

GENDER FORUM

An Internet Journal for Gender Studies

THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A SINGLE-ISSUE STRUGGLE BECAUSE WE DO NOT LIVE SINGLE-ISSUE LIVES. - AUDRE LORDE

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Gender and Intersectionality

Edited by
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About

Gender forum is an online, peer reviewed academic journal dedicated to the discussion of gender issues. As an electronic journal, *gender forum* offers a free-of-charge platform for the discussion of gender-related topics in the fields of literary and cultural production, media and the arts as well as politics, the natural sciences, medicine, the law, religion and philosophy. Inaugurated by Prof. Dr. Beate Neumeier in 2002, the quarterly issues of the journal have focused on a multitude of questions from different theoretical perspectives of feminist criticism, queer theory, and masculinity studies. *gender forum* also includes reviews and occasionally interviews, fictional pieces and poetry with a gender studies angle.

Opinions expressed in articles published in *gender forum* are those of individual authors and not necessarily endorsed by the editors of *gender forum*.

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Editorial

1 “My feminism will be intersectional or it will be bullshit”, writes Flavia Dzodan, feminist blogger at Tiger Beatdown, in perhaps one of the [most well-known articles on the topic](#) in the feminist blogosphere. One of the most important tenets of third wave feminism is the acknowledgement of the fact that gender and gender relations do not exist in a vacuum, but that they are, in fact, only a part of an intricate web of oppression and privileging based on a myriad of factors. Other important factors influencing the level of oppression someone faces are, for example, race, class, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion or disability. In this issue of Gender Forum, our contributors present a wide array of intersectional approaches to Women’s and Gender Studies.

2 In her article "*Jasmine* as a Fantasy", Uplabdhii Sangwan examines Bharati Mukherjee’s novel *Jasmine* to see in how far the novel succeeds in presenting a liberated woman. Sangwan finds that the novel is lacking in alternatives to the heteronormative matrix, however, and the heroine does not find a way to overcome what Adrienne Rich insists are the political institutions of “heterosexuality” and “motherhood”. The absence of these alternatives in *Jasmine* is juxtaposed to other powerful narratives by women of color, such as for example Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple* (1983) where such alternatives are explored. *Jasmine* concludes by invoking a fairy tale economic and emotional rescue of the colored heroine by white male figures, and in doing so the novel enacts, what Adrienne Rich calls the “lie” of “the romantic” in Western tradition.

3 The second contribution, “A ‘Wild Zone’ of Her Own: Locating the Chicana Experience in the Theatre Works of Josefina Lòpez”, Trevor Boffone focuses on the different psychological spaces that Chicana women must occupy in order to develop an oppositional consciousness and discourse through an analysis of three plays by Josefina Lòpez: *Boyle Heights* (2005), *Detained in the Desert* (2010), and *Hungry Woman* (2013). To do so, he employs the “Wild Zone” theory posited by Cordelia Candelaria, which serves as the primary theoretical lens due to its usefulness in an intersectional analysis of Chicana experience and identity, both in the Southwestern United States and abroad, by theorizing the separate cultural and political spaces, or zones, that women inhabit in society.

4 The article “Speaking through ‘Lard-Slicked Lips’: Fatness, Racism, and Narratives of Self-Control Encircling the Paula Deen Scandal” is a joint contribution by Megan Condis, Kaitlin Marks-Dubbs and T.J. Tallie. In the article, the three scholars draw on their diverse

backgrounds (pop culture criticism, feminist studies with a focus on body image, and history with a focus on race and ethnicity) to create dialogues between the disciplines and determine how and why Deen's own body came to be used to rebuke her for her remarks, how sizeism came to stand in for a condemnation of racism.

5 Dr. Zoila Clark, in her article "Maxine Hong Kingston: Ghostbuster Feminist", focuses on the publication *The Woman Warrior, Memoirs of a Girlhood among Ghosts*, arguing that Kingston's book of the uncanny draws on Chinese-American women's writing in order to construct the role-model of a bicultural Ghostbuster feminist able to fight the ghosting patriarchal policies of the US. Clark argues that Kingston's writing style of *écriture féminine* helped her overcome her bicultural uncanny experience.

6 Ellen J. Stockstill provides a review of Ben Griffin's *The Politics of Gender in Victorian Britain*, which offers a thorough history of the fight for women's rights in Britain during the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Jasmine as a Fantasy

By Uplabdhii Sangwan, University of Delhi, India

Abstract:

The paper looks at Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* to assess the rendition of a "liberated woman" and finds it to be vague and insufficient on account of the inability of the heroine to break through, what Adrienne Rich insists are the political institutions of "heterosexuality" and "motherhood". Emotional, economic or sexual alternatives that proffer new and fulfilling roles are conspicuously absent in the novel. The absence of these alternatives in *Jasmine* is juxtaposed to other powerful narratives by women of color, such as for example Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* (1983) where such alternatives are explored. *Jasmine* concludes by invoking a fairy tale economic and emotional rescue of the colored heroine by white male figures, and in doing so the novel enacts, what Adrienne Rich calls the "lie" of "the romantic" in Western tradition. The conclusion appears fantastic because of *Jasmine*'s integration into the white society. Walker's Black women, on the other hand, struggle to reclaim their dignity even within their own communities in a process that takes decades. The heroine's search for an identity appears to be ultimately self-limiting and problematic as resolutions are sought within the conventional structures of gender, race and class.

1 "I wrote poems. I was going to be the next Adrienne Rich," says a pregnant character to the heroine of *Jasmine* (1990) as she contemplates the devastating consequences of motherhood on her aspirations (*Jasmine* 34). This reference to Adrienne Rich inserts Rich's thematic concerns regarding gender, motherhood, mothering, compulsory heterosexuality and the lesbian continuum, amongst others, that occur in her poems and prose, into the novel *Jasmine* by Bharati Mukherjee, an Indian diaspora writer. This paper looks at choices made by the title character of *Jasmine* through the lens of Rich's ideas. In *Jasmine*, the heroine who is brown (or "wheatish") due to her North Indian Asian descent, contends with issues of race, class and gender as she embarks on quest for selfhood on the North American continent (33).

2 The heroine's quest is hampered by her condition of marginality that has been thrust upon her as she is what Mary Ellen Snodgrass describes as an illegal "unassimilated immigrant Asian" women with a "makeshift" life in North America (384). The Bildungsroman of this heroine begins in Hasnapur, India and concludes in America. As the story progresses, the protagonist transforms from Jyoti to *Jasmine* to Jane. The narrative depicts the heroine as a girl child and as a young wife in Punjab, India. Following her husband's death in a blast caused by terrorists demanding a Sikh state, *Jasmine* travels to Florida as an illegal immigrant hidden in a trawler. Upon reaching Florida the captain of the ship rapes her and she murders him in turn. She is rescued and provided shelter by a woman called Lillian Gordon. She then moves in to live at Flushing Ghetto with a family of her husband's friend called Professorji. Subsequently she leaves Flushing Ghetto to become a

nanny for Taylor's and Wylie's adopted child. After Wylie leaves Taylor, he shares feelings of love with Jasmine in a park in New York. Just then Jasmine sees the man who killed her husband. She is frightened and goes to Iowa where she starts living with Bud as a partner. The novel ends with Jasmine (who is pregnant with Bud's child after being artificially inseminated) deciding to leave him and move to California to live with Taylor.

3 Jasmine's story, according to Anita Myles in her work *Feminism and the Post-Modern Indian Women Novelists in English*, was received with "tremendous response and ebullience from critics and readers alike, being translated into eighteen languages due to its undaunting rendition of a "liberated woman" from a third world nation deeply rooted in traditions and dogmas" (Myles 113). The paper interrogates this rendition of a "liberated woman" and finds insufficient and limited evidence of any such liberation in the denouement. This is because the heroine's choices do not challenge the boundaries of gender, race and class thrust upon her. As her choices are made within the very structures of gender, race and class that produce the conditions of her inferiority, these conditions ultimately are neither challenged nor dismantled in the novel. Emotional, economic or sexual alternatives that might offer respite are thus conspicuously absent in *Jasmine*.

4 The rendition of a "liberated woman" in *Jasmine* is vague and insufficient on account of the inability of the heroine to break through, what Adrienne Rich insists are the political institutions of "heterosexuality" and "motherhood" (*Signs* 637). The novel does not destabilize notions of gender particularly as expressed through sexual practice. Sexuality, Vincent Leitch summarizes in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, is viewed in modern culture as a fundamental constituent of identity. Leitch adduces to Judith Butler's research which following Foucault's work in *The History of Sexuality* (1976), drawing attention to the fact that "one's sex and our sexual desires and activities are profound indices of who we are" (Leitch 2485). Due to the heroine's choices emotional and financial emancipation is available to her only through heterosexual relationships. Her choice to organize her life around the political institutions of "heterosexuality" and "motherhood" is despite the experience of trauma caused by violence unleashed upon her by various versions of masculinities engendered by patriarchy. These versions consider violence as a legitimate tactic to contain, confine, limit women's freedom and assert power over her by keeping her in a state of "fear"(Smith x). Such versions are exemplified in descriptions of men in feudal Hasanpur who bring "rape, ruin, shame" on women; Sukhvinder the terrorist whose separate Sikh nation is envisioned as a space where men continue to wield control over women's bodies through prescription of dress code the transgression of which can incite not only

verbal abuses but also death; and Half-Face (*Jasmine* 55). The rendition of a “liberated woman” is insufficient secondly on account of the novel’s preoccupation with what Rich differentiates between the patriarchal institution of motherhood as against the private experience of mothering.

5 Jasmine’s choice of heterosexual relationships, despite the attendant trauma of violence, signifies Jasmine’s preference for performance of “normative sexuality”. “Normative sexuality”, Judith Butler asserts in *Gender Trouble* (1990), only “fortifies normative gender” (46). These normative notions of gender are “naturalized and reified” and only “support masculine hegemony and heterosexist power (Butler 46). Butler however admits that “subverting and displacing” normative notions of gender is a difficult task as they keep gender in its place by “posturing as the foundational illusions of identity” (46). These normative notions of gender are, according to Leitch “written into our very psyches as well as into the dominant institutions of political and social life” (2485). Given this hold of normative notions of gender on the psyche, Jasmine does not even attempt to challenge the norms of gender in terms of roles and power relations. Malashri Lal, a leading scholar in women’s studies, notes that “Mukherjee’s heroine [Jasmine] carries conservative India and female socialization within her wherever she goes and never seems to climb out of the patriarchal structures of her village upbringing” (152). The narrator’s trajectory from Jyoti to Jasmine to Jase and finally to Jane recreates, according to Lal, the India of “sharply defined gender roles” through the “continued note of woman’s dependency upon man, emotionally and materially, no matter which country—India or America” (152). *Jasmine’s* narrator refers to all the men Jasmine enters into relationships with as her “husbands” and furthermore asserts that the protagonist assumes the traditional role of the “caregiver, recipe giver, preserver” (Lal 215).

6 Jasmine also attempts to fulfill the status of a child bearer, which as Rich says has been made into a “major fact” of a woman’s life (*Of Woman Born* 11). In order to achieve this socially mandatory status, the heroine of *Jasmine* endures the discomfort of artificial insemination, an assisted reproductive technology. Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART) is intrusive, costly, and painful, and carries the risk of multiple births. Jasmine is exposed to the risks of ART’s negative effects like any patient. Her choice to perform this role and subscribe to the idea of normative trajectory of womanhood is particularly problematic as the text alludes to numerous instances of gaps in Bud’s and her relationship. Her choice of opting for motherhood is problematic particularly because it appears to be an act of economic desperation. It appears that she values Bud merely for providing basic facilities such as for

example the bathroom. An access to such amenities comprises her notions of victory over the vastly different life she left behind. Companionship with Bud, a rich banker, appears to serve the function of providing her with economic stability. The reader infers emotional reticence on heroine's part as she insists that Bud "chose" her and that she did "nothing to encourage it" (*Jasmine* 204). Rather she describes herself as a "passive person" and hence also a passive partner in the relationship (*Jasmine* 200). The heroine also appears strained due to Bud's increasing emotional demands due to which he requires repeated assertion of her love. At the level of sexual companionship, the novel alludes to Jasmine's unsatisfactory sexual relationship with Bud following his paralysis. Thus even though Jasmine becomes pregnant with Bud's child, she does not want to ultimately marry him. She uses the lens of normative gender in her description of Bud as being no longer a "whole man" following his disability as he can no longer impregnate her (*Jasmine* 36). Interestingly she is timely rescued from an official marriage to Bud by Taylor's appearance at the door in a fairytale ending. The text falls silent about her private experience of impending motherhood that Rich, in *Of Woman Born* (1976), explains can be a source of power. It can be argued that the version of motherhood one encounters in *Jasmine* is deeply oppressive as the heroine does not acknowledge at any point the value of such role for her. The conditions of the heroine's pregnancy reveal the duality in the meaning of motherhood

one superimposed on the other; the *potential relationship* of any woman to her powers of reproduction and to children; and the *institution*, which aims at ensuring that that potential – and all women – shall remain under male control... motherhood as institution has ghettoized and degraded female potentialities. (*Of Woman Born* 2)

7 Both the traditional roles of a "caregiver, recipe giver, preserver" or motherhood, that Jasmine relies on and upholds, have been fundamentally formulated by patriarchy's control over a woman's labour. Emotional, economic or sexual alternatives that proffer new and fulfilling roles are therefore conspicuously absent in the novel.

