Elle raconte ainsi le jour où sa mère est convoquée à l'école pour la prévenir que sa fille fabule puisqu'elle s'était vantée d'avoir un père Président de la République. Ses parents lui conseilleront de ne plus raconter quoi que ce soit. “La petite fille restera désormais muette” (66),
Béatrice Vernier

se souvient-elle. Elle parvient malgré tout, par le biais de l’entreprise scripturale, à prendre du recul sur la portée du choix parental sur un jeune enfant, en en évaluant le poids. Elle saisit que ce qui lui fut imposé servait les intérêts d’autrui avec, le regrette-t-elle, une adhésion totale de sa part au personnage du père, ce qu’elle peut désormais énoncer: “Vous vous êtes donné pour mission d’éliminer toute fragilité, toute brèche dans le système. Vous vous êtes chargée de vous éliminer vous-même. Bon petit soldat” (68). Elle réévalue par ailleurs l’acte peu judicieux du journaliste qui a révélé sa filiation, et parvient à s’en déresponsabiliser: “Un jour, on vous a poussée dehors, mais ce n’était pas de votre fait” (133). Elle redéfinit ses propres limites et les impose à autrui, écriture de la légitimation qui contrevient à une interdiction antérieure à se dire, reprise d’une parole rendue inaudible dans l’enfance.

Soulignons ici que la réévaluation de son passé dichotomique se reflète dans le choix du genre, le journal intime destiné à la publication, choix qui correspond à ce qui a forgé sa personnalité. Elle privilégie l’expression diariste en regard de la période où elle fut réduite à une vie recluse, et par ailleurs, son désir de publier sa réflexion répond au moment où elle fut propulsée sur la scène publique. Cet écrit hybride l’autorise à se placer en actrice de sa vie en se donnant la parole et en redéfinissant à sa manière l’espace de sa vie privée et celui de son existence reconnue. Fille d’une figure politique renommée, elle tente de faire saisir au lecteur la problématique de sa vie d’enfant marquée du fer rouge de l’obéissance. Bien qu’elle soit toujours loyale à la mémoire paternelle, elle veut affirmer sa voix, sa différence au père, sa différence à l’image que le public lui impose. L’écriture l’autorise à tisser des liens entre ces antagonismes sans, notons-le, y parvenir complètement puisque ce sont eux qui ont dessiné les contours de sa personnalité et qui semblent la poursuivre, se jouer encore d’elle ou peut-être avec lesquels elle continue de jouer. Notons qu’il demeure encore une hésitation à cerner l’enfant qui a servi les intérêts paternels: “Aimez-vous cette petite fille? Vous sembleriez avoir du mal à vous en faire une idée, une image, elle vous échappe” (196). Elle persiste ainsi à se voir toujours comme une personne ordinaire, anonyme, or elle ne l’a jamais été et le demeure aux yeux d’un certain nombre de citoyens français.

Cette voix intime n’hésite plus à se positionner face à un public qu’elle n’arrivait pas jusque-là à appréhender. Elle dénonce dès lors des
attaques injustes et le droit de mener l’existence qu’elle désire comme
toute citoyenne française. L’entreprise scripturale nuance l’image figée
de fille illégitime du Président de la République française qui s’est trop
longetemps rue; écriture subversive qui bouscule les préjugés auxquels
elle fait encore face quant à son train de vie qui a coûté cher à la France.
Néanmoins, l’écriture progressant, elle parvient à dénoncer ouverte-
ment l’image erronée d’elle-même pour faire émerger l’image d’une
femme qui affirme ses convictions et accepte les choix de son père. En
effet, sa parole était jusqu’alors perçue comme celle de l’homme politique
des années 1980 et 1990, ce qu’elle souligne quand elle parle de la jour-
née du Meeting au Cirque d’hiver auquel elle est conviée par François
Hollande:

Meeting du Cirque d’hiver. Vous en êtes. Infiltrée aussi
 dans la campagne présidentielle, mais vous n’êtes pas
 responsable de l’imposture. Néanmoins vous l’accep-
tez, parce que le choix n’en est pas un, vous voulez vous
 rendre utile, sans avoir beaucoup de capacités pour cela.
Se rendre utile en l’occurrence, c’est accepter pendant
les quelques semaines, d’être la fille de votre père. (107)

Notons qu’un dilemme existe encore par rapport à l’objectif de
se démarquer de son père mais aussi de se réapproprier sa place offi-
cielle dans une campagne socialiste. Toutefois, elle parvient à consentir
aux décisions prises par son père à son sujet. Elle reconnaît que leurs
deux existences sont liées à l’histoire avec un grand H, histoire qui a eu
en soi une grande valeur. Elle reconsidère alors de manière tempérée la
motivation de son père de l’avoir cachée. Elle juge cette décision non pas
personnelle car elle sait qu’il l’a profondément aimée, mais elle la relie à
sa fonction exercée dans l’enceinte de l’Élysée, qu’elle envisage comme
suit: “ce lieu qui vous avait pris votre père, qui vous avait pris votre iden-
tité” (210). En faisant face sereinement à ce destin, elle y trouve un sens
même si elle reconnaît qu’il se situe encore au-delà de sa compréhension:
“Mais il n’y a rien à comprendre. Vous avez fait partie en seconde main
d’une magnifique aventure. Votre aventure à vous était de n’en vivre pas.
Ou de vivre celle des autres” (184). Par le biais d’un travail rigoureux
d’introspection, elle parvient ainsi à affirmer une identité marquée par
une enfance peu ordinaire et à se distinguer de cette figure publique.

L’écriture diariste qui rapporte sa participation à la campagne présidentielle de François Hollande dans laquelle elle s’était engagée de plein gré l’a conduite à se replonger dans des souvenirs à la nature complexe. En démêlant faits et implications de la décision parentale prise à son égard lorsqu’elle était enfant, elle parvient à assumer pleinement les caractéristiques de son enfance et à se projeter dans l’avenir à l’instar de Georges Perec qui souligne: “L’enfance n’est ni nostalgie, ni terreur, ni paradis perdu, ni Toison d’or, mais peut-être horizon, point de départ, coordonnées à partir desquelles les axes de ma vie pourront trouver leur sens” (W ou le souvenir 25). Dès lors chez Pingeot une réconciliation avec elle-même apparaît:

Cette campagne vous aura appris que vous n’êtes pas votre père, ni une partie de lui, ni son avocat, ni sa vestale, ni sa porte-parole, […], ni l’enfant cachée, ni l’enfant solitaire, ni le tabou, ni le secret, ni la honte: tout cela est votre histoire. Tout cela vous a définie. Tout cela fait partie de vous. Mais vous êtes autre chose […] après tout vous avez trente-sept ans, il serait temps de devenir grande. N’ayez plus honte, n’ayez plus peur. (202)

Notons qu’en cernant avec plus de clarté ce passé caractérisé par la dualité, un timide “je” se substitue au “vous” à la fin de son journal, mais le “je” comprends toujours une restriction en ce qu’il ne signifie en rien pour elle l’accès à des privilèges. Ainsi, lorsqu’elle rapporte à la fin de son ouvrage sa présence à l’Élysée lors de l’intronisation de Hollande à la Présidence de la République française, le retour à une vie de citoyenne ordinaire qui lui était si familière enfant s’impose à la fin de la réception: “Je ressors par la cour d’honneur et reprends le métro à Concorde” (211). Il s’agit, pour elle, de souligner la possibilité d’être reconnue à part entière dans la société française comme la fille de François Mitterrand mais d’avoir également droit à des moments d’anonymat.
Conclusion

Cet écrit, en démêlant l’écheveau public/privé qui a formé la personnalité de l’auteure, contribue à une meilleure évaluation d’elle-même sous le regard d’autrui. Ce dernier tient une place importante dans la reconstruction personnelle de l’auteure ainsi que Marie-Jo Binet l’énonce au sujet des textes d’Abdellah Taïa: “Ils proposent l’écriture elle-même comme un espace, un territoire où l’être multiple pourra se distancier, se regarder en mobilisant le regard des autres, et se construire en générant son propre miroir” (L’Autre 113). Ce journal intime destiné à la publication, récit-confession qui partage avec le lecteur sa vie d’enfant et son quotidien actuel a permis à Pingeot de mettre en mots le fait qu’elle ait été fortement marquée par la célébrité. Elle tente de convaincre le public de la version qu’elle donne de son histoire en l’admettant dans son univers personnel. En effet, alors que pour Simonet-Tenant le journal intime est un “texte prétendument autarcique” (Le Journal 131), ici, en décidant de le publier, Pingeot choisit de détourner cette expression scripturale en l’ouvrant à un lectorat. Même si elle ne s’adresse pas à ce dernier directement, elle le fait cheminer dans ses réflexions dénuées d’artifice, partage ses souffrances antérieures et actuelles afin de l’apprivoiser et de s’en faire un allié car selon Simonet-Tenant, “se déploient dans le journal les traces d’une écriture en acte, s’inscrivent le provisoire délaissé, les errances et le devenir imprévisible de la pensée” (Le Journal 182).

