Food Matters in Literature and Culture

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The Digital Literature Review

The Digital Literature Review is a journal showcasing undergraduate student work in literature and cultural studies. The journal is produced by undergraduate students at Ball State University who are involved in the Digital Literature Review immersive learning project. Our goal is to provide a forum where undergraduate students can showcase their research projects and disseminate their valuable contributions to ongoing academic conversations.

The Digital Literature Review is published annually in the spring. The deadline for submissions is in early January. We welcome original articles relating to each year's theme. Articles should range from 3000-5000 words; every article is reviewed by undergraduate students on the journal's editorial team. Notification of initial decision is in February. All authors receive constructive feedback concerning submissions.

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Food Matters in Literature and Culture

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Food for Thought: The Analysis of Consumption, Preparation, and Placement of Food in Media

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Imagine our world without food.

While most of us can't even imagine an afternoon without food, food items in literature, movies, and other artworks have tended to fall out of view: characters, if they are surviving, *must* be eating, though if that eating mostly happens off the page, the details are left to our imagination. Even when we do see mealtime during a scene or hear about "amber waves of grain" in a song, analyses often step around food as a symbol, as an arbiter, or as a marker of real and imagined differences. Our cultural distaste with discussions of food (compared to the body that consumes it) has made food studies, as a formal discipline, only emerge in the last few decades, with rigorous cultural food studies even newer. Considering our personal and global biases surrounding food, this begs the questions: how many wars have been fought and colonies established over access to water and agricultural sources? How many people have been relegated to the kitchen or the dining room based on their sex, race, and/or class? Food forms the backbone of most religious and spiritual understandings, too: think of the forbidden fruit's function in Abrahamic traditions or the role of the mustard seed in Buddhist teachings about death.

Perhaps this religiosity of food was what led Thomas C. Foster, while professor of English at University of Michigan-Flint, to declare that "whenever people eat or drink together, it's communion" (8). He clarifies, though, that "not all communions are holy"; rather, mealtime is a process between people that develops—even necessitates—cultural and social undertones: "breaking bread together is an act of sharing and peace, since if you're breaking bread you're not breaking heads" (8). Food, according to this view, is the ultimate form of subtext; it can act as the canvas on which almost any scene to play out, only catching us unaware when its function becomes disrupted.

Yet food—in art as well as life—tends to go beyond its daily role to become the disruptor itself. *The Digital Literature Review*, Ball State's undergraduate academic literary journal, has taken up cultural food studies as its focus this year to highlight how our meals can be both normative and subversive, particularly when put in conversation with issues facing marginalized communities. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has arguably made the job of introducing this aspect of cultural food studies easier: who hasn't been moved, since the beginning of lockdown, to try a sourdough recipe or to watch a program like *The Great British Bake Off*? At the same time, the continued food shortages coupled with the

resulting waves of malnutrition; the re-imposition of culinary domesticity on working mothers; and the precarious financial situation for small businesses (including small groceries), particularly in minority-majority areas, spell out the dynamic and sometimes uneasy relationship we all have been maintaining with food.

With this wider acknowledgment of food as a worthy aspect of cultural studies, we are also inclined to recognize subtle yet distinct differences in the analysis of food through multiple types of media. Specifically, literature, film, and television all use food distinctly and require a different lens of analysis. Literature is a more intentional form of media. References to specific foods or particular food-related moments almost guarantee an intention behind them worthy of inspection. Film is quite similar, but different in that it is a visual medium. Intention can thus be portrayed in a variety of ways, namely in the presentation of food itself along with the way the actors portray the actual consumption. Television offers a truly unique lens for analysis with weekly episodes, and repetition becomes a much more powerful tool for analysis. Additionally, television allows for analysis of cooking and food in a more direct sense with such a wide array of cooking and baking shows and their own intentional portrayals of food spaces.

Throughout the fall semester of our *Digital Literature Review* class, we explored food studies through texts by authors of varied backgrounds. Kiese Laymon's *Heavy: An American Memoir* (2018) is about Laymon's complex relationship with food and his mother wanting him to be successful. In regards to Laymon's complex relationship with food, it is both a comfort and a contributing cause to his discomfort. Throughout the memoir, Laymon struggles with body issues arising from his mother's teasing amongst others' barbs. His primary way of overcoming discomfort is gorging himself with food, in particular unhealthy junk food or whatever is within his reach. However, this unhealthy coping mechanism simply exacerbates his body issues. A particularly unique aspect of this memoir is that it focuses on body issues from the male perspective, a perspective not usually seen in media because it contrasts with the stereotypes associated both with men and women. Continuing on with our study, Monique Truong's novel *Bitter in the Mouth* (2011) tells the story of food identity through the character of Linda Hammerick, a Vietnamese-American girl who has been adopted. The relationship of food is explored through Linda's struggles that arise, in part, from growing up in a conservative, predominantly white town in North Carolina. Particularly important is Linda's lexical-gustatory synesthesia, which has an effect on how she interacts with the world, which could be positive or negative depending on the taste of a word. Lastly, Toni Morrison's *Tar Baby* (1981) focuses on the symbolism that foods have in different cultures—in this instance, an island in the Caribbean—and among people with different socio-economic backgrounds. The wealthy white Street family employs several Black servants and has little understanding of the entitlement underwriting their food requests, such as imported apples for a Christmas dinner. Though primarily we learned about food studies via literature, the film works of director Bong Joon-Ho were influential as well.

Bong Joon-ho shows intersections of food studies with ideas of class and social structure in many ways throughout his filmography. His film *Snowpiercer* (2013) shows the separation of class and the way it impacts food security in a very literal sense; in the film, people of different classes are separated into train cars, and these class separations impact not only how they are treated but how they live and what

food they have access to as well. This becomes clearer as the small band of rebels, inhabitants of the last and societally lowest-ranked train car that the film follows, works their way up through the train cars towards the front, seeing just how differently they were forced to live from those of higher classes living towards the front of the train. This, in the most literal sense, is a signifier of class division and social separation through the lens of food theory and food studies—while the back of the train eats what can be most accurately described as protein blocks, people of higher societal class toward the front of the train live in luxury and eat gourmet meals to their heart's content.

This is not the only Bong Joon-ho's film wherein food as a signifier of class division plays a prominent role. Bong's film *Parasite* (2019) provides another clear indication of the impact that class and its separation can have on a psyche, especially through a food studies lens. The Kim family, the main characters of the film, are first seen in a basement apartment, cramped into a small space and stealing free Wi-Fi from a nearby cafe. They have only a few small rooms, they sleep on the floor, and the food that we see this family eat is cheap and easy while significantly lacking in nutritional contents—plain bread, prepackaged food, and canned beverages that look as if they come from a vending machine. Once they begin receiving employment from the wealthy Park family, we see the stark difference in the access that this wealthier family has to food—a fully stocked refrigerator, fresh fruit, and an elaborately catered garden party held for a child's birthday. There is also a stark difference drawn through the food that the Kim family can afford after being employed by the Parks—in the beginning of the film, the entire family works folding pizza boxes, but after the two children become employed by the Parks, the Kim family is able to afford eating at the very pizza place where they used to work. These visual examples of leisure and security in food as compared with the struggle faced by the Kims in obtaining food in the beginning of the film show clear class divides and social disparities through a lens of food studies. Both of *Parasite* and *Snowpiercer* show distinct signifiers of the ways in which food studies interplay with the images and concepts of class and wealth inequality in film.

The study of food as a lens exists not only in literature and film but also in television, which we discussed and analyzed within our class in regard to shows ranging from Gordon Ramsey's *Hell's Kitchen* to Rachel Ray's *30 Minute Meals* to Padma Lakshmi's *Taste the Nation*. In "Domestic Divo?: Televised Treatments of Masculinity, Femininity, and Food," Rebecca Swenson explains how food television depicts men "construct[ing] cooking *as a way to flex professional muscles*, a theme which rejects situating the male cook as an everyday provider of the personal, domestic care that is a hallmark of family life," whereas women are presented "with instructional programs position themselves as approachable, domestic cooks that prepare meals for friends and family members" (143). Swenson applies food studies within these television shows to the theoretical framework of gender as exercised within media to point out that, while both men and women have public platforms within the sphere of food and the kitchen, they are still existing in the separate spheres of public and domestic domains. These gender scripts are evident in their differences in mannerisms (men are often yelling, displaying themselves as more "macho," while women are often more docile and family friendly), choice of fashion (within these cooking shows men are often wearing their chef's outfits, whereas women are dressed more casually like a normal day at home), and the style and format of the show as determined by the television broadcaster.

Food, while historically known for playing a strong role in defining genders in television as

Swenson notes, can also be approached in a more gender-neutral fashion in television through shows such as *Taste the Nation* on Hulu. This series showcases food and the cultures from which they are derived, and is hosted by Padma Lakshmi, who connects with the people of the culture, such as how women tend to do within food in television, while also being adventurous and eating foods outside of comfort zones, such as men are typically presented doing. This merges the separate spheres into one, illustrating the intersectionality of food as a lens within media such as television.

One way that we chose to exemplify these intersections of food with larger social issues is through the inclusion of recipes from each of our staff members. We have interspersed recipes throughout this journal's powerful essays, ranging from espresso brownies to delicious cocktails. With these, we set out to tell a story, following a day's meals and linking them thematically to the essays in our journal.

With this inclusion, the larger importance of recipes in food studies is hopefully brought to light. Recipes hold a key role in the full understanding of food studies; in many ways, recipes operate as time capsules, fully capturing a culture's way of life and its relationship to food at any specific time—we think of certain meals, and they conjure different feelings for different people. The treatment of recipes as a valuable source of understanding allows for a more thorough understanding of life from varying perspectives. This is best explored by Katharina Vester's "Queering the Cookbook" when she states, "Cookbooks have a long tradition of giving instructions that are not solely meant to produce roasts, cupcakes, or beer. The recipes as well as the narrative they are embedded in carry ideological content that reaches far beyond the realm of the kitchen" (131). Vester's words frame our own ideology regarding the recipes we've included. These short glimpses into the journal's identity allow us to look more introspectively at our own consumption and how these recipes may impact our views and the way through which we interpret these essays.

We begin this issue of the *Digital Literature Review* with Emily Turner's essay, "The Parasite of Society: Food and Class Studies in Bong Joon-ho's *Parasite*," which dives into food studies within the cinematic world of Bong's work, a defining aspect of this year's journal. In her essay, she discusses how Bong utilizes food in *Parasite* to denote class inequality that is a direct consequence of the power and wealth divide between the rich and the poor, signaling to the eventual collapse of society. From film to novels, we cross over to Hannah Salih's essay, "Meat Consumption, Abject Bodies, and Toxic Flows in Ruth Ozeki's *My Year of Meats*" in which she analyzes meat production and consumption within *My Year of Meats* to discuss othering oneself through abjection in relation to both toxicity and cleanliness. Through the framework of abjection, Salih compares violence towards women and animals in the novel to form the idea that bodies can "transgress normative boundaries" through bodily functions.

Violence within the meat industry transforms to violence within human nature through the gaze of food and othering in Nimisha Sinha's essay, "'I see what I have been dreading': Witnessing Food and Violence in *Waiting for the Barbarians* and *In the Heart of the Country*." Food in these novels act as modes of violence, which Sinha theorizes through the lens of "food witnessing." Here, she argues that food witnessing can represent the urge to consume, or eliminate, the "Others," mimicking a cannibalistic desire. Violence through means of consumption is further discussed in Kaila Henkin's essay, "Redirecting the Blame: America's Overconsumption of Black Women as Illustrated in Kiese Laymon's *Heavy*." Henkin uses the theoretical framework of triple consciousness, coined after W.E.B. Du Bois's double

consciousness theory, to analyze how women in Kiese Laymon's *Heavy: An American Memoir* are consumed by dominant, white male power as a result of overindulgence without consequence due to societal-caused trauma.

We now transition to more feminist and food theory ideologies with Dilayda Tülübaş's essay, "Women Dined Well: Bakhtinian Carnivalesque in Caryl Churchill's *Top Girls*." In this play, historical female characters socialize over a shared meal, which Tülübas studies through the theoretical context of the carnivalesque. Food in this essay, then, acts as a way to analyze each woman to show how she is dominated in a patriarchal world—a form of oppression that transcends different time periods as well as locations.

Our journal thus leans into the next essay relating to Bong's films: "Eat the Rich: The Parasitic Relationship Between Socioeconomic Groups as explored through film by Bong Joon-Ho's *Parasite* and *Snowpiercer*" by Vincent Ramos-Niaves. In his essay, Ramos-Niaves analyzes how the placement of food in the films *Parasite* and *Snowpiercer* represents class inequality. Methods of consumption as well as food location shows how the elite dominate the impoverished through abuse and punishment. Julia Neugarten furthers the discussion of food in spaces in her essay, "The Whistle Stop Café and Luke's Diner: The Village Café as Utopian Space for Women in *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Café* and *Gilmore Girls*." In this piece, Neugarten explores the concept of utopian spaces for women in cafés within two different media. Female characters seek refuge in their respective cafés, where they can fight against gender norms through both action and speech. Neugarten also ties in queer theory within these spaces due to the same-sex relationship found within *Fried Green Tomatoes*, which leads us to the penultimate essay of our journal issue.

Allen Warren argues in his essay, "Life's a Peach: The Convergence of Sexuality and Class in Guadagnino's *Call Me by Your Name*," that food is used in Guadagnino's award-winning film to cultivate the same-sex relationship between the two main characters, Elio and Oliver. Warren approaches his thesis with a socioeconomic framework to explore how food propels and sustains the budding relationship, both sexual and romantic, between the two lovers despite the class division that works to separate them. The film ends with the cruel reality of unrequited love, which transitions well to the final essay of this journal. The 2021 edition of the *Digital Literature Review* concludes with the third and final essay that discusses Bong's work: Tauri Hagemann's essay, "Food for the Dogs: Consumption and Wealth Inequality in Bong Joon-Ho's *Parasite*." Hagemann utilizes socioeconomic theory to analyze the role of food in the film Parasite. She posits that food in the film represents class divide through modes of poverty as exemplified in various scenes, which begs the ultimate question: *who is the true parasite within a capitalist society?*

The order of this year's journal encourages the reader to experience the different aspects of food in the media through each author's frame of thought and argument. Each essay, although varying in subject, proves the significance of food in books, movies, plays, and more as food in these works represents the different facets of life. So, grab a cup of steaming coffee, a slice of pineapple chicken pizza, or perhaps a piece of chocolate toast to pair with the consumption of this year's journey. Eat every bite, leave no leftovers, and discover what lies beyond each platter.

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The Parasite of Society: Food and Class Studies in Bong Joon-ho's *Parasite*

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The role that food plays in film typically has more meaning than a viewer might realize at first. Often viewers watch movies for entertainment without analyzing the context that the food in each scene provides to the richness of the plot. For example, Bong Joon-ho's 2019 award-winning film *Parasite* thrills its audience while warning them about the dangers of capitalism and class disparity. Despite the popularity of this film, the aspect of food was quietly forgotten even though it enhances the movie's theme. Bong intentionally placed food in this film to signify class status, which further divides the Park and Kim families. While this is a critically-acclaimed film, there is not much scholarship devoted to food studies, concerning social class in *Parasite*; therefore, I am drawing upon movie reviews as well as scholarly work about food in media. In doing this, I have studied *Parasite* through lenses of socioeconomic theory as well as food theory to analyze how food is used in the film. Food involves more than simply preparing ingredients and consuming the final product, especially when used in media and popular culture: it often provides deeper meaning that must be examined in order to know what is truly being said. In the film *Parasite*, food is the vehicle that Bong uses to signify social status, and furthermore, it signals class disparities between the wealthy and impoverished. Beyond the film, Bong uses food to warn his audience how class inequality could be the downfall, the parasite, of society.

Food studies in media provide complex layers to the films that viewers quite literally consume, a fact complicated depending on how one analyzes food. Different theories, lenses, and contexts can change how food is used in film, much like how using different ingredients in a recipe can alter the final product. But why does food matter in film, and how do directors use food to create meaning? Food is often employed to symbolize greater significance or to prove a point that a director wants to assert in their film. For example, Bong Joon-ho's film *Parasite* (2019) utilizes food to symbolize social class: food is a vehicle in this film to show both the stark divide between the upper and lower classes and how such economic disparity can be perilous for society. Bong does this to warn viewers that class inequality is unjust by demonstrating how greed within different social classes warrants grave consequences. Ultimately, *Parasite* concludes with the patriarch of the ultra-wealthy Park family deceased while the extremely impoverished Kim family is divided, still dangerously poor, and suffering the death of their daughter/sister. While these may be extreme conclusions to draw from the film, *Parasite* aims to warn its viewers of the greed between social classes that could lead to such dismal ends. Bong accomplishes this through the placement of food: it symbolizes the class divide that each family struggles with in different ways.

Although *Parasite* is a critically-acclaimed film, due to its newness, there is not much scholarship devoted to it; therefore, my essay draws from film reviews, socio-economic and food theories, and scholarly work about food and media in order to show how *Parasite* uses food to elucidate class inequality that threatens dire ramifications for the whole of society. Food involves more than simply preparing ingredients and consuming the final product, especially when employed in media and popular culture. In *Parasite*, food is the vehicle that Bong utilizes to signify social status, and furthermore, class disparities between the wealthy and impoverished. Such class disparity—the struggle over wealth and resources—beckons the collapse of society as the rich become richer and the poor become poorer until society can no longer withstand the pressure of the parasitic relationship that capitalism fosters.

In the film, viewers are first introduced to the Kim family: they are living in a crowded basement, and it becomes obvious from the clothes they wear, their lack of Wi-Fi connection, and their living situation that they are impoverished. The Kim family is always in need of work, so when Ki-woo, the son, tricks his way into tutoring the daughter of the wealthy Park family, the Kims take extreme measures to infiltrate the Park household for employment through various means. The Parks are oblivious to the Kims' schemes—they are blissfully unaware since they rely so heavily on the employment of the lower class to maintain their homelife. However, their ambient relationship turns parasitic once the Parks' old employees threaten to reveal that the Kims have been scamming the Parks for work. The Kims will do anything to keep their jobs, including murder, but the struggle over power and wealth comes to a head when chaos unfolds at the end of the film due to the parasitic relationship that each family cultivates. Bong leaves the viewers questioning the inner workings of capitalism and class inequality as they reflect on which family was the true antagonist, or parasite, of the film.

Bong portrays the class divide between the Kim and Park families in a variety of ways, including their homes, lifestyles, levels of education, and hygiene. For example, the Park family lives in a pristine, well-kept mansion while the Kim family lives in a crowded, dirty basement. Yet, when we consider food theory in cinema, it becomes clear that food in *Parasite* is a key mechanism through which Bong critiques class exploitation. Anne Bower and Thomas Piontek explain that "[t]hroughout cinematic history, food has played a part in all kinds of films, frequently revealing aspects of characters' emotions, identities, cultural backgrounds, fears, and inspirations" (177). Food in *Parasite* acts as a vehicle to explore not only the families' socio-economic statuses but also the sheer divide between the two, which is why the film ends with death and despair. The Park family consumes food out of luxury while the Kim family consumes and uses food out of necessity: this demonstrates how each family operates within their respective social classes. Hojin Song explains how food studies can be used to identify systems within media: "Through identifying and studying food categories, it is possible to decode the religious, political, economic, social, and cultural systems in which food and food-centered practices are embedded" (5). Song's ideology can be used to analyze the food in *Parasite* as social and economic mechanisms, like how food and consumption denotes a class divide between the two families, ultimately pushing each family to collapse. While the Parks consume in excess, the Kims consume the bare minimum due to their poverty, which promotes the greed that causes them to infiltrate the Parks' lavish homelife. Bong's employment of food to denote social status is particularly striking because food is needed to survive. Access to food should be a given right; however, *Parasite* highlights how this is not true among the

impoverished. While the Parks have fully stocked fridges and pantries as well as a maid to prepare their every meal, the Kims must buy and consume food from vending machines. Food is not guaranteed for the Kim family. In other words, any scene that contains food and drink in *Parasite*, whether it be ramdon or alcohol, signifies either economic distress or excess, suggesting that too much or too little of something—money, food, etc.—can be fatally dangerous, promoting the parasitic relationship of the rich profiting from the poor.

Although the Kim and Park families are starkly different, they act like symbiotics, sucking the life out of one another, to survive. Put another way, the way in which each family prepares and consumes food symbolizes the class divide as well as how each family needs each other to live. The Kim mother, Choong-sook, must prepare meals for the Park family as Yeon-kyo, the Park mother, does not have the capability to do similar tasks for her family on her own. Due to her wealth and status, Yeon-kyo never needed to learn how to cook or clean; therefore, she, as well as her family, are reliant on Chong-sook. *Observer* film critic Mark Kermode defines this relationship in his review as "[a] lifestyle that relies upon hired help: tutors, a chauffeur and, most importantly, a devoted housekeeper Moon-gwang (Lee Jung-eun), who stayed with the building after its original architect owner moved out". The Kim family disposes of Moon-gwang by exposing her to peaches, which she is allergic to, in order for Chong-sook to take over as the Parks' maid. Food here is used as a weapon; while the peach itself may not symbolize economic inequality, it does show the desperation of the Kims to infiltrate the Park family for their money. The Kim family is so poor that they feel the need to endanger Moon-gwang so they can be paid in her place. Weaponizing food thus reflects the wealth gap that causes the Kim family to go through such great lengths to acquire wealth. Through the disposal of Moon-gwang, Choong-sook is able to become the new maid, which allows the viewers to see Chong-sook preparing food for the Kims. Even though the Parks could not produce their own meals without Chong-sook, the Kim family would not be able to buy their food without the money they receive from the Parks. Bong utilizes this symbiotic symbolism, from production to consumption of food within the two families, to highlight the downfalls of capitalism. Neither the rich nor the poor can survive without each other, but to do so, the impoverished must suffer while the rich profits from such suffering. Bong's portrayal of food preparation and consumption in this film signifies such a divide between the two families and beyond them, concerning the wealthy upper class versus the impoverished lower class. *Parasite* implies that without remedying class disparity, society will inevitably fail under the strain of greed caused by capitalism.

Despite being the poorest of the poor, working for an elite family can include certain advantages, though such benefits can come at a grave cost. While the Park family is away on a camping trip for their son's birthday, the Kims sneak into the Parks' mansion to indulge in their employers' riches through the consumption of alcohol, which leaves the family intoxicated. They drink in excess because consuming alcohol is a luxury that they cannot afford to enjoy due to their poor circumstances. French essayist and theorist Roland Barthes posits in his book *Mythologies* that "[d]rinking is felt as the exposure of pleasure, not as the necessary cause of a sought-for effect: wine is not only a philter but also a durational act of drinking: the gesture here has a decorative value, and wine's power is never separated from its modes of existence" (80). Here, Barthes is discussing wine; however, one can come to a similar conclusion within this scene even though the Kim family consumes liquor as opposed to wine. Both wine and

liquor are alcoholic beverages that lead to drunkenness when overconsumed. While the Parks use expensive liquor for decorative value, they are never shown drinking to become drunk. The Kims, however, manipulate the Parks' wealth in order to drink for pleasure—a luxury. They invade their employers' mansion while it is vacant, but they also invade the family's lifestyle, feeding off of what the Kims could never obtain without the Park family. Alcohol in this scene is a mode for transformation as well as escapism for the Kim family: in doing so they are not only breaking and entering, but also stealing. Viewers might resent the Kims for stealing what is not theirs, or they might empathize with the family who is too poor to afford life's necessities, let alone life's luxuries. Whether or not viewers support or chastise the Kims in this scene, alcohol is a mechanism for morality: "Wine thus provides a collective morality, within which everything is redeemed: excesses, disasters, crimes are of course possible with wine, but not wickedness, perfidy, or ugliness; the evil it can engender is in the nature of fate and therefore escapes penalization, it is a theatrical evil, not a temperamental one" (Barthes 81). Barthes claims that under the influence of alcohol, one can be immoral but not wicked, so while watching this scene in *Parasite*, one must ask themselves: are the Kims simply immoral, or are they committing evil acts? Gluttony is a transgression; however, it feels impossible for the Kim family to be gluttonous, even when they are drinking in excess, due to their poverty. Conversely, the Parks overconsume on a daily basis because of their wealth. It is immoral to break and enter. It is immoral to steal. But it is also immoral to be complacently rich in a society where the destitute struggle to provide for themselves day in and day out. Through alcohol, Bong highlights this question of morality that forces viewers to think critically about the economic inequality caused by capitalism. The alcohol scene thus marks the beginning of the end for the Park and Kim family, mirroring the downfall of society once it, too, inevitably fails.

Bong uses the alcohol scene to depict the Kims as the luxurious, decadent family, but all illusions are suspended when Yeon-kyo calls Chong-sook, who is supposed to be home to house-sit, to inform her that they are coming home early from their camping trip due to bad weather. Film critic Manohla Dargis from *The New York Times* summarizes what is at stake during this scene: "By that point, you are as comfortably settled in as the Kims; the house is so very pleasant, after all. But the cost of that comfort and those pretty rooms—and the eager acquiescence to the unfairness and meanness they signify—comes at a terrible price." Here, Dargis refers to how certain aspects of capitalism have severe consequences as seen in the film. One scene in particular demonstrates the fatal class divide between the Park and Kim families via the production of food: when Yeon-kyo is on the phone with Chong-sook, she asks that Chong-sook prepares ram-don for the family to eat when they arrive home. Ram-don is a popular Korean dish that is quick and easy to make on a budget, which is why it is so shocking to the Kim family when Yeon-kyo requests that Chong-sook adds premium beef on top of the ram-don noodles. Viewers who are unfamiliar with this dish might compare the oddness of the request to putting high quality steak on top of macaroni and cheese prepared from a box. Evelyn Yang provides further context to Yeon-kyo's request by observing that "[t]o add a steak on top of the cheap instant noodles is an act of qualifying and justifying Mrs. Park's enjoyment of a 'lower-class' dish. The rich, despite their wealth, would still crave for things that are below their social status, but with their own imagination." One can infer from Yang that although the wealthy can relate to the poor by craving a cheap dish, they can never close the gap between social classes that capitalism established; Yeon-kyo cannot consume ram-don on its own, for it

must include wealthy ingredients such as premium beef. Bernice Chan and Alkira Reinfrank, writers and reporters for the *South China Morning Post*, describe how Yeon-kyo's request demonstrates how far removed the wealthy is from the rest of society: "This is meant to be a sign of how outlandishly rich these people are and how out of touch they are from what normal people eat." Therefore, Yeon-kyo's request for a cheap dish (despite the addition of steak) is also used for irony since she craves a dish typically reserved for those who cannot afford higher quality food. As soon as Yeon-kyo hangs up the phone, chaos ensues as the Kim family rushes to erase any signs that they have intruded before the Parks' return home. The premium ram-don and the Kims' panicked response after Yeon-kyo's call represents how each family cannot belong in the opposite social class, showing division among the families due to the wealth gap.