8 The absence of these alternatives in *Jasmine* can be juxtaposed to other powerful narratives by women of color, such as for example Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* (1983). Like Mukherjee's novel, *The Color Purple* also contends with issues of race, class and gender in the North American continent. In Walker's novel, a range of relationships between women are depicted that can be explicated through Adrienne Rich's idea of the "lesbian continuum". This term "encompasses a wide variety of relationships between and among women, ranging from

the sharing of a rich inner life, the bonding against male tyranny, [to]the giving and receiving of practical and political support! By desexualizing the term *lesbian*, Rich

calls ... attention to the variety of bonds formed between women and to the various functions those bonds play in women's lives. (Leitch 1761)

9 The critic Charles Proudfit explains that in *The Color Purple*, these relationships over an extended period of time, enable Celie who is “a depressed survivor-victim of parent loss, emotional and physical neglect, rape, incest trauma and spousal abuse—to resume her arrested development and continue developmental processes that were thwarted in infancy and early adolescence” (19). These relationships are evoked in “ministrations of Celie’s younger sister Nettie, to Kate and Sophia and to Shug’s facilitating Celie’s sensual awakening to adult female sexuality and a healthy emotional life” (13). These bonds do not merely nurture her at a psychological level but also allow Celie to become economically self-reliant when she becomes an owner of a store. Thus from being a property of her father and husband, she herself ultimately becomes an owner of property. Thus these bonds between women emerge as a counter-discourse against the “institution” of “compulsory heterosexuality” that has traditionally been used by men, including of their own color in *The Color Purple*, to exploit women to the extent of dehumanizing them (Signs 637). Unlike Walker, *Jasmine* does not challenge uneven gender relationships and continues to operate within the paradigm of patriarchy without even for once questioning the prescribed script of compulsory heterosexuality.

10 It is also argued that *Jasmine*’s choice of performing the prescribed script of compulsory heterosexuality should not be linked to the rhetoric that same sex love is purely a Western concept. On the contrary, according the Indian mythologist Ruth Vanita’s essay, “Same-Sex Love in India: A Brief Overview”

[t]here is a wealth of material relating to same-sex love in Indian languages, literatures, visual arts, and modern mass media [...] However, modern South Asian scholarship, both in India and West, has tended to ignore this material [...] This attitude has fostered the popular belief that homosexuality is an aberration imported from Europe or West Asia, and was nonexistent in ancient India. (166)

Vanita, through the examples from Indian mythology, makes a case for the “non-reality of gender and the non-absoluteness of heterosexuality [...] Ancient Indian philosophy provides us with tools to undo the categories of gender and of sexuality” (171). Vanita’s study is important in comparing *Jasmine* to another text like *The Color Purple* because it justifies comparing Jasmine's choice to operate within the paradigm of heterosexual patriarchy with Walker's ideas of sisterhood and lesbian relations. Vanita shows that lesbian relations are not an alien concept in India; as the pre-colonial narratives in Vanita's essay suggest that same-sex love occupies a unique space in the Indian consciousness. To view same-sex love as an

alien concept strengthens the argument that heterosexuality is natural and that lesbian relations are deviant and that the West is the site of this deviant behavior.

11 If Mukherjee is heterosexual and/or she is not discussing lesbian themes, she may view heterosexual relations as a natural choice. Homosexuality does not seem to be an option for Jasmine. Rather in *Jasmine*, relationships between the heroine and other women are palpably absent. This is despite the fact that in her moments of acute crises, particularly when even her very survival is at stake, it is only women figures such as Lilian Gordon and Mother Ripplemeyer who come to her rescue. The emancipatory potential of these scenes is not developed in the novel. On the contrary, the novel eschews this potential by invoking a fairy tale rescue of the heroine by white male figures such as a rich banker like Bud or the highly educated Taylor. In doing so the novel enacts the “lie” of “the romantic” in Western tradition according to which “women are inevitably, even if rashly and tragically, drawn to men... that primary love between the sexes is 'normal'; that women need men as social and economic protectors, for adult sexuality, and for psychological completion” (*Signs* 657).

12 The novel’s insistence on operating within the paradigm of patriarchy however co-exists with undercurrents of an acknowledgement of threat from patriarchy. This threat is symbolized in the recurrent image of a dog. In the novel, the image of the dog undergoes a gradual metamorphosis from a carcass to a rabid dog and finally to a puppy. The novel begins with Jasmine’s childhood memory of a rotting dog carcass floating in the water. The carcass disintegrates into two parts the moment Jasmine accidentally touches it. In this scene, a sense of death and disintegration is conveyed. The carcass is an objective correlative of constant threat of death and disintegration to the being and body of a young girl growing up in a village in Punjab where they were considered unwanted by their families to the extent that for them “daughters were curses” (*Jasmine* 39). In order to eliminate this “curse,” her society commits many acts of violence against girls that attempted to erase their very being. For example, the novel includes a reference to the “ruby red choker of bruise around” the throat of the infant narrator that suggest attempted infanticide through strangulation (*Jasmine* 40). The novel also mentions the screams of a baby girl thrown down a well in Hasnapur so that the family could rid itself of the liability of having to raise a girl child (*Jasmine* 233). Another act of violence is the immolation of Jasmine’s friend, Vimla. Vimla is a widow and even at the age of twenty-two, her and Jasmine’s patriarchal society sees Vimla as an entity to erase

(Jasmine 15)¹. *Jasmine* does not give a reason for Vimla's immolation following her widowhood because the reason is assumed to be obvious to the reader. However, Jasmine's, Vimla's and their society's attitude toward Vimla's widowhood can be understood by reading social researcher Alka Ranjan's paper titled, "Determinants of Well-Being Among Widows—An Exploratory Study in Varanasi." Ranjan writes that "the historical perspective considers widowhood as a form of 'social death'" (4089). The reason is also explained in scholar Swati Gosh's essay "Lives of Seclusion." Gosh highlights

the anxiety involved in controlling the sexuality of young, 'non-remarried' widow [...] The fertility of the widow in her reproductive years, a potential threat to the honour and purity of her husband's lineage, was a constant reminder to the patriarchal society at large in asserting control over widows. (848)

Ghosh also discusses "torture, suicide or murder mostly of the childless, land-owning widows" for appropriation of a widow's property (850). These murders or attempted murders of women in *Jasmine*—by infanticide or suicide—portray the threat of death and erasure that Jasmine perceives from her immediate environment. This sense of death, erasure and disintegration is projected upon the a rotting carcass of a dog floating in the water which disintegrated into two parts by the heroine's accidental touch. That it disintegrated upon her touch points to the relation between the meaning of the image of the dog and her.

13 The narrative continues to evoke yet another image of a dog when it refers to a growling mad dog which attempts to attack the women during the "latrine hour" which was the time when the village women defecated in the fields in groups (*Jasmine* 53). A mad dog appeared growling at the scene while the perverted men from the village as usual sat across the stream ogling at them. The male gaze is an assertion of power and is intended to dehumanize the women by denying them even fundamental access to performance of their

¹ These practices have at various stages been commented upon by researchers. To begin with the census reflect the skewed sex ratio in 0-6 age group suggesting the prevalence of the practice of infanticide. Mahendra K Premi in his research article "The Missing Girl Child" published in *Economic and Political Weekly* (Vol 36.21 (2001): 1875 – 1880) points out that the census of 2001 (conducted nearly ten years after the publication of *Jasmine*) has highlighted specifically the "adverse sex ratio at birth" in Punjab and Haryana (EPW 1875). The researcher using the statistics points out that "the decline in sex ratio of population in 0-6 age group ...from 945 in 1991 to 927 in 2001" is "a matter of deep concern" (Premi 1875). The practice of female infanticide in various regions of India is an age old practice and has even been mentioned in archival records of British colonial officials. L. S. Vishwanath in his essay "Female Infanticide—The Colonial Experience" in *Economic and Political Weekly* 36. 35 (2001): 3411–3412 refers to a British resident called Jonathan Duncan who as far back as December 1789 came across this practice (2313). The researcher notes that the justification for the practice was provided on the grounds that castes which practiced it (usually those higher in the hierarchy) "could not afford the huge dowries or the incalculable marriage expenses having a daughter entailed" (Vishwanath 2313). Besides dowry the family is also burdened with vulnerability to family honor arising due to possible defilement of the female's body or even moral reputation. Vishwanath notes that "though caste is pervasive in Indian society and politics, the government of post-independence India decided to discontinue caste enumeration in the census. Therefore it is difficult to say if the castes which previously resorted to female infanticide still maintain that tradition" (3411).

basic bodily functions due to the fear of impending rape. In order to deal with the intimidation by these men, the women stick together. As the heroine contemplates “rape, ruin, shame”, she confuses this growling to be the sounds indicating the approach of these men. The “enemy” however turns out to be a mad dog and not the perverted men which Jasmine is able to stave off with a staff (*Jasmine* 56). The scene relates these perverted men to the mad dog. The dog’s eyes that “glowed red” and the foaming slack jaws also appear to be describing the lecherous eyes from which the male gaze is being directed towards the women. Jasmine “hated” and “distrusts” all dogs implicitly conveys emotional reaction to patriarchy (*Jasmine* 56).

14 Significantly, as the novel concludes in America, the novel presents an image of a harmless puppy that Jasmine pities (*Jasmine* 201). The reference to a puppy is also invoked in a quiet family scene on one Sunday when Jasmine, Taylor and Taylor’s child, Duff, take the supper in a basket to a park. By this time, Taylor’s wife has left him, and Jasmine acknowledges to herself her love for Taylor. In this familial scene, both Taylor and Jasmine tickle Duff who “rolled on the grass” and declared herself to be like a puppy (*Jasmine* 186). Soon Taylor too “rolled over on the grass” (*Jasmine* 186). In this scene Taylor’s companionable conduct does not reflect the traditional deportment of a man asserting his authority over women and children. The reference to a dog as a puppy at this juncture can be viewed as representing a version of patriarchal social and family structure which is far more egalitarian than that in India. It is thus not surprising that the image of a puppy figures when she meets lovers such as disabled Bud and Taylor. This representation is subversive as it dehumanizes men by equating them to a dog. However Jasmine does appear to believe that a heterosexual marriage can be reformulated to function without threatening a woman’s body and existence.

15 Since Jasmine does not enter into emotional or sexual bonds with women, we do not know whether or not Jasmine is conscious or aware of the very idea of lesbian relationships—yet it cannot be denied as a possibility available to Jasmine simply because it is not alluded to or directly referred to in the novel. Jasmine’s decision to operate within the norms of patriarchy, despite the associated threats to her body and subjectivity, implies a refusal to identify and challenge the structures that promote oppressive gender relations. In contrast, Walker in *The Color Purple* proposes the idea of sisterhood and lesbian relations as a sexual, political and emotional position that enables the Black woman to counter the oppressive forces of race, gender and class. Racial identity is crucial for Celie but Jasmine distances herself from her own Indian identity as she transforms herself to fit the locations

she relocates at in USA. The novel devalues the role race and class play in the life of a woman of color in America and therefore, the denouement in the novel is a fantastic one (meaning not realistic). It is fantastic because the author does not condemn the protagonist to versions of oppressive heterosexual relationships in America such as the one that led to her rape when she illegally arrived in the country. Rather the protagonist, at the conclusion, pursues a relationship with Taylor who is sexually and intellectually far more equipped than the paralyzed Bud. This relationship is fantastic as Taylor is a white professor in the area of “subnuclear particle physics” at Columbia University, while Jasmine, on the other hand, is a far less educated woman of color and located in the margins of America because she is an illegal immigrant. Due to her status of an illegal immigrant she cannot extricate her own self from poverty and desperation and join the mainstream through education and gainful employment. Through Taylor the heroine can achieve class elevation since he belongs to the *creme de la creme* of the intellectual elite and relocates with her at the end to California—a site of perceived considerable economic affluence. Taylor thus becomes a route through which the “promise of America” is fulfilled (*Jasmine* 240). Thus the conclusion of *Jasmine* is largely fantastic and uncritical of attempts by the dominant discourse of race, class and gender to subjugate women of color. Unlike *Jasmine*’s fantastical integration into the white society, Walker’s Black women struggle to reclaim their dignity within their own communities in a process that takes decades. The white society in *The Color Purple*, Molly Hite notes “figures as profoundly unnecessary” (Hite 261).