Espace privé/public, ombre/lumière, anonymat/célébrité sont au cœur de ce journal, doubles nœuds d’une vie que Pingeot évoque sans détours. Ces multiples dualités, conséquence d’un désir parental accepté tacitement par l’enfant qu’elle était, elle les revisite et les analyse ici pour s’en dégager et se créer un nouvel espace où elle désire évoluer selon ses convictions personnelles. Si elle fut écartée de la célébrité paternelle dans l’enfance, l’écrit exprime la volonté d’assumer son passé et d’affirmer SA propre identité, distincte de celle de son père, ancien Président de la République française. Dans cet ouvrage, si Pingeot dénonce les tenants et les aboutissants d’avoir côtoyé un père renommé, elle parvient à renégocier sa relation à la sphère publique en dépassant et en acceptant les enjeux d’une culture de la visibilité liée à la célébrité.

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Notes

1. La journaliste Jessica Chandra rapporte dans *Harper Magazine* que, suite à la réclamation d’1.5 million d’euros de dommages et intérêts du Prince William, la cour de Nanterre a ordonné une compensation de 100,000 euros au couple princier et une amende de 45,000 euros à la rédactrice en chef et au propriétaire du magazine *Closer*.


3. Anne Pingeot (conservatrice honoraire au Musée d’Orsay) a entretenu une relation secrète avec François Mitterrand puisque ce dernier ne divorça jamais de sa femme Danielle Mitterrand.


5. Pour Anne Goscinny, dans *Le Bruit des clés*, ce sera le jour du décès soudain de son père, pour J.M.G. Le Clézio le jour où à huit ans il rencontre son père pour la première fois (*L’Africain*), et pour Franz-Olivier Giesbert une scène de violence familiale (*L’Américain*).

6. Petit François en Italien.

7. Laurent Lepaludier précise: “L’analogie est aussi à l’œuvre par l’inter-
textualité puisqu’une comparaison est instaurée, suggérée ou implicite entre le texte lu et ceux auxquels il réfère ou fait allusion, ses hypotextes.” (Métatextualité 32).

8. A la question de savoir la raison de cette décision, elle avoue avoir beaucoup hésité mais que l’historien Jean-Noël Jeanneney et Hubert Védrine (Président de l’Institut François Mitterrand) l’avaient convaincue de cette publication en vue de la célébration du centenaire de la naissance de Mitterrand à l’Institut François Mitterrand. “Je mets en ordre les choses; j’ai soixante-treize ans; je mets en ordre... et... c’est la crainte que ce ne soit pas fait correctement” déclare-t-elle lors du premier entretien d’une série de cinq sur France Culture [ma transcription]. Gallimard a également publié au même moment l’ouvrage Journal pour Anne 1964-1970, de François Mitterrand.

Works Cited


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El epígrafe alude
al tema predominante en la
novela *Herencia* (1893) de Clorinda Matto de Turner (Perú, 1852–Argentina, 1909). Sin embargo, en el presente artículo nos enfocaremos en el consumo de algunos personajes que contribuye y, de algún modo, rivaliza por su repercusión con motivos mayores que se encuentran en la narrativa de la escritora, tales como la herencia biológica y la educación. Aunque se ha escrito de esto, en este ensayo se hace una lectura crítica del elemento extranjero—el italiano—que se inserta en la ciudad de Lima, de sus patrones de consumo y sus consecuencias.1

Este análisis intenta contribuir a los estudios literarios junto con otros trabajos recientes relacionados al consumo y a la cultura material, investigaciones que habían sido comúnmente opacadas por el interés en el espacio doméstico y el nacionalismo, entre otros temas.2

Las necesidades suntuarias se ven condicionadas por la situación social y, por tanto, el sistema de consumo se nutre de las personas y las nutre con deseos de prosperidad, es decir, con nuevas necesidades. Este círculo vicioso no atrapa, sin embargo, a todos los personajes, y algunos, quienes serán presentados como la familia modelo de la economía liberal, logran escapar al enfocarse en
valores personales que evitan el deseo a nivel físico, refuerzan los crite-
rios morales y establecen una buena ética laboral. No se debe entender
que la familia en cuestión sea una anomalía, aunque se muestren forá-
neos a la capital y les cueste encajar en ella, ya que, así como ellos, tam-
bién existen otros personajes que consumen sin despilfarrar. Esta será la
propuesta de Matto de Turner en el sentido socioeconómico. Es decir,
generar consumo en un sistema que privilegie el capital sin llegar al
extremo del derroche porque esto implicará la ruina. El gasto de din-
ero es solo una —valga la redundancia— de las monedas de cambio del
circuito comercial porque se trafica con influencias, cuerpos y virtudes.
Así, bajo la lógica de algunos personajes, se permite afirmar que todo se
cu en comprar, vender e intercambiar.

La sociedad de consumidores, denominada así alrededor de
1920 y popularizada luego de la Segunda Guerra Mundial, es sólo
posible por el crecimiento del consumo de una emergente clase media
durante el siglo XIX que prestaba atención a los bienes de lujo, al mobi-
liario de casa y a la vestimenta. En este periodo es habitual que el con-
sumo se relacione con el interés por la movilidad social y con la com-
petición de clase, e irá en aumento a medida que la sociedad capitalista
se siga desarrollando. Durante la segunda mitad del siglo XIX, la pro-
ducción masiva, la industrialización, la publicidad y el auge de las zonas
urbanas ocasionarán cambios vertiginosos en el consumo de la sociedad
europea (Magaudda 3–4). A partir de 1880 con el advenimiento de las
maquinarias de producción masiva y las redes de transporte es posible
definir el consumo masivo necesario para tener una sociedad de con-
sumidores (Lipovetski 22–23).

En el caso del Perú, las diferencias en la producción promueven
el desarrollo económico a otra velocidad. Dicho esto, podemos encon-
trar ejemplos de estos modelos e intereses del consumo decimonónico
europeo casi idénticos en la narrativa de Matto de Turner. En el Perú
prima la actividad extractiva de la minería y la década de 1850 saborea
el auge de la industria guanera, que se agota casi a la par del inicio de
la guerra del Pacífico. Es solo en el periodo de reconstrucción nacio-
nal, alrededor de 1890, que llega a mejorar la situación económica
(Arroyo 122–25). Hacia finales de siglo es posible observar el cambio
de una economía cimentada en el poder de la tierra a una economía más
dinámica y capitalista. Las familias tradicionales latifundistas decaen y
eso obliga a que cambien de rubro o se modernicen; de otro modo, una sociedad con otros valores de consumo y de trabajo las reemplazará. En el caso peruano, la situación de la oligarquía habría podido mejorar en la segunda mitad del siglo, pero la burguesía moderna sería la que los opacaría en el futuro:

In Peru, the temporary prosperity brought by guano and then nitrates had filled state coffers and enabled impoverished aristocrats to recover some of their lost status. Lima’s blue bloods regained significant influence over the national government through their moral hegemony, applied selectively against policies unfavorable to their interests, and through their social ascendency over the country’s urban middle and popular sectors. (Halperin 150)

Es justamente en el periodo final de este apogeo que se sitúa Herencia, pero aunque no se menciona, la novela además se publica en la post-guerra,4 por lo que es lógico que haya habido fuertes cambios económicos en años previos. Cabe destacarse que siendo esta la tercera novela de Matto de Turner, la que más influencia naturalista tiene y en la que más información fisiológica e higienista se incluye, el consumo sea un factor tan determinante. Es la sombra de un sistema capitalista global que está desestabilizando un mercado otrora más sólido o uno que había simulado serlo.