The struggle for power and wealth between the Park and Kim families comes to a climax, resulting in bloodshed, trauma, and death. Yeon-kyo throws an elaborate birthday party for her son Da-song, the youngest member of the Park family, that includes copious amounts of consumption fit for all the wealthy partygoers. They even watch a performance that mocks marginalized people (Indigenous Americans), showing how superior the wealthy believe they are compared to other groups: at the apex of the film, Bong blatantly demonstrates how he thinks the wealthy dehumanize those who are poor or marginalized. The party ends horrifically when Geun-sae, another impoverished captive of capitalism, escapes his confines and stabs Ki-jung, the daughter of the Kim family. Geun-sae is Moon-gwang's husband, who she has hidden in the depths of the Park mansion so that she could provide for him via the Parks' wealth—another symbiotic relationship. Due to his devotion to the Parks, as well as being mentally unstable because of the isolation, Geun-sae escapes the basement and kills Ki-jung. Food, then, is an enabler for Geun-sae because without the Parks' food and shelter, he would have never survived poverty. In the end, both families suffer from loss and severe trauma, which Bong uses to signify how the overconsumption of wealth and resources proves to be fatal to both the upper and lower class, causing the eventual collapse of society. Hence, the Kims' and Parks' relationship evolves from symbiosis to parasitism as the Kims' infiltration leads to the deaths and/or injury of members of each family. Korean cinema researcher Christina Klein contends that "Korean cinema allows us to think about the global circulation of U.S. popular culture in a more comprehensive way" (24-25). Bong utilizes the party scene to take an inward look at Korean social class disparity to then look outward in order to perceive how other capitalistic economies face the same struggles that viewers see in *Parasite*. Beyond the film, viewers must realize that unequal distribution, or hoarding, of wealth and resources destroys societies from within, much like how a parasite overtakes its host. Bong's use of food in this film is poignant as it is the vehicle to promote this anti-capitalistic message. By the end of the party scene, Chong-sook fatally stabs Geun-sae with a kabob stick, which symbolizes how even the poor are pitted against each other in the ever-lasting struggle for control over wealth. Yang summarizes that "[Bong] witnesses the story of Parasite every day in a capitalist society. Living in a world where capitalism dominates our values, where we celebrate our freedoms of choices, our wealth and quality of life are more polarized than ever." Food placement is essential for the analysis of the party scene as what began with the overconsumption of food ends with bloodshed. Here, Bong employs food to encapsulate the theme of his film: class divides promote the rich to benefit from the poor's suffering before ultimately collapsing. Both the Kim and Park families experience great loss by the end of the party scene, showing how their parasitic relationship that mimics the

downfalls of capitalism festers and dies, much like how food inevitably rots and decomposes until it is nothing at all.

Bong utilizes food in *Parasite* to highlight the danger and greed that promotes class inequality within capitalistic economies. Through what each family consumes, Bong shows the scarcity of wealth and resources of the Kim family and the hoarding of the same items from the Park family. Furthermore, the Kims use food as a weapon and a luxury, which shows their desperation for wealth, while the Parks use food for comfort and decorative purposes. Although *Parasite* concludes with extreme consequences, it is simply warning viewers to take a critical look inwards at how their economy operates to create class inequality. Food studies in this film provide rich and complex meaning beyond the overlying message that Bong aims to promote: Bong intentionally placed food in *Parasite* to define the capitalistic structures that extend the gap between the rich and the poor. In the film, food symbolizes how greed and class disparity will ultimately cause the collapse of society. Bong accomplishes this throughout the duration of the film, but his point is made evident at the end of the party scene wherein each family suffers injury, trauma, and death, demonstrating that capitalism is detrimental to every social class whether it be families as poor or as rich as the Kims and Parks. Food preparation, delivery, and consumption in *Parasite* shows that such distress and disparity among social classes lead to perilous ends to everyone within that society.

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The "Perfect" Latte, According to a Benumbed Barista

Andrea Mohler

7-9 grams per shot	Arabica Beans
12 oz	Milk of any variety
5 pumps	Flavoring syrup
	or
2 1/2 pumps	Flavor sauce of choice

Photo by Tyler Nix on Unsplash

Description: two mugs with frothed milk on a counter top.

Pour at least 15 grams of the arabica beans into a coffee grinder and grind until the beans are reduced to a smooth, sand-like texture.

Deposit the grounds into a portafilter.

Use a tamper to press the grounds to a level surface. Use exactly 25 lbs. of pressure.

Lock the portafilter into the filterhead, and set two shot glasses underneath the filterhead.

Flip on the filterhead and mop up the spill beneath the third filterhead on the right.

Remind your coworker to let Jim know the machine is leaking again.

Wait exactly 27 seconds after pulling the shot to flip the head off. Anywhere between 25 and 30 seconds should be viable for a shot. The machine is old, though, and sometimes that number is off. And sometimes it's humid, which creates another variable. And sometimes the customer is an asshole, which means the shots do not have to be perfect. A lot of things can throw off the timing for shots.

While the shot is pulling, fill your cup with 2 ½ pumps of flavored sauce or five pumps of flavored syrup. While this number seems excessive, the syrup is about the only way the general public can find a latte palatable. Don't question the proportions.

Recipe

Pour approximately 300 ml of whatever milk you're using into the steaming cup.

Begin frothing the milk:

Hold the cup at the bottom of the cup until you start to feel a small amount of warmth at the bottom of the cup.

Pull the cup downward so the frothing wand skims the surface of the milk.

Pull the cup back up again so the frothing wand is submerged.

Slowly repeat the process until the frothing wand atoms are screaming at you.

Tap the cup against the counter to knock out any bubbles.

Have a customer yell at you to not make their latte too hot; they burnt their tongue last time.

Dump out the milk and repeat the process, this time only allowing the milk to get to "kid's temperature."

Pour the espresso shots over the syrup/sauce in the cup and mix together until homogenous.

Begin pouring the milk. Do not waste time with a fancy design, they do not check and they do not care.

Place the lid and the sleeve onto the cup and call out the flavor of the latte, setting it down on the outgoing counter.

Get tipped 50 cents. If you're lucky.

Great Grandma's Chocolate Toast

Shelby Harrison

1 Tbs Per Person	Unsweetened Cocoa Powder (Hershey's Cocoa Recommended)
1 Tbs Per Person	All-Purpose Flour
A Dash Per Person	Salt
¼ Cup Per Person	White Sugar
1 Cup Per Person	Milk (2% Recommended)
2 Slices Per Person	Preferred Toast

1. Put dry ingredients and milk into a pan on medium heat and bring to a boil. Make sure to constantly stir to avoid sticking and clumping during the process, building up to the boil.
2. While the ingredients are on the stove and the mixture is about to begin to boil, put toast in the toaster to begin to heat.
3. Once the mixture is boiling and toast is done, pour mixture over the toast.
4. Serve.

My great grandmother was born in Hazard County, Kentucky in 1909. She grew up helping her family work on their tobacco farm, and she married my great grandfather by eighteen. She raised most of her children during The Great Depression, which resulted in her making this recipe as a way for a decently cheap meal that tasted like a dessert. She would make this meal for breakfast for her children, one of them being my grandfather. The recipe was then passed down to my grandmother who proceeded to make it for my own mother. Throughout my childhood, I would wake up to the smell of chocolate toast in the kitchen next to my bedroom and hear the noises of my mother moving pans around. When I taste chocolate toast, I taste the warm embrace of home and the long line of love that has been passed down. I hope this recipe brings you the warmth of home, even for just a little bit.

Espresso Brownies

Jianni Adams

For trying to be impressive at parties

Photo by Manny NB on Unsplash

Description: Stack of three chocolate brownies on white table. Brown crumbs are scattered on the table. Background is of a white curtain.

1. Box of desired brownie mix
2. Water source
3. Vegetable oil
4. An egg (or two)
5. Rusty kitchen scissors (to open the bagged mix)
6. Starbucks Via Packets

Desired Result:

A delicious homemade (Kind of? No? Okay.) treat with hints oft he façade of domesticity ... and coffee.

"Things that Give an Unclean Feeling" (Shōnagon): Meat Consumption, Abject Bodies, and Toxic Flows in Ruth Ozeki's *My Year of Meats*

Hannah Salih, *University of Amsterdam*

Under the fragmented conditions of modernity, the means of industrialized production are hidden and instead food is associated with a neatly separated domesticity. This paper considers how Ruth Ozeki's novel *My Year of Meats* resists this exclusionary logic as part of the novel's wider concern for disrupting normative binaries that separate self from other—woman from man, animal from human, inside from outside. While this concern operates on many levels in the novel, this paper focuses on how this notion of distinct categories and boundaries which uphold patriarchal, capitalist violence, coalesce at the level of the body, particularly women's and animal's bodies. The related, but divergent, processes of embodied abjection and toxic contamination, are two ways Ozeki conceptualizes how eating meat draws the body into a social and material entanglement with that previously occluded in a way that troubles our understanding of cleanly distinct categories. Instead, the abject and the toxic make clear the messy entanglements at the heart of modern meat.

In Ruth Ozeki's novel *My Year of Meats* (1998), meat is so much more than what's for dinner. The novel traces the story of Jane Takagi-Little, a Japanese-American filmmaker hired to make a documentary entitled "My American Wife!." The documentary is sponsored by the United States's Beef Export and Trade Syndicate, BEEF-EX, with the goal of drumming up beef sales in Japan by depicting various wives sharing family recipes based around beef. This mission is overseen by Joichi Ueno, the Japanese producer of the documentary, characterized as a vile misogynist and abuser of his wife Akiko, who suffers bulimia and as such is currently infertile. Sell the American dream, sell more meat in Asia, or so the logic goes. Yet, through the unfolding layers of the narrative, *My Year of Meats* shifts drastically from this tidy image of food as connected to culture and domesticity. By the novel's close, Jane creates an exposé of the profit driven, exploitative and violent processes of meat production, exposing the violence of factory abattoirs and the use of dangerous hormones like DES in animal feed for cost-cutting and profit-maximization.

The novel makes clear the modern dissonance between food production and consumption symptomatic of the fragmented conditions of a globalized, capitalistic world. This distinction is figured within a wider logic of a world predicated on a system of binaries, which inevitably lead to exclusion, such as inside-outside; private-public; self-other; safety-threat. In this paper, I examine how these concerns coalesce and flow through the body in the novel through the material and conceptual processes of abjection and toxicity. Thinking with abject bodies and toxic flows radically disrupts the material and conceptual borders of bodies and showcases how the novel makes us think critically about a world characterized by such simplistic binaries, including the way we think and consume food.

My Year of Meats critically exposes a world characterized by these boundaries that separate what is allowed in from what is not. For environmental philosopher Timothy Morton, this "inside-outside manifold is fundamental for thinking the environment as a metaphysical, closed system" (274). Morton's view is echoed widely within the realm of the environmental humanities and stems from the European Enlightenment. It is highly relevant here because it demonstrates a wider system of thought, which privileges a way of being in the world that is contained and clean, and which sees the human in fundamentally the same way—autonomous and sovereign. In this system, the processes of mass meat production are cast to an outside, an elsewhere meant to stay hidden from the consumer and the public. It is also this very notion that leads to oppressive, hierarchical systems of society, excluding those deemed "other" racially, sexually, or on a more planetary scale of the environment. As we hurtle to the cliff edge of climate catastrophe, any discussion of cultural reimagining of these reified binaries is important as it allows us to think differently about how we might exist in and relate to the world.

I first briefly trace how the novel formulates cleanliness as a trope that tries to maintain normative order and resist anything that troubles the narrative, the body, or the world. The prologue of *My Year of Meats* depicts Suzie Flowers, the first American wife and the supposed epitome of white, middle-class, heteronormative America sat in her immaculately clean home. Anything that troubles the neat definitions and the border of the home is framed as dangerous because it troubles the idea of uncontaminated, bounded categories, which are necessary for upholding systems of oppression. This is most clear when Jane recalls the true case of Yoshihiro Hattori, a sixteen-year-old shot by the butcher Rodney Peairs, who was then acquitted on the grounds of defending his home. Jane adds that "in America, we fancy ours a frontier culture, where our homes must be defended by deadly force from people who look different" (107). This is intimately bound with the novels view of "hearth and home" (12) and the domestic, which is framed as contained and closed. As the novel progresses, I argue that Ozeki strives to demonstrate that the reality is far messier and that such a closed system is a fallacy. The framing of cleanliness thus becomes the backdrop against which the messy, abject, toxic flows and connections are rendered both disruptive and demonstrative of wider systems of violence.

As laid out in two lists from Shōnagon—"Things That Give a Clean Feeling" (48) and the reverse "Things That Give an Unclean Feeling" (49)—cleansing is inextricably bound in abjection. If a home or a body is to be clean, something must be purged and forced outside. At the most explicit level, what is purged and abjected in the novel is women and animals and through that the discrepancy between the production and consumption of meat. Following the ideas of Carol J. Adams in her landmark book *The Sexual Politics of Meat* (1990), women's studies scholar Laura Anh Williams conceptualizes this in her article "Gender, Race, and an Epistemology of the Abattoir in *My Year of Meats*." Williams puts forward the notion of an epistemology of the abattoir, a structure of thinking food production that "occludes images of violence, of killing, or even of animals is the most direct product of an epistemology of the abattoir," which, following Adams, keeps "our 'meat' separate from any idea that she or he was once an animal who was butchered [...] a subject" (Adams qtd. in Williams 253). This idea of separation is critical. In some sense, the equivalencies between female and animal bodies in the novel begins to trouble normative boundaries by framing the animals in a less hierarchical relation to the human, whereby both are caught in the systemic hierarchies of masculine-capitalist violence. The initial aim of "My American

Wife!" is "explicitly gastropornographic; the program's celebration of meat, 'climaxing' in its consumption, suggests both the gastronomic and sexualized consumption of the attractive wife. Woman is rendered as meat, and vice versa" (Williams 255). This ethical, political equivalency essentially connects eating meat with patriarchal virility and a heavily gendered mode of oppression. In many ways, *My Year of Meats* narrativizes Adams's argument. Jane describes a moment in a bar with the Japanese producer of the documentary, Joichi. In the bar, a group of "Texas beauties" "[straddle] his tenderloin and offer[s] up her round rump for inspection" (54). There is, however, something overly on-the-nose about this line. How easily this comparison can be made makes it tempting to uncritically accept this as Ozeki's main political message. Indeed, this comparison is crucial to much of the scholarship engaging with this novel, reading the narrative and thematic equivalencies Ozeki draws in portraying her message. Certainly, Jane's own uncovering of the "truth" of global meat production is largely based on revealing equivalences, on lifting the veil and exposing the structures beneath. What interests me, however, is not this operation of revelation but rather how the novel tackles this separation between meat consumption and production not just as an epistemological delineation but also as a material, ontological one. Food also functions within this visceral, embodied space in the novel, not just as a signifier for contemporary systems. Thinking in this way allows us to understand both the equivalencies and the messy in-betweens, the process of transgression that disrupts the notion of sovereign human/hegemonic subjects and not just the revelation of previously "occlude[d] images of violence" (Williams 253).

However, framing relationality as itself predicated on the very globalized systems that have led to the oppression of all those deemed "other," ensures that it is not effectively transgressive or radically troubling these binaries. This is, in my view, somewhat fundamental to both Adams and Williams's work. Even after Jane learns of the conditions of production, she still says she "craves the taste and texture of animal between my teeth" (246). The focus here on the visceral materiality of eating meat is just as critical to the novel's treatment of food. Through food, the systems of capital and violence are inevitably brought into the home and into the body. This demonstrates that such an easy mental occlusion is especially flawed in relation to meat consumption because we are so materially entangled in these networks through food.

Through Ozeki's material, corporeal handling of meat is how we can trace our entanglements in a manner outside global flows of capital and which helps us think beyond identarian categories of male-female or animal-human, although as I shall show, this is not unproblematic in the novel. Given how concerned the novel is not just with meat production, but with its consumption too, I argue that thinking about bodies not just as signifiers of wider social systems but as bodies which bleed, vomit, digest, eat, have sex, morph and move is critical to this novel's desire to transgress normative boundaries and disrupt hegemony. Turning back to abjection here, but as an embodied process, is critical to how the novel conceptualizes this concern.

For Julia Kristeva, abjection is a process of becoming, which comes into being between the subject and object. The abject is of the subject, "I," yet because it is expelled from the self, it's never fully assimilated into the subject. It is also not fully other or object because it "does not cease challenging its master" (Kristeva 2). In this sense, abjection unsettles and transgresses the strict boundary of self and other. It is both horrifying through its association with the "annihilation" of the self and a "safeguard"

(Kristeva 2). Akiko, as Joichi's wife, is made to cook and eat every meaty meal on the documentary in an attempt to restore her fertility. Her visceral reaction to the American meat dishes she cooks evokes the abject: "She'd start to feel the meat. It began in her stomach, like an animal alive, and would climb its way back up her gullet, until it burst from the back of her throat. She could not contain it. She could not keep any life down inside her" (48). Akiko's body becomes the agent of containment in this section, but in her failure to be the perfect vessel for life, her need to vomit and reject the meat results in an image of overflow and ejection. By describing the meat as being alive, it essentially resurrects the animal and seemingly grants the food a sense of agency. In his phenomenological study of the anorexic subject, Fredrik Svenaeus identifies how anorexia is often experienced as an *uncanny* condition, as it is triggered by and manifests as "bodily alienation in which the body is perceived to be foreign" (81). The image of the animal climbing out of her body is a similarly alien experience, which dissociates her act of vomiting from the physicality of her body. It is only later in the novel when Akiko sees with absolute clarity the insemination of her egg, following her rape by her husband, that her sense of her embodiment returns. Akiko expresses this through the poetic form: "my pretty / gash. / Run, / river run" (206). The enjambment creates a transgressive and unstoppable flow of energy.

In comparison, while abject, the absolute rejection of the meat she eats seems almost clean. Akiko's body refuses to digest the meat and assimilate it into her body. On the one hand, this suggests a sense of resistance to the oppressive structures in which the meat is bound. On the other, it evokes other moments where abject bodily processes are figured within the language of cleanliness that leaves no traces. For example, Jane's mother states, "better you throw his baby away" (188), and Jane's doctor makes a flippant comment that her post-miscarriage womb is "spick-and-span" (351) with nothing left behind. This deviates from Kristeva's conceptualization of the abject. If the process is so clean, what boundaries are being troubled? I would suggest then that abject processes do not inherently present as dissolving the boundaries they move across. Instead, Ozeki uses the abject to highlight the power structures that benefit from there being a delineation between, for example, inside and outside. By frequently occluding the messiness of these material, embodied experiences, the abject is not consistently radically transgressive within the novel.

It's in the portrayal of Akiko's rape and the abattoir that the most grotesquely abject moments occur. As part of the exposé, Jane and her crew visit an abattoir where we witness the killing of a cow: "the cow was breathing hard, raspy breath […] and from time to time she let out a strangled cry" (332). Further, "He bent down and looked straight into her bugging eye […] he used the upward movement of his body to sink the knife deep into her throat […] the blood gushes out in rhythmic spurts" (333). This is mirrored in the descriptions of the bodily harm inflicted on Akiko by Joichi after he discovers Akiko has been in touch with Jane, mentioning his abuse, that her periods have restarted, and her love for the lesbian couple Jane shows in one episode. In response, he viciously anally rapes Akiko: "he lifted her by the shoulders and pounded her against the floor, over and over" (282), causing her severe damage and the novel describes her bleeding, ruptured, and violated body in painful detail. Unlike the portrayal of Akiko's rejection of the meat, these moments seem like pure horror. In this moment, both the cow and Akiko are objects of consumption for men and their agencies are stripped in the most horrifying ways. Both Akiko and the cow are captured in the violent shift from being (semi) agential subjects to meat/food

through the application of violence. This is not food that nourishes, but "food" that is ravenously and pornographically consumed. Monica Chiu highlights this stating, "the novel advocates a growing awareness in the two female protagonists of the inextricability of men and meat and how this culturally sanctioned alliance often marginalizes women and the poor, instigating a feminist bent from the novel's very masculine connotations of meat" (112). The explicitly, bodily descriptions in both these moments also pertains to the notion of the abject as their incredibly "unclean" nature makes it far more difficult to uphold the strict boundaries of the body. Jane, after being knocked out by a stunned cow in the abattoir, finds herself questioning on her way to the hospital whether she is covered in her blood or the blood of a cow. In that moment human and animal, typically distinct beings, are brought together in the shared violence inflicted upon them.

This is a dynamic that Laura Williams raises, but her argument lands more strongly on the ideological and structural similarities between women and meat. In this vein, Monica Chiu offers more of a critique of the novel as she identifies an essential circularity to the manner in which Jane's documentarian practices trouble the normativity she supposedly resists. Chiu argues:

> The text's irony lies between rejecting Joichi's ridiculous allusions to a so-called American dream and accepting Jane's multicultural, nonhegemonic re-visions, invested with an American-style romance with difference, of which the nation's primary acceptance has arisen through ethnic food. Such a flattening and homogenizing of difference veers little from Joichi's approach. Thus, Jane can be accused, like Joichi, of cleansing her images. (120)

I agree with Chiu's assertion here that at the level of the narrative, the novel is less transgressive than it appears. As I argued earlier in my reading of Akiko's bulimia, the force with which that image of the meat clawing its way out is so charged with a socio-political symbolism that it negates the food from being just that—a material thing consumed through a body. Chiu highlights how the novel struggles to escape the frameworks it seeks to resist; however, I argue that focusing on the moments of embodied consumption of food, and not just on food as a cultural symbol, reveals a more fully actualized imagining of a messy, unclean entanglement, which forces us to think not just about connections to food through the circulatory objects of capital (meat, food, and, in the novel, women) but in physical, material connections, which challenges our understandings of closed binaries more radically. Thus, we begin to move towards the way Ozeki imagines human and non-human entanglements as ontological that is as a way of being both materially and existentially in the world.

However, in *My Year of Meats*, even in those most abject moments, there is still some sense that we could return to a clean state: Jane can wash off the blood and Akiko can re-envision the pregnancy that stems from her rape as being instead "conceived, in her mind" and "not necessarily through sexual relations with Joichi" (Chiu 118). To be sure, I'm not suggesting these are not necessary trauma responses, more that they are typical of a will in the novel, which Chiu also identifies, to tidy things up. In this sense, the abject moments of consumption reveal equivalencies between human and animal at the same time that they transgress bodily borders. However, there is still a sense of reversibility, which offers a way to separate into distinct categories once more by casting out the other. Turning instead to the novel's

depiction of toxicity, we can see a more radical dissolution of reifying boundaries between normative binaries, disrupting the idea of the impermeable human further.

Within the new materialist school of thought, there is a group of work that deeply considers the bodily connections to the material world. For feminist scholar Stacy Alaimo, she distils this idea into the concept of trans-corporeality, which is predicated on the fact that as "flesh, substance, matter, we are permeable and, in fact, require the continual input of other forms of matter— air, water, food" (78). In Ozeki's novel, this unfortunately extends to the consumption of toxic substances via food. The consumption of food becomes bound to not just harmful social structures but to a physical harm caused by hormones given to animals in the U.S. The Purcell family, one of Jane's subjects, jokingly note that "'some medicines they was usin' in the chickens that got into the necks that we was eatin'…. An' that medicine, well, if it didn't start to make me sound just like a woman!'" (139). Ozeki shows how toxicity radically dissolves the boundaries of the body and draws people into an entanglement of matter. Mr. Purcell's body has physically changed, who he becomes is now inseparably connected to what he consumes. Jane is similarly entangled with the toxic. Following the Purcell's revelation, Jane shares with the reader reams of information about DES, a growth hormone used in American meat production and prescribed to pregnant women, once again drawing the two together under the industrial pharma-meat complex. Yet, unlike thinking the abject, or thinking about the epistemological and social connections, Jane confronts the fact that the toxic is inextricably part of her sense of self, of "me." We can read this as embodying Alaimo's notion of trans-corporeality as it places Jane in a web of "intra-active agencies" (127) that flow through and transgresses the body, ultimately "dissolving the outline of the subject" (112) in a far more complex way than abject flows.

The dissolving nature of toxicity also shapes the narrative. Jane spends much of the novel trying to piece together the chronology of her exposure to DES. Toxicity also dissolves temporal boundaries in the novel as past events only materialize at a later date. After Jane loses her baby, she says it was "maybe not one thing, but a combination" (347). Try as she might, she cannot pinpoint the single cause or exact moment of loss, so we can see how the toxic is always deferred. Thinking about food, this again becomes a matter of consumption because it is distinctly and specifically an embodied entanglement, but it also shows how this concern fundamentally presses upon the novel's narrative form as well as its thematic concerns. Gender scholar Mel Chen's reading of toxicity neatly summarizes how the toxic queers (hetero)normative bounds and animates non-human and human agents through the "[collapse of] object distinctions between animate and inanimate" (209). This is evidently the case in *My Year of Meats*, as meat in all its toxic contamination becomes intimately entangled with the novel's own form, animating and shaping it. This disrupts those binaries even further than Williams first articulates. Jane ultimately realizes she is unable to unravel herself from the toxic and so is unable to unravel herself fully from the processes of industrialized meat production. As such, through meat consumption within the home, Ozeki's novel constructs the notion that food consumption inevitably brings the fragmented processes of modern, globalized, industrial capitalism and exploitation to bear on our embodied experiences.

In one moment of the novel, Jane reads from Fry's geography book, pondering the book's intention "to present the *earth as the home of man*" (185) in an essential man versus nature type battle. It's

clear that this viewpoint delineates and abjects nature from man. It is this system of thought which allows for the awful treatment of both women and cows in the novel. Abjection and toxicity are related but divergent embodied experiences in the novel that reveal how American food production and consumption contaminates across the scales of the environment, the transnational and the body, disrupting our understanding of closed-systems and a distinction between woman and nature on the way. Moments of bodily abjection do offer a transgression of these idealized notions of a bounded body. However, their repeated association with cleanliness shows its limitations. Toxins in the body are dangerous and Ozeki works to expose this. Yet, by showing how Jane's material body is so deeply enmeshed with the toxic, it doesn't just transgress but radically dissolves the distinction between her and her environment. Perhaps we might then see toxicity as a mode of thinking within the novel, which allows Ozeki to more effectively confront this problem of man versus nature. As the meat is consumed, it brings us into contact with categories, ideas and, materials, which have been cast out. The damage caused by meat production is typically occluded, but by tracing the processes of abjection and toxicity in the novel, I hope to have shown how thinking about the embodied consumption of meat as realized in the novel makes visible the multifarious connections that mean meat is, under the conditions of globalized modernity, never simply what's for dinner.