16 The fantastic conclusion in *Jasmine* is foregrounded by the author’s position on identity construction. In the interview “Bharti Mukherjee: An Interview With Runar Vignisson,” Mukherjee claims that she is “[...] very aware of the dark side of America as well as the romanticism that America offers” to people like her, and she believes “that both the dark side and the hope comes through.” This assertion of “hope” is rhetorical, as it is not accompanied by any concrete counter-measure to the realities of the dark side. Rather Mukherjee appears to advocate the idea of assimilation as a strategy for identity formation. Anne Brewster summarizes Mukherjee’s position in stating that:

in her non-fictional writing (specifically, in interviews and articles) Mukherjee explicitly endorses the notion of ‘assimilation’—a concept that generally carries negative connotations in the Australian context, especially in terms of Aboriginal history and the notorious assimilation policies of the 1940s onwards—and contrasts the American policy with what she sees as the less successful Canadian ‘mosaic’ policy of multiculturalism.

17 In *Jasmine*, the narrator's attempts to assimilate are revealed as she mutates along the trajectory from Jyoti to Jasmine to Jase to Jane. According to the narrator "Jyoti of Hasnapur was not Jasmine, Duff's day mummy [...] that Jasmine isn't this Jane Ripplemeyer" (*Jasmine* 127). Jasmine describes herself as being "reborn" and in doing so emphasizes a break from the past through a cycle of birth and death over across various identities (*Jasmine* 126). The narrator's description implicitly denies a continuum between not only each identity but also between cross-border identities where a rejection of hyphenation is implied. Critic Anita Myles responds to Jasmine's trajectory through the comment that "the narrative entails epic universality by its quick movement between America and India and between the past and the present without any traces of ennui" (113). While Myles notes merely an absence of nostalgia, Jasmine not only tries to overcome memories of her past but also attempts to reject her ethnic background and history. Jasmine's desire to assimilate is hinted at early in the novel. At Flushing Ghetto, Jasmine "wanted to distance" herself "from everything Indian" (145). On the other hand Nirmala, the wife of Professorji (the man in whose house Jasmine stays briefly), is described as watching Indian movies until she "had exhausted the available stock of Hindi films" in store (*Jasmine* 145). Nirmala's "regressive behavior" is juxtaposed with Jasmine's distancing herself from "everything Indian." Both women represent attempts to establish a specific version of immigrant woman identity. This immigrant and cultural identity negotiated by the narrator in *Jasmine* suggests attempts to completely assimilate in the West and implies a complete break from the past—namely the Indian experience. The attempt is not easily accomplished. The subtext reveals reception of the experience in the West through the lens of Indian roots. Thus Jasmine describes Jamaica as shedding "monsoonful of tears" and Mary Webb's socks as being dyed "the orange of Indian swami's robes" (*Jasmine* 179, 123). Imagery used in these descriptions is drawn from her life in India.

18 However Jasmine's attempt to reject hyphenation by increasingly distancing herself from her Indian roots entails a denial of ethnic identity as a means of political and institutional space-claiming. The assertion of ethnic identity has political implication. This assertion becomes, according to literary scholar Susan Koshy, a means of claiming political and institutional space.² This space is claimed by the Black community in *The Color Purple*.

² Susan Koshy, "The Fiction of Asian American Literature" *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 9 (1996) 315-346. Project Muse. 1 March 2007 < <http://muse.jhu.edu> >. Koshy discusses that question of "affirmation of ethnic identity as a means of political and institutional space-claiming." Discussing the "category "Asian American," Koshy points out that it has undergone reconfiguration more rapidly and to an extent that none of the other ethnic categories have". Koshy's essay presents a brief summary to elucidate this without "delineating exhaustively the many shifts, nuances and disjunctures in the historical constitution of Asian Americans." Koshy writes that "the latest historical pattern of ethnic identity formation has emerged in the last decade or so,

The desire to claim such a space is made irrelevant, as Jasmine appears to simplistically view the West as a land of freedom and “dreams.” Jasmine’s views appear to have been influenced by her husband Prakash who claimed that only America could make possible a “real life” since “here” (referring to India) this was made impossible by the “backward, corrupt, mediocre fools” (*Jasmine* 81). This view is rendered problematic when seen in light of Koshy’s claim. Jasmine continues to envision a “happiness” that would “appear out of the blue” because of “green card, a job, a goal” (*Jasmine* 149). This hope is despite of the description of difficulty for many Asian Indian immigrants living in ghettos to gain these items. Jasmine notes that “New York was an archipelago of ghettos seething with aliens” (*Jasmine* 140). The implication of her observation is that minority groups such as the Punjabis described living in the Flushing ghetto in New York are unable to integrate into the mainstream. The inability to integrate in the mainstream occurs at an economic level. Professorji, an Indian who lives in one such ghetto called the Flushing ghetto, is described as a “ghost, hanging on” (*Jasmine* 153). He performs such menial jobs as sifting through human hair so as to sell it to wigmakers and scientists. His condition points to the workforce in America discussed in Avtar Brah’s essay “Diaspora, Border and Transnational Identities.” Brah discusses the condition of low paid “peripheral workers” performing low-end jobs whose “labour is central to the functioning of global economies” (626). Unlike the relentless discrimination of Black women in *The Color Purple*, Jasmine overcomes all hurdles by simply marrying Taylor. This therefore implies that Mukherjee refuses to incisively critique America as a site of relocation in terms of gender, race and class. Through Professorji, Nirmala and descriptions of other Punjabi families, *Jasmine* presents images where men and women living in ghettos lead lives in deep anguish due to the conditions of marginality thrust upon them. The novel however in its fantastic end refuses to propose a coherent political alternative that will challenge the conditions of marginality experienced by people of color and various ethnic groups.

19 The critic Anne Brewster seeks to explain the note of optimism in Mukherjee’s writings on America in her essay “A Critique of Bharati Mukherjee’s Neo-Nationalism.” According to Brewster, Mukherjee’s early work, written in Canada, registers pessimism and

and the scripts it has produced have further transformed the constituency we refer to as Asian America. This shift has been initiated by the reconfiguration of aspects of ethnicity within a transnational context. During this period, relations between the U.S. and Asia have undergone dramatic change and we have entered a transnational era that is remaking economic, political, and cultural relations in the Pacific. As a result, ethnicity can no longer be solely contextualized within the problematic of whether and how Asian Americans will be incorporated into the American body politic, but must also be read through the deterritorialization of ethnic identity” (322-23)

thematically focuses on racism and homelessness. Brewster locates this preoccupation in the fact that Mukherjee had to deal with both “relative literary anonymity” and “racism” in Canada. A change in tone and thematic content occurred subsequent to her relocation in the United States where she gained literary recognition with “award-winning success and canonization.” Mukherjee felt less marginalized so her writing became more positive and hopeful.

20 As discussed earlier, the protagonist of *Jasmine* is dependent on men for both class and economic support. At the end of the novel, Jasmine’s search for an identity appears ultimately to be self-limiting, problematic and difficult as it continues to maneuver in various degrees within the dominant discourses of gender, race and class relations. *Jasmine*, in conclusion, enacts a limited and a problematic resolution with regards to the theme of gender equation. The reason is not difficult to find. Jasmine as a women of color continues to operate within the paradigm of patriarchy and lacks a support group due to which no radical counter-discourse seems to emerge. In contrast, Walker’s formulation of bonds between women—both sexual and emotional—provides an alternate script of selfhood that erases and demolishes constrictive ideas of womanhood. In the treatment of the theme of racial oppression, Walker visualizes the role of economic empowerment gained by the Black women. *Jasmine* does not acknowledge the existence of racial conflict—despite the protagonist’s experience of it. Rather, the text proposes assimilation into the dominant white culture as a method for identity construction and class elevation. From the perspective of class, Celie is able to transform from being a muted slave of her “father” and “husband” by wresting her freedom by becoming an entrepreneur. Unlike *The Color Purple*, *Jasmine* concludes without proposing any substantial economic resolution that might empower women in material terms. Rather economic stability in Mukherjee’s novel is derived from heterosexual relationships.

21 *Jasmine* depicts the heroine’s search for an identity which appears to be ultimately self-limiting and problematic. This is due to the novel’s unique treatment of issues of gender, race and class. *Jasmine* does not represent race relations as significantly hampering the trajectory of the heroine’s story and thereby eschews acknowledging the experience of marginality experienced by women of color. In addition, *Jasmine* accepts patriarchy as normative even though the heroine is acutely aware of its ability to unleash violence towards women. Rather the (white) heterosexual relationship is a source of class elevation. Unlike *Jasmine*, Celie’s emotional and erotic bonds with the other Black women facilitate social and individual transformations that also seek financial independence and the dignity from being

financially independent. In Mukherjee's *Jasmine*, the heroine does not destabilize dominant ideas of either gender or race despite her recognizing their tendency to oppress women of color and rather seeks to carve her identity within the dominant discourse.

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Speaking Through ‘Lard-Slicked Lips’ – Fatness, Racism, and Narratives of Self-Control Encircling the Paula Deen Scandal

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Abstract:

This article represents the efforts of a disciplinarily diverse group of scholars (a pop culture critic, a feminist scholar who works on body image, and a historian who works on issues of race and ethnicity) to decode the multiple nasty turns we saw taken in conversations around Paula Deen scandal. The authors are invested in creating dialogues between our various disciplines in order to determine how and why Deen’s own body came to be used to rebuke her for her remarks, how sizeism came to stand in for a condemnation of racism.

1 Paula Deen is an American celebrity chef, best known for her collection of extensive collection of cookbooks and popular cooking television programs, most notably on the Food Network. Deen’s unique brand of Southern-style cooking began as a small home business in the early 1990s that developed into the popular Savannah, Georgia restaurant, The Lady & Sons. Deen’s high calorie culinary creations were popular with tourists and local residents alike, and her particular type of Southern-style “comfort foods” earned her a significant following. By 2002, she had joined the Food Network with her show *Paula’s Home Cooking*. By 2013, Paula Deen was a well-recognized fixture on American cooking programs, food magazines, and on bookstore shelves. Yet legal troubles involving former staff members put Deen’s eatery empire in jeopardy and brought discourses of race, fatness, and bodies directly in the public eye.

2 In March of 2012 Lisa Jackson filed a lawsuit against Food Network star Paula Deen and her brother, Earl ‘Bubba’ Hiers, accusing them of racial and sexual workplace discrimination. Among the allegations, Deen is said to have made racially offensive comments, including one regarding the desired dress code for servers at her brother’s wedding.

“Well what I would really like is a bunch of little n***ers to wear long-sleeve white shirts, black shorts and black bow ties, you know in the Shirley Temple days, they used to tap dance around,” Jackson claims Deen told her. “Now, that would be a true Southern wedding wouldn’t it? But we can’t do that because the media would be on me about that.” (THR Staff)

Other accusations made in the lawsuit included:

Black staff had to use the back entrance to enter and leave restaurant; Black staff could only use one bathroom; and Black staff couldn't work the front of the restaurants. (Washington, 2013)

Despite the gravity of the allegations, however, it was not until May of this year when Deen admitted to having used the N-word and to being fascinated with the image of a plantation-themed wedding complete with waiters playing the role of slaves in a deposition for the lawsuit that the mainstream media started paying attention to the case (Duke).

3 The consequences for Deen were swift: the Food Network opted not to renew her contract, and companies like Wal-Mart, Target, Home Depot, Sears, Kmart, Walgreens, J. C. Penny, Caesars Entertainment, Novo Nordisk, and Smithfield Hams announced that they would cut ties with her (cf. Gennis and Bhasin). Random House dropped her forthcoming cookbook and canceled her five-year contract (Moskin), and QVC announced that they had “decided to take a pause” from their business relationship with Deen in the wake of the scandal (ABC News).

4 By August, the scandal died down, just in time for the courts to dismiss the racial discrimination case on the grounds that the plaintiff, a white woman, had no standing to sue (Bynum). The sexual harassment portion of the case, likewise, was dismissed with prejudice, and the remains of the lawsuit were finally resolved in a settlement agreement on August 23rd (Severson, "Settlement in Lawsuit Against Paula Deen"). But the damage to the Deen brand was already done.

5 This article represents the efforts of a disciplinarily diverse group of scholars (a pop culture critic, a historian who works on issues of race and ethnicity, and a feminist scholar who works on body image) to decode the multiple nasty turns we saw taken in conversations around Paula Deen scandal. We are invested in combining the perspectives of our various areas of focus to determine how and why Deen's own body came to be used to rebuke her for her remarks, how sizeism came to stand in for a condemnation of racism.

Headline News - With a Side of Fat Jokes

6 One of the things that fascinated us about the unfolding Paula Deen scandal in the media was how the occasion seemingly came to be used as a justification to launch a raft of mean-spirited body-based attacks against the former Food Network chef. Much of this discourse was circulated through social media like Facebook and Twitter. For example, Deen's food became the vehicle through which people lampooned her racial comments via the trending hashtag #PaulasBestDishes (some of the most clever entries included: Ashley

Carter @ashcar: “We Shall Over-Crumb Cake” and Parallel @ParallelRhymes: “Paula Deen’s Whole Grain Whites Only Rice: The South Will Rice Again”).