Los patrones de consumo en Herencia irrumpen de modos imprevisibles en la trama de la novela y están a la par de la herencia como componente central en la narrativa. Cierto es que Matto de Turner se decanta siempre por la educación y que se encuentra en sus textos un enfrentamiento entre los rasgos fisiológicos de los personajes y el aprendizaje, que se resuelve en un equilibrio que establece una simbiosis entre la naturaleza y la educación.5 En Herencia son ambas las que permiten el beneficio de unos y la caída de otros. Así tanto el determinismo genético como el ambiente – educación – motivan el maniobrar de los personajes, pero la presencia del consumo se extiende a todos los ámbitos, logrando ser, quizás, un mecanismo tan consistente como los otros para activar las acciones dentro de la economía narrativa.
Aunque resulta interesante conjeturar acerca de las elecciones de la autora, se hace complicado afirmar que Matto de Turner haya incluido tantos detalles del consumo, que además son los que nos permiten entender el tinglado social de esta novela, porque vislumbrara un futuro consumista o porque estuviera en desacuerdo con el sistema capitalista. Sin embargo, sí es posible afirmar que lo critica, y que para una mujer trabajadora, que por su experiencia vital sabía manejar presupuestos y finanzas, el traslado de la economía rural de la Sierra a la urbana de la capital debe haber sido impresionante. También que es posiblemente con esa mirada lúcida que Matto de Turner analizara el sistema económico y las redes sociales que se establecían para mostrar su visión de la realidad peruana. El comercio es fundamental para cualquier economía, pero en la Lima finisecular se habían creado circuitos de usureros que ofrecían servicios hipotecarios y de préstamos a cualquiera que necesitara arriesgar su fortuna. Matto de Turner explica su funcionamiento para retratar en su novela la decadencia de una clase social que estaba extinguiéndose en su realidad histórica y también menciona los riesgos del sistema mercantil subyacente.

*Herencia* es una novela de muchos personajes, pero en la que es posible encontrar dos jóvenes parejas contrastadas por sus cualidades: una representa un futuro próspero que proviene de dos seres nobles que se aman sinceramente y la otra personifica el hundimiento de quienes sólo tienen una relación pasional. Para enfatizar en el tema del consumo, habremos de señalar que para los primeros se vislumbra estabilidad y crecimiento económico, mientras que para los otros se prevé ruina.

*Aves sin Nido* (1889), la primera novela de Matto de Turner, narra la experiencia de la pareja de Fernando y Lucía Marín, que es prácticamente expulsada de la Sierra peruana con sus hijas adoptivas, que son indígenas. La mayor, llamada Margarita, está enamorada de un joven local. Al final de la novela el lector descubre que ella es fruto de la violación del sacerdote del pueblo y su madre indígena, es decir, que es mestiza y además es hermana del joven, porque él es el hijo que su madre tuvo con el mismo sacerdote abusivo, joven que posteriormente fue adoptado por el gobernador del pueblo cuando se casa con la madre. Al empezar *Herencia*, la tercera novela de la autora, reaparecen los Marín con solo una hija, Margarita, que se enamora de Ernesto Casa-Alta. La hermana indígena ha desaparecido y ni siquiera es mencionada, lo que
resulta extraño porque *Aves sin nido* había tenido mucha repercusión por su defensa del indígena. La otra familia importante, la de Don José y Nieves Aguilera, tiene dos hijas y la mayor, Camila, se convertirá en pareja de un italiano inmigrante, Aquilino Merlo. El libro cubre el desarrollo de ambos noviazgos en el ambiente social urbano de la capital.

**Promiscuidad de sangre y de colores**

Antes de analizar a Aquilino Merlo, el inmigrante italiano que luchó en el ejército garibaldino y que se asentó en Perú con ansias de hacerse un futuro, es necesario entender el momento histórico del país.

Los conceptos concernientes a la nacionalidad establecidos en el periodo independentista por los estados nacionales se fueron modificando al pasar el tiempo. Las varias experiencias para consolidar la república, unidas a experimentos de educación cívica y un mercado inestable en el que se enfrentaban grupos exportadores, productores y clases trabajadoras, fueron la constante durante la segunda mitad del siglo XIX (McEvoy 267-68).

El mestizaje era una práctica extendida, y tal como menciona el pensador peruano Manuel González Prada (1844-1918), incluso la persona que parecía ser blanca tenía mucho de mixtura:

Hay tal promiscuidad de sangre y colores, representa cada individuo tantas mezclas lícitas o ilícitas, que en presencia de muchísimos peruanos quedaríamos perplexos para determinar la dosis de negro y amarillo que encierran en sus organismos: nadie merece el calificativo de blanco puro, aunque lleve azules los ojos y Rubio el cabello (217).

Sin embargo ocurre una mezcla entre lo que es la raza biológica, lo étnico y la raza entendida como cultura (Cosamalón 364-68). Estos conceptos se entremezclan ideológicamente por motivos políticos para facilitar a los Estados argumentos morales y científicos para optar por una política racial de inclusión o exclusión. Los países americanos eligen diversas medidas de mestizaje y aculturación porque de por sí tenían configuraciones raciales diferentes, pero la noción de incorporar extranjeros fue extendiéndose dentro del imaginario liberal “como instrumento
fundamental para la construcción de naciones orientadas al progreso, la conveniencia de atraer contingentes de inmigración europea; ya fuera española, como quería el mexicano Mora, o del norte de Europa, según el argentino Alberdi” (Quijada 310) para mezclarse con los grupos ya existentes en el país. Lo que se ofertaba con la inmigración era la fusión de lo racial con lo cultural: blanquear la piel y europeizar las costumbres para lograr “la configuración de la nación civilizada” (Quijada 310). Estas ideas se expandieron más hacia finales del siglo, pero tenían su base en las nociones anti-indígenas, esclavistas y de blanqueamiento que se desarrollaron durante todo el siglo XIX.

Aunque estas narrativas de la diferenciación existieron en América desde la Conquista, en cada momento tomaron un cariz diferente. Durante el siglo XIX los conceptos biológicos del pensamiento estadounidense y europeo acerca de la jerarquía racial fueron recogidos por los países latinoamericanos, cuyas élites intelectuales querían esconder su cara exótica y atrasada – la de sus indígenas principalmente – frente a sus contemporáneos. En esta percepción, el indígena no era sólo producto del terreno, la educación y el clima, sino que tenía un problema genético y, por ello, era inferior o, en el vocabulario de su momento, estaba degenerado. En general, existía la idea de que el espíritu de los peruanos, “vistos como haraganes y retrasados por naturaleza” (Hampe 459), debía regenerarse al incorporarse una raza considerada superior o, como escribe Matto en Herencia, los cambios no comenzarían “mientras no se haga una reforma radical en nuestra Constitución y hasta en nuestra sangre” (36). A nivel cultural, el otro – un otro no europeo – era inaceptable y se anhelaba ser o por lo menos pasar por blanco en la sociedad.

Los gobernantes republicanos tuvieron la intención de fomentar la inmigración de europeos blancos que trajeran consigo conocimientos de tecnología y criterios de inversión capitalista (Hampe 462). En el caso peruano, los hacendados de las plantaciones costeñas se involucraron en el debate nacional acerca de la inmigración (Thurner 160). Las élites liberales querían restringir la inmigración a europeos blancos para “mejorar la raza” y extender la civilización, pero tras la abolición de la esclavitud (1854) los ingenios azucareros necesitaban peones para los campos, al igual que la industria guanera, y eso promovió la llegada de los inmigrantes chinos. Los intelectuales parecieron abrir los ojos
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frente al problema del indígena, pero los cerraron frente al nuevo grupo que estaba inmigrando y exhibieron un gran racismo (Graham 3). Aunque era de esperarse que en un país andino como Perú no hubiera un proceso de exterminio y repoblación similar a otras partes de América hispana en las últimas décadas del siglo XIX, hubo intelectuales que abogaron por la renovación de sangre, es decir, por la incorporación de europeos, siempre y cuando el sujeto en cuestión pudiera participar de la hegemonía cultural. Bajo este grupo se puede leer a González Prada, quien fuera en su momento una imagen influyente en el pensamiento de Matto de Turner (Chang-Rodríguez 179). Como intelectuales, ellos también tenían la presión de opinar desde su “blancura intelectual” y desde su periferia americana. En esta época, las referencias culturales de la ciudad se imponían en todo el territorio: “But ethnicity, like gender, goes beyond physiology and biology. Since they imply culture, they cause havoc and set the whole conceptual world awry. . . . In these texts culture carries a very fixed meaning” (Rodríguez 11). El significado de la cultura hacía referencia a las áreas metropolitanas—a Europa—y en particular a Francia. Entonces Matto de Turner, a través de su novela, cumplía con su misión como intelectual de alertar a la población acerca de la infiltración de ciertos inmigrantes que llegaban a la capital, pero que no encajaban en esa idea de cultura (Holguín 145). González Prada posiblemente hubiera preferido ingleses o franceses, pero la realidad se configuraba con más inmigrantes como el Aquilino Merlo de la novela.