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Lantern Asparagus

Dr. Emily Ruth Rutter

2 Bunches	Asparagus
1 Pint	Shiitake mushrooms
2 Tablespoons	Sesame oil
2 Tablespoons	Butter
1/2 Cup	Soy sauce
1 Teaspoon	Black pepper

Description: Bundle of aspargus sits in bowl on right side, cut off by picture. The bowl is on a wooden cutting board.

This recipe is inspired by Lantern, a restaurant in Chapel Hill, N.C., where I worked for several years. Typically, a soft-boiled egg would be placed on top, but I am squeamish about egg yolks (I know, I know).

1. Wash the asparagus and the shiitakes.
2. Cut off the stems of the asparagus and slice the spears diagonally into inch-long pieces.
3. Sauté the asparagus on medium heat along with the sesame oil for approximately 5 minutes.
4. Add the rinsed shiitake mushrooms, and sauté these vegetables together with the soy sauce and butter for approximately 10 minutes.

Serve as a side dish with friends or family who take as much pleasure savory vegetables as you do.

"I see what I have been dreading": Witnessing Food and Violence in *Waiting for the Barbarians* and *In the Heart of the Country*

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This paper is a critical examination of the gazes that fall on food and on those who eat in J.M. Coetzee's *In the Heart of the Country* (1977) and *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980). I refer to this phenomenon as 'food witnessing' and posit that they occur out of curiosity in 'the Other' or in attempt to consolidate or wield power. The paper argues that these gazes originate from violent impulses within a complex racial and gendered setting, and mimic a cannibalistic desire to consume the Other. It further explores questions about the body and senses that arise from watching someone eat, and complicates ideas of familiarity and distance between 'the Self' and 'the Other' as they occur in the novels.

Introduction

There is a common saying that one eats with the eyes first. This paper takes the saying literally as it tries to read the act of gazing as a kind of symbolic consumption through the respective protagonists of J.M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980) and *In the Heart of the Country* (1977). Both novels are a first-person account of institutional violence and torture committed in historical and geographical obscurity and ambiguity. The narrative frame of both novels is set up through the reference of a protagonist who watches, observes, and tries to archive or convey their experiences through writing. With the advent of food photography in advertisements and social media, food has become a sensuous object that first and foremost appeals to the gaze that holds the desire to ultimately own and consume the food item (Roland Barthes, Signe Rousseau, Carolyn Korsmeyer). In Coetzee, however, the food-related gaze falls on a person eating as a way to ultimately create distance from them, or to define "the Self" in opposition to them, or to absorb knowledge about "the Other". If we understand consumption as a form of assimilation and absorption, gazing becomes a kind of consumption too, where the goal is to conquer, absorb, and obliterate ''the Other".

This paper examines the gaze of the respective narrators of the novels, the Magistrate and Magda, specifically through instances of looking at food, watching others eat, or using metaphors and images of consumption in the novels. Food is one of the more accessible modes of expression of violence in Coetzee. While forced hunger and starvation are common ways to inflict and read torture, this paper looks at violence inflicted in the presence of food. Food is a universally identifiable object and signifier that usually occupies the 'background' of a narrative in literature. For example, it is the central element of the Magistrate's relationship with the prisoners in *Waiting for the Barbarians*. Since he does not directly intervene to stop Colonel Joll's atrocities, food becomes a significant way in which he is able to extend his humanity and the hope in the Empire to the natives. Magda, on the other hand, lives a life of domestic servitude and her vocabulary, therefore, consists of food objects, family meals, and the contents of

the kitchen. Food and its metaphors are essential to her narrative imagination. Food, then, becomes an easily available and manipulable signifier while depicting violence in both texts. This paper looks at the protagonists' relationship with food through the idea of 'food witnessing'.

'Food witnessing' refers to the symbolic violence that the witnessers commit on the objects of their gaze. The Magistrate and Magda are separated by their desires, power, and motivations and possess an uneasy relationship with authority. They watch people eat and describe it in their tales, both out of curiosity and as a way of gaining knowledge about "the Other." This paper will examine related issues of body, violence, and voyeurism by locating food within troubled colonial, racial, and gendered gazes. Jacques Derrida, in an interview with Jean-Luc Nancy, talks of the inevitability of consuming "the Other": "The so called nonanthropophagic cultures practice symbolic anthropophagy and even construct their most elevated socius, indeed the sublimity of their morality, their politics, and their right, on this anthropophagy" (114). The following section will shed light on how food is implicated by Coetzee very deliberately and very intricately into these numerous gazes, and that violence and metaphoric consumption are woven into it. Violence is an essential part of the act of food witnessing.

Food Witnessing: Food and Consumption Related Gazes

The agential choice to not look in *Waiting for the Barbarians* stands in stark contrast with the other abundant scenes of looking, watching, observing (and consequently, reading or interpreting) with wonder, discomfort, and disgust. In giving importance to the non-performance of an action, compelling us to critically examine the Magistrate's difficulty with looking at and recording torture: the Magistrate struggles to look at physical violence when Colonel Joll brings local people "roped together neck to neck" (29) and confines himself to his room to escape the sights and sounds of violence (31). While Joll deprives the prisoners of food, the Magistrate constantly tries to ensure their basic nourishment. In this indirect relationship with food, we can see the contradictions in the Empire and its many agents' relationship with the natives. It is a nonlinear, oppressive relationship that the Empire forces upon the natives. Feeding the Other, disrupting food chains, and legitimizing consumption become some of the ways in which this dynamic relationship is established.

Magda's story, by design, is not palatable or even believable: the false stories, the dream-like sequence of events, and frequent inconsistencies make her tales suspect. Through the long- winded stories of her lonely life, surrounded only by three other people, she lurks and spies, watching through windows, "through the chink in the curtain" (9), "by the light of the storm lantern I see…" (25). When she cannot look, she employs her imagination to paint a vivid picture of the going-ons in the house. Magda is possessed by an obsessive desire to look and observe, to know, and confront things that exclude her—and food is an essential item in this quest. She imagines a shift in power hierarchies through ideas of food service: "Soon I will be bringing my father and my maid breakfast in bed while Hendrick sounds in the kitchen eating biscuits" (49); and she comprehends her denial of family privileges through the 'noble' family meal: "I should have been invited too. I should be seated at that table" (52). Magda continuously uses vocabularies of food to imagine desires, materiality, and even to confirm her own bodily existence, "I think of tea and rusks and my saliva flows. There is no doubt about it, I am not pure spirit" (36).

The Possibility of Violence in Watching People Eat

Watching other people eat can entice us, be an act of acquiring familiarity, and in *Waiting for the Barbarians*, it can even be an act of creating distance—of defining oneself against "the Other." In the earliest instances of looking at prisoners, the Magistrate notes their hunger, their fancy for 'civilized foods' like bread and tea, and most importantly, how they eat. He is aware of the innocence, helplessness, and hunger of the first set of prisoners. He asks the guards to give them food—using the Biblical word 'manna' for it—and writes:

> The old man accepts the bread reverentially in both hands, sniffs it, breaks it, passes the lumps around. They stuff their mouths with this manna, chewing fast, not raising their eyes. A woman spits masticated bread into her palm and feeds her baby. I motion for more bread. We stand watching them eat as though they are strange animals. (26)

These descriptions of Others eating are impersonal and dehumanizing: *those eating are Others to the witness*. He cannot see their interiority—and so we get descriptions of external physiognomic and anatomical features like hands, mouths, and eyes. They do not seem to be eating like animals, but people look on as if they were. His account restricts description to the corporal-material.

The difference in Magda's descriptions of the "new wife" (1) and her dead mother in her first (false) story suggest that an eating body can be weaponized into a monstrous Other. In paragraphs numbered 2 and 4, we get a description of the "new wife," who she falsely claims her father has brought home, and of Magda's dead mother (2) respectively. Both of these are part of her imaginations; at this point in the narrative, it is impossible to verify any of these stories as true or false through our own reading:

> 2. The new wife. The new wife is a lazy big-boned voluptuous feline woman with a wide slow-smiling mouth. Her eyes are black and shrewd like two berries, like two shrewd berries. She is a big woman with fine wrists and long plump tapering fingers. She eats her food with relish. She sleeps and eats and lazes. She sticks out her red tongue and licks the sweet mutton-fat, from her lips. "Ah, I like that!" she says, and smiles and rolls her eyes. I watch her mouth, mesmerized. (1)

The imagery of a woman with berries for eyes could be read as an evocation of the non-human/demonic or of a desirable, consumable object. Magda ascribes shrewdness to the berry-eyes. Most of the description is based upon watching her eat and enjoy flesh; the "new wife" is made into a gluttonous, villainous woman because she consumes and relishes food. Martha's imagined gaze falls directly on her eyes and mouth, and is fixated on this woman who eats — "I watch the full lips of this glutted woman" (4). The mother, on the other hand, is described as "a frail gentle loving woman" who, even as she was dying, was "patient, bloodless, apologetic" (2). Blood is an interesting symbol; while the new wife relishes a dead, now bloodless being, that is mutton, the mother is the bloodless being. The new wife is not only a replacement to her mother, but shall also devour Magda. Magda later tells us that there never was a new wife (16). She is the literal imagined Other.

The narrative frames of both texts ensure that descriptions remain corporeal, even visceral. In both Magda and the Magistrate, we see the desire to comprehend the Other—to read and interpret them—before they reject the idea, and the desire is transformed into violence, as seen in the above analysis. Sheila Roberts argues that *In the Heart of the Country* looks like Magda's personal locked diary—one that she writes in to "rediscover her possible 'mothers'" (23) as an ironic or temporary subversion of the Electra plot. Magda, writes Roberts, like most women and unlike the colonized, has no memory of "any utopian existence of living in equality side by side with men" (23), and so the images she uses typically come not from memory but fiction. Familiarity and distance play a fundamental role in how one imagines interpersonal relations with the Other, but is complicated by the consequences of the desire to watch the Other eat. It suggests an irreducible distance between the witnesser and the witnessed

Distant Familiarity with the Eating Other

Coetzee constructs a paternal, pitiful, and enquiring gaze in *Waiting for the Barbarians* that gradually turns destructive with increasing self-awareness. One could posit that the bodily familiarity it provides is what later fuels the desire to reinforce distance. This is most clearly seen in people's reactions to the prisoners: what starts with wonder and curiosity in the barbarians—the Others—eating civilized food finally ends in it becoming another nuisance: "For a few days the fisherfolk are a diversion with their strange gabbling, their vast appetites, their animal shamelessness, their volatile tempers. . . . I stare down, invisible behind the glass. Then, all together, we lose sympathy with them. The filth, the smell, the noise of their quarrelling and coughing become too much" (28). The 'distant familiarity' of watching the Other eat sublimates into violent desires and brutal prejudices for the Magistrate, and the next section shows its transformation into the need to punish, erase, and obliterate the Other. The Magistrate's gaze is shrouded in the violent language of the Empire. In one scene, he partakes in gazing and staring at the prisoners along with a big group of people who watch the natives with lecherous intentions, perverted desires, or an idle curiosity. He "spend[s] hours watching them from the upstairs window (other idlers have to watch through the gate)" (27). He seems to always be watching them from his window above, even watching the other onlookers, and observing their food choices, appetites and other private rituals. Curiosity combines with surveillance as these displaced natives are displayed in the yard. A similar fixation on watching and trying to comprehend is repeated in his relationship with the Barbarian girl. He obsessively tries to decipher the marks on her body, trying to recreate and imagine the brute force on her feet, her eyes, and her sense of self.

In his many nights with her, he cleans and massages her feet and falls into a torpor, reflecting on his declining sexual desires and prowess. Despite living in proximity, she remains an Other that he simply cannot comprehend. The Magistrate writes, "But with this woman it as if there is no interior, only a surface across which I hunt . . . how natural a mistake to believe that you can burn or tear or hack your way into the secret of body of the other" (59). The desire to burn or tear or hack into her body to discover some secret is not very different from Joll's belief in some truth hidden to be forced out of the Barbarians.

Eating is largely considered to be a personal experience because it uses the relatively private senses of taste and smell, making it difficult to hold stable universal standards for it. In our contemporary world of food tourism and social media, the sense of sight has been implicated in a new form of

consumption via extravagant images of food and consumption. Watching someone eat is much like an inquisition into the Other's interiority and culture; following from Derrida, we can insist that the food-related gaze also assimilates and consumes the Other. However, in the texts before us, we see that food witnessing is ultimately a limiting exercise in knowing the Other. What one eats does not always tells us who they are:

> Sundown after sundown, we have faced each other over the mutton, the potatoes, the pumpkin, dull food cooked by dull hands. Is it possible that we spoke? No, we could not have spoken, we must have fronted each other in silence and chewed our way through, time, our eyes, his black eyes and my black eyes inherited from him, roaming blank across their fields of vision. (3)

The word "fronted" is interesting. "We must have fronted each other" means that they have faced each other every day, and made themselves visible to each other. However, to put up a front also means to conceal the reality behind appearances. Food becomes a medium which transforms confrontation into a fronting: the possibility of action is substituted by chewing, which is an infinite repetition through time. The gaze 'roams blank' in the face of irreducible distance. The family meal is not a ritual of love or care; in *In the Heart of the Country*, the family meal is the performance of duty and subservience of brutal coexistence.

Magda's gaze is effectively piercing. She is able to find the truths about others through her own private surveillance efforts, or at least the truths that are good enough for her narrative. She keeps a watchful eye over everyone in the house, their routines and rituals, comings and goings. In describing her father's routine, she writes about his mealtime, "Before meals he washes his hands with soap. He drinks his brandy ceremonially, by himself, from a brandy-glass, of which he has four, by lamplight, sitting in an armchair" (31). This routine and its knowledge are important to her, because it is deviations in these everyday behaviors that alert her to his deviancy. She quickly catches digressions from these observances, for example, when he when he pushes his food away, asks her to leave during the meal, or makes his tea himself. She is able to confirm his "guilty thoughts" about Anna when he breaks his private ceremony, and "pecks his glass of brandy not sitting in his armchair but pacing about the yard in the moonlight" (33).

Changing Expressions of Consumption

In *Waiting for the Barbarians*, consumption is linked more closely with bodily reactions rather than sensory experiences. For example, the Magistrate watches the blind barbarian girl eat, and writes, "I watch her eat. She eats like a blind person, gazing into the distance, working by touch. She has a good appetite, the appetite of a robust young countrywoman" (41). Watching her eat becomes a feeble attempt to gain access into her interiority. Watching someone, especially watching someone eat, can be an act of familiarizing ourselves with them through the recreation of visceral reactions in our own bodies. In arguing for the aesthetics of food, scholars such as Kevin Sweeney, Carolyn Korsmeyer, and Emily Brady have noted the difference in treatment of the more objective and universal senses of sight, sound, and touch as opposed to the more personal senses of smell and taste. In Sweeney's "Can A Soup be

Beautiful?" (2009), he argues that this is one of the reasons why food has been denied the category of the beautiful in eighteenth century aesthetic traditions. The focus of these arguments has generally been on the divide between the universal and personal senses in creating complex aesthetic experiences, but I wish to point to the use of sight and touch by Coetzee in describing consumption.

The first-person narrative of *Waiting for the Barbarians* implies that the Magistrate can write only about the sensory experiences that he can look at in others when they eat. Therefore, sight and touch are used almost exclusively to represent consumption of food. In a peculiar teasing of the senses, Coetzee complicates and contorts the familiar idea of consumption through the narrative framing of the text. Even when consumption is defined first-hand, the text shifts attention to the bodily reaction to food rather than the taste and smell of food. In *In the Heart of the Country*, there is a suggestion of a more complex notion of consumption that suggests an aesthetic of eating, "The sun is setting, the sky is a tumult of oranges and reds and violets. Up and down the stoep struts Klein-Anna mastering the shoes. If only we could eat our sunsets, I say, we would all be full" (85). The bright colors in the scenic image excites the eye, and consumption of beauty is compared to a metaphoric eating of a sunset.

Gaze, Consumption and/of the Other: Obliterating the Other

Finally, I want to talk about how the gaze, in both texts, exploits food to successfully obliterate the Other. The Magistrate, earlier, only "[passes his] his gaze over their surface absently, with reluctance" (34) but when the girl lives in close proximity with him, the surface of the barbarian body becomes reflective, "When she looks at me I am a blur, a voice, a smell, a centre of energy" (41). The blind barbarian girl cannot return his gaze. But when his own gaze reflects and falls back on him, it begins to diminish him. He begins to avoid the girl, and soon after, passes the girl when crossing over the kitchen:

> Through wraiths of steam I see a stocky girl seated at a table preparing food. "I know who that is," I think to myself with surprise nevertheless, the image that persists in my memory as I cross the yard is of the pile of green marrows on the table in front of her. Deliberately I try to shift my mind's gaze from the marrows on the table in front of her. Deliberately I try to shift my mind's gaze from the marrows back to the hands that slice them, and from the hands to the face. I detect in myself a reluctance, a resistance. My regard remains dazedly fixed on the marrows, on the gleam of light on their wet skins. As if with a will of its own, it does not move. So I begin to face the truth of what I am trying to do: to obliterate the girl. (64)

The green marrows become a substitute for the girl, a way to shift gaze; this is a tacit acceptance of the fact that looking away is marked by brutality, not least the brutality of indifference. He does not wish to see the girl, because now his gaze falls back on him. The girl is stocky but when he looks at her, he only sees her hands or her face at a time, already fragmenting her body. The gleam of the skin of the marrows also strangely mirrors her skin, possibly gleaming from the wraiths of steam.

The series of events leading up to and following Magda shooting her father are intricately linked with items and vocabularies of the kitchen. She holds her gun "like a tray"; this innocuous metaphor forces a reconciliation of the image of a serving dish and of a weapon. She decides to kill her father after a

dramatic night of violence and abuse, "[she] has had enough, tonight, of listening to the sounds that other people make" at the kitchen table and in their bedrooms. While shooting her father, she shuts her eyes to avoid not the sight of her patricide but "to keep me from seeing my father's nakedness" (63). She continues to describe him, his movements, his stupor in vivid detail as narrative time slows down. Standing over him, she describes the scene as follows:

> 125. The cups have not been washed.
> 126. There are flies in my father's room. The air is heavy with their buzzing. They crawl on his face and he does not brush them away, he who has always been a fastidious man. They cluster on his hands, which are red with blood. There are splashes of dried blood on the floor and the curtain is caked with blood. I am not squeamish about blood, I have made blood-sausage on occasion, but in this case I am not sure it would not be better to leave the room for a while, to take a stroll, to clear my head. However, I stay, I am held here. (65)

She stands over his dead body and describes in detail his room and body, and the surfaces where the blood has begun to dry. The image of blood returns, but this time she is responsible for it. She is surrounded, perhaps even covered in her father's blood, which she compares with blood sausages. Blood sausages are usually made from pork, dried pig's blood, and suet. While the odd and unsettling comparison between human and pig blood made through the example of food does not suggest a cannibalistic desire in Magda to literally consume him, but it points the reader towards a much more complex web of metaphoric relations of consumption in the novel.

Conclusion

Images of food or metaphors of consumption are strategically placed in the narratives to help express non-food related desires. The idea of consumption also includes the possibility of consuming the Other, thus, making the Other into a consumable object that can be conquered and absorbed. To consume also means to use up a resource. If Derrida says that consuming the Other is inevitable, this paper has tried to examine the processes and consequences of this kind of assimilation and appropriation of the Other. Shifting gazes between people and food, the subsequent conflation, and the borrowed language allows the protagonists to successfully consume the Other.

Food in literature has a dynamic presence. It is not limited by issues of survival or nourishment, and it does not serve the function of realistic embellishment alone. The meaning of food may differ for readers across the world, through space and time. It is impossible to fix a single allegorical meaning for food. In this paper, I have tried to demonstrate a food-related gaze in Coetzee that falls on an eating Other. The motivations for watching people eat are numerous: it is a curiosity in the Other, a way to create both bodily familiarity and distance, a way to distinguish ourselves from the Other, and a way to consolidate power. The racial/colonial/patriarchal gaze falls on the eating body to create Otherness and monstrosity, and Coetzee uses this to portray complex ideas of consumption. The violence of food witnessing vaguely mimics a cannibalistic desire to consume the Other: erase them, destroy them, or inflict brutalities on them. The impossibility of returning the gaze and the irreducible distance between the

witnesser and the one being witnessed is testament to the imbalance in power between the two parties. Finally, I tried to show that the food-related gaze does not excuse itself, and gradually turns inwards to look back at itself in obsessive and futile attempts to confirm one's own materiality.

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Tomato Based Soup

June Cooper

This soup is based on a Taste of Home recipe meant for seafood, but works well with pasta as well.

1/2	Olive Oil
1/2	Small yellow onion
1	Small green pepper
	Garlic clove
	Tomato Sauce Can
	Diced Tomatoes Can(undrained)
1/4	Lemon
3/4 cup	White cooking wine
1/4 tsp	Black pepper

1. Cut onion and green peppers together and set aside to add in to your saucepan when you begin cooking with oil.
2. Carrots and garlic can be cut and put together before adding to the pan.
3. Have a medium bowl hold the tomato sauce, tomatoes, wine and seasonings so they can easily be added to the recipe.
4. In large saucepan bring olive oil to medium heat, mix in onion and green pepper and stir occasionally until onions are tender.
5. Once onions begin to look transparent add carrots and garlic, cook for three minutes.
6. Stir in bowl of tomato sauce, tomatoes, wine and seasonings-bringing the dish to a boil.
7. Stir occasionally until the soup is boiling-reduce to medium heat and let simmer covered for 30 minutes.
8. Add precooked seafood and allowto simmer until seafood is brought to temp, squeeze in lemon juice.

Can be cooked with Cajun powder for extra spice.

Make your own pasta

2 cups	All purpose flour
3	Eggs
	Rolling pin

This is a fantastic and easy recipe that can feed 3, and can be a fun team effort.

1. On a clean flat area pour your flour into a tight compact mound.
2. Shape a whole into the middle and outwards until you make your own bowl in the flour.
3. Crack open the eggs and add them directly to the center of your flour.
4. Mend and mix the flour and eggs carefully together until completely mixed. Once dough mixture is thoroughly mixed shape it into a ball and wrap it in cling wrap for it to set out 30 minutes on a counter.
5. You can place in fridge if setting for longer, let it get to room temp before moving on. Roll the ball flat using the roller and palms of your hands. Flatten the dough evenly until it's around 1/4 inch. Cut desired shape from dough. Boil in water until fully cooked.
6. Add to soup or desired sauce.

Photo by Ed O'Neil on Unsplash

Description: Full red tomato centered on page covered in water droplets, a shadow of the fruit leaks off the page on the right.

Redirecting the Blame: America's Overconsumption of Black Women as Illustrated in Kiese Laymon's *Heavy*

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Food within literature often presents itself through the multifaceted lens of the intersectionality of culture, gender, class, and race. Kiese Laymon's memoir *Heavy* is not exempt from this intersectionality as Laymon presents food as an outlet for the struggle that the Black women in his life face as they are forced to fit into gendered expectations through the gaze of not only men but of America and white power structures. Within Heavy, Kiese Laymon presents both the implicit generational and explicit current trauma that African American women endure through the consumption of their bodies by America, their use of food as ownership, and the role that food insecurity plays in ensuing actions. This essay applies triple consciousness to the trauma of these women as Black women in America as they internalize the gaze of white people in America and aims to shift abusive blame from Black communities back to the white institutions which use these Black communities for consumption. This is evident through analyzing the rape of Laymon's childhood friend, his grandmother's submission to white power structures but her strength in the kitchen, and Laymon's mother's abusive tendencies toward him which follow her food insecurities. This essay will delve into how throughout Heavy, Laymon illustrates how food functions in the lives of Black women in American societies and the unhealthy habits that are formed in order to confront both this explicit and implicit trauma, and the increasing relevancy to shift the blame of these unhealthy habits from Black communities back to the white power structures which enforced them in the first place.

Introduction

Generational trauma—which was, and still is, evoked by white people—is prominent in the Black community today and often presents itself in a harsher manner both within Black women and as a consequence of how Black women are treated as consumable beings. This generational trauma stems from being enslaved by white people, to segregation, to societal racism, and can manifest itself within Black folx in multiple fashions. In Kiese Laymon's *Heavy: An American Memoir* (2018), an autobiographical narrative about a heavyset Black man's experiences with personal trauma and struggles with food, this generational trauma manifests in how the Black women in Laymon's life are treated as sexual objects. In Laymon's memoir, Black women respond to their hardships through their interactions with food as a tool to negotiate the implicit and explicit trauma they endure; at the same time, Laymon compares Black women's exploitative treatment to the indulgence of food being devoured throughout the narrative. By delineating generational trauma through the Black women in his life, Laymon affirms the consequences of white institutions abusing Black folx through overindulgence, and how that carries into the lives of Black women and their actions as a result. To further this conversation in a present-day context, it is also relevant to analyze the Black Lives Matter movement in relation to the protests, riots, and the deaths of Black women specifically as consequences of white power

within institutions such as the police force and within politics, evincing a pattern of abuse and overconsumption of Black women with a lack of remorse or justice.

This essay will explore how Laymon's *Heavy* is an indictment of dominant white power structures and the lack of acknowledgement of the impact that these structures have on Black women, in particular, as they see themselves not only through the white American gaze but also the male gaze—a theoretical framework referred to as "triple consciousness." Moreover, Laymon's memoir shifts the blame from the Black community's actions to expose the ways in which white power structures built the grounds for these actions to begin with, reflecting the trend of food and consumption as the polarity of comfort and grief in the discussion of generational trauma within Black women.

To analyze this through the lens of triple consciousness, I will interpret where both the white and male gaze is evident within characters in *Heavy*, including Laymon's childhood friend Layla, who is sexually assaulted through the means of overconsumption but then neglected in the beginning of the novel; Laymon's grandmother and her negotiation of the white gaze and tendency to serve others while creating a safe space of food for herself and her family; and Laymon's mother through her abusive tendencies and food insecurities. Moreover, the essay includes research on the impact that generational trauma, as caused by white people, has on Black women. These interpretations and extensive research will allow for further understanding of the disregarded consequences that are derived from the power that white institutions hold, along with the harm of focusing the blame on the Black community rather than on the white structures which allow Black women to become the scapegoat for their own victimization.