7 Many mainstream media pieces (even ones coming from sources often labeled as having a liberal bent) deployed such jokes in an apparent attempt to recruit viewers into feeling outraged at Deen. Rather than cultivating empathy with those who were accusing Deen of racial and sexual discrimination, these commentators used cheap othering tactics to paint her as a big, fat villain, literally. That is to say, her villainy and racism, it was implied, arose from her fatness. For example, on *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* (a late-night comedy program that many young Americans use as their source for news, see Feldman), substitute-host John Oliver’s segment on the scandal opens with a pair of fat jokes:

The N-word? Uh, which one did she use? Because I know it wasn’t ‘non-fat.’ BOOM! Paula Deen is the only chef to receive an A-rating from the American Lard Council. BOOM BOOM! I can do this all night! (“Fried & Prejudice”)

Following a few minutes discussing the allegations against Deen, the fat jokes resume. An image appears of Deen pouring a ladle full of melted butter into a large stock pot. Oliver quips:

Now, now. I know that looks disgusting. But don’t worry. It’s not butter. That’s just Paula Deen’s urine which, to be fair, at this point is about 85% butter. BOOM! I guess what I’m saying is I’m not surprised she was diagnosed with diabetes. I’m surprised they didn’t rename diabetes the Paula Deen Syndrome. (“Fried & Prejudice”)

The segment concludes with Oliver bringing in fellow comedian Jessica Williams, who frames Deen’s racism as a diabetes-esque disease; type I racism, Williams contends, is genetically inherited while type II is a “lifestyle disease” that afflicts those who wallow in racist sentiment. She concludes by stating that Paula Deen might be able to someday recover and live a normal life... that is, “until she chokes on a sausage fritter or drowns in a vat of butter” (“Fried & Prejudice – Paula Deen’s Diagnosis”). All told, John Oliver’s portion of the program spends three minutes and one second discussing the allegations against Deen and two minutes and eleven seconds indulging in fat jokes. Williams’s appearance lasts two minutes and fifty seconds and could be said to be working both angles simultaneously using her diabetes-themed framework to discuss racial relations.

8 Fans of *The Daily Show* will point out that the program is primarily comedic in nature, so jokes at Deen’s expense are to be expected. After all, Deen has long been the target of sizeist jokes. However, by choosing to make so many fat jokes in the wake of this particular story, *TDS* signals to viewers that the primary reason one should dislike Deen is her fat body and not her business practices or her allegedly antiquated and offensive racial

beliefs. To be fair, Oliver does seem to acknowledge that his jokes are nothing more than cheap-shots. The cheesy delivery style, with each joke emphasized with a pantomimed punch and a shouted “BOOM!” suggests that Oliver is aware that he is “punching down” by going after Deen’s weight.

9 Other commentators deployed the same rhetorical stance, lacing discussions of the Deen scandal with numerous asides about her food, her diabetes diagnosis, and her weight. For example, “The Rude Pundit,” a liberal blogger and regular guest on *The Stephanie Miller Show* left-wing radio program, wrote an especially vicious post on the topic. Here are a few choice quotes:

The first time you look at or hear Deen, you know that a racial epithet or two, at least, passed through those lard-slicked lips. [...] The Rude Pundit's basic attitude is ‘Fuck Paula Deen.’ She made a ton of money getting people fat and getting them to believe that eating piles of fattening shit was somehow just fine. This is not to even get into the cultural colonialism of her appropriation of African-American cooking without an acknowledgement of it. Then, after it turned out she had diabetes because of the butter-rich slops she threw in a trough to gorge on, she hid her disease for a couple of years until she signed a deal with a pharmaceutical company. And her TV show was just awful. So, yeah, fuck her. (Rude One)

He even threw in a gratuitous bout of fat-shaming aimed at the (uninvolved) recently deceased: “That revelation [that Deen had used the n-word] is about as surprising as James Gandolfini dying of a heart attack” (Rude One). Richard Lawson at “The Atlantic Wire” (a sister blog to the print magazine *The Atlantic*), on the other hand, kept it short and (none too) sweet, referring to Deen as a “grease being.”

10 Melissa Harris-Perry of MSNBC’s *The Melissa Harris-Perry Show*, normally a serious and thoughtful news personality, began her segment on Deen with a re-cap of Deen’s nutritional sins.

We thought we’d had our fill of delicious drama from television’s number one pusher of all things artery-clogging back when we found out that first ugly truth. You remember that while she was stuffing us full of fatty food, she was stuffing her pockets with money as a spokesperson for a diabetes drug maker. Oh, and keeping quiet for three years about her own diabetes. But what was a little questionable integrity amongst friends when Paula was still showing us Southern-style love with those delicious, no-calorie-spared home-cooked meals, mmm-hmmm? (NewsPoliticsInfo)

Meanwhile Alexandra Le Tellier described Deen’s racist speech as “toxic baloney” in a piece called “Paula Deen is Still Trying to Poison Us” written for the *Los Angeles Times*:

For years, Southern chef Paula Deen shamelessly built an audience around high-fat, high-calorie recipes. Never mind the burgeoning obesity epidemic responsible for an

increase in such killers as heart disease and diabetes. She was encouraging sticks of butter and celebrating all the way to the bank. It was unconscionable. (Le Tellier)

Even some of Deen's defenders jumped on the chance to shame her for being a peddler of fatty delights. In a piece titled 'Forgive Deen for Epithet, But Not Butter' featured in *USA Today*, DeWayne Wickham argued that, between using racial slurs and 'pushing fatty foods,' Deen culinary choices were "her real crime":

Paula Deen's foul mouth should have gotten her sacked long before now. If bad talk really matters to the folks who run the Food Network, it shouldn't have taken the leaking of a deposition, in which Deen admits having uttered the n-word in private conversations, to kick the celebrity cook off of TV. Her repeated use of the word "butter" should have gotten her fired long ago.... I'm willing to give Deen a pass on something she confessed to saying years ago. What I have a problem with is not the racist talk for which she has apologized. It's her years of hawking of unhealthy eating—such as her recipe for two glazed doughnuts wrapped around a cheeseburger patty. That should have pushed Food Network executives to give her the boot before her n-word scandal broke. (Wickham)

11 These commentators ironically use one type of hateful rhetoric to recruit viewers and readers into condemning another. Were they so afraid that an apathetic population would remain unmoved by accusations of racism and sexism that they felt the need to recruit their audience by playing into fat hatred? Or did they simply detect that their audiences would be glad to hear that Deen had made such politically incorrect comments so that they could have an excuse to pillory her for the sin of being an unapologetic fat woman in public? As a chef and a celebrity notoriously known for her size, perhaps some references to her food and her body are to be expected. But the stark opposition between the messages delivered in these commentaries and the form those messages take strike us as bizarre. Deen is said to be worthy of scorn because she judged other people based on what they look like, yet that scorn *itself* takes the form of attacks on her looks.

Body Discipline: Thinness as Control

12 The above accounts of the Deen debacle require audience complicity in recognizing and acknowledging Deen as fat in order to get the joke's punch line. As the butt of a joke, *fat* identifies a specific bodily feature as not simply flawed but further as discursively policeable. Like *queer*, *dyke*, *slut*, and a host of other words, *fat* can be used as a description of the body or bodily activities that operates to shame, silence, and negate the ethos of whomever it describes by marking that person as somehow Other than the imagined social ideal.

13 Many of the storylines described above further imply that the cause of Deen's problems is her fatness and dietary choices rather than her management of the workplaces she owns. This shift in focus from workplace management to dietary management illuminates the many social values connoted in the binary fatness/thinness. Thinness is commonly associated not only with beauty but with control, discipline, and the hard work of achieving and maintaining a thin body, one that has been "marked by the self's repeated discipline" (Kent 131). Fatness, then, is the visible stigma not only of the failure to meet a beauty ideal or standard but of the failure to master or even meet several otherwise unseen social values we see as made visible and legible on the thin body.

14 Control, in this case, is not only of one's body size or shape but of one's appetite, which consistently appears as a stand-in for temptation in the metaphors we live by. Consider Susan Bordo's descriptions of chocolate commercials that describe their products as "sinful" or yogurt commercials that use a rhetoric of "being good" to describe making food choices that will supposedly lead to thinness (128-129). Blaming Deen's fatness for her follies links her fatness to a number of choices for which she is currently being condemned, from her language use to her workplace management. Discussions, and particularly condemnations, of Deen seem to list being fat as both a part of her history of wrongdoing and as further visual evidence of such wrong – something others can see written on her very body to speak for her character.

Avoidant Behavior: Substituting Individual Failures for Accounts of Structural Racism

15 Ultimately, we see two processes at work here in the discussion of Paula Deen. First, Paula Deen's racist actions are seen as understandable, predictable even, because of her relationship to fattening foods, which are seen as out of control. As a result, she is seen as lacking discipline over her physical desires, a fact which is then linked directly to her racist sentiments. Ultimately, Deen's lack of discipline means that she is unable to control both her own weight/appetites and her own internalized racist thoughts.

16 This lends itself to the second process: namely, the disavowal of structural racism through liberal discourses of individual irrationality. Focusing on Paula Deen's actions as proof positive of "authentic" racist sentiment, pundits have managed to inscribe Paula Deen as an ancient relic whose actions are out of step with contemporary American society (see Stoler). Such a view, however, reinforces the notion that racism exists only in flagrant verbal displays, like Deen's use of the n-word. As blogger and essayist Chauncey de Vega argued,

Paula Deen's transparent and guileless racism is also a tool and object of national catharsis. Institutional racism remains a significant problem in post civil rights America. Those who embody "old fashioned racism" like Paula Deen can be condemned as a means for the (White) body politic to bathe in the self-congratulatory rays of just how "far" we/they have come. By suggesting that Paula Deen is a social and political dinosaur, one best fit for the dustbin of America's racial past, colorblind racism of the present is overlooked--if not nurtured. (de Vega)

These two processes are interlinked. As Deen's racist speech is interpreted as a form of individual malfeasance, divorced from larger circulations of racism in the United States, it is also justified through her lack of self-discipline. In this formulation, Deen's actions are read--on a social and personal level--as individual failings through her failure to control what goes into or comes out of her mouth. The subsequent public scapegoating of Deen is imbricated in a form of social shaming. The body policing of Deen's supposedly uncontrolled eating is reinforced by the mass judgment of her inappropriate statements. The solution offered for Deen's transgressions, then, is a form of social shunning; in place of her lack of self-control, public response instead becomes a means of enacting control over her body.

17 While Deen's words should and have been judged harshly, the way in which this judgment has occurred, has been inextricably linked to fat-shaming, body policing, and control. Deen is thus rendered as an unchecked menace due to her inability to limit her consumption of food or production of injurious speech. The discourse also marks her as a threat to an imagined post-racial order. She therefore must be eliminated, lest institutional forms of racism be more critically observed. The scapegoating of Paula Deen for her lack of bodily discipline is, at its heart, also deeply bound up in ideas of individual responsibility that ignore larger structural ways in which racism (or obesity, for that matter) occurs (cf. *WeAreTheSavageNation*).

18 In her work on nineteenth-century American literature, theorist Kyla Wazana Tompkins has argued that "eating reveals the self to be reliant upon that which is beyond its epidermal limits" (3). The dependency of the body upon eating is referenced through social taboos of shaming and restraint in ways that can resemble social responses to racist speech. Thus, the evocation of Deen's fatness allows commentators (and, by extension, their viewers and readers) to pat themselves on the back for their own self-discipline in addition to condemning Deen for her (supposed) lack of discipline. As noted above, fatness is associated with temptation, something we might succumb to if we are incautious. And racism is often constructed as a personal failing on the part of individuals and not as what it actually is: an

institutional exercise of power. What if we were to combine these two observations to help explain our case study on the rhetoric used to describe the Paula Deen scandal?

19 The self-congratulatory rhetoric deployed by commentators writing and speaking about Deen suggests that, like fat, racism is something that is sometimes constructed as secretly tempting even as it is seen as something shameful; something that must be actively resisted because of its delightful naughtiness; something that readers and viewers can be proud of eschewing (as opposed to the bare minimum standard of decent behavior). It is constructed as an impulse that must constantly be fought and yet, perversely, it is also occasionally admired in those who are imagined as “brave” enough to display it unabashedly. Take, for example, the accolades we give to comedians who claim to be rebelling against the constraints of “political correctness” when they tell racist and sexist jokes. Their defenders praise them for “telling it like it is” in the face of censorious “political correctness” (Favreau 212).

20 By combining fat jokes with coverage of Deen’s racist follies, are these commentators protesting too much? They emphatically distinguish (and ultimately enable their audiences to imagine) themselves as the type who are disciplined in the face of temptation. But they simultaneously expose an urge to indulge in the kind of racism that Deen was caught engaging in, just as they might occasionally sin (so to speak) with one of Deen’s full-fat meals (but only when no one is looking, of course).