Los grupos que llegaron fueron mayoritariamente alemanes, españoles, franceses, ingleses e italianos. La inmigración masiva de Europa en las últimas décadas del siglo XIX fue diferente en el Perú comparada con los países con costas atlánticas, porque el país no poseía un vacío demográfico que permitiera absorber inmigrantes de modo masivo como ocurrió en esos otros países. De ahí que el porcentaje más alto de emigrantes que registró fuera un 4% en 1876 (Bonfiglio, Presencia 93–96), y que se diferenciara la proyección del grupo en el país de acogida. A otras naciones llegaron europeos obreros y agricultores, a veces pobres, pero por el carácter selectivo de esa inmigración en el Perú los europeos se integraban a las clases medias e incluso a las altas. Por ello también estos nuevos pobladores se afincaron en la capital o en núcleos urbanos de la costa peruana y no en zonas rurales (Hampe 462). Además “la alta valoración étnica generaba un ascenso automático de
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los inmigrantes europeos en la jerarquía social peruana; y permitía a los inmigrantes ocupar un lugar más alto del que ocupaban en la jerarquía social del lugar de origen” (Bonfiglio, Presencia 130). Este privilegio obtenido por su color de piel y otros factores relacionados al comercio y consumo son los que explican su éxito económico. Teodoro Hampe Martínez subraya esta blancura, a la que añade que la mentalidad criolla aún menospreciaba el trabajo manual y comercial, y seguía atrasada en el manejo de los avances tecnológicos (463).

En la segunda mitad del siglo XIX, el grupo europeo que más inmigrantes ostentó en el Perú, y por un amplio margen, fue el de Italia. En el caso italiano, la inmigración fue espontánea, no promovida por proyectos colonizadores, y su modalidad era de cadena migratoria. No obstante existir un flujo constante de viajeros, este nunca fue masivo y la gran mayoría provenía de Liguria. Solo llegaban genoveses que podían generar su propio empleo y muchos eran pequeños empresarios independientes o comerciantes (Bonfiglio, Los italianos 160–61). Dentro de este grupo, un alto porcentaje se dedicaba al comercio menor en las pulperías: “A fines del siglo pasado no había barrio de la ciudad donde no hubiesen pulperos y comerciantes italianos que destacaban en medio del ambiente aristocratizante y carente de una cultura empresarial, como era la Lima antigua” (Bonfiglio185). Estos mercaderes lograron consolidar este pequeño comercio y extenderse hacia finales del XIX a ramas activas de la economía, lo que les permitió a algunos convertirse en los empresarios más sólidos del país. Debido a esta bonanza, varios de ellos fueron dueños de fincas urbanas y otros terrenos en la capital. Algunos participaron en la vida del país en diferentes posiciones y lograron acumular prestigio social. Ya para la primera década del siglo XX, los italianos se dedicaban a sus empresas y abandonaban el oficio de pulperos.11

A nivel sociocultural, la situación era diferente. Los italianos que llegaban tenían una proporción de cinco hombres por una mujer, así que los matrimonios interétnicos fueron bastante comunes (Bonfiglio, Presencia 102-03). El origen social de estas parejas era variado, pero se registraron algunos escasos matrimonios entre los hijos de diplomáticos y militares con “hijas de la nobleza colonial limeña” (Hampe 465); otros, de europeos de diversa nacionalidad y estadounidenses con hijas de políticos y magistrados que resultaron en la fundación de linajes importantes de la era republicana, y también los casados con humil-
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des provincianas o mujeres sin padres conocidos (466). El especialista en inmigración y población Giovanni Bonfiglio propone que no hubo asimilación, sino que se vivía en un estado de biculturalidad poco problemático, lo que resulta debatible ya que propone que los italianos también pasaban por un periodo de segunda socialización en el Perú (Presencia 131). Al erigirse como la colonia europea más populososa fue también muy critica y sufrió de detractores xenófobos. El final de siglo, sobre todo posteriormente a la Guerra del Pacífico, se observa como un periodo en que el Perú redefinió los conceptos de ciudadanía y se ansiaban sectores sociales urbanos modernos y controlados en los que se socializaba bajo mecanismos jerárquicos existentes.

Los colonos italianos se consideraban, en su mayoría, liberales y anticlericales, pero no eran anarquistas ni socialistas porque no pertenecían a la clase obrera (Bonfiglio, Los italianos 211). Debido a que muchos genoveses habían sido republicanos en Italia, habían salido en categoría similar a los exiliados hacia los países americanos. Varios antiguos combatientes del ejército garibaldino se afincaron en la capital peruana y por su posición política y disputas contra la Iglesia católica, generaban la animadversión de los grupos conservadores y religiosos. Hasta 1930, la oligarquía peruana prefería relacionarse con franceses e ingleses, lo que equivalía a un rechazo para estos sudeuropeos. La imagen del italiano era la del bachiche, un bodeguero o vendedor de verduras que se relacionaba con las clases populares peruanas debido a su trabajo en el comercio. Por ello para los matrimonios interétnicos se preferían europeos, pero se evitaban a los italianos (Bonfiglio, Los italianos 220). En palabras del sociólogo el espíritu de poco afecto por el grupo a comienzos del siglo XX podría ser resumido así: “los italianos eran tolerados, pero nunca bien aceptados” (Bonfiglio 131). No bastaba su participación en la economía, también era necesaria su inclusión a partir de prácticas socioculturales adecuadas.

Aquilino Merlo: el inmigrante

El italiano no logra encajar en la clase alta debido a múltiples motivos: su manejo pobre del idioma, su trabajo manual o sus pocos recursos, entre otros. Su interés se focaliza en obtener beneficios económicos y el problema a franquear es que él no tiene derecho o acceso a ese poder. El modo en que lo logra es enamorando a la joven inexperta
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de una familia adinerada, Camila Aguilera, a quien se acerca porque conoce al personal de servicio de la casa. A través de ellos, logra primero una conversación y rápidamente se convierte en amante de la joven, que luego queda embarazada. Para evitar el escándalo, su suegra le da una dote para que salga del país y regrese a la capital como un conde italiano adinerado. Se casan y viven en una vivienda, propiedad de la familia, pero Merlo pasa sus días en el club privado embriagándose y jugando cartas, por las que pierde sumas altas de la fortuna de su familia política. En los últimos capítulos, él se entera que su suegra ha decidido no pasárle más dinero a causa de la difícil situación económica familiar. En su desesperación, apuesta mucho y bebe más, para posteriormente golpear a su joven esposa, que estaba durmiendo sola en su casa.

La crítica ha basado su lectura de esta unión enfocándose en el cuerpo de la joven como mercancía, pero a nivel comercial se puede analizar también la mercadería peculiar que es Aquilino Merlo. El italiano podría ser apetecible, pero no lo es y nadie en la alta sociedad quiere consumirlo. En una etapa inicial, la joven Aguilera está atrapada por el deseo físico y tiene relaciones carnales con él, de quien además se menciona su gran experiencia sexual, pero a largo plazo no hay más que pueda consumir de ese cuerpo. Si lo que quería era “mejorar la raza”, logra su objetivo con el embarazo y sí sigue reproduciéndose con él es porque, como menciona su suegra, es “un mozo bien plantado” (Heren- cia 154). La etapa de deseo con la joven, ahora además embarazada, ha quedado atrás. Los inmigrantes refrescaban las líneas de sangre, pero su ciudadanía y participación tenían restricciones.