Understanding Triple Consciousness

To begin to understand the trauma—both generational and present—that the Black women in Laymon's *Heavy* encounter and react to, we must first take a step back to understand what generational/cultural trauma and collective memory is through the lens of triple consciousness. In his book *Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity* (2008), Ron Eyerman explained that:

> [T]rauma is mediated through various forms of representation and linked to the reformation of collective identity and the reworking of collective memory. … In this sense, slavery was traumatic in retrospect, and formed a 'primal scene' which could, potentially, unite all 'African Americans' in the United States, whether or not they themselves had been slaves or had any knowledge of or feeling of Africa. Slavery formed the root of an emergent collective identity through an equally emergent collective memory, one that signified and distinguished a race. (1)

The concept of collective memory and trauma being present in the Black community in America was caused by and perpetuated by the white population through continued racism and the enforcement of stereotypes. This collective and generational trauma is the foundation for both double and triple consciousness, where Black women are traumatized to view themselves through the gaze of Blackness, America, and womanhood. In some cases, including in *Heavy*, such experiences may influence their relationship to food.

The theoretical origin of this framework is double consciousness, a term coined by W.E.B Du Bois,

which explains how Black men in particular are prone to looking at themselves through the white American gaze, rather being allowed to develop a true self-consciousness. This white gaze is internalized due to generational trauma that Black folx tend to suffer because of their ancestral history, consisting of enslavement, dehumanization, segregation, police brutality, and more, along with the repercussions of this consistent racism and the promised reparations that have yet to be made. As Du Bois wrote in *The Souls of Black Folk:*

> The Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-con sciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity… The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife, — this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. (23)

Triple consciousness takes Du Bois's theoretical framework one step further by including the gaze of womanhood which Black women have been held against and hold against themselves, as they are consistently consumed (not unlike food) by dominant power structures. According to scholar Nahum Welang's "Triple Consciousness: The Reimagination of Black Female Identities in Contemporary American Culture" (2018), "[B]lack women view themselves through three lenses and not two: America, blackness and womanhood" (296). Black women are forced to see themselves not just as Black women but through "the perceptions of the white world" (Welang 297) and the generational trauma that they are faced with, along with the gendered stereotypes that are derived from these perceptions. In other words, triple consciousness acknowledges the impact that both "blackness" and "Americanness" hold on women specifically—recognizing that Black hypermasculinity targets Black women while white hypermasculinity targets the generalized Black community in general. Therefore, Black women are subject to the "womanhood" lens, which consists of gendered expectations, a lack of respect, and the normalized and accepted (over)consumption of their bodies by both male and white communities. Triple consciousness is evident through the Black women in Laymon's *Heavy* and how they are influenced by the power structures which oppress them and attempt to define their roles as women in Black communities.

Black Women Strength Trope

As Laymon's memoir also indicates, issues ranging from physical abuse to food insecurities derived from the influence of white structures are normalized within Black communities and Black women especially experience the repercussion of historical and present racial and sexual abuse and trauma. In *Racial Indigestion: Eating Bodies in the Nineteenth Century* (2012), Kyla Tompkins argues that "The image of the black body as an edible object is a strong and consistent trope… black bodies and subjects in these encounters fight back, and bite back… in novels produced by black authors" (8). Not only is the Black body seen as edible to the white eye, such as Tompkins argues, but also by applying the triple consciousness lens, I contend that the bodies of Black women, in particular, are appetizing to both the

white gaze and male gazes. In Laymon's *Heavy*, these women "fight back, and bite back" through defying weakness and simulating perfection and strength, which is made evident through their actions and involvement with food in their lives. This normalization of the consumption of Black women can be seen through Laymon's childhood friend Layla, his mother, and his grandmother, and how they respond to the undue societal expectations to which they are held.

Each of these women face their own trauma—both generational and present—throughout their lives and are greatly influenced by triple consciousness, causing them to act out in various ways but with one common factor: fitting into the persona of a strong Black woman. Regardless of their particular traumas, they are forced to fight against the unwanted overindulgence of their own bodies. According to Roxanne Donovan and Lindsey West's study "Stress and Mental Health: Moderating Role of the Strong Black Woman Stereotype" (2015):

> [The Strong Black Woman] is perceived as naturally resilient, able to handle with ease all the stress, upset, and trauma life throws at her. . . . During slavery, internalization of these traits was likely necessary for personal, familial, and community survival. Today, Black women no longer have to contend with institutionalized chattel slavery, but they do have to contend with such significant intersectional stressors as racialized sexism and gendered racism. (386)

To further contextualize this stereotype through the lens of triple consciousness, the strong Black woman is a trope derived from the need that Black women have to present themselves as secure in order to stray from humility, as pending from both the looming racism from white power structures and the sexism from hypermasculinity—both lenses that Black women tend to view themselves through. As I argue, these pressures to be strong bear down on Laymon's friend Layla, his grandmother, and his mother, influencing their interactions with food.

Black Lives Matter Protests in 2020

The fact that Black women are forced to portray themselves as having a specifically strong "character" to provide protection for themselves is not a new subject of debate; however, while this conversation is not new, there is *still* a lack of acknowledgement of the consumption of Black women due to the dominant tendency to view Black women as something to devour and ingest—a view originating with white power structures during the long centuries of chattel slavery. This remains evident today through the recent 2020 spark of protests in support of the Black Lives Matter movement which were provoked by the murder of George Floyd by Minnesota police officers and protests that were spurred on by the continued killings of Black folx, and how white institutions taught us to fight for the lives of men but disregard the health of Black women.

These murders of Black folx were committed by, and as a result of, white power structures which influence communities to act and respond in a certain manner, including "Protesters [who] burned a police precinct in Minneapolis, torched cop cars in Los Angeles and Atlanta, and dodged plumes of tear gas" (Altman). Moreover, "By June 2, the National Guard had been activated in at least 28 states, and dozens of cities had imposed curfews to quell looting, arson and spasms of violence," as Alex Altman

recalled in his Time article "Why the Killing of George Floyd Sparked an Uprising" (2020). Instead of asking how the Black Lives Matter protestors could destroy property, steal from big name brand companies, and protest in the middle of a pandemic, which consequently shifts the blame to the Black community, this blame needs to be redirected to the white power structures that have suppressed the Black community for centuries by instead asking the question of why the Black Lives Matter protestors have responded in such numbers and actions.

While this recent series of BLM protests happened in response to the unjust murder of George Floyd on May 25, 2020, the mention of Black women such as Breonna Taylor, an innocent woman killed in her sleep by a no-warrant home invasion by police officers, has been significantly less valued along with a lack of justice due to America failing Black women in addressing their pain and instead continuing to consume their bodies as if they were edible. This is evident not only through the fact that Taylor's murder happened on March 13, 2020 (Booker), two months before Floyd's, which is what caused the series of protests, but through how the media consumed Taylor's body as a Black woman in response. Taylor became a popularized image in the media, as seen on the covers of *Vanity Fair* and T*he Oprah Magazine*, as America continued to overindulge in her body post-mortem and use her picture to attract buyers yet stay static about taking any action to bring Taylor any justice.

This standardization of the overindulgence of Black women is explicitly stated when Laymon writes in *Heavy* that "I was taught by big boys who were taught by big boys who were taught by big boys that Black girls what be okay no matter what we did to them" (16)—a philosophy passed down not only between Black boys but also one that stems from when Black people were still enslaved and Black women were owned and sexually abused by white men without consequence.

Black Women as Sexual Consumption in *Heavy*

Throughout Laymon's *Heavy*, the pattern of justified sexual abuse and using Black women as a means for overindulgence through the act of sex is prevalent and emphasizes the indictment of dominant white power structures and the impact of triple consciousness on Black women's experiences. The consumption of Black women within *Heavy* is most notable with the introduction of Laymon's childhood friend and crush Layla, and how the "big boys" in Laymon's life would sexually abuse her. Laymon remembered that "Layla had to go in Daryl's room with all the big boys for fifteen minutes if she wanted to float in the deep end. . . . I assumed some kind of sex was happening" (18), and that afterward "I knew that the big boys would tell stories about what happened in Daryl's room that were good for all three of them and sad for [Layla] in three vastly different ways" (21). The "big boys" consumed Layla's body without consequence, abusing her in the overindulgence of sex, satisfying their own appetites and allowing her to reap the small benefit of swimming in the deep end of the pool. Just as the Black Lives Matter protests in 2020 brought fleeting attention to Breonna Taylor and the media's exploitation of her body without any serious act for justice and therefore without consequences for the consumption of Taylor's image, thereby perpetuating generational trauma and the experience of triple consciousness, the "big boys" in Laymon's *Heavy* sexually consumed Layla's body and left her with nothing but trauma and minimum gain through the swimming pool deal.

This scene, along with Laymon's own acknowledgement of Layla's rape yet his refusal to try to

stop it, relays how Black women—and girls—are treated and seen as succulent beings in the Black community, especially by Black men, as influenced by systems controlled by white people. In "Black Women and Girls & #MeToo" (2020), Jennifer Gómez and Robyn Gobin explain that "Black women and girls' experiences of intra-racial sexual assault . . . [are] impacted by racial trauma, sexism, cultural betrayal, and (intra)cultural pressure. . . . Consequently, addressing racial trauma has implications for healing from cultural betrayal trauma as well" (12). Accordingly, when Black women are abused by someone within their own community, such as Layla was in Heavy, this behavior creates not only physical but also emotional scars that tear Black women away from their people, creating a further division and increasing the blame of the Black community, even though this abuse and thought process originated from white power due to the fact that Black women view themselves through the trifecta gazes of white America, Blackness, and womanhood.

The lack of recognition for Black women and girls who have been raped force these women to act accordingly, as if they were unaffected. In "Revealing a Hidden Curriculum of Black Women's Erasure in Sexual Violence Prevention Policy" (2017), Sara Wooten furthers this idea by stating, "Ultimately, Black women are the antithesis of the ideal rape victim due to centuries of racist and sexist ideology aimed at protecting white supremacy" (409). To elaborate, it is not just that Black women are not the "ideal rape victim" due to white supremacy, it is also that Black women are not seen as victims at all when it comes to sexual abuse. Instead, their bodies are seen as meant for men to consume without consequence, as Laymon exhibits with his unwillingness to act when Layla is being gang raped in the next room. The implication is that Black women and girls are not actually seen as women and girls but instead as objects for consumption and food to be devoured by America, as can be currently seen through Taylor's face on the cover of magazines as a form of pathos but no perceived legal amends for her or her loved ones.

As a response to her sexual abuse by the three boys, Layla puts up the "strong Black woman" front in the face of Laymon and the boys waiting in the pool. This trope that Layla exhibits, as previously discussed, is a way for Black women to mask their true emotions in order to present themselves as unconsumable, even after being consumed, as constructed by a systemically white America and the triple consciousness that Black women tend to see themselves through. However, by portraying herself as a strong figure who "was all-world at dissing" (Laymon 16), Layla further performs the idea that Black women and girls don't need help and cannot be bothered, and therefore don't deserve justice—similar to how the Black women consumed, raped, and/or murdered by white power structures are often not given justice or even entirely fought for by movements such as the Black Lives Matter protests, not only in 2020 with Breonna Taylor, but throughout American history. Indeed, the strong Black woman front is problematic because it normalizes the overconsumption and overindulgence of Black women and their bodies, both sexually and not, as evident not only through Layla in Laymon's narrative but with many Black woman today.

Food as an Outlet in *Heavy*

Another woman within Laymon's *Heavy* who is constantly consumed by both the white, male, and American gazes is Laymon's grandmother, who teaches him the importance of home, food, and the struggles of racial inequality. His grandmother worked at the chicken plant, sold a variety of food, and

worked as a domestic laborer for the white Mumford family (Laymon 49). In one scene, she takes Laymon to the Mumford's house with her, and Laymon is offended by the privilege of the white family and his grandmother's servitude toward them; in response, his grandmother talks to him in the kitchen when they return home—a place of solace, and as she describes, "she spent so many hours in white-folk kitchens and just wanted her children to respect her kitchen when she got home" (Laymon 57). To Laymon's grandmother, the kitchen was sacred because she was working for herself and no one else, as she exhibited the "strong Black woman" trope that is consistent within the Black women throughout the narrative. Behind this is a history of Black women working in kitchens as servants. As, Kimberly Nettles-Barcelón, et al. write in "Black Women's Food Work as Critical Space" (2015), "Black women are not seen as authorities in the kitchen or elsewhere in matters of food—culturally, politically, and socially. . . . She is rendered absent, and made invisible by the continued salience of intersecting vectors of disempowerment: race/gender/class/sexuality" (35). Historically, Black women were not accepted within the production nor consumption of food, so for Laymon's grandmother, her kitchen is a symbol of strength in the face of adversity and independence in the face of triple consciousness.

Since Laymon's grandmother experiences America's gaze, the Black community's gaze, and the gaze of womanhood, she fights their expectations by creating a safe place within her kitchen for herself and her family, outside of any of these gazes. The "strong Black woman" trope is also evident in Laymon's grandmother's self-efficiency within her food habits, including growing vegetables in her own garden because she likes to know the process the food that she is consuming has gone through (Laymon 59). Laymon notes that, because of this, he would tend to eat more healthily with his grandmother, even though she is a heavier woman, which defies the food insecurity which Black communities often suffer from due to white power structures oppressing Black folx to the point of food scarcity and a lack of access to a variety of healthy food. Moreover, Laymon's grandmother's strength—unlike Layla's which was derived from intrapersonal trauma through sexual abuse between her Black peers—has developed from a need to protect herself from the abuse of the white families to which she has been in service. Her strength is a defense mechanism to ensure that they cannot "get" to her—therefore consuming her body as a result—and accuse her of an action such as stealing food, as Laymon had wanted to when he visited the Mumford's house.

While Laymon's grandmother actively works against holding a defiant attitude toward the white families that she has worked for, she is still allowing their white American power to affect her and her mindset such as it does through triple consciousness. She relays that "It ain't about making white folk feel what you feel. . . . it's about not feeling what they want you to feel" (Laymon 56). She reveals the impact that the white gaze holds on her life by adamantly thinking in a way that defies the expectations that she is held to as a Black woman by the white communities around her. Laymon's grandmother is heavily influenced by triple consciousness, but she also recognizes the cause and effect that white people tend to have on the Black community, so she attempts to stray from stereotypical manners—stealing from white people, lying to white people, etc.—that would allow the white people to consume her even further and place the blame on the Black communities that they are hungering for.

Abusive Tendencies as a Result of White Hunger

This white hunger for Black blame is satisfied when the Black community responds to their generational trauma in negative fashions, in turn passing down white hate, supremacy, and power to influence their families and allow them to be consumed by white influence. Within *Heavy*, this hunger is satisfied through his mother as the memoir follows her trends of food insecurity and abusive impulses as derived from white institutions and triple consciousness. Within the memoir, Laymon's mother is yet another Black woman who presents herself as a strong, no-nonsense, professional, and educated woman in order to defy any negative feedback from the white community which could deter her professional career.

With these publicly secure qualities, Laymon's mother hides her insecurities through the abuse of her son: insecurities including a lack of consistent, nutritional food for herself and her son, and her fear of white power systems affecting her, and her son's, lives. These insecurities, as derived from white supremacy and therefore triple consciousness, lead to abusive tendencies—both physical and emotional—that Laymon's mother felt were necessary in order to teach Laymon about the harm that white power systems could impose upon his livelihood if she weren't there to punish him first. Laymon's mother inadvertently consumes her own son through the influence of white power structures and the hold that they have on her life by abusing him into submission toward both her and the food present in his life.

Unlike Laymon's grandmother who grew her own vegetables which gave Laymon access to healthy food options growing up, Laymon's mother, throughout the *Heavy* narrative, struggled with supplying Laymon with those same nutrients and was therefore associated with unhealthy foods, ranging from Laymon binge-eating Pop Tarts late at night (Laymon 13) to him stealing an obscene amount of bread which his mother never questioned (Laymon 108). Laymon's mother's food insecurities only further motivated her to act out the strong Black woman trope and her abusive tendencies; she focused on the womanhood gaze as included in triple consciousness, which caused her to abuse Laymon as a result of her role as a food insecure mother protecting her son, not only against her own food insecurities, but against the white power structures which devoured their Black community, and many other Black communities, into submission.

Laymon's mother would physically abuse her son—once over Laymon dating a white girl, hitting him and relaying the dangers of such a relationship (Laymon 97) and once over poor grades, going "on and on about ruining the only chance [Laymon] had of getting free" (Laymon 138)—in order to show Laymon what white people and institutions would do to consume his body if he didn't learn his lesson now through his mother. The physical act of beating her son suggests how influenced Laymon's mother was by triple consciousness and the white gaze and how it controlled her life, leading her to commit abusive acts which shifted the blame from those white institutions to herself as a Black woman. Throughout *Heavy*, Laymon refutes that placement of blame by not only illustrating his mother's actions but the reason behind them, therefore redirecting the blame back to white supremacy and the racist systems that are still in existence today.

Along with physical abuse, Laymon's mother mentally abused him about his weight as a result of her food insecurity. The mention of weight is consistent throughout *Heavy*, but Laymon's mother viewed it as another excuse for white people to devour the Black community without consequence and with justified reason. Within the text, after Laymon lost weight and went on daily and nightly runs, his mother

addressed his concerns about being shot by police:

> "How is running at night increasing my chances of getting shot?"
> "Please. You are a big Black man," [she] said. "Stop running at night." I asked [her] if [she] still thought I was big even though I had hardly any body fat. "To white folk and police, you will al ways be huge no matter how skinny you are." (Laymon 201)

Laymon's mother's actions and abusive tendencies were a direct result of the trauma that has been inflicted upon her throughout her life by white people as an independent Black woman, causing her to react in fear and anger. Laymon's mother's food insecurities and her inability to view her son as anything but "big" or "heavy" are abuses influenced by triple consciousness and her inability to fathom herself or her son outside of the white and American gaze, and herself through the womanhood gaze as a single mother raising her son under the influences of white power structures. According to Wendy Ashley's "The Angry Black Woman: The Impact of Pejorative Stereotypes on Psychotherapy with Black Women" (2014), "Many characteristics of the angry Black woman stereotype, including hostility, rage, aggressiveness, and bitterness may be reflective of survival skills developed by Black women in the face of social, economic, and political oppression. This trifecta of oppression is all encompassing and creates a pervasive environment of injustice" (29). In addition to the "strong Black woman" trope, Laymon's mother also negotiates the "angry Black women stereotype" in response to the constant humiliation of being a Black woman as seen by Americanness, Blackness, and womanhood.

In his review "What We Hoped to Forget: The Weight and Power of Kiese Laymon's *Heavy*" (2019), Bijan Stephen notes that "His mother hurt him as well, beating him when she thought he was out of line, while insisting to Laymon that it was for his own good. . . . Even when he was a college student, his mother continued to police his behavior, worried as she was about how the white world might harm her son." Through the repercussions of generational trauma and the consequences of viewing her life, and her son's life, through the white gaze in America, Laymon's mother harmed her son for fear of how others would harm him outside of her own control. Put another way, she was consumed by America as she acted out in abusive tendencies, not unlike white institutions expect Black women to in order to place the blame on Black communities rather than on themselves.

This fear, as maintained by white power systems, is continuously perpetuated by the consistency of white supremacy, from before Laymon's mother was alive to after Heavy was published—a fear which creates a chain reaction within the Black community and places blame on its members for being trained in the mindset of pleasing the existing white institutions. Laymon elaborates on this fear in an interview with Abigail Bereola titled "A Reckoning is Different Than a Tell-All" (2018):

> [T]his anxiety about white folks and what they would do if given opportunity was always around us. . . . I think sometimes it can inadvertently make white folks into the traffic cops of your life. . . . I think it makes it harder for us to imagine because we're literally told that if we imagine out of the box, white people are gon' get us. And so when I bring that shit up in the book, I'm not trying to indict my grandmom, my mama, and them, because I understand. They're trying to protect themselves and protect their child and their grandchild.

Laymon recognizes this fear of white power structures within himself and within the influential Black women in his life, pointedly saying that they are only trying to protect their children before white institutions can harm them. To further this, I argue that Laymon is relaying in *Heavy* that these Black women in his life are not at fault for fearing white supremacy and acting out in ways that are harmful—such as his mother abusing him. It is instead these white institutions and systems that are held in such high regard that are at fault and are to blame for the destruction of Black communities, specifically across America, as these white power structures continue to overconsume and indulge in the oppression and destruction of Black communities as they stand.

The destructive consumption and exploitation of Black communities by white institutions was further proved during the Black Lives Matter protests in 2020 when police officers continued to harm Black bodies in public but rarely with consequence. This lack of consequence further implies the lack of care for Black folx and how their bodies are only feasted on by America, the white gaze on Black folx, and, for Black women, hypermasculinity. As a result, the narrative of the blame of destruction during the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests was further bestowed upon the Black community rather than the white power structures which instigated the destruction in the first place.

Conclusion

Throughout *Heavy* (2018), Kiese Laymon shifts the blame of abuse, insecurities, and negligence from the Black community and projects it onto the white power systems which have upheld the grounds for these negative actions for centuries. Through the strong characteristics of the Black women in his life, including Layla, his grandmother, and his mother and the overindulgence of their bodies and impact of triple consciousness, Laymon shows how they view themselves, as well as their fraught relationships with food.

Following suit in the reactionary strong Black women trope, the Black women in *Heavy* face trauma—both generational and present—which force them to act in specific manners, from a normalization of being consumed by men, the media, and America in general, to having abusive tendencies in order to stray from future potential harm from white institutions. This can also be seen through the mention of food habits throughout the novel, from Laymon's grandmother's place in the culinary world and conversation, to his mother's focus on Laymon's weight—whether he is "heavy" or not—and her food insecurities.

All of this is a reaction to how Black women have been treated in the past and continue to be treated as consumable items and something that others are allowed to overindulge in without consequence. This is still evident today in America with Black women such as Breonna Taylor within the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests and the consumption of her body for the media and publicity without any real warrant of justice. The abuse of Black women causes them to see themselves through triple consciousness, or the lens of both the white and male gaze, and react in ways that shift the blame to the Black community. In writing *Heavy*, Laymon achieves redirecting this blame back to white supremacy and the influence of the white systematic oppression of Black people, and specifically Black women, throughout America.

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Dummy's Guide to Stir-Fry

Jules Steele

1. Some type of noodles. Preferaby lo mein, or udon. You can also use pad thai noodles.
    a. Don't do what I did. Spaghetti noodles are NOT a good replacement.
2. Some kind of protein. Chicken, tofu, pork, eggs, beef [don't use ground beef unless your goal is failure] are all good options.
3. Oil with a high smoke point. Peanut, vegetable, soybean, canola, etc.
4. Lots of veggies. Mushrooms, carrots, broccoli, brussel sprouts, green beans, baby corn cobs, onions, garlic – honestly the beauty of stir fry is that you can pretty much include or exclude whatever you want.
    a. (If you're gonna use peppers, start frying them FIRST even before your meat because they're gonna take three times longer than you'd reasonably expect, it's honestly ridiculous.)
5. Some kind of sauce. Soy sauce is a good starter. So is teriyaki. Go wild.
6. Lots of salt if you're okay with being as unhealthy as I am.

1. Start boiling a pot of water for your noodles. While you're waiting, wash and chop your chosen vegetables and meat. Size is up to you, but keep in mind that smaller pieces will cook faster.

Ideally, you'll want a wok. I do not own one, so I just use my biggest frying pan and suffer. While your water is heating up, sprinkle in a small amount of oil to your wok and start adding the ingredients that will take the longest to cook. (Peppers and meat, usually.)

2. As you go, continue adding vegetables. Keep your wok at a lower temperature until you add your noodles to the boiling water, then raise the temperature of your stir fry to medium.

3. Add your preferred amount of salt to the stir fry as you go. You can also add other spices such as black pepper, garlic, or whatever you have that you feel good about.

Description: Flying wok with chicken, noodles, and spices. Concept of food preparation in low gravity mode, food levitation. Separated on black background.

I typically stick to salt and pepper. When the noodles are done, drain the water and then add them to the wok and stir them in with the vegetables, lowering the temperature back down to low.

4. Add your sauce. It's up to you how much you add. Keep in mind that you may not be able to taste much if you aren't liberal with it. Keep stirring it around until it's all mixed together well. This is where your life becomes much harder if you choose a frying pan.

5. Serve and enjoy!

Women Dined Well: Bakhtinian Carnivalesque in Caryl Churchill's *Top Girls*

Dilayda Tülübaş, *Humboldt University of Berlin*

"The human frame being what it is, heart, body and brain all mixed together, and not contained in separate compartments . . . a good dinner is of great importance to good talk. One cannot think well, love well, sleep well, if one has not dined well."
—Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (18)

The dinner scene in the first act of Caryl Churchill's post-WWII play Top Girls enables us to examine the individual subjectivities and collective consciousness of the iconic woman charac-ters. Churchill, by creating a dinner scene in the first act of her play, explores the inequalities faced by women across centuries and allows her characters to resist a system that creates certain types of gender identities. This essay highlights how the dinner scene and the increased appetite of woman characters at the dinner table in Top Girls function as a Bakhtinian "carnivalesque" that creates a topsy-turvy showing the reader the symbolic essence of food, the act of consump-tion, and their complex and dynamic relation with gender norms and identities.

Caryl Churchill's most celebrated play, *Top Girls*, begins with a remarkable dinner scene, where various women from history, literature and art come together to dine, celebrate, and share stories. Marlene, the play's central character, assumes the role of a party-giver, celebrating a recent promotion in the Top Girls Employment Agency with her friends. The dinner party consists of various women from fictional works or different time periods in history: Isabella Bird; a Victorian traveler, Lady Nijo; a thirteenth-century Japanese courtesan; Joan Gret, a ninth-century Pope; Dull Gret from Brueghel's painting; and Griselda, a fictional character from Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*. The dinner party creates a carnival sense of the world where patriarchal structures and conventions are challenged through the end of the act. Such an impossible gathering of women in the first act of *Top Girls* makes it possible to explore the female experience, femininity, and their dynamic relation with food and festivity across centuries.

Through the dinner party, Churchill offers her characters an alternative life in which they are in a state of becoming. However, in a world turned upside down, these female characters are still haunted by the patriarchal system and male domination that culturally traumatized them. Churchill, who was heavily influenced by the social and political transformations of her decade, wrote *Top Girls* to critically examine the situation of women and their struggle to gain economic independence in post-war Britain. I argue that Russian literary critic and author Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of carnivalesque provides a conceptual vocabulary to explore and analyze the remarkable supper scene in Churchill's post-war play *Top Girls*. My aim in this essay is to illustrate how the dinner scene in the first act of the play functions

as a "carnivalesque" that shows us the symbolic essence of food, the act of consumption and its complex and dynamic relation with gender norms and identities.