The Southern Connection: Racialized Labor and Southern Cuisine

21 In these discussions of Deen, there is an implied connection between Southernness, fatness, and racism that needs teasing out. Take for example, the claim by The Rude Pundit that, “you know that a racial epithet or two, at least, passed through those lard-slicked lips.” If, as the blogger suggests, this is an observation based on looking at or hearing Deen alone, we have a few potential visible and audible pieces of evidence at hand to come to this conclusion: gender, age, clothing and hairstyle, body shape, accent, and potentially dialect and figures of speech.

22 It would be easy for people to jump to presumptions that Deen is or has been outwardly, verbally racist based on her visible age, interpreted socio-economic class (clothes, speech patterns, the fact that she has a television show), and the fact that she is Southern – a potential social and political dinosaur. The most concretely detailed, visceral, and memorable portion of this claim, however, is the speaker’s description of “those lard-slicked lips,” which forcibly takes the focus off Deen’s age, class, or other characteristics that people frequently

use to understand, explain, and even excuse an individual's racism (again, finding ways to blame individuals rather than acknowledging racism as institutional). This visceral description calls attention not just to Deen's body and diet in its mention of lard but directly ties her body and diet to a lack of control over not only what goes in, but what comes out of her mouth. We can purportedly know, just by looking at her, that racial epithets have passed through her mouth because they can pass easily through "lard-slicked lips." It is what she has taken in her mouth that makes her speech so slippery.

23 While her "lard slicked lips" indicate greed and lack of control, they are also a form of cultural positioning that particularly marks Deen as Southern (as lard is a cooking fat that is strongly associated with Southern cuisine, see Ozersky) and other from "normal" American discourse. This othering implicitly grounds Deen in a Southern past, a spatial and temporal boundary ahistorically cast as the unique repository of antiquated racial animus. To do so serves liberal discourses of progress that position racism as an individual failing and obscures continuing structural discrimination in a supposedly postracial era.

24 Yet the lard on Deen's lips signifies a different type of historic South as well. It also marks Deen's Southernness as sanitized from its historic violences at the same time that it posits a uniquely antique, racist time/region. Deen has certainly profited from a particular commodification of Southern charm; it is entirely this form of folksy white culinary culture that is being re-referenced as rationale for the simultaneous uncontrolled sins of obesity and racism in media depiction. Yet this easy equation of Southernness to portliness and prejudice obscures the much racialized labor that produced the culinary culture from which Deen profits.¹ As food historian Michael Twitty has argued, "the Southern food [Deen has] been crowned the queen of was made into an art largely in the hands of enslaved cooks, some like the ones who prepared food on your ancestor's Georgia plantation." Thus, the food culture that Deen markets has itself been appropriated from black labor. This is a crucial aspect missing from the obesity/racism equation surrounding Deen; it has rendered her a relic to be shunned, but in the process ignores the institutional whitewashing that creates the very brand of Southern cooking she espouses. It is in this whitened lacuna that a "Paula Deen Southern" can be imagined; one that is simultaneously timeless and profoundly ahistoric, where racism structures the individual choices of actors, but where blacks themselves are nowhere to be seen. It is perhaps these competing Souths in the American popular imagination, ancient and

¹ For more on white women's appropriation of black cuisine, see Williams-Forsen, p. 166 – 71.

sanitized, that give non-Southern pundits the discursive power underlying such statements such as “a racial epithet or two, at least, passed through those lard-slicked lips.”

25 Deen’s entire career has been about presenting “Southern” culture and hospitality as a lifestyle that is provided to white families by their white matriarchs. Other brands like the exceptionally white-washed *Southern Living Magazine* do similar work (Fry 186). Deen’s family-centered business model is built upon these logics: she passes her culinary skill and her brand on to her sons, who in turn open their own restaurants, sell their own cookbooks, and star in their own Food Network television shows (Finn). She even has a flagship restaurant called Lady & Sons. The implication is that Deen’s lifestyle brand is something passed down within the family. There is no mention of those from whom Deen “inherited” (read: appropriated) her cuisine.

26 Well, there was not any mention of the African-American origins of this style of Southern culture until Deen’s fetishization of the plantation-themed wedding (THR Staff) and the alleged request that a female African-American employee of hers wear an “an old-style Aunt Jemima outfit” (Severson, “Paula Deen’s Cook Tells of Sights”) came to light. These accusations are perverse admissions of the true origins of Deen’s brand of Southern hospitality. They reference a different kind of inheritance that wealthy whites could pass onto their children to maintain their genteel lifestyles: their slaves. Perhaps what is so shocking about the Deen scandal is that it pulls back the curtain on the aesthetic of Southern charm, revealing it as nostalgia for a time when labor-intensive homemaking was easy to do, providing one had the help of several enslaved servants and cooks. Perhaps the scapegoating of Deen allows us to retain our fantasy of Southern hospitality while attributing all of the racist baggage that goes along with it to a single figure.

Conclusion: Racism as Individual Indulgence

27 Deen’s food, and Southern food in general, is thought of as indulgent. Deen is a cultural icon not just in the sense of a TV chef but whenever anyone needs a shorthand mention of decadence in terms of preparing and eating food and serving it to others. One of the fascinating aspects of Deen’s show is that admits, even flaunts, these cultural dietary no-no’s through a medium with a broad reach and a long memory; when she broadcasts and commits herself to film, she is both a potential teacher of these practices and a potential other at whom we may look askance over her dietary indulgence. We know what she puts into her food because she shows and tells us. We have the choice to follow her influence, to look down on it, or both, as it suits us. Her show is equally about reveling in (appropriated)

Southern history and the indulgence of Southern food, and I think that this is an important point to return to - the temptation of Deen's cuisine unites with the temptation of falling into racist actions, which is why people feel comfortable and deserving of a pat themselves on the back when they think that they have resisted these temptations.

28 The summer of 2013 marked more than the culmination of Deen's *annus horribilis*, however; it was also the summer of the George Zimmerman trial, arguably the year's most visible national media spectacle centering on questions of racism, violence, and Southern history. The trial of Zimmerman, a volunteer neighborhood watchman in Florida tried for the murder of seventeen year-old Trayvon Martin, a young black man who lived in the neighborhood, became a lightning rod for conversations about racism, bodies, and security. It should be noted that to a lesser extent, Zimmerman also became subject to comments about his body size (he gained over one hundred pounds between his arrest and the trial), but none to the extent that Deen received. More significantly, much of the larger discourse revolved around Zimmerman's role as unofficial security against potential "thugs" or "criminals." Zimmerman's ultimate acquittal hinged upon a defense that argued against structural racism and instead positioned the night of the killing as both an act of self-defense and a "tragic accident." Such a rhetorical positioning disavows structural racism and instead underlines the notion of racism as individual failure, one that could happen "to any of us." The rhetorical similarities of such "accidental racist acts" between Zimmerman and Deen were underlined by an October 2013 episode of *Law and Order: Special Victims Unit*, where a thinly-veiled Deen analog (celebrity chef Jolene Castille, played by Cybill Shepherd) mistakes an innocent black teenager in a hooded sweatshirt for a potential rapist, shooting him in the street. Castille is a beloved Southern chef with a private penchant for saying racist comments about African-Americans, yet she in turn is acquitted, amid public outcry. The conflation of Zimmerman with Deen in popular media serves to reinforce the idea of racism as individual failing, and in so doing, makes the actors both scapegoats for structures of racism, but also warnings for the viewing audience that such actions are one mistake away.

29 The Paula Deen case, and Paula Deen's performance as a Southern food icon, makes such a fascinating case study because of these multiple levels of temptation and resistance in food, appropriation, racism, and the like. It may well be easier than many would like to admit to actually be Deen, secretly (or not so secretly) thinking that it would be quite comfortable to sit as a guest at a Southern plantation wedding with ten sticks of butter in one's corn bread while a comforting Aunt Jemima figure attends to us, even if we find it problematic at a moral, ethical, and/or intellectual level. This is why so many writers link her racism to her

fatness in their condemnations of her and in their self-congratulatory pats on the back for not falling into this trap. As Tompkins has argued, “the mouth is understood as a site to which and within which various political values unevenly adhere and through which food as mediated experience imperfectly bonds with the political to form the fictions that are too often understood within everyday life as racial truths” (5). Media discussion of a public white, overweight celebrity spilling racist discourse from her mouth reveals much about the simultaneous and interrelated constructions of race, gender, and consumption. Thus, the mouth that is seen to lack control over the fleshly attributes that fill it is linked to the denigrating invective that also poured, unrestrained, from lard-slicked lips.

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A "Wild Zone" of Her Own: Locating the Chicana Experience in the Theatre Works of Josefina López

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Abstract:

The present study focuses on the different psychological spaces that Chicana women must occupy in order to develop an oppositional consciousness and discourse through an analysis of three plays by Josefina López: *Boyle Heights* (2005), *Detained in the Desert* (2010), and *Hungry Woman* (2013). The "Wild Zone" theory as posited by Cordelia Candelaria in "The 'Wild Zone' Thesis as Gloss in Chicana Literary Study" serves as the primary theoretical lens due to its usefulness in an intersectional analysis of Chicana experience and identity, both in the Southwestern United States and abroad, by theorizing the separate cultural and political spaces, or zones, that women inhabit in society.

1 One of the primary aims of the Chicana Feminist Movement, a group of women of Mexican descent in the United States theorizing the historical, social, economic, and political roles of women, that gained traction in the 1970s and 1980s, and continues to be a driving force in Chicano society today, has been to express and assert the validity of female discourse as well as the textual zone of Chicanas' experience. In "The History of Chicanas: Proposal for a Materialist Perspective," Chicana scholar Rosaura Sánchez, plants the seed for a feminist analysis giving value to the Chicana subject's "multiple subjectivities" of gendered, ethnicized, racialized, and classed identity and experience (1-29). Essentially, Sánchez demonstrates the necessity for gender-specific inquiry in the research and study of Chicanas as well as other women of color. One such theory, the "Wild Zone" Thesis, remains a useful tool in analyzing the Chicana experience in the United States. Proposed by anthropologists Edwin and Shirley Ardener in their influential study *Perceiving Women* (1975) and applied to the study of Chicana experience by Cordelia Candelaria in "The 'Wild Zone' Thesis as Gloss in Chicana Literary Study," the "Wild Zone" signifies the separate cultural and political spaces, or zones, that women inhabit in society, which, coincidentally, are only recognized by women (Ardener 24). While not privileging gender over race, ethnicity, or class, the theory posits that women's lived experience has formulated specific female-identified subcultures marginalized within and outside of the male-centered patriarchy. According to the thesis, the patriarchy, in this case traditional Chicano society, has created learned gender differences, which are largely linked to the acquired stereotypes of masculinity and femininity in Mexican and Mexican-American society. In the case of Chicana womanhood, the age-old triad of *La Virgen de Guadalupe*, *La Llorona*, and *La Malinche* (or, virgin, mother, whore) exemplifies

this cultural stereotypification. Though being challenged largely today by Chicana feminists, activists, writers, and artists, these conventional ideals of Chicano femininity remain a consequence of the patriarchal values that have marked the Chicano experience in the United States. Josefina López, similar to other contemporary Chicana playwrights such as Cherríe Moraga, Monica Palacios, Milcha Sánchez-Scott, Adelina Anthony, and Virginia Grise, seeks to challenge, decolonize, and redefine these gendered stereotypes through her work. By empowering her female protagonists with feminist agency, her characters hold the tools to theorize the connection between their experience as women in a patriarchal society and their physical and metaphysical location.

2 This essay seeks to analyze the connection between Chicana identity and her location, *patria* (homeland), place, and land base in the theatre works of Chicana playwright Josefina López while demonstrating the possible uses of the “Wild Zone” Thesis as a means of creating female agency directly linked to her location and physical surroundings. In López’s plays, *Boyle Heights* (2005), *Detained in the Desert* (2010), and *Hungry Woman* (2013), we will see, serve as protests against the silencing of Chicanas while highlighting the link between female experience and space and its expression in dramatic literature.

The "Wild Zone" Thesis

3 Ardener’s “Wild Zone” Thesis, an essay from their book *Perceiving Women* (1975) which focuses on the anthropology of gender and their different ethnographic field experiences, posits that the female voice has been entirely muted, both silenced and marginalized, by the dominant patriarchy; the female’s power has been blocked by the controlling entity of society so that she has lost all privilege and agency (Ardener 22-5). Essentially, this authority over women creates disproportionate sociocultural effects, thus producing a larger distance between female desire and actual choice, between female identity and the capacity to actualize that identity (Candelaria 249). The fundamental components of the “Wild Zone” Thesis are that of Zone and Wild. Zone connotes both the physiological-derived space (social structures limiting women due to biological distinctions) and the stereotype-derived space (in this case, the traditional Chicana stereotypes); notably, both of these spaces of appropriate Chicana womanhood are dictated by the beliefs of the dominating Mexican-American culture in the Southwestern United States. On the other hand, *Wild* suggests a female identity unrestrained by the mandated definitions and assumptions of traditional patriarchal Chicano society.