Merlo no tiene la educación ni las capacidades sociales para aportar en la formación de los hijos – que además se reconoce como una función materna – y se limitará a tener una actividad de semental. Sin embargo, el italiano encajaba correctamente en el grupo de clase media o media-baja donde por ser un blanco europeo era respetado. Además era el tendero, por lo cual tenía un mínimo control económico sobre sus clientes; pero nada de esto le es útil en el club privado. En un inicio, el exotismo de su nacionalidad le aportaba capital social, pero en la clase social aristocrática tendría que poseer otra nacionalidad europea para que fuera deseable. En el casino, puede aparentar porque el italiano sabe jugar al billar, apostar a las cartas y beber ajenjo – muy de moda en ese entonces –, pero no lo hace con mesura, por lo que termina alcoholizado
y perdiendo el dinero. Si fue presentado en sociedad como un conde, ya se ha perdido el interés en su título. No puede consumir correctamente porque no es moderado y difícilmente entiende lo que le corresponde hacer conforme a las reglas del decoro. Su falta de educación y sobre todo de modales evitan que se convierta en una mercancía que otros quisieran consumir. El deseo que es fundamental para definir el consumo de las mercancías se desvanece rápidamente en el personaje de Merlo, quien parece incapaz de pertenecer al grupo social asignado en esta etapa de su vida.

Como se ha mencionado, el consumo de alcohol se hace esencial para entender los momentos exaltados de su comportamiento. Su relación con la bebida es doble: como consumidor y como productor. En su etapa de bodeguero, Merlo destilaba licor de papa al que agregaba esencias para hacerlo pasar por diferentes licores y el público, ignorante en estos menesteres, pagaba un precio adicional por ellos. Esto resulta de suma importancia porque se hace énfasis en la elaboración ilegal de alcohol. Su capacidad de producción se limita a un producto falso y de baja calidad, pero además en este proceso demuestra su nula ética en este mercado. Es decir, que desde el inicio se le presenta como un problema en el sistema de compra y venta al comerciar con un producto adulterado y a precio excesivo. Este proceso de destilar y despachar alcohol falso es una metonimia de él mismo. Merlo podría negociar con su conocimiento técnico, pero como se oferta a la aristocracia peruana, esta destreza comercial y manual pierde su valor. Como mano de obra, él podría seguir con sus elaboraciones genovesas como la pasta o el pesto que requerían destreza manual y que eran apreciados: “el de los tallarines verdes, tan ricos…” (46), pero al distanciarse de esta vida para aparentar otra, pierde su capacidad de producción. Aunque se eleve a nivel social, limita sus propias posibilidades de participar en el mercado comercial. En Lima, el trabajo en las pulperías estaba monopolizado por hombres italianos y esto les permitía tener movilidad social – así fueran analfabetos – porque se unía el estatus de su ocupación con el hecho de que eran blancos (Cosamalón 227-29). A diferencia de este privilegio, sus amistades superficiales del club exclusivo no están interesadas en él y solo lo buscan porque posee dinero para apostar.

Atesorar riquezas y un título falso no subsanan las carencias de Merlo. Una necesidad decimonónica de los criollos había sido afianzar
su poder en su linaje. Por ello, hubo una obsesión por las genealogías, por los recuentos de los antepasados y la alcurnia (Guerra 198). En el caso de Matto, ya hacia finales de siglo, la autora no insiste en linajes, más bien se burla del sistema con la falsificación del título nobiliario de Merlo. En el extremo, esa adulteración le permite a la autora seguir añadiendo características de ilegalidad a la existencia de su personaje, que se convierte en el conde Luis de la Coronilla, posiblemente un juego de palabras con corona, o también, en otra acepción, con estar hasta la coronilla o estar hastiado. Es decir, que algo tan íntimo como su nombre, sus señas de identidad, son una falsificación.

El lector sabe que Merlo no puede encajar por su falta de pertenencia a esa clase social, pero en el texto esta incomodidad se construye a partir de otros elementos narrativos. El hombre se enfada cuando escucha que Nieves Aguilera no va a seguir sustentando sus vicios, pero ha logrado ya obtener un botín de esta familia. Debería ser suficiente que sus expectativas socioeconómicas queden cubiertas, pero el italiano está altamente frustrado y sigue despilfarrando la fortuna ajena. Su estado parece cercano a una crisis y algo no identificable lo consume: “repitió beodo y salió otra vez a la calle, loco, frenético, entrando nuevamente al Casino donde pidió otra copa de ajenjo y la bebió dirigiendo la mirada de fiera a dos caballeros que aún continuaban su partida de ajedrez” (Herenicia 173). Su cuerpo y su voz enfrentan un valor importante que la sociedad limeña mantiene aunque no siempre cumpla: la decencia. Aparte del problema psicológico que crea su marginalidad, Merlo tendrá que lidiar con un problema económico en un futuro cercano. Si pudiera adaptar su conocimiento comercial a otros ámbitos, podría destacarse e incluso aportar al grupo, pero dado que solo tiene conocimientos manuales, no logrará encajar con sus pares. Merlo, quien es más bien experto en el arte de la bodega – destilar licor y hacer pasta – nos recuerda a un cristiano viejo, o a un aristócrata criollo, que se enfurece al pensar en que debe trabajar. Esto es un recordatorio de Matto de Turner de que laborar debe ser visto como un hecho positivo socialmente. Si bien se estima el trabajo, no necesariamente se recomienda la labor manual o en exceso, pero sí el que haya un interés en una función productiva entre los varones.

El rechazo a la presencia del europeo es interesante porque la autora lo deshumaniza a través de sus hábitos de consumo, que es una
técnica similar a la que utiliza para deshumanizar al indígena de los Andes. En *Aves sin nido*, la narradora propone que los indígenas están reducidos a ser “animales de labranza” (104) por su mala alimentación y el abuso de larga data. Se resumen los problemas alimenticios del indígena como una dieta pobre y no balanceada. Lo explica Marín a su esposa: “Hay algo más, hija – dijo don Fernando –; está probado que el sistema de alimentación ha degenerado las funciones cerebrales de los indios” (104). También influyen el exceso de alcohol y el desmesurado trabajo que realizan. En *Herencia*, la descripción del italiano lo coloca a la altura del indígena, como una bestia. Aunque estas dos representaciones deberían ser diametralmente opuestas, el pasado indígena versus el futuro extranjero, el bárbaro versus el civilizado, ninguno de estos hombres será digno de ser considerado en su ciudadanía tras este proceso de cosificación. Las motivaciones de la autora son diferentes porque en el primer caso, Matto muestra la realidad de los Andes, y al contrario, realiza la figura del indígena dentro de sus desgracias, mientras que en la segunda se construye como un proceso adrede para disminuir al italiano.

No es sólo la producción ilegal, sino el exceso de trabajo físico que conlleva – por ejemplo, amasar los tallarines – que bestializa a Aquilino Merlo. No se menciona su alimentación, pero sí su consumo alcohólico. Matto utiliza el alcohol para activar los deseos profundos de los personajes, un uso bastante lógico, pero también para mostrar su lado primigenio: “La imaginación exaltada sublevó a la bestia. El pensamiento cada segundo más incisivo al deseo, sacudió el organismo del macho, y Aquilino fue lanzado por una fuerza superior a todo cálculo psicológico” (*Herencia* 43). En *Índole* (1891), la segunda novela de la autora, se describe a Mister Williams como “...un ente raro. Callado, caviloso, excéntrico, parecía guardar en el fondo de su alma un abismo oscuro como el crimen, o tal vez insondable como el dolor. Sus ojuelos brillaban sólo cuando veían una copa de whisky” (86). El exceso alcohólico en Matto ya se había utilizado para caracterizar a otro personaje extranjero, en este caso a un estadounidense. Este hombre es descrito como un borracho solitario incapaz de crear lazos afectivos con quienes lo rodean. La autora crea el personaje de Mister Williams, a quien añade el vicio de fumar, como un experto en falsificar monedas. No es que todos los extranjeros sean inadecuados en sus historias, pero estos dos comparten vicios y son falsificadores, creando así un prontu-
ario delictivo para los foráneos. A finales de siglo, algunos intelectuales ya advertían con temor la intervención de los Estados Unidos en el futuro nacional como una suerte de neocolonialismo y Matto tal vez siguió esa línea de pensamiento para delinear a este personaje.