The carnivalesque, first described in Bakhtin's *Rabelais and His World* (1965), is a social institution where life is turned inside out and all sorts of eccentric behavior are accepted. Bakhtin, who saw carnivals of the Medieval and Renaissance period as being anarchic in nature, acknowledged that the carnival breaks apart rules and beliefs to make room for fresh and new beginnings. He describes the carnival sense of the world with five essences: "(1) it has a reversed life; (2) the participants have free and familiar contact; (3) it is replete with carnivalistic mésalliances; (4) it is infused with profanation; (5) it has crowning/decrowning acts; and (6) it parodies everything" (Yilmaz 51). By taking his inspiration from the folk festivals of Medieval and Renaissance cultures, Bakhtin conceptualizes a gateway to an egalitarian society since carnival and its suspension of hierarchical norms can make a "man renounce his official state as monk, cleric, scholar, and perceive the world in its laughing aspect" (Bakhtin 13).

The carnival as described by Bakhtin rejects the hierarchical structures and all sorts of inequalities. It is a topsy-turvy, utopian beginning that mocks the official systems and establishments and exposes the grotesque images of the body. In his Rabelais and His World, Bakhtin highlights the grotesque body and how it is not separated from the rest of the world:

> It is not a closed, completed unit; it is unfinished, outgrows itself, transgresses its own limits. The stress is laid on those parts of the body that are open to the outside world, that is, the parts through which the world enters the body or emerges from it, or through which the body itself goes out to meet the world. This means that the emphasis is on the apertures or the convexities, or on various ramifications and offshoots: the open mouth, the genital organs, the breasts, the phallus, the potbelly, the nose. The body discloses its essence as a principle of growth which exceeds its own limits only in copulation, preg-nancy, child- birth, the throes of death, eating, drinking, or defecation. (Bakhtin 26)

Moreover, mouths in a carnival "are always open, eating and drinking, laughing, shouting: they take in and commune with the outer world and never shut it out, [which] corresponds to a cosmic openness" (Elliot 130). The open mouth as well as the act of consumption signifies the spirit of constant change and renewal. The collectivist spirit of the carnivalesque and popular banquets, according to Bakhtin, "shakes up the authoritative version of language and values, making room for a multiplicity of voices and meanings" (Elliot 130).

The trans-cultural and trans-historical nature of the dinner scene in Churchill's *Top Girls* presents us with challenging and complex questions about the class consciousness among women across centuries and their victimization caused by the system. Such an impossible gathering of women in a contemporary situation "constructs the present as just one of history's many time periods" that helps create a diversity of voices, which is particularly abundant in carnivalesque (Yi 43). Food in *Top Girls* functions both as a unifier and a divider that makes the experience of these women visible. Through their act of communal eating, these characters embark on a journey between the outer and the inner world. Theatre critic Kenneth Jones observes that Marlene in *Top Girls* creates a dinner party with people she does not

even know, for she has no close friends of her own for the sake of rising in the job market, which is essentially led by her male counterparts (qtd. in Bastan 165). Furthermore, Sharon Ammen sees this scene in *Top Girls* as being initially utopic as five legendary figures show up to a contemporary woman's fantasy party to dine and celebrate (86). I argue that this gathering is a great example of Bakhtinian carnivalesque as it provides an alternative life, whereby women share their experiences of male domination and patriarchal authority accompanied by all sorts of food and drink. This gathering allows them to explore the exploitation of women across centuries, which produces certain types of gender identities. In fact, when the unnamed waitress makes an appearance with the wine bottle, Marlene and Nijo engage in a conversation that indicates the beginning of a Bakhtinian carnivalesque:

> MARLENE: I think a drink while we wait for the others. I think a drink anyway. What a week.
>
> The WAITRESS pours wine.
>
> NIJO: It was always the men who used to get so drunk. I'd be one of the maidens, passing the sake. (Churchill 128)

As Margaret Visser puts it: "Food is never just something to eat" (qtd. in Jones 133). From identity to social status, food, and the way it is consumed is loaded with meanings. Therefore, it will be useful to focus on the food consumption of these characters at the dinner table as "food has a constant tendency to transform itself into situation" (Barthes 171). Moreover, "the communicative value of food lies in its appearance, preparation methods, eating habits, sensory perceptions, and eating contexts, which are all part of a system of differences in signification" (qtd. in Counihan and Van Esterik 24-25). As mentioned, the influence of patriarchal figures on the lives of these female characters dominates discussion throughout the party. While ordering her chicken and soup, Isabella recounts how she was so grieved when her father passed away. Similarly, Lady Nijo starts telling the guests about the death of her father while simultaneously ordering a Waldorf salad. Marlene, on the other hand, orders two rare steaks, lots of potatoes, and a few bottles of Italian white wine while casually listening to her guests (Churchill 134-135). In this instance, food works as a motif that highlights the different ways in which these female characters ingest and take nourishment. Marlene's choice of food, which in this scene is a "rare" steak "has been associated with strength, power, aggression, and sexuality" for decades. (qtd. in Jones 139). Unlike Isabella and Nijo, Marlene is portrayed as a hungry and demanding consumer; a character representative of her age. Churchill uses food in this scene as a highly effective motif to explore the gender roles that shape the experiences of women across centuries as the food preferences of these transcultural women heavily reflect complex cultural, social, and hierarchical structures that they had to abide by throughout their lives.

Having come from a working-class background, Marlene has achieved to find herself a place in the job market as a woman by internalizing and adapting to the patriarchal and capitalist norms of twentieth-century Britain. By throwing this dinner party, Marlene not only celebrates her promotion but also facilitates an opportunity for her fantasy female friends to create a new outlook

through which they can connect with the outer world as never before. By constantly encouraging her guests to consume more food and drink more wine, Marlene seeks to regenerate a new order where everything is in a state of becoming. She achieves this as the carnival essence pro-liferates and characters get drunker. Lady Nijo's excitement upon being offered an alcoholic beverage for the first time in her life at the beginning of the supper party is an indicator of her social status at the Emperor's court (Churchill 128). In this carnivalesque, she is no longer a concubine that passes the sake for men. Instead, she is a woman who drinks as heavily as her male counterparts and enters into a realm of possibilities. This dinner offers Nijo the chance to leave her previous and only role as a concubine, experience life, evaluate her potential, and exist as herself without having to behave in compliance with the rules of patriarchal authority.

Isabella Bird, who is the first guest to arrive at Marlene's dinner party, mentions in turn to Nijo how she has tried the Japanese sake and how she has found it "fortifying after a day in the wet" (Churchill 128). Isabella is a Victorian-era world traveler who has lived an independent life engaging in male endeavors, unlike Lady Nijo. In the nineteenth century, a period in British history when women were seen merely as the "angel in the house," Isabella Bird traveled the world extensively and chose not to get married. Instead, she has tried the sake, had an adventurous life, and wrote a book. Her familiarity with and consumption of sake, which is considered as a highly masculine libation in Japan, indicates her masculine traits which contradicts the traditional portrayal of women of the Victorian era. In this era, many women "rejected meat associating a carnivorous diet with sexual precocity, abundant menstrual flow, and even nymphomania and insanity" (Andrievskik 142). Therefore, "denial of appetite expressed an ideal of female perfec-tion and moral superiority," something which Isabella lacks as she freely enjoys the food and drink at the dinner table (Andrievskik 142). Furthermore, one of the most remarkable characters at the dinner table, Pope Joan, gets drunker and recounts freely how she enjoyed her life as a man in Italy until it was revealed that she was a woman. She hid the fact that she is a woman for so long that she came to a point where she could not recognize her womanhood anymore and was alienated from her female body. In fact, she could not recognize that she was pregnant with one of her chamberlains until she had to give birth in the street during a religious procession. Only by disguising herself as a man and using her "male" privileges, she could achieve her goals and live a life full of freedom and comfort. The moment she stopped disguising her true gender, that is when she becomes a mother, she is stoned to death and murdered (Churchill 160).

The stage direction as Joan tells her story to the dinner guests carries a significance in the play. Churchill, by acknowledging that "the waitress brings more wine," aims to draw attention to the role of alcohol in removing the inhibitions and fears of the characters and en-couraging them to speak more frankly. As put by Gaston Bachelard, who focused on the significance of alcoholic unconsciousness in his works, alcohol "incorporates itself, so to speak, with that which is striving to express itself. It appears evident that alcohol is a creator of language. It enriches the vocabulary and frees the syntax" (qtd in Chimisso 206). Similarly, Marlene's dinner guests do not refrain from sharing the sensational and adventurous stories they have had as women living in different centuries as alcohol becomes a creator of language in the party:

NIJO: What was he like, the chamberlain?
GRET: Big cock.
ISABELLA: Oh Gret.
MARLENE: Did he fancy you when he thought you were a fella?
NIJO: What was he like?
JOAN: He could keep a secret. (Churchill 154)

Marlene, by ordering more wine and encouraging her guests to drink more, aims at creating an untrammeled vision for the legendary guests, who according to Rebecca Cameron "remain locked in their own, singular perspectives" (qtd in in Cameron 156). On the one hand, drinking alcohol accelerates these women's desire to have a frank discussion and "makes accessible once again sources of pleasure which were under the weight of suppression" (qtd in Holowchak 85). On the other hand, their act of communal eating and increased appetite works as a tool that con-tributes to the creation of carnivalesque allowing the women to unite and create a resistance against patriarchy and established gender norms and etiquettes.

Dull Gret, who rarely speaks except for ordering more food, is also a remarkable character that Churchill has involved in this dinner party to highlight the sexist portrayal of women in sixteenth-century Europe. As painted in Bruegel's painting, Dull Gret, also known as Mad Meg, is a peasant woman, descending to hell while leading a troop of other peasant women. In this apocalyptic painting, Gret is seen wearing a military costume, armed with a sword gathering up cutlery. In the making of this painting, Bruegel is thought to have been inspired by a famous misogynistic Flemish proverb: "She could plunder in front of hell and return unscathed." Gret's occasional monosyllabic contributions to the conversation and her sudden and sharp remarks throughout the dinner such as "big cock" and "bastards" indicates her social position as a peas-ant woman. Unlike other women at the dinner table, Gret has little idea of how to communicate with others around her. Her silence makes it obvious that Gret is not used to an environment where she can have a voice of her own and express herself. She is mostly mute constantly asking for more bread and potatoes. Her constant appetite carries a significance throughout the play as "eating without constraint certainly repre-sents refusal to conform to socially determined gender behavior marked by moderation and constant worry about body image" (Andrievskikh 141). At the very end of the play, we learn that Gret's fight against devils in hell actually represents her vengeance against the Spanish ar-my, who murdered her children. By involving Gret at the dinner table, "Churchill endows [her] with a biography of oppression and a spirit of rebellion" (Cohn 115). Her lack of "feminine" manners and her constant appetite signify her stereotypically masculine characteristics—something she might have developed as a defense mechanism to fight her maternal instincts.

Food representations and "symbolism carries a particular importance for women due to the cul-turally determined association of women with cooking and nourishment" (Andrievskikh 137). Food and the dining scene in *Top Girls*, therefore, serves as a tool that helps us explore the female experience, femininity, and its constant and dynamic relation with food and festivity across centuries. The women at the dinner party, who are only connected to each other by their oppression under patriarchy, are offered by Churchill a transformative journey that ends with a moment of epiphany. Food in this work acts as a

"system of language" that helps create a reversed life that challenges all social and patriarchal hierarchies that have previously traumatized the legendary characters (qtd in Counihan and Van Esterik 24). The stage direction through the end of the act shows us how the carnival essence in this act has proliferated as the communal eating and drinking of the characters contributed to the creation of carnivalesque, where the grotesque body "outgrows itself, transgresses its own lim-its" (Bakhtin 26):

> NIJO is laughing and crying.
> JOAN gets up and is sick in a corner.
> MARLENE is drinking ISABELLA's brandy. (Churchill 182)

All of the women start reflecting on their past as a product of a system that oppresses women so much so that they do not realize they have a voice of their own. They enter a completely new stage of their life through this dinner that contributes to their sense of belonging and shared womanhood. Their performative manner at the dinner table as well as the kinds of food and drink they choose to consume gives us insight into the roles they take in order to create new social constructions that are stripped off all sorts of hierarchical rules.

Churchill utilizes food and the act of consumption to explore these characters' individual subjectivities and collective consciousness. By creating a carnival sense of the world through the dinner scene, Churchill proves the dominance of men in all sorts of social and trans cultural systems. The legendary characters' increased appetites work as a tool that contributes to the creation of carnivalesque allowing the women to unite and foment resistance to patriarchy and all sorts of established gender norms and etiquettes. In this carnivalesque, the women no longer restrict their appetites. Instead, they think well, dine well and challenge the rules of patriarchal establishment. Churchill ends the act with Isabella saying, "I knew my return of vigour was only temporary, but how marvellous while it lasted" (Churchill 183), which signifies "any temporary triumph of top girls, especially since Church-ill's characters have lapsed into laughing, crying, vomiting, stealing drinks" (Cohn 115). This temporary triumph as described by Cohn is achieved through the carnivalesque, which creates a diversity of voices as the women begin to challenge the patriarchal establishment and toast to their success and "extraordinary achievements":

> ISABELLA: To Marlene.
> MARLENE: And all of us.
> JOAN: Marlene.
> NIJO: Marlene.
> GRET: Marlene.
> MARLENE: We've all come a long way. To our courage and the way we changed our lives and our extraordinary achievements. They laugh and drink a toast.
> (Churchill 182)

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Two Hoosiers' Ramen

Allen Warren

A friend of mine served a variation of this dish to me earlier this year. We adapted it to be meat-free and both agreed it added a lot to the ubiquitous student staple of ramen. Try this affordable recipe to add some heartiness to your midnight meal and make you run for your Maruchan!

1/2 lb.	Super or extra firm tofu
1/2 c.	Carrots (baby carrots may be easier to peel)
3-5 (1/3 c.)	Bok choy leaves
2 tbsp.	Hoisin sauce
1 tbsp.	Soy sauce
1/4 tsp.	Black pepper
2	Eggs
4 c.	Water
2	3-oz. ramen packets

Photo by Deniz on Unsplash

Description: Two chopsticks in a full bowl of ramen and vegetables.

1. Dry tofu until no longer sopping. Cut into ¼- to ½-in. cubes. Coat a deep pan or pot with butter or cooking spray and begin cooking the tofu over low-medium heat, stirring occasionally.
2. Peel the carrots and add them to the pot.
3. Rip the bok choy leaves into ¼-in. pieces and add them to the pot. Mix the vegetables in with the tofu while adding the hoisin and soy sauces as well as the pepper.
4. Once the tofu is firm or appears golden-brown, add the eggs and fry them. Continue mixing.
5. Add the water slowly, then insert the ramen. Make sure the water covers the ramen. Cook everything together until ramen is tender and water boils.
6. Remove from heat and serve while hot. Add hoisin or soy sauce to taste. Keeps three to five days when refrigerated.

Eat the Rich: The Parasitic Relationship Between Socioeconomic Groups in Bong Joon-ho's *Parasite* and *Snowpiercer*

Vincent Ramos-Niaves, *Ball State University*

Bong Joon-ho's portrayal of class and the war between those who inhabit either end of the socioeconomic spectrum has long been noted and explored by critics and scholars for years. In particular, his films *Parasite* and *Snowpiercer* offer a dynamic exploration of this topic. Existing conversation about these films delves deeply into the symbolism for class and status, but rarely do they come from an emphasis in food studies and the way food can be used to denote socioeconomic structures. While that conversation is growing, I hope to expand it further by focusing on the space and method in which food is consumed in these films through a socioeconomic lens. *Parasite* and *Snowpiercer* are essential to this conversation because of their careful use of space and consumption. There is a clear spatial divide between the lower and upper classes in these movies that is examined and manipulated within either film. With this spatial divide, we see food spaces change in order to reinforce a binary idea of how class structure exists. Along with the change in space, change in method of consumption is equally important to analyze. The subtle but powerful differences create an image that serves to emphasize socioeconomic position and explain the relationship between dominant and subordinate groups.

Class is a universal tool designed to separate large groups of people into a binary world. It's a system that has divided every civilization from ancient cities to modern superpowers and, being an all-encompassing timeless force, is thus rooted in every aspect of our society. Some of these manifestations of class division are obvious, like neighborhood disparities or social division, creating a tension that is incredibly common in the literature of any culture. While exploring its roots in books and film as a derivative of the social structure established by the novel or movie can be compelling, it is far more interesting to look at the smaller, often overlooked parts of a given piece from a socioeconomic lens. Few creators understand the importance of subtle manifestations of socioeconomic principles as director Bong Joon-ho. In his films *Snowpiercer* and *Parasite*, class is at the forefront, and while the films have more obvious imagery of social division, the most subtle and complex way of viewing class in either film comes from food and the way and space in which it is consumed. Bong Joon-ho uses the subtle placement of food to explore the different class expectations as a limiting agent as well as in terms of performance, confining each social group into their respective roles through the space and consumption of food.

To analyze the socioeconomic systems in each film, I will primarily be using class as defined and studied by Raymond Williams in his book *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, where he defines class as "a new binary: in Marxist language the *bourgeoisie* and the *proletariat*" (32). Williams

explores class as a binary system, disregarding the concept of the middle class as a physical entity and labelling it a "self-conscious and self-used description" (28). For the purposes of this analysis, this definition is fitting as both *Snowpiercer* and *Parasite* seek to highlight a binary interaction between the higher and lower class without an easily identifiable middle ground. While Williams does make the argument that the working class may be inducted into the middle class, both films take an approach of the upper class against any lower class, reinforcing the duality rather than complicating it. Williams further expands on this duality in his book *Marxism and Literature (Marxist Introductions)* where he conflates the bourgeois as a form of "cultural sociology" and also delves into their habit of "mass manipulation," both of which are prevalent in these films—particularly *Snowpiercer* (136).

Beyond Williams, class is one of the pinnacles of human society, so there is a plethora of information on these aspects in both films. Pieces like "Laughing to Keep from Crying" by Ari Aster and "'Parasite' Review: The Lower Depths Rise with a Vengeance" by Manohla Dargis examine class in the context of Bong Joon-ho's subversion of traditional roles and expectations of the characters to highlight a resistance against the binary class system, not unlike what Williams describes. Not nearly enough dialogue has been started on the idea of food within these class-based films despite the emphasis on food and consumption in each of them. This, along with the recentness of the films, has led to a lack of scholarly discussion regarding the specific topics of this paper. However, scholars and critics of these two films do note common threads. Chief among these is a clear reinforcement of traditional class structures, and I will be expanding on this through a close analysis of the use of food and space and by utilizing the limited criticism available. However, it is also important to note that the context of Williams's essays is firmly rooted in British class structures while Bong Joon-ho is Korean. Many of Bong's films do have more Western-centered images and themes, making a British analysis of class more in line with Bong's methodology.

1. *Snowpiercer*

Bong Joon-ho's film *Snowpiercer* (2013) is a sci-fi dystopian thriller in which the entire world has frozen over, leaving what remains of humanity to inhabit one long train. The train itself was created by the antagonist of the film, Wilford, and is meant to circumnavigate the world and never stop running. Everything needed for life on earth exists on the train. The society there is symbolic of socioeconomic structures with the poorest being all shoved together at the tail end of the train, earning the name "tailenders," while the "frontenders" consist of the upper class. Bong Joon-ho does not spend much time in the middle of the train, making his representation of class more akin to William's definition. The plot itself follows Curtis, the protagonist, as he and a group of tailenders seek to overthrow Wilford in a rebellion. Throughout the film, many of them die, including a mother figure, Tanya; Curtis's close friend, Edgar; and other important tailender figures like Gilliam (John Hurt) and his surrogate son Grey. Key frontender and Wilfred's spokeswoman, Mason, dies as well. The movie ends with Curtis derailing the train, effectively killing everyone except for the two youngest who are left to rebuild a better society. *Snowpiercer*'s relevance is perhaps best explored by Ian Pettigrew in his review for *Science Fiction Film and Television*. Pettigrew notes several scenes from the film, such as that "both Korean characters are addicted to the train's drug of choice Kronol" (151). Here, he clearly draws a connection to western

civilization's treatment of marginalized groups, reinforcing the notion of power as a manipulative force and showing Bong's attention to the real-world implications of consumption from a powerful group to a subordinate.

Snowpiercer is an understudied film, making the analysis of specific scenes essential to understanding the emphasis on food in the film and its relevance to Bong's critique of class. The most emphasized example of food's massive implications in the film comes from the item that's given the most frequently: protein bars. These initially appear to be small brown rectangles of indeterminable composition, but Bong reveals their production towards the end of the first act. In this scene, Curtis and his rebellion break into the production car where mass quantities of the protein bars are made. The tailenders rush to the conveyer belt, grabbing as many of these bars as possible, noting their warmth and marketing that feature as a luxury. However, moments later, the ingredients for the bars are revealed: ground up insects put through a high-tech grinder until they are essentially a brown gelatin-like structure. The emphasis of this role can perhaps best be compared to the role of chicken, a cheap inexpensive meat now that, while sensationalized on the train, carries a specific connotation. In her essay "More than Just the 'Big Piece of Chicken': The Power of Race, Class, and Food in American Consciousness," Psyche Williams-Forson investigates the role of chicken as a food source primarily associated with Black culture. She identifies the origins of the stereotype as chickens being an undervalued source that enslaved people could typically get away with stealing (111). In essence, chicken gained its notoriety from being the only available option to a group oppressively denied nourishment. While chicken itself is not used in the film in this specific way, its similarities to the protein bars offer a look into the way Bong utilizes the role and consumption of food to highlight the marginalization of the lower class.

Bong directly compares protein bars to chicken, creating a more poignant emphasis on the luxury of more quality meat as a barrier between classes. When comparing the role of one food to another in *Snowpiercer*, the spaces in which the food is consumed or shown are incredibly relevant in terms of the hierarchy of the train. It's a rather straight-forward metaphor of class. Those closer to the front of the train represent the upper class while the farther back a person is, the less important a person is to the social hierarchy. Chicken, being the middle ground of the film, is the first comparison to be made in terms of food. Seconds before Curtis's rebellion begins, the tailenders antagonize the guards shouting, "we want chicken," rejecting the protein bars. This demand for the betterment of their meal at a time in which they are trying to push forward puts the protein bars spatially in the back of the train. There is a massive difference in where the film allows the bars to exist and where chicken is. When we see the protein bars being made or consumed, the car is always dark and the people grimy. The car where they find the grinder is a dingy place with little lighting, but the chicken car is well lit by florescent lights all along the walls. It marks them as a cleaner form of food, making them significantly more important in appearance when juxtaposed to the grime worn by the tailenders. It shows them as out of place next to the luxury that they haven't been afforded.

The food choices as a representation of class come together in the final scene in which Curtis is forced to have dinner with the inventor of the train, Wilford, which operates as a callback to past moments in the film and emphasizes its role as the epitome of class privilege. This scene is full of religious imagery where Wilford rules over and controls the lives of the people in the train, explaining how he

and an important figure of the tailenders orchestrated Curtis's rebellion, and how they, together, control life and prosperity on the train. All while he is explaining this, Wilford is cooking a meal for himself of steak and red wine. These two items are very emblematic of socioeconomic structures. Steak and red wine are traditionally linked with the upper class, marking their inclusion as a clear indicator of thematic importance to the film. The intentional choice of this food gives this entire scene more weight in terms of the grand scheme of the food choices throughout the film, specifically the method of consumption. At every point of the film where food is involved, the characters eat the item with their hands; even the eggs are hard-boiled so frontenders and tailenders alike eat them with their bare hands, and the daughter of the inventor, Yona, drinks champagne directly from the bottle. While this could be explained as a reinforcement of the tailenders as the "savage" end of society, another emphasis on utensils coming from an interaction between Mason and Curtis at the sushi bar brings the utensils into more critical role.

In this scene, Curtis forces Mason to eat the protein bar, thus cementing her as a part of the lower class, but moments before this, Mason had attempted to have sushi with the rest of them using chopsticks which are taken from her. By replacing this utensil with the protein bar, Curtis is essentially removing her status as a high-ranking official. This use of utensils as a symbol makes the egg scene more interesting as everyone eats the eggs the exact same way. This draws attention to the blurring of socioeconomic lines that Wilford talks about at length during this conversation. Wilford talks about working with tailender Gilliam because "the front and the tail are supposed to work together" (*Parasite*). He says this cooperation is meant to maintain order, and the tension their oppression creates is just as vital as his maintaining the engine for their society to thrive. This explains why, in the middle of the train, everyone is on equal footing, eating a simple food of moderate luxury with the same method of consumption. The middle of the train illustrates a blurring of societal lines and highlights the importance of Curtis's rebellion as a destructive but necessary force in the same way Wilford does. Still, as we will explore later in this essay, these comparisons orchestrated by food matters offers the assurance of a relationship both parasitic and symbiotic in nature. The foundation of this argument is perhaps best illustrated by another of Bong Joon-ho's films, *Parasite*.

2. *Parasite*

Parasite, released in 2019, is a social commentary thriller directed and created by Bong Joon-ho. It follows the Kims, a lower-class family unable to find work due to a lack of opportunities in South Korea. While earning some money folding pizza boxes, they meet the Parks, a wealthy family in need of some labor. Slowly, the Kims conspire to get all of the Parks' employees fired and then take those jobs for themselves. The Kims' attempted integration in the Park home eventually leads to the death of the Kim daughter and injury of the Kim son. Spurned by this, the film ends with the Kim father killing the Park patriarch and hiding in tunnels under the Park home for what we assume to be the rest of his life. The film is widely believed to be a brilliant depiction of class struggles and won an Oscar for its critique of the class system. While the film does follow Raymond Williams's definition of class, it brings the separation of lower and upper classes to the forefront, as noted by critics like E. Alex Jung and Bong Joon-ho himself as he states in an interview with *The Atlantic: "What story could I tell with just two houses?* I came up with the idea of a poor house and a rich house. . . . I was really enveloped in this story about

the gap between the rich and the poor" (Sims). This separation as it pertains to *Parasite* is best explored in the essay "Domination and Subordination" by Jean Baker Miller. Miller refers to class as a form of "permanent inequality," meaning it's something born and not achieved or marked by certain characteristics. According to her studies, most of these sociological groups (class, gender, race, etc.) can be separated through a binary lens made of the dominants and the subordinates. In context with one another, "dominant groups usually impede the development of subordinates" and "determine what is normal for a culture," while subordinates attempt to follow social rules created by the dominants while motivated by their own self-interest in an act of basic survival (Miller 94-95). This insistence on dominant and subordinate social factions is the driving force behind *Parasite* as the lower class competes with the upper for domination despite living as a subordinate group.