Women as politically subordinated subjects must, for survival, know and practice the dominant patriarchal discourse and conventions, but equally they must maintain an unmediated, affirmative identity of self and class. They develop an/other culture and discourse – one not required for the survival of, and therefore largely unavailable to, the empowered members of the dominant class. (249)

This is to say that woman, as an alleged subordinate being, must occupy the interstitial space between the dominant culture and their own self-identity as a method of survival. Furthermore, Chicanas' compound oppression – that of being a woman in an ethno-racial underprivileged group– must be recognized considering that the additional burden of gender is substantial in all patriarchal societies. Nevertheless, one must not privilege gender over race because Chicanos themselves belong to an economically and politically subordinated class in the United States, a country which throughout its history has privileged an Anglo narrative (Candelaria 250). Still, the Chicana experience cannot be examined outside of the gendered differences she faces simply by being born female. Through the process of locating Chicana womanhood within a zone of experience and power inaccessible to those in the dominating group, the authority of Chicana artistic and literary expression, such as that of playwright Josefina López, is directly defined within Chicana experience (Candelaria 251).

Writing the "Wild Zone"

5 Essentially, playwright Josefina López embeds, whether consciously or not, “Wild Zone” theory into several of her plays as a strategy to accurately portray Chicana experience and identity, a process that draws attention to Josefina Ludmer’s canonical text on Latin American feminism, “Las tretas del débil” (“The Tricks of the Weak,” 1984), in which she illustrates the ways in which subordinated women develop strategies to give them agency and power.¹ In this manner, the act of writing the “Wild Zone” serves as a strategy that the marginalized playwright, López, integrates into her work to empower her Chicana protagonists. Effectively, by incorporating her very own “Wild Zone” into her theatre works, Josefina López is capable of rewriting women’s lived experience in a way that more genuinely reflects their complex nature. This procedure functions as one of revision according to Gilbert and Gubar in their essay “Infection in the Sentence”; because the majority of male Mexican-American writers historically have defined women along the lines

¹ Ludmer, through her analysis of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz’s *La Respuesta* theorizes that there are certain strategies that the weak must develop in positions of subordination and marginality. The principal strategy is that of female writing, taking the pen and writing regardless of thematic content, style, or intended audience. Furthermore, Ludmer establishes the empowering tricks associated with silence, knowing when and when not to speak so that women are able to think about what to say as a tool to create a more effective, and empowering, discourse (47-55).

of rigid stereotypes, female writers must revise the work that has been done previously in order to appropriately define themselves as women and create an active female subculture, distinct from the male-dominated counterpart. Gilbert and Gubar claim:

Not only do their precursors incarnate patriarchal authority (as our discussion of the metaphor of literary paternity argued), they attempt to enclose her in definitions of her person and her potential which, by reducing her to extreme stereotypes (angel, monster) drastically conflict with her own sense of her self – that is, of her subjectivity, her autonomy, her creativity. (23)

Gilbert and Gubar reinforce the notion that women are largely and overtly defined by the identified patriarchy, and to a more extreme level in a culture as traditional as that of the Chicano Nation. For this reason, the Chicana writer must pen her own “Wild Zone” as a space to create accurate definitions and imagery associated with the female subculture.

In a similar vein, Hélène Cixous calls women to reconsider the patriarchal traditions by which they are defined in her seminal essay “The Laugh of the Medusa.” By claiming their role in history, past and present, through the act of writing, the pen serves as a tool to problematize the traditions previously used to define women based on exclusionary practices of male-centered discourse, Freudian and Lacanian psychology, and other rhetorics of desire. Cixous demonstrates the value of the female writer as she has the power to ignite social transformation through the process of liberating women from their silence:

Women must write her self: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies – for the same reasons, by the law, with the same fatal goal. Woman must put herself into the text – as into the world and into history – by her own movement. The future must no longer be determined by the past. I do not deny that the effects of the past are still with us. But I refuse to strengthen them by repeating them... (347)

By writing a zone only identified by women, female writers can criticize the patriarchal culture that has given more value to men’s writing while undermine its female counterpart. Noteworthy to this study, Josefina López began to write as a way to break the stereotyped gender narrative that was typically seen during the height of the Chicano Theatre Movement (1965-1980). As a high school drama student, she noticed a glaring absence of multi-dimensional female characters in the majority of plays being produced and presented in theaters across the Southwest United States; this experience urged her to pen her own plays in which a variety of multi-layered female characters are featured, essentially exhibiting a more accurate depiction of the multiplicity of the Chicana experience. López’s experience reinforces the notion established by Cixous that the act of writing as a woman provokes women to enter into the public sector and, in doing so, ignite a change in society.

7 Literature provides a platform to voice the concerns of women, thus operating as a liberating force. By revising stereotypical representations of women in literature, writing serves as a tool to decolonize the Chicana experience through multi-layered portrayals of self-representation that are inextricably connected to the physical spaces they inhabit. According to Alvina Quintana, writing “provides the stage for a multiplicity of voices, experiences, issues which speak to the subordination of women to ideology and thus replaces the oversimplistic stereotypes so often used to categorize and define women” (209). By seizing the pen, the Chicana writer is able to enter into history, which according to Cixous “has always been based on her oppression” (351). Only by doing so will the opportunity for liberation materialize, allowing her to be truly detached from patriarchal stereotypification.²

8 While many writing tactics can be utilized to theorize the condition of womanhood, perhaps none is more effective in studying Chicanas than the Ardener’s “Wild Zone” Thesis, as it focuses on the connection between space derived from both social structures and stereotypes. López, similar to other contemporary Chicana writers, deconstructs the previously monolithic gender paradigms that have defined their history in an attempt to decolonize Chicana subjectivity. Within Chicano and Mexican-American culture, women are expected to adhere to the traditional triad of *La Virgen de Guadalupe*, *La Llorona*, and *La Malinche*. Gloria Anzaldúa affirms: “La gente Chicana tiene tres madres. All three are mediators: Guadalupe, the virgin mother who has not abandoned us, la Chingada (Malinche), the raped mother whom we have abandoned, and la Llorona, the mother who seeks her lost children and is the combination of the other two” (30). In this way, Anzaldúa suggests that the legacies of these figures be reinterpreted so that Chicana women can be free to become multi-dimensional subjects. Nevertheless, Chicanas face a double-marginalization, that of women and members of a racial minority group in the United States. Essentially, they have been colonized by their own people. As colonized subjects, active Chicanas in the Chicana feminist movement:

seek to de-colonize ourselves by learning about our own history, by conducting research that sheds light on our behavior and by creating images that are concordant with the images we have of ourselves. Through a de-colonization process, we see to destroy those images upon us by an outside world hostile to women and ethnic peoples ‘different’ from the so-called mainstream. (Herrera-Sobek 14-5)

² Cixous adds that women can be liberated through the act of writing, gaining feminist and political agency in the process: “She must write her self, because this is the invention of a new insurgent writing which, when the moment of her liberation has come, will allow her to carry out the indispensable ruptures and transformations in her history, first at two levels that cannot be separated” (350).

Chicana feminist attempted to affirm their position in not only the Chicano community but also within the larger United States society by writing themselves into history. By means of this process of decolonization, Chicanas gained self-worth and enhanced their significance within their culture and history. Essentially, this process was marked by not only a physical liberation but a psychological one as well in which Chicanas contested oppression and unearned male privilege within Chicano cultural nationalism. In light of these premises, the portrayal of compelling Chicana women whose personifications coincide directly with their physical environments in Josefina López's *Boyle Heights*, *Detained in the Desert*, and *Hungry Woman* indicates the significance of place, notably geography and home, as metaphor in locating Chicana experience and identity. López, whose works are filled with strong references and connections to physical space and geography, demonstrates a Chicana expression directly linked to home and to homeland while giving her plays a newly discovered feminine territory within the "Wild Zone" of her Chicana-identified identity.

Boyle Heights

8 *Boyle Heights* (2005) represents Josefina López's vision of the importance of home and returning home. The play depicts a struggling writer and actress, Dalia, who is forced to move back in with her parents after she breaks up with her boyfriend. It is no coincidence that López chose to set the largely autobiographical work in her hometown neighborhood of Boyle Heights in East Los Angeles. By doing so, this work embodies Adrienne Rich's ideology about "Revision – the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction...an act of survival" (24). Even though López spent the majority of her formative years in the neighborhood, her early opinions and beliefs about the space were largely associated with negative connotations about her experiences as a Chicana growing up in the neighborhood. López describes what it was like to grow up in Boyle Heights: "I felt invisible because not only was I undocumented and felt there was something wrong with me, but as a young girl I was treated inferior to my brother" ("On Being a Playwright" 45). Therefore, her struggle becomes a revisionary one in which she chooses to redefine both herself and her thoughts about her surroundings. Part of redefining Boyle Heights involves putting herself back into the neighborhood, as manifested in the play, and as artistic director of her own cultural arts space, Casa 0101, which still serves Boyle Heights to this day. In a sense, López has given back to her community more than just a play set in Boyle Heights, but a cultural arts space to promote the advancement of the arts in a socio-economically underprivileged East Los Angeles neighborhood in need of more positive

opportunities for personal growth and development. Both López and the fictional Dalia are reclaiming the neighborhood for themselves and other marginalized individuals, calling attention to the play's graffiti artist Chava who establishes one of the key themes of the play: "we're reclaiming it for ourselves – we're saying 'This community belongs to us'" (*Boyle Heights* 188).

10 *Boyle Heights* manifests a heightened interest in writing the protagonist's self as a simultaneous observer, antagonist, and embodiment of place. Through an intersectional depiction of Dalia's gender, race, and economic circumstances, López is able to highlight the parallels between her protagonist and Boyle Heights. Dalia's position as a Mexican-American woman in an impoverished neighborhood draws attention to the marginalized location both occupy in relation to Mexican-American men and Greater Los Angeles, respectively. In this way, Dalia, as a writer, frequently documents both her current situation and that of the neighborhood by means of her poetry and journal entries. Through her writing, Dalia is able to analyze her individual situation and genuinely, perhaps for the first time, comprehend the profound connection she has with Boyle Heights. In this sense, the play serves as a "love song to the playwright's hometown" (Huerta 9). When Dalia arrives in Boyle Heights, she identifies her life transition with failure and negativity, but, in time, the neighborhood acts as a sort of mythical homeland – perhaps paralleling the Chicano Nation's connection with Aztlán³ – that gives Dalia strength. When Dalia's ex-boyfriend begs her to take him back, she utilizes this recently discovered strong mental connection with her physical space, reclaiming it as her own, as well as her feminist agency of the pen to write him a poem titled "My Low Self-Esteem Days"; Dalia writes:

Si te quise fue porque I had low self-esteem.
If I swore I'd always be by you side,
was because I had nothing better to do.
Si te dije you were a great lover,
was because I had nothing to compare it to.
If I said you and me were meant to be,
was because I thought I couldn't find better.
Si te dije que te amaba con toda mi alma,
was because I hadn't found myself.
[...]
Time has proved me stronger,
I don't need your approval any longer.
So today, I ain't even gonna bother...

³ According to Aztec legend, Aztlán was the original home of the Aztec people. Today, this land is thought to be the American Southwest. The term was adopted by Chican-rights activists during the Chicano Civil Rights Movement which began in 1965. In this way, it was meant to connect Chicanos with their indigenous pre-conquest roots and stake claim to the conquered land.

To let you know how good it's been...
Without you. (*Boyle Heights* 196-7)

Notwithstanding the poem's code-switching between English and Spanish, thus reinforcing the hybrid identity of the Mexican-American, Dalia's poem effectively draws attention to her own feminist-derived space in which she is able to battle against the monolithic gender expectations and stereotypes associated with a submissive woman. As Jaime tells Dalia earlier in the play, "If you were in Mexico, you'd be married with five kids and pregnant with another" (*Boyle Heights* 154), essentially making the association between location and cultural expectations. If Dalia's parents had remained in Mexico, the likelihood of cultivating positive agency and a feminist voice would be significantly limited under the traditionally patriarchal Mexican society to which López frequently criticizes throughout her dramatic works. Only through living in Boyle Heights does the opportunity emerge to not adhere to a dated stereotype; Dalia does not have to be *La Virgen de Guadalupe*, *La Malinche*, or *La Llorona*, but can instead be herself. In a sense, this reflects a Chicana feminist revision of the American Dream in which women have the agency and voice to make their own decisions instead of adhering to the cultural guidelines established by patriarchy. Dalia is given the opportunity to select her own path, a possibility that would remain out of reach if Dalia were to have been raised in Mexico.