Otro modo de mostrar esa deshumanización es a través de descripciones en las que se retrata a Merlo como un animal. En el primer encuentro con la joven se le compara con un felino: “como el gato que se agazapa cuando acecha” (49), que luego “se lanzó sobre la hija” (50). Posteriormente cuando se dirige al encuentro sexual con Camila, Matto escribe que “se encogió como el tigre que se pone en acecho” (125), “sonreía canallescamente con la sonrisa del lobo” (126) y poco después tiene una “mirada de fiera” (173). Se le representa como un depredador frente a la joven. En otro pasaje de la novela, se le menciona como “un bulto” (125), con lo que queda cosificado y pierde sus características humanas. Marcel Velásquez señala acertadamente la conversión de Aquilino en “un hombre-bestia” (238) en este proceso de deshumanización. Al final de la novela, el italiano arribista en un acto de furia golpea a una inocente Camila por haberse entregado sexualmente a él fácilmente y también por celos. Es en este ejercicio de la violencia física que se realiza su carácter bestial.

**El consumo social en la nación**

En la novela se describen ceremonias y fiestas que implican grandes gastos debido a que son acontecimientos sociales en los que se promueve la compra y venta de una mercancía más interesante: los hijos. Casar a una hija adecuadamente puede implicar el ascenso económico de una familia y el acceso a un circuito social superior, aunque lógicamente esto implique a su vez mayores costes. La presión o el miedo a la exclusión es mencionado en la novela por la pareja de la familia modelo, los Marín, que saben que deben cumplir con ciertas convenciones aunque no les conciernan, y que el no hacerlo podría equivaler a convertirse en parias en la sociedad. Su contraparte en la novela, la otra pareja, los Aguilera, padres de la otra joven, también entienden este funcionamiento social y tratan de sacarle provecho, lo que, como veremos a continuación, no logra un buen fin.

Al inicio de *Herencia*, los Aguilera abrieron su hogar como si fuera un mercado abundante de jóvenes en venta, y esa misma noche
un italiano oportunista se aprovechó e intimó con la primogénita en un recodo de la casa. Lo anuncia la autora: “al mismo tiempo que sus labios de fuego profanaron los labios de carmín de la niña, la actitud de su cuerpo profanó el alma de la virgen” (*Herencia* 50). Poco después, Aquilino libera a Camila después de haberla tenido cogida por la cintura: “cuya posesión absoluta quedó aplazada” (50). Ya en este contacto inicial Aquilino ha logrado tocar y poseer este objeto de consumo, esta mercancía, que es Camila. Un análisis no exagerado, porque mientras en la sala de baile, los jóvenes están tratando de obtener un lazo de cinta que las mujeres se niegan a entregar porque “dar prenda es malo” (*Herencia* 45), la cumpleañera ya ha entregado mucho más. La relación es consensual, pero el acceso al poder se procura aprovechándose de la inocencia de la joven, a quien un hombre experimentado sabe excitar y llevar al acto sexual en su propio jardín sin mayor cortejo. Con este acto de transgresión se invierten posiciones y el extranjero pobre adquiere una voz dentro del discurso aristocrático. El cuerpo de la mujer se convierte en una mercadería dañada y el matrimonio será el medio para evitar la vergüenza de su embarazo. Salvando las distancias, ese cuerpo femenino – de modo similar a los cuerpos indígenas ultrajados por los curas blancos en la Sierra – carga con el producto de ese abuso.

La apertura que se inició con la fiesta ha desembocado en la pérdida de la honra familiar y esto equivaldrá en un nivel alegórico a la aceptación de un otro inferior e indigno dentro de la familia nacional. No por nada la penetración de sujetos subalternos al grupo hegemónico, así como la identidad nacional, es tema constante en la narrativa de Matto. El inmigrante que representa Aquilino Merlo no es el deseado por las clases altas o las burguesas en el Perú republicano. Aunque exista la ansiedad de europeizarse, si se tiene acceso al dinero y al poder, se trata de obtener algo más a través de esta transacción. Tal vez conexiones con el antiguo continente, abolengo, o más capital extranjero, o incluso un pacto comercial (Hunefeldt 636). Esto queda claro en el baile inicial de la fiesta porque se enfatiza la preferencia por jóvenes que pueden aportar – de preferencia bienes materiales – a la relación. Esto no debe llamar la atención, ya que para la sociedad occidental ha sido común: “women are ‘products’ used and exchanged by men. Their status is that of merchandise, ‘commodities.’” (Irigaray 85) y, por lo tanto, sus cuerpos sexualizados son fundamentales para la reproducción de la sociedad. Aquellos de
vida disipada donjuanesca serán interesantes como cuestión atractiva o como anécdota, pero no como los modelos deseados para reproducir la nación. Una pareja de casados, un matrimonio, se considera el eje central de la familia y ésta se constituye como el bastión de la nación, tal como perfectamente la representan los Marín.

Cabe entenderse que los Aguilera no abren solo su casa sino sus bolsillos, ya que para hacer una fiesta tan opulenta Doña Nieves ha sacado un préstamo, el cual ha garantizado con su patrimonio. La falta de control financiero sobre el hogar por parte del marido también se hace palpable y Don Pepe es presentado como un buen hombre, aunque bastante inútil. Él representa la aristocracia en decadencia que será reemplazada por una economía más activa, tal vez todavía oligarca, pero con intereses en la exportación y la industrialización. Francesco Dene- gri propone que en la realidad histórica del Perú para las jóvenes de ciertas familias “la posibilidad de casarse con un hombre rico era el único medio con el que contaban para alcanzar un nivel de vida acorde con sus expectativas” (163). Doña Nieves utiliza el capital económico para acrecentar su capital social con la suposición de que esto a largo plazo le traerá más riqueza, pero sucede lo opuesto. Aquilino Merlo implica más gasto: los Aguilera solventan su transformación para que regrese a Lima como un conde, costean su viaje, su dote, la fiesta del matrimonio y ulteriormente mantendrán a la joven pareja. La inversión inicial se multiplica negativamente en gastos secundarios que reducen su fortuna y Doña Nieves termina perdiendo propiedades. Una gran crítica social de parte de Matto de Turner acerca de la sociedad superficial limeña que vive de las apariencias y una moraleja en el tema económico: consumir con mesura, ya que el consumo exagerado y superficial lleva a la ruina.

Por el contrario, Ernesto Casa Alta, el novio de Margarita, representa al joven capitalino de familia honorable pero humilde que quiere casarse con una joven de sociedad y de buena situación económica. Sólo para ilustrar su tenor naturalista, se cita la conversación del padre de la joven, Fernando Marín, cuando viene el joven a pedir su mano. Parecería irónica porque resulta difícil de pensar en que un hombre dé su permiso con esta frase: “Usted no tiene entre sus parientes ascendentes en rama directa, ni locos, ni lunáticos, ni histéricos, ni sifiliticos; pues me alegro; puede usted casarse libre y tranquilamente con mi ahijada” (Herencia 145). La lógica es clara: Marín no puede permitir que su hija mantenga
relaciones sexuales con un enfermo porque sería permitir el acceso de patologías degenerativas al cuerpo de la nación. Los cuerpos deben ser productivos, tanto en riqueza como a nivel fisiológico. Ernesto y Aquilino han tenido experiencias sexuales previas con prostitutas, pero no están portando infecciones, aunque en el segundo caso, el hombre trae vicios (holgazanería, alcoholismo, ludopatía, etc.). De modo opuesto, los aportes de Casa Alta se centran en su persona —provenir de una familia decente, tener una madre abnegada y poder transmitir valores—, en su educación —estudiar en un colegio prestigioso y en la universidad para desempeñarse como abogado— y en el poder constituir con Margarita todo lo que una nación moderna necesita. Su carencia económica se equilibra con su educación, lo que resulta imposible para una mujer en su época (Denegri 164). Si se le compara con el extranjero, este joven, criado tradicionalmente en Lima, pero sin patrimonio económico, tiene valor por todo el capital social y cultural que añade, esto es, que también sería mercadería bien cotizada. Casa Alta pertenece a una élite ilustrada. Por el contrario, los Aguilera representan a la élite económica que solo ostenta dinero, pero carece del conocimiento para participar del progreso. Para los Marín la unión con Casa Alta asegura su participación en el desarrollo nacional. Lo único que es de lamentarse es que Casa Alta obtiene el dinero para su dote de modo fortuito, literalmente, al ganar la lotería. Este truco, al estilo de Sab, funciona adecuadamente dentro de la lógica narrativa, pero deja en manos de la suerte la unión de esta nueva familia republicana.