In terms of the connotation of the food itself in the film, *Parasite* functions much like *Snowpiercer*, using well-known dishes with distinct ties to class in order to enhance the film's central theme and identify the subordinates and dominants. For example, the Parks ask their cook, Chung-sook (mother of the Kim family), to make a simple dish but emphasize the importance of adding sirloin, a red meat symbolic of wealth (*Parasite*). Where *Parasite* deepens this meaning is the invasion and division of socio-economic spaces and their methods of consumption. The Parks eat on a long wooden dining room table, emphasizing their wealth and position as they sit far away from each other, but the Kims are often shown eating close together and with the bare minimum of utensils and care. In fact, their positions while eating are remarkably different. The Kims eat in various positions around the kitchen, close together and close to the location in which food is prepared. It is in these scenes where the Kims eat around their table that the invasion of upper-class space is planned and comprised. However, it is also a location that visually places the Kims as subordinates in their relationship with the family they serve. When looking at the way the dinner table is treated with the Parks, there is a very different experience. The Parks never sit at the table together, choosing instead to have their conversations when one of them is at the table, not eating together. By consuming their food in various locations, they take up more space, carefully avoiding the kitchen to maintain their distance from where the food is cooked. This separation is indicative of a more civilized and refined way of consumption. The two images of the consumption space allow the Parks and Kims to inhabit a food space at the peak of their class expectations. The importance of this difference is perhaps best shown through the invasion of the Park residence by the Kims (*Parasite* 00:55:11-1:24:35.)

This long scene represents the turning point of the film where the story takes a darker turn. In this scene, the Parks leave for a camping trip, leaving their home in the hands of Chung-sook. Thanks to this absence, the Kims then inhabit the Park residence and, with the arrival of the recently fired cook, learn about a series of secret underground tunnels hiding an older poor man who is the former maid's husband. When the Parks call Chung-sook informing her of an early return, the family rushes to hide their stay, leading to the death of the Park's former maid. Food and drink in this sequence holds a particularly interesting meaning when compared to other instances of eating in different spaces. The sequence can be further investigated by comparing two specific moments: The Parks eating on the living room couch of the Park house, and Mrs. Park eating at the dinner table (*Parasite* 00:57:11, 1:18.41). It is important to first reinforce the importance of distance and space when looking at these two scenes. The Kim family,

representing the lower-class, or subordinates, are all sitting close together as they eat and drink, but the Park family is dispersed and separated, not all eating and also occupying greater space. The two locations operate as different eating spaces in different rooms, giving them a physical barrier to separate the dominants from the subordinates, despite the fact that the Kims are still occupying a dominant space to eat. Similarly, the underground tunnels hiding the lower-class man within the Park house is hidden behind a food-space as well, that being the pantry in the basement, emphasizing the idea of the "upstairs family and the downstairs" (Jung). The couch scene opens with most of the family on the floor, pouring scotch into a clear rocks glass, emphasizing the position of an upper-class family. However, as the son pours his father more scotch, the father looks directly into the camera and says, "this is pretty classy," reminding the viewers of the oddity of this family consuming these items. The sense of irony is only heightened by the placement of the food itself in the scene, covering the table in a disorganized clutter of mismatched foods. From there, they fall further and further from their perceived privilege, moving from drinking from a glass to drinking liquor straight from the bottle, eating food with their hands, and eventually even shattering glasses and throwing food across the floor.

Conversely, the mother of the Park family, Yeon-gyo, has a different relationship with the food she consumes in the separate scene. The food given to her is not food she found or made herself, but is rather the food she had her maid, Chung-sook, cook and then later serve to her as she sits at the dinner table. Yeon-gyo engages Chung-sook in a meaningless conversation where the Kim matriarch remains standing while Mrs. Park eats. This signifies a differentiation between the reason either woman is there. Chung-sook is there as a distraction from the attack on and essential murder of the former maid that occurred moments earlier, unable to sit at the table itself as the situation marks her as an uncivilized subordinate, while Mrs. Park represents a picture of civilized society to the wealthy, sitting at a table with a bowl with utensils and eating a meal she did not make herself. Even Chung-sook's making of the food symbolizes the subordinate as the act was tainted both by the crime she had just committed and the lie she told Yeon-gyo. In this way, the food becomes a kind-of sickness of the lower-class infiltrating the upper-class, a fact only solidified by the fact that the meal itself is a comfort food associated with the lower class but with sirloin, an upper class meat, mixed in, highlighting the blend of class-related foods. The blending is furthered when the Park mother offers the food to every member of the house before sitting down to eat it herself, showing the infiltration in a more complete way that directly confronts the dominant social group with the subordinate.

3. Common Themes in *Parasite* and *Snowpiercer*

While *Parasite* and *Snowpiercer* are remarkably different movies, they both revolve around the theme of class and how each social group relates and connects to the other. What's important about the comparison of the two comes from the lens through which they are told. Snowpiercer comes from a place where subordinates seek to become dominants in their own class system. *Parasite*, however, sees class for what it is, a parasitic relationship where the wealthy benefit and the poor have to accommodate while acting in their own self-interest. According to Jean Baker Miller, subordinates know "[their] fate depends on accommodating to and pleasing the dominants," allowing them to infiltrate them with the knowledge of how they operate. In some ways, the thematic importance of *Snowpiercer* can be

conveyed through the single action of Mr. Kim stabbing Mr. Park at the end of *Parasite*. Still, however, that aggression and rage create a conflict between the classes that is essential in fully understanding the effects of socioeconomic barriers as they are presented in Bong Joon-ho's work. By comparing these two films, we see Bong's steady reinforcement of socioeconomic norms: the subordinates eat with their hands in close proximity to the making of the food, the dominants (or those inhabiting dominant space) drink elegant alcoholic drinks with classier connotation from glasses rather than straight from the bottle like subordinates.

Similarly, punishment for social deviance is prominent as seen through the massacre of tailenders at the end of *Snowpiercer* and the death, imprisonment, and insanity of the Kim family. In both films, Bong utilizes punishment to emphasize the rejection of shifting class structures. This comes into play in *Parasite* through the use of water. Early in the film, during the first real instance of the Kim family inhabiting of the Park home, the son of the Kim Family, Ki-woo, takes 2 glass water bottles for himself and his sister. While this in itself is an innocuous enough moment, its place as the first parasitic act of the family is central to understanding the way Bong Joon-ho reinforces socioeconomic structure through punishment of deviant behaviors. Water is influenced by Bong's idea of socioeconomic structures. The director makes it a point to display the brand and type of water being consumed, that being an expensive, imported brand, making the consumption of it an act of deviance by the characters. This deviance then leads to punishment by the end of the film, reinforcing socioeconomic boundaries. The film accomplishes this by flooding the Kim home, using that same life-sustaining food to effectively destroy the family's way of life (*Parasite*). This could be interpreted from a religious context, the Great Flood washing out sinners. This punishment is supplemented by the ending of the film in which the two most injured members of the family are the same two who drank the water. A review by John Tammy makes note of the oddity of the children's positions, stating, "Simply stated, fluency in English is a rather lucrative skill to possess . . . if he's got these skills why on earth would he be folding pizza boxes? . . . . why isn't he already lucratively employed by someone, somewhere in Seoul." While Tammy notes this, he fails to acknowledge the physical and visual barrier presented by the film as the norm of this film. Taking into account the oddity of the intelligence of the Kim family that Tammy observes, the intelligence of the younger Kims marks a further deviation from their societal role, making their punishment at the end even more fitting, solidifying the importance of reinforcing socioeconomic boundaries.

This type of religious allusion is common in Bong's works, especially when it comes to the punishment of deviant behavior. For example, the aforementioned scene in *Snowpiercer* involving the eggs references the builder of the train, Wilford, as a God of the society, praying to him and saying life on the train is because of his will and grace. This allusion is further cemented by the imagery of Curtis when Wilford shows him the engine and a bright white light shines on his face. The dialogue is followed by the involvement of chicken, specifically eggs, which operate as an enforcer of class roles similarly to *Parasite*'s use of water. The eggs come into play when Curtis and his allies infiltrate the education car where "children enthusiastically recite propaganda," emblematic of the American repetition of the pledge in school (Pettigrew 151). The model of the class and repetition of propaganda that Ian Pettigrew points out in his review reinforces the idea of God and prayer to the society of *Snowpiercer*. By praying to Wilford, they validate themselves as the privileged and "worthy," making the punishment of the scene

more poignant. In the scene, the tailenders and frontenders are all given free hardboiled eggs despite their place in the class system. However, the moment the eggs are consumed, and the tailenders are afforded the very luxury they sought out, they are immediately punished by the frontenders in the form of gunfire and the mass executions. This punishment is especially weighty when considering the sushi scene just prior to this one. In that scene, the tailenders are afforded a luxury that they hadn't had since before the apocalypse. Moreover, they aren't the only deviants. When Curtis and the others are forced to deviate from the assigned role, Curtis also forces Mason to do the same, having her eat a protein bar, marking her for the same punishment as them. In either case, the punishment is handed down by that film's God, enforcing Raymond Williams's idea regarding the role of inheritance in socioeconomic structures.

Food in *Snowpiercer* and *Parasite* is used to create barriers between socioeconomic groups and explore the societal reaction and impact of the blurring of those lines. The impact and importance of food as a human necessity gives it more weight to be able to highlight the infiltration of class structure in our everyday lives, creating an uncomfortable narrative that forces us to question our place within socioeconomic structures. However, these films deal with food in more than just a superficial way. They highlight the differences in food spaces as a strong indicator of class, proximity to sustainable food as an indicator of worthiness and privilege, and using religious imagery and punishment of deviant behavior to show the ramifications of stepping outside of one's prescribed barrier. Their endings and beginnings are centered around where food is from the introduction of the Kim family talking at their dinner table to the tailenders waiting for their protein bars. These films end much in the same way, with the Kim daughter being stabbed with a kebab and Curtis watching Wilford eat a steak. Both films and their messages start and end with the importance of food and space as a driving point to their careful critique of class structures. While food is just one way in which class is examined in these films, food is also the pinnacle of culture and society, the most basic human necessity. To ignore the importance of that would be to ignore the subtleties and intricacies of our class-based society that Bong Joon-ho demands we examine.

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Spam Fried Rice

Ian Roesler

Spam
White Rice
Sesame oil or vegetable oil
Soy Sauce
Oyster sauce
Sambal oelek or chili garlic sauce (Green lid with a rooster on the bottle is optional)
Snow peas

1. Put a skillet on medium-high heat. Whilst it warms up begin removing the Spam from its can and cut into bite-size cubes. When skillet is ready add enough sesame oil to cover bottom of pan then add Spam. Add soy and oyster sauces then cook until Spam is crispy. When done, remove Spam to a plate.

2. Cook snow peas in a similar manner with oil and sauces. However, any vegetable can be used. Cook until done. I cook the snow peas to where they still retain their crunch. Remove snow peas to a plate after done.

3. Take cooked white rice and add it in chunks. Turn up the heat to hot. Cook with oil and sauces. Constantly move rice around until done. It turns brown. If one desires, they may add their chili sauce now. When rice is done add back Spam and snow peas. Stir. Eat.

I like Spam. I like fried rice. So why not combine them? This recipe is a variation of a recipe that I got from a deck of playing cards with Spam recipes on them. I just eyeball the sauces. And I prepare two-and-a-half cups of dried basmati rice beforehand.

The Whistle Stop Café and Luke's Diner: The Village Café as Utopian Space for Women in *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Café* and *Gilmore Girls*

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This paper compares the Whistle Stop Café in Fanny Flagg's novel *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Café* (1987) to Luke's Diner in Amy Sherman-Palladino's television show *Gilmore Girls* (2000-2007). These fictional restaurants complicate traditional binaries of male/female, public/private and domestic/commercial, which creates utopian spaces where women exert power and agency. The utopian inclusivity of these spaces is limited, however. Only white, privileged, educated, slender women enjoy them. Using close reading and theory from food and beverage studies, I analyze how the consumption of food and beverages helps construct the gendered identity of the characters that have access to and power in these fictional cafés, and how gendered power dynamics have changed over time. I also outline directions for future research, arguing that cultural objects including literature and television illuminate the gendered power dynamics of real-world public spaces in ways that are relevant to contemporary society.

Introduction

This essay compares the Whistle Stop Café in Fanny Flagg's 1987 novel *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Café* (1987) to Luke's Diner in Amy Sherman-Palladino's television show *Gilmore Girls*, which aired between 2000 and 2007. I argue that the two cafés are similar in that they both offer a utopian space where women can be themselves, enact their desires, and speak their minds without fear of judgement or violence. Through a comparison of these two fictional cafés, I show the ways in which gendered power dynamics have changed over time from formal to informal modes of power. Both spaces, as I will show, are inclusive, but their inclusivity is limited. They offer utopian spaces for the gendered other but not the racialized other, and they perpetuate unrealistic ideas about women's bodies. Additionally, both spaces face a constant struggle to maintain their utopian status. Throughout the essay, I also analyze the way that consumption of food and beverages helps construct the gendered identity of the characters frequenting these fictional cafés.

First, I define my conceptualization of a utopian space for women. Second, I analyze the significance of the fictional restaurant space in relation to gender and power. These two steps function to lay out a theoretical framework for the essay. Third, I explain, through selective close readings of my two cultural objects, how utopian spaces for women are constructed in the two narratives, and I examine the representation of gendered identity through the consumption of food and beverages. I also discuss some of the limitations of the two utopian spaces. Finally, I outline possible directions for future research by exploring the ways in which the fictional cafés can help researchers theorize the gendered power

dynamics of real-world spaces.

Theoretical Framework: Defining a Utopian Space for Women

Within the context of this essay, I conceptualize a utopian space for women as a space where women are safe from physical and verbal violence. I base this definition on the observation that real-world spaces are often rife with threats for women. Research in urban studies has shown that "fear of potential unwanted interactions [limits] women's access to urban space" (Beebeejaun 6). Thus, a utopian space for women is one where women need not fear unwanted interactions. Additionally, I define utopian spaces for women as free from the confinement imposed by cultural or societal expectations of femininity, including the pressure to be demure, submissive, conventionally attractive, and heterosexual. In line with the work of Susan Brownmiller, who describes femininity as a "tradition of imposed limitations" (10), I consider these societal expectations or constraints as constitutive of femininity. Within the context of this essay, a utopian space for women is one in which the limitations imposed by femininity do not limit or constrain women. Further, vulnerability, one of the traits culturally associated with femininity, is not a weakness within these spaces. Brownmiller notes that "the feminine principle is composed of vulnerability" (15), or, in other words, that to be feminine is to be vulnerable. By contrast, this essay understands a utopian space for women as one in which vulnerability is not exploited or even perceived as a weakness but instead perceived as a strength.

Societal expectations of femininity also relate to food and the body, two concepts that are relevant to the ways that women inhabit culinary spaces. These expectations placed on women and their bodies are summarized by Giovanelli and Ostertag who observe that "fat women are . . . the antithesis of what it means to be appropriately feminine" (290). While the culinary spaces analyzed in this essay are utopian in some ways, they nonetheless do not feature fat bodies. This suggests that they are not accessible, and therefore not utopian, to women whose bodies do not look as slender as society deems appropriate for women.

Theoretical Framework: Representations of the Culinary Space

I compare the Whistle Stop Café to Luke's Diner because both illustrate an interesting dynamic of gender, power, and a set of cultural ideas surrounding the culinary. Culinary spaces bring the domestic sphere, where food is traditionally prepared and is often associated with femininity, into contact with the public and commercial sphere, which is often associated with masculinity. As Alice McLean notes:

> Feminist food studies has locked onto the domestic sphere as a conflicted site, one that simultaneously reproduces patriarchal values and, hence, the physical, intellectual, and ideological subordination of women and that serves as a space where women enjoy an amount of power and control far surpassing that which they exert over the public and political realms. (250)

McLean outlines the cultural binary that associates femininity with the domestic sphere and masculinity with the public and political sphere. She also identifies the contradiction that characterizes the domestic

sphere: it is simultaneously the realm of women's subordination, because it is permeated with patriarchal values, and the space where women are most powerful.

Historically, these two separate spheres have been constructed discursively to argue that "men and women have different relationships to the world based on their dominance of distinct social and economic arenas" (Julier 169). Women and men were thought to be different because women exert influence only in the private household sphere while men dominate the public, commercial sphere. This cultural binary generates a sense of ambiguity with regards to cooking, as observed by Angeline Godwin Dvorak in her analysis of southern cooking in literature. According to Dvorak, cooking can be construed as a "patriarchally imposed, gender-designated task", but also as a means for women to strengthen social ties, overcome hardship, and exert agency, thereby escaping patriarchal control (96). This essay explores the ambiguity identified by Dvorak and critiques the understanding of society as divided into separate gendered spheres that McLean and Julier identify by analyzing the commercial culinary establishment—the café—a space that blends the separate spheres and thereby undermines their binary opposition. Commercial culinary establishments bring the feminine domestic sphere into contact with the masculine public sphere by commercializing food. Food preparation, traditionally a private and feminine endeavor, is exploited for commercial gain, entering the realm of commerce that is traditionally associated with the public and masculine. Commercial culinary establishments like diners and cafés embody a blend of the traditionally masculine and feminine spheres and thereby undermine their distinction. As my analysis will show, this blend lends women a measure of agency.

Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Café

I describe the Whistle Stop Café from Fannie Flagg's novel *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Café* as a utopian space for women primarily because, in the novel, the café offers one of the main characters, Ruth, a refuge from domestic violence. Ruth's friend and later romantic partner, Idgie Threadgoode, starts the café after taking Ruth away from her abusive husband when Ruth's son is born. In the novel's second timeline, the older Ms. Threadgoode narrates these events: "Poppa Threadgoode sat Idgie down and told her that now that she was going to be responsible for Ruth and a baby, she'd better figure out what she wanted to do, and gave her five hundred dollars to start a business with. That's what she bought the café with" (Flagg 245-46). With a loan from her father, Idgie starts the café to provide a safe space to have a family with Ruth in, to provide herself with employment and responsibilities, to provide Ruth with a friendly environment, and to ensure the financial security of her family. Ms. Threadgoode's choice of words describes the shift of patriarchal power from Idgie's father to Idgie herself. First, the patriarchal figure, Poppa Threadgoode, "sat Idgie down," which indicates his authority over her. He then tells her she is "going to be responsible for Ruth and a baby." By saying this, he transfers the patriarchal authority that he has over Idgie to her, encouraging his daughter to assume authority and responsibility over her family, which will now consist of Ruth and her baby.

Previous research has argued that Idgie is a character who "denounces femininity" (Dvorak 93); within the system of binary opposition that structures our understanding of gender, this also means to a certain extent that she embraces masculinity. By opening the café, Idgie is placed in a traditionally masculine and patriarchal role—she provides both a safe space and a measure of financial security for her

family. Yet, Idgie is not a man, which makes the café she opens a utopian space for women. While Idgie displays some of the characteristics associated with masculinity in this scene and throughout the novel, such as financial and social responsibility for her partner and child, she lacks the characteristics that made Ruth's previous domestic space unsafe: unlike Ruth's ex-husband, Idgie is not authoritative or violent. It is Idgie's dual role as protector, traditionally masculine, and caregiver, traditionally feminine, that makes the café into a utopian safe space for women. The female-dominated domestic space of the café replaces the male-dominated domestic space that Ruth had hitherto inhabited with her husband.

The café's utopian nature is also evident in other ways: it lacks the societal pressures of heteronormativity as well as economic struggles. Within the sphere of the café, Ruth and Idgie do not need to enact conventional, heterosexual femininity. Instead, they are free to have a romantic lesbian relationship, because the café is a space where women have the agency to act on their desires. The narrative relays that "Idgie and Ruth bought the café in 1929, right in the height of the Depression, but I don't think we ever had margarine there" (Flagg 313); thus, the café is described as a refuge from scarcity. The café is a place of plenty, where even the homeless, like the character Smokey Lonesome, are fed. Within the novel, food functions primarily as a source of emotional nurturance and a way to combat social inequality.

However, the utopian nature of the Whistle Stop Café has its limits: it is not entirely racially inclusive. Black people are not permitted to eat inside to avoid giving the violent Klansmen a reason to enter and disturb the protective space. At the same time, the café food is cooked and prepared by the same African Americans who are prevented from enjoying it as customers, a division of labor that echoes the historical situation in which "African American women [work] in the kitchens of white plantation owners" (Byrd 104). While the café offers a utopia for white women, Black women are still in an inferior position, similar to that of slaves. Black women thus become accomplices to their own exclusion through their work as cooks. The safety of the café for women comes at the expense of racial others as its utopian inclusivity does not extend to them.

Gilmore Girls

In the television series *Gilmore Girls*, Luke's Diner offers a utopian space for women. *Gilmore Girls* is situated in a town called Star's Hollow, and it follows the lives of mother and daughter Lorelai and Rory Gilmore. Luke's Diner is Star's Hollow's only café, and it is run by Luke Danes. The main characters, Lorelai and Rory, visit the diner in almost every episode to escape the difficulties of their romantic and social lives, including Lorelai's demanding mother and Rory's eccentric and difficult boyfriends. Luke's Diner is not the same type of utopian space for women as the Whistle Stop Café, primarily because the diner is managed by Luke, a man. Luke inherited it from his father, who owned a hardware store in the same location—the door of the diner is still adorned with the signage of a hardware store so that the diner's history as a male-dominated space is still explicitly remembered. Yet, by turning his father's hardware store into a diner, Luke has made the location accessible and welcoming to people of all genders.

The show's opening scene illustrates that Luke's Diner is no longer male-dominated by presenting Lorelai Gilmore as its real sovereign and resident coffee fiend. Luke knows this and wants to make sure

Lorelai does not have too much; yet Lorelai persuades him to serve her coffee anyway, which shows her ability to exert power over Luke using language. Through Luke and Lorelai's exchange, their banter shows that they are talking as equals, regardless of their different genders. While, in a sense, Luke holds the power because he controls Lorelai's supply of coffee, in a different sense, Lorelai shows that she holds the power over Luke because she is able to persuade him to supply her with the coffee.

Throughout *Gilmore Girls*, the Gilmores' love for coffee is a recurring theme. When demanding coffee, Lorelai is neither patient nor polite. In season five, for example, Lorelai brushes off Luke's friendly greeting by demanding coffee: "I need caffeine. Whatever form you've got, I haven't had any all day. I'll drink it, shoot it, eat it, snort it, whatever form it's in, gimme" (20:09-20:18 "Women of Questionable Morals"). In this scene, and in the many other scenes in which she forcefully orders coffee, Lorelai undermines some of the expectations of demureness often culturally associated with femininity (Brownmiller 10). Rather than asking nicely, Lorelai demands coffee from Luke, subverting the traditional gendered dynamic in which men demand food or drink and women provide it. Throughout the show, Luke's role in the diner as manager, chef, and busboy also subverts traditional expectations of gender roles in which "women are credited with control over the purchasing, storing, cooking, and serving of food" (McIntosh and Zey 132). Because of these gendered expectations about who controls, prepares, and distributes food, Luke's presence behind the counter indicates the utopian, inclusive nature of the space as one not governed by traditional gender roles or hierarchies.

The Gilmores' love for coffee also has significant cultural implications for the protagonists' social identity as white women. In their extensive and sometimes gluttonous consumption of coffee, the Gilmores appear unaware of the beverage's history as a colonial commodity: "[The] history of coffee is indefeasibly bound up with the rise of capitalism and the overseas expansion of European colonialism, establishing relations of domination and dependency both between Europe and its (ex-)colonies and within them" (Smith 512). Keeping in mind coffee's role in global inequality and post-colonial exploitation as described by Smith, the Gilmores' carefree consumption of coffee is a sign of their implicit perpetuation of the exploitative hierarchies established by white Western patriarchy.

Furthermore, coffee contains caffeine, a stimulant culturally associated with increased alertness and productivity, as well as with intellectual activities like writing and academic study. Coffee has been culturally perceived as "a soberer to spark intellectual clarity and creativity" (Topik 84). The Gilmores' excessive coffee consumption aligns them with the upper-middle class and its intellectual academic pursuits, as well as its privileged carelessness about where commodity goods like coffee come from and whose labor is exploited to bring coffee to American consumers. As Bryant Simon writes in *Everything but the Coffee: Learning About America From Starbucks:* "We buy things to say something about ourselves" (7), and buying large quantities of coffee like the Gilmores do indicates privilege, intellectualism and education, as well as the aforementioned complicity in global inequalities.

Another defining feature of *Gilmore Girls* is the protagonists' preoccupation with food, and the show's frequent representation of the spaces where food is served and consumed. In the show: "Interior shots of diners, kitchen nooks, dining rooms, and banquet halls depict eating as a class- and race-inflected activity . . . [W]here and what one eats mark socioeconomic status" (Mintz and Mintz 235). For example, Luke's Diner is the lower class, low-culture counterpart to the stately dining room in Lorelai's

parental home, where she received a constrained, upper-class upbringing. At Luke's Diner, by contrast, Lorelai can eat what she wants and love who she wants (Mintz and Mintz 240). Lorelai frequently visits Luke's Diner late at night after an uncomfortable visit to her parents in order to escape her mother's judgements and, by extension, the societal judgements placed on her as a single teen mother. In offering this freedom, Luke's Diner is a utopian space for Lorelai.

Lorelai is at the diner during the pilot episode to meet with her daughter Rory, but she is first approached by a guy named Joey who tries to hit on her. Lorelai politely and wittily rebuffs his advances. Once Rory enters Luke's Diner, Lorelai goes to get her daughter a cup of coffee, and Joey takes advantage of Lorelai's absence to hit on Rory instead. The following dialogue occurs:

> [Behind Lorelai, Joey approaches Rory's table. Lorelai sees Joey talking to her.]
> LORELAI: Ah. He's got quite a pair, this guy.
> [Lorelai goes back to the table.] (…)
> JOEY: Oh, hi.
> LORELAI: Oh, hi. You really like my table, don't you?
> JOEY: I was just, uh. . .
> LORELAI: Getting to know my daughter.
> JOEY: Your…
> RORY: Are you my new daddy?
> JOEY: Wow. You do not look old enough to have a daughter. No, I mean it. And you do not look like a daughter.
> LORELAI: That's possibly very sweet of you. Thanks.
> JOEY: So. . . daughter. You know, I am traveling with a friend.
> LORELAI: She's sixteen.
> (…)
> [Joey and his friend exit the diner] (2:34-3:19 "Pilot").

In this scene, Lorelai and Rory are accosted by Joey's unwanted advances. It becomes clear in the show's opening scene that Luke's Diner is not devoid of male aggression, even within the illustrated utopian safe space.

Lorelai and Rory are able to rebuke Joey using three verbal tactics. The first is the element of surprise: Lorelai makes Joey profoundly uncomfortable by revealing that Rory is her daughter and that she is sixteen; the second tactic is wit: "Are you my new daddy?"; the third is mild condescension: "That is possibly very sweet of you. Thanks." In the face of this verbal hostility, the men quickly leave the Gilmores' domain. This scene establishes that the Gilmores are verbally skilled, which is a recurring source of comedy throughout the show and another indicator of their educated, privileged background.