11 Near the end of the play, Dalia finally understands what Boyle Heights means to her. Dalia writes:

Poetry is being... Being here... Being home... Being Boyle Heights.
My beautiful little barrio.
Since I can remember I swore I'd leave you like all the rest,
But when I'm in Paris, Rome or New York I just want to come back.
Everyone thinks you're East L.A.
But I know who you really are.
I know what they say on the five o'clock news isn't true.
I know you are a beautiful place where families like me loved and lived.
I know you are located near the L.A. River, somewhere close to my heart. (199)

Although Dalia previously connected the neighborhood to personal failure, she now understands the significance of the place. Boyle Heights is more than just a mere concept; it is an actual place, one in which both playwright and personage matures (Huerta 9). Dalia, now more enlightened having understood her spiritual connection to her homeland, is grateful for what the neighborhood has symbolized to her: "Boyle Heights, thank you for the stories. Thank you for the memories. I will return when I have something to give back to you. Goodbye" (*Boyle Heights* 146). Cognizant of the prospect of developing feminist agency as a

writer, Dalia will return one day when she is ready to give something back to the community, paralleling López's founding of CASA 0101, thus granting other Chicana women a positive connection to home.

Detained in the Desert

12 Similar to *Boyle Heights*, Josefina López's *Detained in the Desert* (2010) validates the connection between the cultural and political space that Chicana women inhabit in society. *Detained in the Desert* is López's response to Arizona's Senate Bill 1070. While the law adheres to United States federal law requiring undocumented immigrants over the age of 14 who stay in the country for more than 30 days to register with the United States government, it also inadvertently allows law enforcement officers to try to determine an individual's immigration or citizenship status. In this way, the controversial bill allows police officers to question the citizenship of anyone whom they believe could be undocumented, essentially legalizing racial profiling in the state of Arizona (Koven 18-19). By concentrating on gendered oppression, López engages the United States-Mexico border as a geopolitical site of increased violence, racism, and legislative abuse against brown bodies in an effort to better understand the experience of being a woman of color on the border in the current sociopolitical climate. The play exemplifies López's use of writing and theatre as a form of political protest; the playwright seeks to create "some degree of understanding that goes beyond the immigration rhetoric and fear mongering that is happening right now in this country. Hopefully with this play I've shed some light on the darkness of ignorance" (*Detained* 19). López explores this "darkness of ignorance" through the play's two narratives: one focusing on Sandi Belen, a recent college graduate who is disconnected from her Mexican heritage, and another centering on a radio talk-show host, Lou Becker, who incites anti-immigration propaganda among his audience on the Arizona-Mexico border, an open wound as Gloria Anzaldúa calls it: "*una herida abierta* where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds" (3). As Sandi and Lou question their thinking about immigration and the role they occupy on the geopolitical landscape that is the border, López forces her audience to consider the consequences of anti-immigration laws such as Arizona SB 1070.

13 Josefina López incorporates the emblematic use of place, in this case the border and, on a deeper level, Aztlán, as a source of spiritual energy for Sandi Belen. After being racially profiled and believed to be an undocumented immigrant, Sandi, responding to her boyfriend Matt's lack of understanding, comments on the oppression one faces in a country that privileges white skin and European origins: "you will never know what it's like to be me.

You don't have dark skin. Nobody ever questions your right to exist or succeed. You have no clue how hard it is to be an American when you look like me!" (*Detained* 43). After recognizing the injustices that she faces in the borderlands, Sandi is capable of tapping into her own experiences with the aim of developing self-defensive tactics and, in such a way, fighting against the injustices of the region that she faces. To this end, as a result of being racially-profiled by the Arizona police officer, Sandi chooses to cultivate her own "Wild Zone" discourse in order to successfully navigate this geopolitical space of increased racial and gendered violence, drawing attention to Mary Louise Pratt's theory of the "contact zone" as seen in *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (1992). The "contact zone" serves the site where the fusion of inequalities and differences is manifested; concurrently, it pairs with Gloria Anzaldúa's notion of the multiplicity of border crossings, both physical and metaphysical as seen in her seminal text *Borderlands/La Frontera* (Pratt 53).

14 In this "contact zone," Sandi is able to cultivate certain tricks, or *tretas* according to Josefina Ludmer's theory as established in her essay "Las tretas del débil," and strategies to defend herself from gendered and racial oppression experienced on the border at the hands of White males. Pratt argues: "While subjugated peoples cannot readily control what emanates from the dominant culture, they do determine to varying extents what they absorb into their own, and what they use it for" (6). Pratt suggests the necessity of developing a counter discourse in which subjugated peoples seek ways of developing certain strategies of resistance. For example, Trevor Boffone in "Detenida en la frontera: 'La conciencia de la mestiza' en *Detained in the Desert* de Josefina López" analyzes the feminist coming-to-consciousness of Sandi and her development of a self-defense tactic, Gloria Anzaldúa's *la facultad*, "a kind of survival tactic that people, caught between the worlds, unknowingly cultivate" (39), as a means of navigating and ultimately surviving her surroundings. *La facultad*, a form of oppositional consciousness, connotes the moment when the individual loses their ignorance and innocence, thus producing a transformation in their viewpoint that adds multiple meanings and interpretations to the ways in which the person views society and the world (Anzaldúa 39). By means of gaining self-enlightenment, the woman is able to obtain consciousness in order to develop a feminist agency. To this end, *Detained* portrays a zone of psychological alienation and socio-political subordination. Because Sandi has brown skin, she is racially profiled and believed to be an undocumented immigrant, even though she has rejected her Mexican heritage in an attempt to pass in White-American culture and society. Sandi recognizes as a young girl the privilege that white skin and Anglo-association carries in mainstream United States culture. After being discriminated against in elementary

school, she alters her identity because, as Gloria Anzaldúa theorizes, “The only ‘legitimate’ inhabitants are those in power, the whites and those who align themselves with whites” (3-4). When the Arizona police officer pulls over Sandi and Matt, he immediately believes that she is a prostitute because she has been performing oral sex on her boyfriend. Furthermore, after seeing Sandi’s brown skin, he tells her: “You are six miles away from the border and you look – I mean...you have given me reason to suspect that your status” (*Detained* 32). Even though he should not question Sandi’s citizenship based on her appearance, he does so, thus highlighting the subsequent racial-profiling that the bill allows. Despite her rejection of her true heritage, she is discriminated due to her connection with the space in which she finds herself, six miles from the Arizona-Mexico border. Given that the police officer focuses on Sandi rather than her Anglo boyfriend, it is in this space that she truly comprehends her subordinate condition as a woman of color in Arizona; her identity as a discriminated minority woman and her geographical location on the border are inextricably connected to her experience (Boffone 12-3).

15 López’s enigmatic depiction of the borderlands as a threatening geopolitical space to women of color in response to the unconstitutional nature of Arizona SB 1070 functions as a practice of igniting a dialogue with regards to possible social and political transformations. In this sense, López’s writing of the border as a Chicana empowering “Wild Zone” serves as a type of “Retrofitted Memory,” as theorized by Maylei Blackwell in *¡Chicana Power! Contested Histories of Feminism in the Chicano Movement*. Blackwell establishes:

Retrofitted memory is a form of counter-memory that uses fragments of older histories that have been disjunctured by colonial practices of organizing historical knowledge or by masculinist renderings of history that disappear women’s political involvement in order to create space for women in historical traditions that erase them [...] By drawing from both the discarded and suppressed forms of knowledge, retrofitted memory creates new forms of consciousness customized to embodied material realities, political visions, and creative desires for societal transformation. (2)

Understanding Blackwell’s “Retrofitted Memory” helps contextualize López’s rewriting of Chicana history on the border within the masculine tradition of Chicano theatre. In other words, the feminist “Wild Zone” space of *Detained* is precisely where the playwright inserts an oppositional consciousness, such as Anzaldúa’s *la facultad*, that permits her to inject Chicanas’ realities, political aspirations, and creative ambitions in an effort to revolutionize the way women of color, and people of color as a whole, are seen on the Arizona/Mexico border.

16 Josefina López, as a Chicana playwright, searches for a woman of color model, Sandi, to legitimize her own coming-to-consciousness and development of feminist agency. Nevertheless, as *Detained* demonstrates through the police officer's targeting of Sandi, being a woman is an obstacle in a patriarchal society, an interference that is victimizing (Gilbert and Gubar 24). Yet, this gendered inequality is what allows Chicana women to tap into the "Wild Zone." In the case of Sandi in *Detained in the Desert*, accepting her authentic identity as a Chicana permits her to develop and implement various strategies of self-defense, most notably Anzaldúa's *la facultad*, as a means of maneuvering her marginalized physical and metaphysical location in the borderlands. As seen in the final scene of the play, Sandi demonstrates her newly found Chicana identity and oppositional consciousness when she calls into the radio program "Take Back America" and presents herself as "Sandra Sánchez" (*Detained* 65), the use of her real name being the first stage in the process of modifying her identity and image as a woman of color. In addition to her changing her name, she changes her opinion regarding Ranchera-style music, a traditional genre of Mexican music featuring only one performer with a guitar. Whereas in the initial scenes of the play she was not interested in this type of music, in the final scene she decides to reconsider her opinion. Nevertheless, her final act of positive Chicana identity rests in her decision to dedicate her future towards social change. Sandi tells Ernesto: "I want to help. Next time you go deliver water, I want to join you" (*Detained* 64), manifesting her need to participate in the dialogue towards immigrant rights and immigration reform on the Arizona-Mexico border. López employs specific zones intertwined with cultural and psychological perceptions to demonstrate how the intersecting zones influence Sandi's life and experience and also how they serve as catalysts in the formation of her Chicana identity and feminist agency.

Hungry Woman

17 Josefina López's latest work *Hungry Woman* (2013), the stage adaptation of her novel *Hungry Woman in Paris* (2009), foregrounds the intersections between experience and place by removing the Chicana from East Los Angeles and placing her in Paris. In the play, Canela, the protagonist, is able to forge her identity as a Mexican-American in a city that does not seem to understand this particular hybrid identity (she is frequently mistaken for a Middle-Eastern immigrant). In this sense, Paris serves as the catalyst in her development of positive feminist agency, a power which she takes back to California as a stronger and more self-reliant woman. López dramatizes Canela's personal growth utilizing the thematic contrast between Parisian and Chicano cultures and values.

18 East Los Angeles is associated with the traditional Chicano value system in which Canela is expected to adhere to the virgin/whore dichotomy and other gendered stereotypes, such as *La Virgen de Guadalupe*, *La Malinche*, and *La Llorona*. According to Gloria Anzaldúa, cultures such as the one Canela finds herself in expect “women to show greater acceptance of and commitment to, the value system of men. The culture and the Church insist that women are subservient to males” (17). For López’s protagonist, home signifies suppression under the relentless authority of her family and male-identified values. The death of Canela’s best friend, Luna, serves as the catalyst that drives Canela’s decision to call off her wedding and depart for Paris. Canela, in delivering a monologue depicting Luna’s backstory, effectively depicts the gendered reality that she is trying to avoid in East Los Angeles:

In our story, Luna met a guy and I remained single. I was never jealous of him, but he wasn’t good enough for her. He was Mr. Now, but Luna was forced to make him Mr. Forever when her parents grew concerned that ‘the neighbors were talking,’ They married her off before she ‘got knocked up,’ to this poor guy who could barely afford to support her and keep her gold-plated birdcage locked. Luna couldn’t go to college and had to play the housewife, a role she was never born for. [...] Her world kept shrinking, but her body kept growing. Her dreams were larger than life, too big to exist in this world in a woman’s body. (*Hungry Woman* 4)

Oddly enough, it is not her father or Armando, her fiancé from whom she later separates, who reinforces these patriarchal values in *Hungry Women*, but Canela’s mother, a technique López also incorporates in the play *Real Women Have Curves* (1996). Because Armando is a “good man,” her mother urges her not to break off the wedding, culminating in her plea: “Do you realize how hard it is to get a good man in Los Angeles?” (*Hungry Woman* 3).⁴ In her mother’s opinion, Canela’s happiness and well-being are not as important as being married and financially secure.