El imaginario del siglo XIX propone a la nación como la familia, como una estructura natural. Dentro de esta, la mujer no era el jefe de familia, sino su marido y sucede lo equivalente en el espacio público donde el hombre es quien toma las decisiones políticas por todos. La vida femenina está relacionada con su comportamiento y su función reproductora, pero no limitada al núcleo familiar, sino expandida para reproducir biológicamente y moralmente a la nación. Bajo esta óptica, el comportamiento de la joven Aguilera implica la deshonra de la nación: la penetración del cuerpo y su donación, que no venta, como mercancía es a nivel alegórico un acto desdichado para el país. Su madre, Doña Nieves, hizo lo propio cuando era joven, pero logró consolidar una familia con el buen Don Pepe, aunque sus amistades murmuraran a sus espaldas. De ella, su hija Camila hereda el vicio y también el mal ejemplo: una combi-
nación de fisiología y educación si pensamos que el impulso sexual de la joven es incontrolable y heredado biológicamente de la madre. Esta idea opera dentro de una lógica naturalista para la que incluso una educación adecuada no hubiera evitado ese desenlace. Doña Nieves propone que el dinero le permite callar conciencias y evitar el escándalo. Aunque se le describe como una mujer orgullosa, lujuriosa y superflua, se debe añadir que es ella quien lleva a su familia a la ruina económica por sus malos manejos y su consumismo. Nuevamente bajo una lectura naturalista, son sus defectos los que modelan sus desgracias familiares, pero estas no serían tales si es que no estuvieran ligadas a un sistema de consumo que los absorbe. La clase socioeconómica que ella y su familia representan será reemplazada por otras familias para las que el consumo, el ahorro y el trabajo tienen otro valor. Estas nuevas ideas, que se pueden replicar para las familias de menor condición, son propuestas por la autora a través de diferentes personajes. Los conceptos que Matto plantea en su narrativa como necesarios para la prosperidad pueden verse, tal vez, como sólidas contribuciones para reconsiderar el país.

La nación se consolida en la unión de Margarita con Ernesto. 20 Esta será la nación sana, próspera y bien balanceada, pero entonces también queda pensar en la pareja de Aquilino y Camila, en quienes se vislumbra un futuro desastroso. Las parejas hacen buena contraparte en la novela y en ambas es posible encontrar artificios para llegar al matrimonio: en la primera, es un golpe de suerte; en la segunda, una serie de mentiras. A nivel literario, la represión sexual y emocional de corte victoriano era usual y por ello ese deseo sexual puede entenderse también como el consumo del cuerpo. En las dos jóvenes se muestran los efectos de la pasión por sus parejas y el desbalance físico que ocasiona el sentirse enamorada, pero la diferencia es que Margarita logra comportarse correctamente porque tiene un entorno adecuado; es decir, la educación y modelo de Lucía Marín en su familia adoptiva, junto a la herencia biológica de su madre, una indígena decente. Estos rasgos hereditarios son complicados porque se esconde lo indígena en su presentación, tanto a nivel cultural como físico. Aunque no se relaciona a la mujer indígena con un alto deseo sexual (lo que sí sucede por ejemplo con las mujeres negras), sí se les atribuye defectos innatos por su raza. Reiteramos que se refiere a la madre porque el padre fue un sacerdote violador, pero esta información se diluye 21 y el pasado o herencia biológica no influye nega-
Un italiano en Lima: Relaciones sociales y consumo en *Herencia*  

En su desarrollo. Una educación esmerada unida al buen proceder de su pretendiente y al apoyo económico de sus padrinos coloca a Margarita en una posición muy ventajosa. Como menciona Fernando Marín antes de besar a su esposa: “el amor no es la misma cosa que el instinto del macho y el calor de la hembra” (*Herencia* 75). El amor de esta nueva pareja consolida la economía –Margarita– con la educación –Ernesto– del Estado moderno en el Perú republicano (Del Aguila 91).

Desde el título se hace referencia a la herencia, no sólo de sangre sino también al ejemplo que se da a los hijos en la familia. La posición de Matto no queda muy clara en cuanto al tema porque tiene una profusa perspectiva determinista proveniente del naturalismo que se contrapone a la educación como herramienta convincente de cambio sociocultural; pero también existe un claro interés en el aspecto mercantil de la ciudad y en el aspecto económico del funcionamiento social. El consumo social de la ciudad dirige la vida económica y los apetitos nacionales asimilan lo propio y lo ajeno, pero bajo los estándares de la cultura deseada, aclarando siempre lo que se considera deseable y lo que resulta inaceptable. La educación permite a cualquiera, incluso al bodeguero italiano, ascender en la escala social si es que logra adaptarse positivamente en su entorno, pero se colige que la capital no está preparada para asimilar todos estos cambios. Cierto es que estamos analizando personajes de una novela, pero la escritora utiliza su narrativa para examinar su realidad y criticarla. La integración social es primordial y los patrones de consumo juegan un papel fundamental en este proceso. Por tanto, el saber consumir se convierte en pieza clave para definir al nuevo sujeto culturalmente adecuado para el estado nacional moderno.

**Nota**

1. Debido a que en un ensayo anterior la autora ha analizado otros personajes de *Herencia* en relación al consumo, este ensayo se enfoca en el personaje italiano.

2. En ese sentido es posible encontrar proyectos recientes como el de Marcel Velásquez, que dedicó más de la mitad de su libro *La mirada de los gallinazos a la mercancía en Lima en el siglo XIX*, o Christopher Con-
way y Lee Skinner, quienes editaron un tomo en torno al consumo en la literatura latinoamericana y que fuera publicado por la revista española *Siglo Diecinueve*.

3. La diferenciación entre consumo y consumismo varía entre los estudiosos del tema, pero comúnmente refiere a un periodo contemporáneo. Por ejemplo, Bauman lo define dentro de su modernidad líquida (25–51), así que sería difícil de reformular para el siglo XIX. Hemos preferido un uso libre del término consumismo y que se explique como una versión amplificada del consumo en ese siglo.

4. La Guerra del Pacífico enfrentó a Chile y a Perú en alianza con Bolivia entre 1879 y 1884. Los chilenos lograron la victoria con una campaña militar sólida que incluso llegó a la capital peruana. El periodo de reconstrucción nacional al terminar estos eventos intentó sacar al país de la ruina económica y la debacle moral en que se encontraba.

5. Este interés no es único para Matto de Turner, que aportaba tanto como sus contemporáneos. En el caso de la educación, esta era importante dentro del programa de la élite industrial porque seguía las propuestas del positivismo y se planteaba para reorganizar a los indígenas en las zonas andinas. Cabe recordar además que la escritora intentaba indicar modelos de gobernabilidad y pedagogía en estos textos ficticios.

6. Aunque no se mencionan en este ensayo, en esta novela como en las otras de Matto de Turner aparecen personajes secundarios de niveles socioeconómicos inferiores que también se pueden analizar a la luz del consumismo.

7. Aunque en ocasiones se burla de las teorías científicas europeas, González Prada acepta el desarrollo intelectual y ensalza la literatura de países como Francia e Inglaterra, mientras que constantemente critica a España y sus costumbres en sus ensayos.

8. Los vacíos demográficos se relacionan con repoblar ciertos territorios, casi siempre rurales, y también con la falta de mano de obra. El ejemplo más mencionado fue el de los agricultores europeos en la pampa argentina para los que había una serie de beneficios estatales y ayudas económicas.
9. La mayoría de esos casos fueron de inmigración oficial o provocada y no espontánea o voluntaria como en el caso peruano. El gobierno peruano concedió desde 1830 una serie de facilidades para la inmigración, pero no creó las condiciones propicias para que funcionara. Los proyectos de algunos gobernantes fracasaron por falta de apoyo estatal y porque los colonos europeos rechazaban las condiciones serviles de las haciendas costeras (Ruiz de Castañeda 145–48). Aunque las políticas migratorias se enfocaban en el colonio europeo, en la práctica se cambiaron las leyes para atraer la mano de obra china. En 1872 se creó la Sociedad de Inmigración Europea que pagaba el pasaje y daba hospedaje por una semana a los viajeros. Con este sistema llegaron alrededor de 3000 europeos, mayormente italianos y algunos franceses y suizos. La idea era colonizar tierras costeras, pero por la falta de condiciones adecuadas la mayoría encontró trabajo en Lima en empresas connacionales o comercios (151).