Comparing Luke's Diner to the Whistle Stop Café

The Gilmores' control over Luke's Diner as a utopian space for women does not lie in any ritualized exchange of power or money, such as Idgie's power over the Whistle Stop Café does. When Idgie is

endowed with responsibility by her father and by the financial means to materially possess the café space, she gains power by entering the bureaucratic patriarchal sphere of commerce. To have power over a space, Idgie has to become more like a man, such as her father. By contrast, the Gilmores exert their power over Luke's Diner through informal speech—for example, when Lorelai convinces Luke to serve her an eighth cup of coffee, or when mother and daughter fend off unwanted male advances using verbal skills, as demonstrated in my analysis of the pilot episode.

The less formalized, less patriarchally sanctioned power that the Gilmores hold over Luke's Diner is ultimately less powerful than Idgie's inherited power through masculine responsibility and wealth. If Luke decides to lock the diner up, the women cannot access it. As its manager and cook, Luke remains the most formally powerful character in the diner space, and in this sense, patriarchal power is not subverted or even evaded. At the same time, the Gilmores exert power in Luke's Diner which Luke condones because he likes them; even if he did not, their power to talk to him and about him would still exert a great deal of sway in the small, close-knit community of Star's Hollow. The power of women's speech and the threat of gossip that the Gilmores' hold, while less formalized, is more difficult to completely exclude from the community.

The Gilmores' informal, insidious mode of power is also successful in ruling Luke's Diner because the kind of male threat that they encounter is different from the one that Ruth experiences in Flagg's novel. In *Gilmore Girls*, male aggression is only verbal, while in Flagg's *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Café* (1987), male violence, such as the domestic abuse Ruth is subjected to, is physical and, at times, sexual. In the peaceful world of *Gilmore Girls*, speech and gossip are the greatest weapons. In Luke's Diner, Lorelai and Rory enjoy the freedom to speak their mind, which they sometimes lack when encountering the patriarchal structures of school, work or Lorelai's family. This freedom of speech is what makes Luke's Diner a utopian space.

However, Luke's Diner does not meet all of the criteria for a utopian space for women outlined earlier in this essay. While Lorelai and Rory are free to be their witty, outspoken selves in the diner without worrying about the societal expectations of femininity, they do encounter an unwanted interaction when Joey hits on them. In this situation, the Gilmores have the weapon of their verbal skills at their disposal. Arguably, this ability to defend oneself against unwanted interactions is a greater source of agency than the ability to take refuge in a utopian space where male threats are excluded, such as Ruth does in the Whistle Stop Café. The Gilmores' ability to fend off unwanted interactions creates the possibility that every space could be equally safe, welcoming, and accessible to women, provided all women possess the verbal skills to defend themselves. Yet this prerequisite of dexterous verbal skills places the onus on women to ensure their own safety. Put another way, women can be free to navigate any public space, provided they possess the skill to defend themselves against unwanted attention.

My comparison of the Whistle Stop Café and Luke's Diner also brings to light one similarity: in both spaces, food is never scarce. Both spaces enable and encourage gluttony. In relation to this essay's main topic of utopian spaces for women, this emphasis on plenty can be interpreted as subversive on the one hand and as indicative of societal pressures placed on women on the other. Women eating as much as they want of whatever they want may be read as a liberating act in a society that stigmatizes female pleasure. At the same time, because in both restaurants women are depicted eating endlessly without

ever gaining weight, these representations contribute to the societal pressure on women to be effortlessly thin, as well as to embody the aforementioned beauty standards of skinniness identified by Giovanelli and Ostertag without ever dieting. The Gilmores, for example, "are able to be gluttonous without ever having to cope with the consequences of uninhibited eating" (Diffrient xxx). In Flagg's *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Café*, food is linked to emotional nurturance, and those who do not indulge in excessive eating are depicted as emotionally cold. While the cafés analyzed in this essay offer fictional women a place to eat as much as they want unashamedly, they simultaneously perpetuate unrealistic expectations for women regarding eating and body image. Ultimately, this comparison of the Whistle Stop Café and Luke's Diner shows a development from spaces where women can take refuge to spaces where women can exert agency, each of these two types of spaces has its benefits and drawbacks.

Conclusion

In this essay, I have illustrated through select examples from both *Fried Green Tomatoes in the Whistle Stop Café* and *Gilmore Girls* how gendered power dynamics work in fictional restaurant spaces. In the Whistle Stop Café, Idgie's power is absolute and formalized by her ownership of the café, creating a space where women like Ruth can feel safe from the threat of male violence and where Idgie and Ruth can be themselves without feeling the pressure to adhere to societal expectations of heteronormative femininity. By contrast, in Luke's Diner, the Gilmores' power is contested, informal, and exercised primarily through speech. The women do not experience the societal pressure to be demure and defer to men. While their witty, clever speech enables them to exert agency and express individuality, not only within the diner but also in other public spaces, this use of speech as armor means that the responsibility for keeping unwanted male attention at bay lies with the women themselves.

These different power dynamics reflect a change in real-world gendered power dynamics. While in Idgie's Depression-era women could only obtain power by enacting a masculine part, entering into patriarchal structures and co-opting masculine public spaces, in the early 2000s of *Gilmore Girls*, approximately seventy years later, women access power using language and take charge of public spaces themselves. In a sense, then, in the contemporary era, language enables women to exert power that escapes patriarchal bureaucracy.

Both the Whistle Stop Café and Luke's Diner are also limited in the kind of refuge they offer from the social constructs of femininity. While Idgie and Ruth freely express their same-sex love for one another in the café and offer safety to economically disadvantaged characters, racial others are excluded from their utopian restaurant space. In *Gilmore Girls*, Lorelai finds comfort in Luke's Diner because of its distinction from the stifled upper-class environment in which she grew up. At the same time, the Gilmores embody white, educated, upper-middle class femininity, and thin privilege. They also experience the leisure and pleasure of almost endless supplies of food and coffee because they benefit from global inequalities—their carefree attitude towards consumerist consumption in general and coffee in particular illustrate this. Furthermore, the Gilmores' protection from unwanted male advances lies in their exceptional verbal skill, which depends on their whiteness, class background, and education for its success.

In this essay, I have shown that cultural objects including literature and television can illuminate the gendered power dynamics of public spaces, with a focus on the culinary space, in ways that are

relevant to contemporary society. Whether the shift from formalized bureaucratic power to informal rhetorical power in these two cultural objects is indicative of a historical shift in power dynamics between genders, and whether this shift can be observed elsewhere in popular culture and perhaps in reality, are all questions for future research. I have also argued that, while the Whistle Stop Café and Luke's Diner offer utopian spaces to some women, women of color and fat women are excluded from their welcoming embrace. The ways that gender, class, race, and body shape intersect with regard to the accessibility of utopian spaces for women are another potential avenue for future research.

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Pineapple Chicken Pizza

Benjamin Jett

1 cup of chopped pineapples
1 cup of pineapple juice
1 sliced green pepper and carrot
1 cup of pre-cooked sliced chicken
1 lb. dough, homemade or store bought
Any additional veggies or toppings
1 cup of mozzarella cheese

Description: Round pizza with pineapple with one slice on a wooden round board. Two slices of pineapple lay in the bottom right side.

This recipe is a pizza-fied version of a dish I personally love from my Filipino background, pininyahang manok. My mother makes this anytime I return home from school and it instills quite a bit of nostalgia about my own childhood. I love all of my mother's traditional Filipino dishes, but this one has to be my absolute favorite.

It starts with tenderizing the chicken and slicing it into bite size pieces, then marinating that in pineapple juice for about 30-45 minutes. Make sure to keep the juice for the sauce base while you sauté the pineapples and pineapple juice to give it a more viscous consistency. Then, cook the chicken until light brown. If you wish to add additional veggies, you can precook them after washing with the chicken. Roll the pizza dough while everything is cooking into a thin circle. Once everything is prepped and cooked, spread the pineapple base evenly on the dough and then sprinkle on the mozzarella. Then, add the chicken, pineapple slices, green pepper, and any additional toppings to preference. Preheat the oven to 475 °F, then let pizza bake from 10-15 minutes or until the cheese is golden and the crust brown.

Serve and enjoy!

Life's a Peach: The Convergence of Sexuality and Class in Luca Guadagnino's *Call Me by Your Name*

Allen Warren, *Ball State University*

Call Me by Your Name (2017) became famous for its "peach scene," though the orchard around the Perlmans' villa where this fruit thrives could not have grown on its own. Distinctions of class and a parasitism by the most affluent of their workers cultivate the paradise where director Luca Guadagnino sets the blossoming romance between Elio and Oliver. Apricots are a clear metaphor for desire here, yet their prolificacy is only possible through the invisibility and silent intervention of other food items, from peas to latkes to water. Critics have pointed out the beauty of the Italian setting and its use as a temporary escape from heteronormative surveillance, as well as the way domestic workers flow in and out of scenes almost wordlessly. What these critics have missed is the connection these occurrences have in explaining how the working class have built (but do not benefit from) this heaven on Earth, where the young male lovers may permit their bodies to act without restraint. While queer and class theories inform this discussion, my primary vehicle for interpretation will be food, both for its prominent place in the movie and for the ways it parallels the class structure at the villa. I find the film quietly reflects on the levels of economic privilege and exploitation needed to experience the paradise it depicts, with the usurpation of food in many scenes helping to remind the audience of the inability of this space to be wholly subversive.

Two young men pause their summertime bike ride through the Italian countryside to speak to an old woman sitting outside a farmhouse splitting peas. Dressed in Memphis-Group-inspired shorts and a Talking Heads band shirt, the younger of these fellows asks the woman if she could fetch them glasses of water. While she's inside, he reaches into the bowl where the woman has been sorting her split peas and grabs a fistful. His companion slaps his hand, smiling, unable to admonish the younger man for munching on his new-found harvest. After receiving their water, the men peddle off, leaving the woman to go on pea-splitting, oblivious to both the produce stolen from her as well as her role in sustaining a homosexual romance.

The scene above is representational of the large part food plays in facilitating the sensual, exploratory world of *Call Me by Your Name*. Besides earning an Academy Award nomination for Best Picture and launching Timothée Chalamet's career, the 2017 film adaptation of André Acimen's novel has been ground-breaking in its mainstream reception of a queer relationship. While almost every reviewer has had something to say about the infamous "peach scene" (which itself was toned down from the source material) and similar symbols of lust and love in the film, few have focused on how food overall—its production, presentation, or consumption—functions in *Call Me by Your Name*. Fewer still have chosen to interact with the working-class characters who not only dot, but paint the lush backdrop of Elio and Oliver's interactions and who provide for the main characters' romance through food production. With these two lenses missing, we have been unable to understand this piece of cinema for what it suggests: for these men to have come together romantically, there needed to be a space, such as the Perlmans' villa, where they could escape normative messaging around sexuality without stressing about the fiscal demands required for a fulfillment of the necessities—in this case, eating. According to this interpretation, love must transcend the body to exist; for that to happen, you need someone underneath to serve you. I propose food as a mechanism by which we can assess this movie's romantic leanings as well as its reliance on class divisions to kickstart any meaningful realization of queerness. With this understanding in mind, we can begin to gather a better sense of *Call Me by Your Name*'s class-consciousnes

and reckoning with economic forces that, on the surface, suggest entering a capitalistic elite to even clandestinely undermine heterosexism; however, these views ultimately bow under examination to show the inability of any space built on such a hierarchy to funnel out oppression.

Cartoonist Olivia de Recat lampooned the popular excitement around *Call Me by Your Name* through a 2018 series for *The New Yorker* entitled "Timothée Chalamet Made Me Do It." In it, obsession over the film, and Chalamet in particular, manifests as a collection of indulgent admissions, such as this one from twenty-two-year-old "Fiona" of Portland, Oregon, whose face is broken out in a rash: "I started eating peaches again, even though I'm allergic to them." This unashamed love coupled with the resulting mythology around Guadagnino's production are reflected in most published critical reviews. Writing for *The New Yorker* as well, Anthony Lane hailed *Call Me by Your Name* as "an erotic triumph," suggesting that "a gratifying cameo by a peach . . . merits an Academy Award for Best Supporting Fruit." Besides being "far and away the best movie of the year," *Call Me by Your Name* was, for Christy Lemire on Roger Ebert's legacy site, a "sensitive adaptation": "A feeling of melancholy tinges everything, from the choice of a particular shirt to the taste of a perfectly ripe peach." A messy soft-boiled egg excited Manohla Dargis in *The New York Times*: "Mr. Guadagnino almost can't help making everything look intoxicating." No written discussion of the film seems to escape a discussion of its food, first among them *the peach*, which serves as a masturbatory tool while Chalamet's character, Elio, waits in a barn loft for Oliver, played by Armie Hammer. That Elio discovers the fruit's erotic potential undoubtedly fueled much of the movie's public interest: today's texters code the same reference in the peach emoji (Murray), though, as food studies critic John Varriano notes, wide-spread sexual interpretations of produce have existed for much longer, pointing to painted and poetic examples from the Italian Renaissance—some of which feature a peach in an explicitly homoerotic light. This popular discussion indicates that while not forming the basis of the movie, food cannot be removed from the emotional and critical connections which audiences form with *Call Me by Your Name*.

The film's mythology manifests through other cinematic choices as well, including the story itself. Oliver is a graduate student who has come from America for the summer of 1983 to work under Professor Samuel Perlman, an expert in classical culture. The opportunity introduces Oliver to Elio, the professor's son, a seventeen-year-old who makes a hobby of notating and re-interpreting Bach pieces and who can switch with ease between English, French, and Italian depending on the situation. Guided by the languid gazes of the professor and his wife Annella, the two young men swim, study, and simmer beneath the fruit trees of this expansive rural villa. As Anthony Lane writes, the film is "'Somewhere in Northern Italy,' and "Such vagueness is deliberate: the point of a paradise is that it *could* exist anywhere." In fits and starts, Elio and Oliver form a bond that starts as a distant intellectual respect for one another before becoming, by the film's midpoint, a romantic one. Director Luca Guadagnino is faithful to author Acimen's pacing of the novel by resisting expediting the tract of this relationship, instead allocating generous amounts of time to shots of fields, forests, and low-hanging apricots.

These apricots are seminal to the start of Elio and Oliver's rapport. We are introduced to their grove as forming "Annella's trees," delineating a claim of ownership to them as well as to the cherries, pomegranates, and peaches, despite us never seeing Professor Perlman's wife pick a single fruit—though, by some miracle, apricot juice abounds. A few scenes later, when Annella brings some of this juice to

the professor's study, she offers a glass to Oliver, who laps it down without pausing for a breath. Seeing this, the professor proposes a trajectory of the word "apricot" into English from Arabic that Oliver counters, situating the word's origins in the Latin praecocem meaning "precocious" and "premature." This last addition is directed at Elio, who has been watching Oliver behind a book while sharing smirks with his mother. They both know the father is testing his assistant's etymological skills, so when Professor Perlman declares Oliver has passed with "flying colors," Elio can't help but interject: "He does this every year" (*Call Me by Your Name*). As Anna Harvey of *Screen Queens* observes, Elio has become "intrigued by this newcomer's confidence," a growth that prompts the young Perlman to elicit Oliver's attention in this scene. It also attests to Roland Barthes's belief, stated in "Towards a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption," that "food has a constant tendency to transform itself into situation" (29); beyond giving sustenance, food is a symbol of the social predilections of its user/s, a truth that strengthens as the item's necessity as sustenance wanes. The philological sparring Elio witnesses resonates for him precisely because a physical attraction towards Oliver has already begun to form, characterized by this discussion of the sources of the succulent apricot.

In his negative review for *The New Yorker*, Richard Brody points to this scene as an example of how Guadagnino supplants intimacy and emotional development for having Elio and Oliver "post their intellectual bona fides on the screen like diplomas." Through this analysis, Brody fails to appreciate the extent to which these interactions with food express the development of the boys' relationship where words cannot be spoken. In his analysis of contemporary food advertisements, Barthes notes that advertising "eroticizes food and thereby transforms our consciousness of it, bringing it into a new sphere of situations by means of a pseudocasual relationship" (27). This relationship, which starts out as formally-structured, removed, and (in advertising's reliance on "[m]otivation studies" and other psychologies of the consumer) intellectual, dips into a more personal connection "connoting a sublimated sexuality" through the eventual association by the individual of specific foods with erotic images (Barthes 27). Barthes's description of French marketing schemes also proves insightful into Elio and Oliver's budding bond. This interpretation contends the notion that an eroticization of food requires the intervention of corporation images: as Varriano points out, we symbol-seeking animals need no incentive to link our world to our sex, particularly when these links help to code social transgressions.

To that end, many of Elio and Oliver's interactions with each other involve food or drink such that these items enwrap themselves into, and become, the conversation. At one point, Oliver, for example, uses a request for water after playing volleyball as an excuse to knead Elio's shoulder. Elio does not respond well to this touching because he mistakes it for teasing from a heterosexual man—with others around, Oliver cannot correct this misunderstanding. The presence of girlfriends for both characters complicates being explicit about any homosexual feelings. However, at breakfast one morning when Elio declares to Oliver and his father that he and his girlfriend Marzia "almost had sex last night," Oliver uses the opportunity to opine that "it's better to have tried and failed," glancing up from Elio to Prof. Perlman then back down at his soft-boiled egg (*Call Me by Your Name*). This egg's destruction starts the scene, with shots of the cracking of its shell, the spilling of the yolk, and the spooning out of its contents. It's a delicate but messy process, necessitating Oliver's focus as well as the audience, and sets up this discussion among the men of a sexual duty to pursue despite the possibility—or likelihood—of failure.

Food becoming its own language in *Call Me by Your Name* follows Pierre Bourdieu's observation from "Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste" that "[t]he sign-bearing, sign-wearing body is also a producer of signs which are physically marked by the relationship to the body" (35). So close to the body that it becomes the body, food must serve here where words cannot. Apricots, water, and eggs have joined the ranks of, if not usurped, the typical signalling method of speech to account for social muzzling –thankfully for Elio and Oliver, little gets lost in translation. This fact suggests the erection of "a new regime of discourses", founded to account for the fact that "[t]here is not one but many silences" (Foucault 27)—ironic for a film whose title promotes declaration. The extinction of words is necessary to conceal what is happening symbolically to the people around Elio and Oliver, who, if they did catch onto the code, could only ever become aware of a sublimation from strangers to lovers.

Since Oliver and Elio often must meet each other at mealtime (with Elio's parents, if not more people, present), meals play a role in both obfuscating and deepening this relationship. On Oliver's first night at the villa, a bell peels through the darkness: the Perlmans' maid/cook, Mafalda, is calling the house to dinner. Despite Elio's pressings, Oliver is too tired to attend and asks Elio to make an excuse for his missing the meal. Skipping dinner becomes a habit of Oliver's, a crass Americanism that Elio criticizes later on to his folks. His parents have none of it, disappointing Elio. He cannot share why Oliver's absence bothers him (if he knows why yet himself); this denial separates child from parents, though they are dining together. The elder Perlmans, it must be noted, are quite progressive for their time: they have gay friends, after all. Still, queer topics remain unpalatable at the dinner table, so it must be left to simmer, cloche-covered. When Mafalda comes by to remove Oliver's plate from the table, Elio scoots over to occupy the empty place, a way of "inhabit[ing] the body for which the space was reserved" (Harvey). This movement allows us to begin to understand, at the same time as Elio, how much he desires Oliver's company, particularly when he is surrounded by others of the household through the rituality of mealtime.

Mealtime, like everything at the villa, is cultivated and polished to a degree almost impossible for anyone outside the bourgeoisie to realize; human help curates the machinations of the Perlman mansion, for which they receive little in-world or on-screen recognition. Manohla Dargis sees the villa's "miles of bookshelves, its velvet sofas, scattered Oriental rugs and tastefully arranged antiques" as a sign of how Guadagnino makes "even a busy breakfast table and the fruit on a tree . . . seem art directed." In the film's universe, these aesthetic decisions are instead aided by a pair of domestic workers: Mafalda and the handyman Anchise. Both are involved in the production and service of food. Besides being the Perlmans' cook, Mafalda seems to be in constant expectation of the family's need for food: at one point, a milkshake she has prepared for Annella is waved away while she intervenes to show Oliver how to properly crack open a soft-boiled egg on his first morning there. Anchise, on the other hand, is more involved in the collection of food, such as picking the fruit from the orchard. A large fish he caught serves as amusement for Elio, who makes faces at what will likely be part of dinner that evening. Elio can take breaks such as this from his music transcription (done with a Walkman, no cheap product in 1983) because he did not have to involve himself in the fish's retrieval; because he did not have to blend the apricot juice he drinks; because the villa greets those with enough socioeconomic privilege to enter it with the sustenance for their academic, leisure, and sexual pursuits.

The Perlmans and their guests are never wanting for food, nor do they ever lack someone to serve them, a fact that they take as natural and therefore unnecessary to examine. Whether at home or at a café, they are always able to secure service. Annella makes appearances in the kitchen on the pretense of some female bonding with Mafalda; we learn later that Annella had inherited the property, and it is possible she and the maid have had a long relationship as employer and employed. However, when you only step into the kitchen to remove a tart from the oven so it's ready for a guest who just arrived, or, in a particularly weird sequence, look square in the eyes of your hired help while sticking your finger into another tart to have a taste, it doesn't suggest a strong bond. Nor does it suggest much awareness of the social stratification that might make Mafalda's presence at the villa a generational venture.

Oliver is not exempt from this lack of class consciousness; while his financial bearings are technically unknown despite his ability to travel abroad to further his doctoral candidacy, we cannot overlook how easily he adapts to having someone crack his eggs for him, or how he can bear to wave away a hot meal almost nightly. If you aren't having to make breakfast, you can stomach skipping dinner. When it comes to collecting to food, we see a Perlman—Elio—attempt this only thrice: once, when he steals the peas from the country woman; twice, when he gains Oliver's attention by shoving Oliver out of the way to pick a peach; the last time, when he picks another peach, which he inverts and converts through onanism, refusing even Oliver the chance to eat what remains. Each instance indicates a commodity comfort through its view of food as cost-free and arousing entity that stands on the shoulders of lower-class labor.

These initial observations of food in the film has led me to conclude that *Call Me by Your Name* imagines the fulfillment of same-sex desire only as an effect of capitalism that not only can the workers of the world never expect to realize, but the bourgeoisie might experience this luxury while still being unable to disclose it. Homosexuality can manifest only in the spaces as allocated for swimming pools, orchards, and private displays of antique sculpture; moreover, such manifestations must remain hidden, both to the property's owners and to the property's up-keepers. Besides being problematic, this worldview is pessimistic, albeit lining up with the film's sad ending. Contesting this original conclusion are certain elements of the story—subtle, clever, the largest of which happens at lunch—that allude to social change as a remedy for the social ill (heterosexism) which ultimately brings down Oliver and Elio. This is all to say that *Call Me by Your Name* is not, as I first thought, ignorant to the class distinctions described up to this point.

On the contrary, the film is aware of the political-social context, and while we see posters in town advertising the Communist and Socialist Parties, as well as Annella and the professor laughing at a televised satire of the newly-minted Socialist prime minister, the most thorough in-film examination of contemporary politics interacts with food. Over lunch one day following the national elections, friends of the Perlmans bicker about the incoming prime minister and the new "historic compromise" with leftist political parties. In part due to their friends' bombastic style, but surely as well from the topic at hand, Prof. and Ms. Perlman look uncomfortable throughout the scene, hardly touching their food. Per usual, Mafalda comes in and out of the scene, replenishing what food has been eaten and taking empty dishes away. However, because the Perlmans wish, through their glances, for some distraction, their maid comes more in focus for us—as does Anchise, who is off sitting alone in the grass, chuckling to himself

and shaking his head. The camera highlights the workers for their roles in facilitating the villa's orchestrated, daily outdoor lunches, making sure food and its production remain in the middle of this political conversation—although Oliver and Elio are only there as observers, sitting beside each other but silent.

Having said this, it may become easy to overestimate the political winds of change rippling through Italy; we cannot forget how singular the villa is even within the immediate vicinity and how, despite its origins and structure, it has permitted something unusual to flourish. The scene from the opening paragraph of this essay encompasses more than I first described; while Oliver and Elio are waiting outside for the elderly woman to return with water for them, Oliver points out the portrait hanging above the front door of her house: "Il Duce." "Popolo italiano!" Elio replies, impersonating Mussolini. The two regard the portrait a second longer, leading Elio to resign: "That's Italy" (*Call Me by Your Name*). His linkage of the country with its fascist past—and, as this encounter shows, the persistent penchant for fascism among the Italian working class—stands in contrast to what historian Charles F. Delzell in 1988 called "[Italian] citizens' tolerance of regional and economic differences, . . . their ability to cope with the inefficiencies of democratic government, . . . their pragmatic acceptance of human foibles—and, most of all, . . . their appreciation of the rich texture of everyday life" (135). Rather, it is a sign that the political theories that endangered Jewish and queer Italians during World War II are still extant, in opposition to the atmosphere of liberality which the Perlmans sponsor (an anomaly their non-Jewish domestic workers appear to accept). Elio introduces to us, then, right at the start of his and Oliver's sexual involvement (the beginning of the end), an awareness that whatever rapport the two of them will develop cannot sustain itself outside the walls of his parents' mansion—even if there is always someone who will fetch something for them to drink. What these two men share will only be watered if it remains in the shade.

More than once will Elio have to wrestle with this fate. Elio and Oliver decide to travel around Italy together before Oliver must head back across the Atlantic. One night during this vacation, after the two have become drunk, Oliver finds a male-female couple dancing to the Psychedelic Furs' "Love My Way," a song that Elio had seen Oliver dancing to with his local girlfriend earlier in the film. Oliver dances with the woman here; Elio watches for as long as he can before throwing up the night's reverie. Vomiting, argues Jude Agho, along with other modes of scatology, can be employed by artists "not as ends in themselves, but as means to an end; that of criticizing the prevalence of corruption, oppression and dehumanisation in society" (196). Speaking of the work of the Nigerian Biyi Bandele-Thomas, Agho comments on how portrayals of vomiting show that the writer "wants the reader to see his own feeling of shame, rage and disappointment at the way things have become in post-independence Nigeria" (205). We can link this interpretation with the violent ejection Elio emits in witnessing something as unappetizing as his man dancing with a woman to this song. When food has defined so much of their involvement with each other, we suddenly see a rejection of what can be considered Elio and Oliver's last supper, and the prediction of Oliver's eventual betrayal for hetero-conformity readable through Elio's self-purge.