10. La cadena migratoria consistía en que inicialmente llegaba un inmigrante que luego atraía a sus parientes y les ayudaba a establecerse económicamente. Estos, a su vez, invitaban a otros y así se iba extendiendo la cadena. Si ellos regresaban a Italia, vendían su negocio a alguien de la colonia y así se iban estableciendo también pequeñas redes comerciales familiares. En otros países sí hubo proyectos colonizadores para atraer europeos y afincarlos en ciertas zonas, pero en el Perú éstos fueron casi inexistentes.

11. El negocio de las pulperías, que en algún momento fue de italianos o chinos, pasó a manos de japoneses (Bonfiglio, Los italianos 188) y no a manos locales.

12. Incluso el propio Giuseppe Garibaldi se refugió en el Perú de 1851 a 1853.

13. Bachiche es un término común y derogatorio del siglo XIX para referirse a los inmigrantes italianos en el Perú y de fácil asociación con los pulperos.

14. Los modales no solo refiere a lo externo sino que los manuales de comportamiento también hacen hincapié en las cualidades morales de las personas (la decencia, por poner un ejemplo).
15. El pesto es un plato típico ligur que se sigue comiendo en Lima en la versión regional de Génova y que fue muy bien aceptado por la población. Originalmente solo era preparado por los colonos italianos que además acriollaron sus ingredientes y preparación (Bonfiglio, *Los italianos* 225). La elección de Matto de Turner comprueba su conocimiento de estos grupos inmigrantes en la capital.

16. Matto de Turner no inventa estas ideas, sino que son parte de un discurso vigente en esa época. La autora utiliza los términos “raza degenerada” y su base ideológica se encuentra en el discurso sociológico europeo, en autores como Arthur de Gobineau (1816 – 1882). Como señala Graham, “The word degenerate, when applied to people, means (as it ought to mean) that the people has no longer the same intrinsic value as it had before, because it has no longer the same blood in its veins, continual adulterations having gradually affected the quality of that blood” (45).

17. Efraín Kristal escribió *Una visión urbana de los Andes* (Lima: Instituto de Apoyo Agrario, 1991), en que analiza los intereses económicos en pugna en el último cuarto del siglo XIX. Aunque su análisis se centra en las zonas andinas, por lo que incluye *Aves sin nido*, permite entender también el funcionamiento de los grupos oligarcas en el Perú.

18. Cabe recordar que la mujer no tiene derechos sobre su cuerpo, o sus hijos, o sus propiedades ya que es el hombre quien tiene la patria potestad, la tutela de su hija o su esposa. En el caso de otras mujeres, se espera un nexo con algún hombre, ya que el no tenerlo la deja desvalida. Esa falta de protección puede llevarla a la marginación social (lo que de algún modo también se representa con otro personaje de esta novela: Adelina, la costurera pobre). Sin importar su estatus, la mujer no tiene los beneficios de la ciudadanía.

19. El amor de madre se representa como uno de los más sólidos en las novelas porque, como se ha visto, se enfatiza el interés en la función reproductiva de la mujer. Esto no se limita a la reproducción física, sino también a lo moral y a lo cultural. Lucía Marín, la madre por excelencia de la familia republicana, y la madre de Ernesto son ejemplos de virtud que serán transmitidos a Margarita y a sus hijos como parte de un ciclo reproductivo del Estado nacional. Con esto será posible que la nación se consolide y también se multiplique.
20. Con esto se hace una lectura similar a la de Doris Sommer en *Foundational Fictions* en que el desenlace pasional coincide con las bases políticas de la nación.


**Obras citadas**


Joshua Specht defines *Red Meat Republic*, a “hoof-to-table history of industrialized beef production,” as an explanation of “the origins and ongoing resilience of a beef production system that was at once revolutionary and exploitative” (4, 3). Cattle and humans have been united throughout civilization, even as far back as the Lascaux cave paintings in France, where aurochs—an extinct kind of early cattle—are prominently featured among the other animals. In the United States of the nineteenth century, the desire for cheap and delicious meat was to a large extent responsible for Indian removals, expansionist policies, and the rise of near-monopolistic control of the meatpacking industry by a few big businesses. At the same time, these actions democratized meat consumption throughout the nation and, eventually, the rest of the globe. Specht does a great job describing this fraught history.

Specht divides *Red Meat Republic* into chapters based on themes surrounding the spread of beef production in the United States in the second half of the nineteenth century: “War,” “Range,” “Market,” “Slaughterhouse,” and “Table.” The chapter “War” focuses on the history of a number of Indian Removals during the cattle boom period of the late nineteenth century, the
era of the “cattle kingdom.” Large cattle concerns intentionally used military-supported actions through various “Indian wars” to forcibly change the Great Plains region from Native American nations hunting the American bison (buffalo) to cattle—first on an open range and, later, fenced in with barbed wire. Even the reservation system, Specht notes, favored US ranchers, as it created ration-based captive populations that ranchers could exploit. Moreover, Specht notes the importance of narrative to nation building during this period of US history, as these stories were as significant as any guns during this bloody period of US expansion in the interest of beef production.

“Range” continues this theme: the eventual closing of the open frontier and its effects on the nation’s cattle industry. Specht discusses a lesser-known period of the US cattle industry’s history. In the 1870s and 1880s, small-scale cattle ranchers battled against corporate cattle ranching. Through a series of political and ecological events, the large-scale ranches failed, to be ultimately diffused into a number of small ranches that would be dominated by the meatpacking “Beef Trust” in Chicago and other large Midwest cities. “Market,” then, shows the next stage of this history—the move from range to a small number of Midwest cities that came to dominate the market. This chapter focuses on mobility and the technologies required for moving more cattle faster and through greater spaces across the United States, including the development of the railroad system. Ultimately, standardization of the industry led the “Beef Trust” to control the commodity and pricing, leaving small-scale ranchers almost entirely at their mercy. Specht notes that this system has remained largely unchanged into the present moment—growing global and more systematic in the modern period.

“Slaughterhouse” concentrates on Philip Danforth Armour, one of Chicago’s meatpacker moguls, as depicted in Upton Sinclair’s classic muckraking novel, *The Jungle* (1906). This period of US history influences food production—not only meat production—throughout the nation and around the globe. Specht gives a useful reading of *The Jungle*, turning his lens to the laborers, as Sinclair intended, and observing that readers of the novel have always, then and now, cared less for the workers being abused within the meat production system than for the cleanliness of the meat they bought. Meanwhile, Specht continues, the workers themselves were doing everything possible to survive during a
time of big business corruption and control. As one example of the violence during this time, he gives a detailed reading of the use of the “infamous Pinkertons” and their role as strikebreakers. Meanwhile, Armour and the rest of the “Big Four” harmed ranchers and butchers as well. They controlled the beef production industry to the point where they could literally set the price of meat that ranchers would be paid and, on the opposite end of the market, the price that consumers could expect to pay. In so doing, they ruined the nation’s butchers and controlled the ranchers as well. In a fascinating side note, Specht argues that the streamlined structure of the (dis)assembly line in Chicago’s meatpacking plants would go on to influence Henry Ford (181).

The final chapter, “Table,” brings the cattle industry to the familiar home table at the end of the nineteenth century—examining how labor and other key elements of industrial meat production became largely invisible but how, at the same time, various choices democratized beef consumption. This chapter describes the telling shift from individual production and consumption of meat—largely not beef but rather chicken or pig—to the now familiar packaged preprocessed portions of beef in a centralized grocery store “long divorced from a living, breathing, bleeding animal” (251). A variety of industry policies, marketing strategies, and consumer decisions led to dramatic changes in beef consumption that remain into the twenty-first century.

Specht’s organization and structure are immaculate. His chapters are clearly laid out and focused, his writing clear and straightforward. In addition, the book is painstakingly well researched, with significant and fascinating archival first-person narratives and images throughout, which truly bring to life the story of beef’s move into “the center of the American diet”(118). Over all, *Red Meat Republic* is a significant, thought-provoking work about a critical time in US history when beef truly did change the nation. Until now, this story had not received the treatment its repercussions deserve. *Red Meat Republic* will be a valuable addition for any scholar working on agricultural history, animal studies, or food studies.

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