In the film's final act, we see the villa in winter, blanketed in snow: a beautiful traditional veneer for this time of year, albeit with an acknowledgement of how the cold prevents the arbor from bearing fruit. Phoning in from America, Oliver reveals to the Perlmans that he is engaged; this knowledge hurts Elio to hear as much it hurts Oliver to convey. Still, despite Elio's belief that his parents "know about"

his relationship with Oliver, neither seems willing to fight the matter, which can be attested as much to the legal and social abhorrence to homosexuality as much to the boys' religion.

Elio and Oliver's acceptance of their separate fates and resignation to social dictates develops as does Elio's exploration of his Judaism. Inspired by Oliver, Elio begins wearing a Star of David necklace in opposition to his parents' stance that they are "Jews of discretion," bringing Elio closer to a moral quandary, since his faith is opposed to gayness. In a food context, Judaism's consideration of pork as unclean may have been a result of considerations of holiness (Douglas) or, more likely, cost and care of swine in biblical Israel (Harris), though neither explanation supplants Judaism's mandate on reverence. Thus, even if "religions gain strength when they help people make decisions which are in accord with preexisting useful practices" and "God does not usually waste time prohibiting the impossible or condemning the unthinkable" (Harris 65), Orthodox Jews still "insisted that God's purpose in Leviticus could never be fully comprehended; nevertheless the dietary laws had to be as a sign of submission to divine will" (61); the effort against futility wracks its head on homosexuality. Elio and Oliver need no reference to Leviticus 18:22—the religious expectation of compliance on that matter is in conversation with the dietary dictates elsewhere. The reminder of this for Elio is that, upon the conclusion of the credits roll, he is called to the table for latkes—another meal, another form of silence, even at the villa. An ocean apart, Elio and Oliver can eat this traditional marker of Hanukah yet no longer consume each other; to that, they must consign if they are to be in conversation with the law, the land, and their faith.

For a brief summer, though, they were able to evade these concepts for a discovery of the flesh. The reality that they were never going to permanently transcend society's fury at their relationship speaks to what Michel Foucault wrote, that, for the heterosexists who would look to find some sign to condemn homosexuality, Elio and Oliver's romance would be "a secret that always gave itself away" (43). Their reliance on food to communicate to each other speaks as much to the subliminal nature of what they were doing as to the need to be a member of the bourgeoisie to say it. While this sexual search contested the two's gender scripts and social cues, it is not accurate to say they failed if the pleasure of the peach shall linger with them and the viewer: "Pleasure and power," wrote Foucault, "do not cancel or turn back against one another; they seek out, overlap, and reinforce one another" (48). Indeed, the lasting message of *Call Me by Your Name* is not to resign to louder, more normative messaging, but to better understand the link between what we govern and what governs us.

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Filipino Turon (Fried Plantain!)

Kaila Henkin

5 Plantain Bananas
1 Cup of Brown Sugar
0.25 Cup of White Sugar
10 Eggroll Wrappers
1 Cup Cooking Oil

Turon is an easy, sugary, classic fried Filipino dessert that my mother, who immigrated from the Philippines, taught me and my sister as we were growing up. Today, we still make this simple and sweet dessert at the kitchen table with the guests we bring home, from close friends to significant others. We demonstrate and teach our guests how to make the dessert while bonding over sharing a small part of our Filipino culture with those outside of it. Turon is a plantain, a starchier banana more commonly eaten in the Philippines, wrapped in sugar and an eggroll wrapper then fried on a pan, making a delicious crunchy outside and a soft, sugary inside.

To make turon, you first mix 1 cup of brown sugar and 0.25 cup of white sugar in its own bowl. Next, you take the plantains and cut them halfway length wise and then horizontally, turning a single plantain into four parts. Once you put an eggroll wrapper on a plate, lightly wet the wrapper with water and spread some of the sugar mix on to the surface. Then, take a single part of plantain and roll it in the sugar, making sure it's completely covered. Place the plantain on to the wrapper so that a corner of the wrapper is facing you and the plantain is horizontal to you and that corner. Next, roll the wrapper with the plantain the way that you would roll a burrito, folding the edges inward to keep the plantain in place. Repeat this process until you run out of plantains. Finally, you place the rolled plantains into a layer of cooking oil on a frying pan, cooking each side evenly until it is a golden brown and crispy. Now you have the classic Filipino dessert of turon, enjoy!

Carrot Cake and Cream Cheese Icing

Tauri Hagemann

Thanksgiving, Easter, birthdays, any special occasion you could think of my mom would be found in the kitchen the night before baking this cake. Growing up I always played sous chef for her, so I have no idea how many times I've made this cake by now. It's a very sweet and very delicious dessert year round, and it's easier to make than one might think.

Cake

2 cups flour
2 cups sugar
1 tsp baking powder
1 tsp ground cinnamon
3 cups finely shredded carrots
1 cup cooking oil
4 eggs

Icing

(2) 3oz. packages cream cheese
1/2 cup softened margarine or butter
2 tsp vanilla
2-4 cups sifted powdered sugar

Cake

In a bowl, combine flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda and cinnamon. Add carrots, oil, and eggs. Beat with electric mixer until combined. Pour into greased and floured baking pan. Bake at 350 degrees for 30-35 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. If using a Bundt cake pan, cook time is closer to 50 minutes. Cool on wire racks for 10 minutes. Remove from pan, and cool thoroughly.

Icing

In a bowl, beat together cream cheese, margarine, and vanilla until light and fluffy. Gradually add 2 cups powdered sugar, beating well. Gradually add more powdered sugar until frosting is of desired spreading consistency. Refrigerate until firm, and then evenly spread on cooled cake.

Perfect No Bake Cookies

Emily Turner

1 stick Butter
2 Cups Sugar
1/2 Cup Milk
1/3 Cup Cocoa Powder
1 Cup Peanut Butter
3 Cups Rolled Oats
1 Tlb Vanilla

This No Bake Cookie recipe was not born out of my kitchen, but it has become my own after years and years of making and crafting and perfecting these cookies. I remember one day my dad brought home a recipe for my sisters and I. We were young, not so great in the kitchen, but we loved to bake. As young bakers, we tried this treat, melding together butter, sugar, cocoa powder, peanut butter, rolled oats, and more. Our entire family quickly became obsessed with these little cookies, and although not every batch was perfect, we continued to make our beloved No Bake Cookies, and now I have the recipe practically memorized. Make these cookies for holidays, special occasions, or for not-so-special occasions. Share with ones you love. Expect no leftovers.

Photo by Melissa Di Rocco on Unsplash

Description: Raw oats spread across a white counter with a silver spoon laying among the oats.

The ingredients listed above yields one batch of cookies (number depends on how big you make them), but my sisters and I found that you will need to make a double batch (simply double the ingredients and use a slightly bigger saucepan). Trust me, you'll need to make a double batch.

In a medium saucepan, melt your butter and then add your sugar. You must melt the butter first or else the sugar might burn. Mix until combined and add the milk, cocoa powder, and then stir.

The next step is the most important of this recipe: tread carefully and follow my exact words, and you'll have the perfect batch of No Bake Cookies. Bring the mixture to a boil. It should be more than simmering, but it also shouldn't be boiling over the pan. Stir occasionally. Once the mixture is boiling, stop stirring and let it boil for exactly 60 seconds. Not a second more. Not a second less. If you boil it for longer than 60 seconds, then the cookies will come out dry and crumbly. If you boil it for less than 60 seconds, then the cookies will be runny, and they won't fully set. So make sure to have a timer on hand and set it before the chocolate starts to fully boil!

As soon as the 60 seconds is up, remove the saucepan from the heat. Start by adding the peanut butter. Stir it in and watch as the gooey peanut butter melts into the chocolate, creating ripples of gold throughout the pan (my favorite step). Once combined, stir in the rolled oats and vanilla.

To complete the cookies, dollop the dough onto sheets lined with aluminum foil and let harden. (Though I highly recommend trying the batter while it's still warm).

You have successfully made your very own batch of No Bake Cookies! Once hardened, these cookies will be dry to the touch on the outside yet moist and chewy on the inside. These cookies are bite-sized pieces of peanut-butter chocolate heaven. Be sure to share these cookies with your friends and family, but always make sure you save some for yourself. You deserve it.

Food for the Dogs: Consumption and Wealth Inequality in Bong Joon-Ho's *Parasite*

Tauri Hagemann, *Ball State University*

This essay analyzes the ways in which food throughout the film *Parasite* symbolizes the divide between rich and poor, using contemporary research to further build on how food is a signifier of class and wealth. From the less wealthy eating prepackaged foods, to using a fruit allergy as a weapon against someone, there is a clear indication throughout the film of food as a signifier of status and class. I take this divide and analyze its significance to the modern culture and society of South Korea, then further apply this to its relevancy in a modern United States. *Parasite* flourished in American society—both are countries wherein a capitalist 'meritocracy' rules for the most part, and an analysis of the culture around the film will show the ways in which the cultures that consumed this media are similar in their class divides.

Bong Joon-Ho's *Parasite* received numerous awards and much critical acclaim at the 2020 Academy Awards, a remarkable feat in general, let alone for a foreign film. The film was also the first non-English production in the Oscar's history to take home the award for Best Picture. Joon-Ho, however, is neither new to the directorial world, nor to the theme of class and division. Unfortunately, because of its recency, having only debuted in cinemas a little over a year ago, *Parasite* has not yet received much scholarly criticism. However, there is no shortage of critique on class structures in the U.S., as well as in South Korea, and enough film commentary exists to suggest a viable popular opinion regarding the film. The division between classes and the difference in opportunity and accessibility as exemplified through the Kim and Park families is a consistent and prominent theme throughout the film, and thus can easily be intuited to show the ways food studies further complicate this class divide. Utilizing contemporary research and commentary, this essay will analyze the ways in which class divide is represented in the film through the lens of food studies and consumption, including poverty as demonstrated through food insecurity, an ignorance on the part of upper classes, and food used as a physical conduit for violence and aggression.

Parasite was a film that was very well-received internationally, and its many awards and acknowledgements are proof of this. As already noted, it was the first non-English film to receive Best Picture, among several other Academy Awards, as well as being featured and receiving recognition at the Cannes Film Festival in France. The film follows the Kim family, who live in a small basement apartment in Seoul, South Korea. The family is visibly poor, until they are presented with the opportunity to find work with the Park family, who are visibly wealthy. Obtaining these jobs, however, requires lying about their identities and creating false personas more qualified and educated than the Kims really are, as well

as spreading lies about the others already employed by the Parks to garner mistrust and get them fired to open more opportunities for the Kims. All of these lies and cutthroat tactics to achieve financial prosperity end up catching up to the Kims, and the final arc of the movie results in intense violence and bloodshed. The main theme or premise behind this film is the unbridgeable gap between the poor and the wealthy elite, and this is a notion that people internationally, especially in the United States, understand to an extensive degree. We are told that we live in a meritocracy wherein all one must do to become successful is put in hard work. At the same time, the rich keep getting richer and the poor remain poor, showing that there must be a flaw in this ideology.

The COVID crisis and the quarantine of the last year have been clear contributors to furthering this class divide. Over the course of around three months of shutdown of everything non-essential, many people were unable to work and therefore unable to bring home a paycheck for their families. After some businesses started reopening, many remained closed or were forced to permanently shut down because of financial losses from three months with no business. A CNBC article from mid-October found that at that time over 100,000 small businesses had already been forced to permanently close their doors because of an inability to keep up revenue while complying with new COVID guidelines and regulations (Adamczyk). The government did send out a stimulus check, but many people either did not receive any stimulus or the small amount they received did not compensate for their loss of employment. Now, a year since the United States' official lockdown, the COVID crisis is finally beginning to push through more stimulus aid and work on making vaccinations and treatments more readily accessible.

Not everyone faced these struggles during the quarantine, though; because of in-person retailers and shopping options being closed for so long, many people took to shopping from online sources like Amazon. Over the course of the quarantine and the pandemic, Jeff Bezos, the CEO of Amazon, continued to grow richer and amass a greater net worth. Over a roughly seven-month period, Bezos's wealth growth was over $90 billion, bringing his total net worth to over $200 billion (Stebbins). In a time where people in our nation were struggling to even put food on the table, Bezos continued growing richer and richer and nearly doubled his net worth. This ties directly into the idea of food security—Bezos and others like him had no worries for their families or their own well-being financially, whereas those 100,000 small businesses that were forced to close have resulted in an even larger number of people now unemployed and afraid if they will even be able to afford to put food on the table for their families with what little income they may have. In an interview with *The Atlantic*, Joon-Ho discussed this wealth gap internationally, saying, "I think the state of polarization applies not only to Korea but anywhere across the world. [South] Korea has achieved a lot of development, and now it's a fairly wealthy country, but the richer a country gets, the more relative this gap becomes" (Sims). Marcus Noland remarks how "South Korea's development over the last half century has been nothing short of spectacular. . . .[yet] still needs to fix a labor market in which some workers have extensive benefits and job protection and others do not" (17, 20-21).

The South Korean education system has also played into this increasing class divide and polarization. In South Korea, as in other countries including the United States, "higher education has been transformed from an elite system to a mass system" (Doo Hwan Kim 436-437). University education is

no longer something that puts a person a step ahead in the workforce as much as it is something that is expected and seen as necessary to find sustainable work. However, despite this ideal, income and class status in South Korea still heavily impact available opportunities: "They view expansion of higher education as a process of diversion, which reserves higher-status opportunities for the elite by channeling children of the working class to low-status post-secondary opportunities" (Doo Hwan Kim 437). We can also see this phenomenon clearly reflected in Joon-Ho's *Parasite*. Kim Ki-Woo has a long-time friend named Min who connects him with his job with the Park family in the first place. Min is university educated, and this is what helped him find his position tutoring for the wealthy family—his education has provided him with opportunity. Education brings opportunity, opportunity brings financial stability, and financial stability brings food security—all things of which the Kim family were lacking at the start of the film.

As has been referenced several times throughout this essay, money and food are inherently related in that money is needed to obtain food. This is made very clear in one of the first scenes of the film, wherein we see the poorer Kim family sitting around their small kitchen table eating food that looks—and sounds—like it is coming out of plastic packaging. We also see them all with the same canned beverage, though whether it is soda or beer or an alcoholic beverage is unclear (*Parasite*). They're eating cheap, packaged, processed foods like one would buy from a vending machine because this is what their family is able to afford on the small income they make folding pizza boxes. According to Barbara Briers and Sandra Laporte, "financially dissatisfied people may try to replenish their need for financial resources by consuming caloric resources or food energy because money and food are closely related, exchangeable resources" (767). Briers and Laporte also posit that because of this increased value assigned to food energy, those who are financially dissatisfied also tend to consume food in larger quantities and higher caloric contents. Going from the vending machine assumption, this would make perfect sense of the Kim family. Prepackaged snacks and beverages tend to be high in calories and cheap to acquire, while also being alarmingly lacking in nutrient or vitamin contents. Another study also found that the amount of people who are financially dissatisfied, particularly in developing Asia, is startlingly large: "Around 560 million people lived in slums in Asia and the Pacific in 2014, which corresponds to about 30 percent of the population." While the percentage has fallen year to year, "the absolute number has risen . . . due to overall population growth" (Aizawa 28). Looking at the Kim's basement apartment and the small table they crowd around in their center room to eat, it is not too out of bounds to assume that they would fall into this category of financially dissatisfied people.

This wealth divide becomes more apparent once the Kim family becomes employed by the Parks. The Parks are a family that live a life drastically different from the Kims—they employ several personal assistants and tutors, they live in a sizable house with a lavish and manicured lawn, and they can do so off of the patriarch's salary with the mother and children of the house not having to work at all. One scene that is particularly striking in showing this wealth divide is when the Park family decides to go on a camping trip for their son's birthday and leave Kim Chung-sook, their caretaker and the mother of the Kim family, to stay in the house and look after their dogs. The matriarch of the Park family goes into extensive detail on each of the dog's diets, explaining how one of them eats differently from the others and has food that is made from crab legs (*Parasite*). She seems completely oblivious to the extent of luxury and comfort this exemplifies in her family, ignorant and unappreciative of just how prosperous they

really are. For the Kims, who can only afford to get themselves a pizza after several of them have been working for the Parks for a few weeks, seeing dogs who eat fancier ingredients than them is very unsettling. This dichotomy is especially seen after the Parks have left and the Kim family have made themselves comfortable, taking advantage of a space and a prosperity that at any other time is unavailable to them. While the Parks are aware that Chung-sook is in the house, they are unaware that any of their other employees are related and therefore do not know that the family is all present in their absence. While the Kims are lounging around the house enjoying the Parks' food and drink, daughter Ki-Jung inspects this package of dog food and scoffs upon seeing what it is composed of. One scholar argues that this idea of "upward comparison to those with more income generally leads people to feel they need more to be satisfied" and how this "perceived need has a precise relationship to risk taking" (Payne 4643). Comparing what the Parks have to their own resources, the Kims develop a feeling that they need more to be happy, which causes them to take greater risks in order to achieve this wealth and satisfaction. They feel a sense of injustice at the wealth gap they are experiencing firsthand and decide to take matters into their own hands to level this gap as much as possible.

What serves to make matters even worse for the Kims is that the Parks, who have the wealth and prosperity to eat basically whatever they want, also seem to have a strange affinity for cheap and easy food. When a storm starts and the Park camping trip eventually turns into a bust, the mother of the family calls Kim Chung-Sook on their way home and asks her to prepare their son, Da-Song, his favorite meal for when they return. This favorite meal? Ramdon, a combination of packaged ramen and udon noodles (*Parasite*). For a family that is so well off, it comes as somewhat strange that Da-Song's absolute favorite food is comprised of pre-packaged noodles that are affordable even to poorer families like the Kims. It is not only Da-Song who enjoys the cheap and easy meal, though—when the Park family returns home, Da-Song is upset and angry and retreats to his room without eating. The family matriarch offers the food to her husband but, upon his declination, eats the Ramdon instead. Not only does she eat it, she eats quickly, signifying either an intense hunger, a deep love for the dish, or a combination of both (*Parasite*). It's not just their young son who enjoys cheap food—it's the adults in the house as well who supposedly have an appreciation for the 'finer things in life' that would exclude something this simple. This serves to emphasize a very important point in the film: while the Parks have the means to obtain practically anything, they are not necessarily appreciative of this fact. This is the same idea emphasized through the image of the crab leg dog food; the family is completely oblivious to their own wealth and prosperity and therefore do not appropriately acknowledge their privilege. The Kim family, on the other hand, knows that they are not at all considered wealthy, but, in contrast to the Parks, they are willing to do nearly anything to find a way to obtain the means to that wealth and prosperity, even if it takes lying about their lives and identities to do so.

Another very interesting yet less obvious way in which food comes to play a role in the significance of class divide in Parasite is through smell and connotation. When the Park family returns home from their failed camping trip, the Kims have not yet had time or opportunity to leave without being seen, and as such end up hiding under the table in the main living room area. While here, the Parks can be overheard talking, and at one point the patriarch of the household can be heard saying that Kim Ki-Taek, the Kim father who at this point works as the Parks's chauffeur, smells badly—specifically, he says

that he smells like radishes (*Parasite*). This is a comment that strikes Ki-Taek much more deeply than one would anticipate and plays a very large role in the climactic final events of the film.

While the Parks are out the old housekeeper returns, and conflict ensues between the old and new help of the Park family. The old housekeeper had been working in that house since the previous owner, and it is revealed that she had been hiding her husband in a nuclear cellar underneath the house that the Parks were unaware of, allowing him to live there for free and providing him with food. When he was much younger, Park son Da-song saw this man coming up the stairs late at night and was so frightened that he had a seizure. In the climax of the film, more conflict embroils between the Parks and the old help, all hidden underneath the Parks's elaborate picnic party for Da-song. Eventually, this man leaves the basement and grabs a knife as he passes on his way to the yard, where he attacks the Kim family and gravely injures the daughter Ki-jung in front of a crowd of people. Upon seeing this terror from his past resurface, Park son Da-Song has another seizure and needs to be taken to the hospital. His father yells for Kim Ki-Taek to get the car ready and go, not knowing that the body Ki-taek is cradling is that of his daughter. Instead, he throws the keys towards the Parks, and they land in the grass and end up under the body of the previous housekeeper's husband who has been physically struggling with the mother Kim Chung-sook most of this time. When Mr. Park goes to retrieve the keys, he recoils for a moment and holds his nose before grabbing them. This is the action that ultimately makes Ki-Taek snap as he rises, grabs the knife previously used to hurt his daughter, and drives it into the chest of Mr. Park. Ki-taek's daughter is about to die, bleeding out on the grass in his arms, and Mr. Park has the audacity to think his bodily odor lingering on the car keys is repulsive enough to take pause in acting to help his own son. There are several places where food makes itself present in the carnage of this final scene—the smell of radishes lingering on these car keys, Mrs. Kim taking down the man who killed her daughter by stabbing him with a sausage skewer, and the whole scene centering around Da-song's birthday and beginning while Kim Ki-jung was bringing out his birthday cake. This is perhaps the most extreme, and yet the most clear and significant, example throughout the film of this disparity between the families and the gap between their lives that they will simply never be able to bridge.

There is also another very direct tie between food and violence in this film, specifically with peaches. The Park's old housekeeper, who gets fired and replaced by Chung-Sook, has an intense and dangerous allergy to peaches. The children in the house enjoy the fruit, but never have it because of their housekeeper's allergy. When trying to get rid of the housekeeper, the Kim children who are employed in the house already use this allergy to their advantage and spread the fibers off the skin of peaches in the air around her, making her cough and react aggressively. Upon these reactions happening increasingly frequently, the housekeeper goes to see a doctor and is spotted there by Kim Ki-Taek, who takes a selfie with her in the background and later expresses concerns to Mrs. Park, saying he overheard the housekeeper talking about tuberculosis. This is ultimately what ends up getting the housekeeper fired—a fabricated sense of secrecy surrounding her health and a perceived endangerment of the Park family. Later, when she comes back for her husband while the Parks are away and the Kims are relaxing around the house, the peach becomes used as a more literal weapon against her, shoved in her face and rubbed against her skin to cause a reaction. In Bong Joon-Ho's words, "Peaches are so pretty to look at, but you can attack someone with them" (Murray). Beyond just the physical representation of the food,

this further exemplifies how food and consumption are used throughout the film as signs of aggression and class divide. The Kims use the peaches as a weapon against the housekeeper to secure their jobs with the Parks and obtain a better financial standing, thus pushing the poor housekeeper down into unemployment
and poverty.

Through these given examples, food and consumption clearly play a major role in the way that class and social status are portrayed throughout *Parasite*, being so vital as to be the conduit for the final moments of violence and bloodshed within the film. One's means of obtaining food and for consumption are inherently tied to their social and financial standing, and this is clear to see in the divide between the food and consumption habits of the Parks and the Kims. This is not just an issue that exists within the screen either—wealth gaps in South Korea as well as the United States are an ever-present issue as the rich grow richer and the poor stay poor, and this film is an exemplary demonstration of the destructive nature of this social structure. While *Parasite* is unarguably a dramatized representation of the consequences of this divide, it brings about some very important points and one essential question for us to consider: Who is really the parasite of the film? Is it the rich who rely on the services of the poor to thrive without being appreciative of these services or the privilege that they themselves have? Or is it the poor who sap money and resources from the rich in hopes of financial ascension?

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Ball State University Themed Cocktails:

Inspired by Ball State University's amazing community and environment

Vincent Ramos-Niaves

Chirp-Chirp Shots

All measurements featured are recommendations

.75 oz Grenadine

.35 oz Peach Schnapps

.5 oz Vodka

.25 oz Chambord (Black Raspberry Liqueur)

.15 oz Galliano

Tools: Shaker, Spoon, Strainer (hawthorn or the top of a regular cocktail shaker (not boston), 2 oz Shot glass, Ice

Photo credit: Vincent Ramos-Niaves

Description: Two full shot glasses in between two liquor bottles on a countertop

All ingredients to taste, pour Grenadine (should be the majority), Peach Schnaps, Chambord, and some vodka into a shaker tin with ice and shake until the tin is well frosted. Strain the mixture into the bottom of a 2 oz shot glass until 3/4ths full. Carefully layer Galliano on top by pouring over the back of a spoon (preferably a bar spoon) until full. If you use less Grenadine than recommended, you may have to mix Galliano with a high-proof liquor (Recommended: Everclear but Vodka of any brand will do as well).

Education Redefined Mojito

4-5	Mint leaves, muddled in the bottom of the glass
1/4th oz.	Simple syrup
2.5 oz.	White rum
1 oz.	Lime juice
20 oz.	Strawberry purée (store bought or homemade)
	Club soda OR Cherry 7-up
	Garnish: Mint sprig
	Garnish: Lime wheel

Photo credit: Vincent Ramos-Niaves

Description: Mojito and liquor bottle on countertop

Tools: Shaker, Muddler, Jigger (for measurements), Blender, Stainer (Hawthorne preferred), Highball Glass, Ice

Put mint leaves in the bottom of shaker tin and pour simple syrup and lime juice over them. Gently press against the leaves with muddler, similar to the force it would take to press down onto a button (if you press too hard, the mint will go bitter). Once muddled, pour in rum and strawberry purée (to taste). The more purée you put in, the sweeter the drink, so be careful not to let it overshadow the mint! If it does, add a bit more of each ingredient into a separate glass and mix together before pouring it in the tin. Fill shaker tin with ice and shake vigorously until tin is WELL frosted. Fill highball glass with ice and strain the mixture into the glass. Top off with club soda (or if you REALLY don't like tasting the rum, cherry 7-up). Garnish with mint sprig, and lime wheel.

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Julie Steele is a senior at Ball State University. They're studying as an English Literature major and a Professional Writing and Emerging Media minor with the intent of going into a writing field. As an aspiring author, they are interested in both creative works of fiction as well as the fields of editing and publishing. Currently, they hope to become a published author in the fantasy genre.

Dilayda Tülübas is originally from Istanbul, Turkey and moved to Berlin, Germany to pursue her master's degree in British Studies at Humboldt University of Berlin. Dilayda holds a bachelor's degree in English Literature from Istanbul Yeditepe University, where she completed her studies as the third highest ranked graduate. Her research interests include gender studies, workers' theatre movements, postwar British drama and Turkish women's writing. Dilayda describes herself as a passionate flâneuse who enjoys strolling the streets of Berlin discovering what the city has to offer. She is also an incorrigible bibliophile and a proud black coffee drinker.

Emily Turner is a senior at Ball State University, majoring in English Studies with minors in Creative as well as Professional Writing. From a young age, Emily has used reading and writing to express herself, and through her writing, she hopes to deliver her personal truths to her readers. She has been previously published in Little Fiction Big Truths, Quirk Literary Magazine, and she has an upcoming publication in The Broken Plate. When Emily isn't reading or writing, she enjoys baking sweets to consume with her daily coffee.

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