19 On the other hand, Paris and the culinary world of Le Coq Rouge, the cooking school that she attends in order to remain in France longer than her passport will allow, represent freedom and choice to Canela; they serve as a world in which the protagonist is able to seek the positive self-identifying powers of her previously suppressed eroticism and independence. In terms of stereotypes, it is noteworthy that Canela decides to go to a cooking school. López does this in order to decolonize her opinions of the kitchen as a restricting space for the female, typically linked to Chicano culture in which traditional sociocultural values suggest

⁴ Canela’s mother frequently reinforces traditional gender stereotypes throughout the play. For example, when Canela tells her that she has decided to remain in Paris for a year, her mother responds: “If you finally get married, I won’t have to worry about you anymore. Now I’ll be stressed out even more with you in another country. Come back now!” (*Hungry Woman* 21)

that women must serve men. In this way, away from the American Southwest, Le Coq Rouge grants Canela the opportunity to develop positive self-identification with the physical space of the kitchen; her time at the cooking school is a liberating experience, the antithesis to the patriarchal Chicano kitchen to which her mother is confined, forced to utilize the space as a means to satisfy and serve her husband. Canela tells us on multiple occasions of her mother's confinement to the kitchen and the bedroom, hence serving as a faithful wife to her philandering husband. According to Tey Diana Rebolledo, writing the kitchen and the Chicana as a cook functions as a strategy of claiming authority over gendered space and self-representation (132-3). Precisely, Canela's restructuring of Chicano gender roles and gendered spaces is made possible through the positive qualities of the French kitchen. In a flashback scene, Canela questions the Chicano male/female dichotomy of this space: "How come the men aren't in the kitchen? How come they're drinking beer and laughing and we are in this hot kitchen doing all the work?...We are not in Mexico anymore" (*Hungry Woman* 26). As a result of this experience, Canela decides to never go into a kitchen to cook for a man. All of her memories of the kitchen are associated with female suppression and unwavering faithfulness to men. These negative associations are reversed in the physical space of Le Coq Rouge, a space that is able to fill her hunger for a world that allows her to have positive female agency and voice and to not be equal to a "piece of meat" (*Hungry Woman* 28). Canela's reconstruction of positive associations with food and cooking is symbolically affirmed when Henry, her love interest while in Paris, not only fills her erotic desires, but cooks a meal for her after her graduation from Le Coq Rouge. While Chicano gender roles are flipped in this scene, Henry is surprised: "You're joking. None of your lovers ever cooked for you?" (*Hungry Woman* 53), thus reinforcing the East Los Angeles/Paris dichotomy of gendered experiences and spaces. Parisian society allows for men to occupy the kitchen, a gendered space reserved for women according to East Los Angeles culture.

20 Nevertheless, Canela returns home to East Los Angeles a freshly revitalized woman: "Henry and Le Coq Rouge had revived me and awakened my senses. I was alive again" (*Hungry Woman* 57). Canela's positive "Wild Zone" experiences in Paris grant her the ability to take this newly forged positive self-association with place and carry that feminine power to East Los Angeles, thus returning with a positive connected with home. When she becomes engaged again to Armando, she now has the power to decide what is best for her; she calls off the wedding, reinforcing her independence. Furthermore, in a final act of self-liberation, Canela metaphorically kills La Calaca Flaca (The Skinny Skeleton), a Posada skeleton-like

character, associated with Day of the Dead celebrations in Mexico and the United States, created by her imagination to link her Mexican roots with pessimistic opinions about her self-worth and womanhood. In this way, La Calaca Flaca represents Canela's low self-esteem. Canela declares: "I know I created you to protect me but I am no longer scared of life. I am no longer scared to be in my body, I want to stay. I'm going to stay and continue fighting" (*Hungry Woman* 77). Thus, the play ends with Canela at peace with herself, all enabled as a result of her occupying the positive spaces of Paris.

21 Through the process of forging Canela's personal hungers and aspirations in terms more extensive than her own intimate psychology, in the sociopolitical and dimensional dualities of place and culture, López's *Hungry Woman* articulates one facet of gendered experience and identity pertaining to the Ardeners' "Wild Zone" Thesis.

Conclusion

22 Josefina López's *Boyle Heights*, *Detained in the Desert*, and *Hungry Woman* represent just three of the many theatrical expressions of creative agency that are part of the Chicana Feminist Movement in the United States. While providing a Chicana-identified perspective of female experience, these works do not privilege Chicana womanhood over ethnicity or race. Instead, the playwright inserts Chicana voice, agency, and authorship into the discourse about woman in her multiple meanings. Gloria Anzaldúa claims that women's struggle has always been an inner one that is materialized on the outside, stating that: "Awareness of our situation must come before inner changes, which in turn come before change to society. Nothing happens in the 'real' world unless first it happens in the images of our heads" (109). It is essential that Chicana playwrights, such as López, become aware of their past and write their history; they should take action so that positive depictions of the Chicana's multiple subjectivities are represented in dramatic literature. Anzaldúa sees language as an ideal tool to call attention to the economic, political, and social inequalities which largely mark the collective Chicano experience in the United States. Only by taking ownership of one's life can a change materialize. To Josefina López, writing offers the opportunity to localize a Chicana experience that more accurately reflects reality while simultaneously validating what it encompasses being a woman in an underprivileged minority group. López writes:

By making myself the protagonist I am saying to the world that my experience, that of a woman and a Latina, is important and valid. I put myself as the protagonist in my writing and in my life because I refuse to allow a 'white man' to rescue me. I, like my characters, am in control of my destiny. By writing about myself and Latinos I am

reclaiming my humanity that was taken from me not just when the Spaniards raped Mexico, but when the first man raped the first woman. ("On Being a Playwright" 45)

By writing a Chicana "Wild Zone" of her own, López provides women with an authentic portrayal of a Chicana experience that is interconnected to dignity and courage, positive qualities representative of female identity in its multiple forms.

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Maxine Hong Kingston, Ghostbuster Feminist

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Abstract:

Maxine Hong Kingston is a first generation Chinese-American writer who became recognized after the publication of *The Woman Warrior, Memoirs of a Girlhood among Ghosts* in 1976. In this study, I argue that Kingston's book of the uncanny draws on Chinese-American women's writing in order to construct the role-model of a bicultural Ghostbuster feminist able to fight the ghosting patriarchal policies of the US. By contextualizing second wave feminism and women's writing in the 1970s, we can observe that Kingston's writing style is part of *écriture féminine*, and that this helped her overcome her bicultural uncanny experience.

1 After three and a half decades of being published, critics still debate whether *The Woman Warrior, Memoirs of a Girlhood among Ghosts* (1976) is a fictitious story or not. Maxine Hong Kingston invites us to be the judge when we open up the covers of her controversial book¹ and share her uncanny experiences as a first generation American girl growing up in a family of Chinese immigrants from the 1940s to the 1970s. In this study, I argue that Kingston's 1976 book of the uncanny draws on Chinese-American women's writing in order to construct the role model of a bicultural Ghostbuster feminist² able to fight the ghosting patriarchal policies of the US. By contextualizing second wave feminism and women's writing in the 1970s,³ we can observe that Kingston's writing style is part of *écriture féminine*, and that this helped her overcome her bicultural uncanny experience.

2 In 1975, when Hélène Cixous's essay "The Laugh of the Medusa" became a feminist manifesto for the women's movement, she coined the term *écriture féminine* to describe her literary approach. This embraces the idea that women need to find their own way of writing in order to hear their voice and break free from the kinds of linear scientific thinking which is rooted in masculine pleasure and modes of creation. Her essay gave rise to what is now known as post-structural feminism, igniting, as it did in the 70s and 80s, a new generation of feminist writing that experimented with *écriture féminine*. Among other creative writers, this group includes Chantal Chawaf, Catherine Clément, Luce Irigaray, Mary Daly, Trinh T.

¹ As a child, Kingston used to paint back curtains over her colorful drawings as if they were theatrical presentations with sets waiting on the other side. Once she learned to speak English, "I wrote that the curtains rose or swung apart" (Huntley 7)

² I took this term from the film *Ghostbusters* (1984) because Maxine Hong Kingston had already created a heroine that busted ghosts in the USA in 1976

³ During the 70s, some feminists became interested in language and post-structuralism. A group of feminists who use Derrida's theory of deconstruction to create women's writing are wrongly identified as French Feminists. However, they are not all French

Minh-ha, as well as Maxine Hong Kingston. *Écriture féminine* is an individual way of writing that seeks to reconnect the subject with the pre-symbolic *jouissance*⁴ we enjoyed in our mother's womb. The modernists,⁵ whose work is non-linear, cyclical, symbolic, and musical, received favorable mention from Cixous, who considered them worthy forerunners of *écriture féminine*. A central principle and point of departure for Cixous, however, is that the content must be related to women's identity, a sentiment she articulates at the outset: "Woman must write her self: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies" ("The Laugh" 2039). This is what Kingston does with her *Woman Warrior* in 1976. She shows us the process of creating her bicultural identity in a non-linear way by use of pre-symbolic ghostly dream images about the fear of being raped and ostracized after the onset of menstruation, and ends her book with a song, or poetic story, where she admits that while the beginning is her mother's, the ending is hers.

3 Trinh-T. Minh-ha, as a feminist of color like Kingston, considers that a woman of color, in

un-learning the dominant language of 'civilized' missionaries also has to learn how to un-write and write anew. And she often does so by re-establishing the contact with her foremothers, so that living tradition can never congeal into fixed forms, so that life keeps on nurturing life, so that what is understood as the Past continues to provide the link for the Present and the Future. [...] Each woman does it through storytelling, the oldest form of building historical consciousness in community. (148-49)

Being bilingual, Kingston learns and un-learns two languages and cultures, Chinese and English, in order to find her own voice. Telling us her story in different versions, she re-establishes a connection with her ghosted foremother, an aunt who was forced to commit incest, suicide, and filicide in China in 1924. In so doing, Kingston demonstrates that Chinese tradition is not fixed, but reconstructed and transformed because the past, the present and the future are interconnected spaces from which we draw memories that become the narratives of our identity as individuals and members of a community. History has commonly been presented as the official fixed story, or guardian of traditions, that protects our identity and without which we would lose our sense of self. Kingston's response to these conventions is to write her self through talk-story, a technique to recall memories she learned from her mother which bestows on the individual the power to know themselves and create their own

⁴ In French, *jouissance* means pleasure or enjoyment. It has a feminine sexual connotation of the mother's body, which is multi-orgasmic.

⁵ Modernists used the stream of consciousness technique to dive into the unconscious and write without censorship. They also used a poetic style, which is in tune with the pre-symbolic.

identities in the face of social pressure that might haunt them from past traditions, present oppressive social structures, or somebody else's future goals. She succeeds in reconnecting with her female ancestors in order to create a cyclical and spiral view of individual and collective history.

4 Stories are like pieces we use to build our identity, and this concept of talk-story is the binding agent that holds it together. Immigrants like Kingston constantly need to negotiate their identities with memories of stories at the interstice of time and space, a literary chronotope.⁶ Even though Kingston was born in California, her past is bound up with China to the extent that she grew up listening to her mother's talk-stories of Chinese women's patriarchal socialization. Not all her mother's stories were, however, oppressive; for instance, she remembers this turning point in her life: "[My mother] said I would grow up a wife and a slave, but she taught me the song of the warrior woman, *Fa Mu Lan*. I would have to grow up a warrior woman" (20). The myth of *Fa Mu Lan* has different versions, and Kingston chooses to focus on the process of strengthening since the narrator's voice is that of a young girl who has chosen her destiny as a hero that will do combat with her fears in the form of ghosts from the past, the present, and the future. Upon reading this tale, I realized that Kingston had written the story of a young girl Ghostbuster before the Ghostbusters films were made in the 1980s. The main character of her story, Maxine, becomes a worthy figure of heroic behavior for all US immigrants, especially women of color, who then tell their stories in books such as *Warrior Woman: A Journal of my Life as an Artist* (1992), *When Women Were Warriors* (2008), and *Women Warriors of the Afro-Latina Diaspora* (2012).

5 Ghosts are generally related to the repressed and denied, and, for Cixous, what is repressed and feared in the unconscious mind is women's sexuality because this has been expelled or ghosted even from their own bodies, which they themselves fear and find monstrous. She considers that women are able to gain individual and collective liberation by breaking the silence with their own speech and their own "songs," just as Kingston had done when, as Maxine the Warrior, she had fought her ghosts with laughter ("The Laugh" 2043-45). Humor, in this instance, seems to be a key strategy for overcoming the fear of our double self as a Medusa and for helping us to stop seeing ourselves through the lens of patriarchy. "You only have to see at the Medusa straight on to see her. And she's not deadly. She's beautiful and she's laughing" ("The Laugh" 2048), concludes Cixous, aided, in her manifesto, by an uncanny experience. *Écriture féminine* takes the reader to uncanny places,

⁶ A term coined by M. Bakhtin to describe the way time and space are described by language, and, in particular, how literature represents them.

and this is a concept we will explore when looking for uncanny experiences of immigration in *The Woman Warrior* book.

6 Uncanny is the English translation of *unheimlich*, a German term that was coined in 1906 by Ernst Jentsch. Jentsch makes no attempt to define the essence of what he calls the uncanny, stating instead that “such a conceptual explanation would have very little value. The main reason for this is that the same impression does not necessarily exert an uncanny effect on everybody” (2). In other words, the phenomenological and individualized nature of the experience in different cultures makes it difficult to tie down. For him, the uncanny “appears to express that someone to whom something ‘uncanny’ happens is not quite ‘at home’ or ‘at ease’ in the situation concerned, that the thing is or at least seems to be foreign to him” (2). By 1919, however, Freud does make an attempt to define the concept from a universal and scientific western perspective, but in its translation into various languages, the term became overly abstruse and we were left with an incomplete list of additional characteristics.

7 The copycat Chinatowns Chinese-Americans recreate become uncanny because the social rules, people, objects, and culture cannot be the same. It is an unhomey home where anything can happen. In fact, Chinese-Americans experienced severe discrimination before World War II; it was not until the 1930s that merchants were able to bring their wives and another decade before the US government finally repealed the Chinese Exclusion Act, by which no Chinese woman could enter the country (Nakano Glenn & Yap 142). Kingston’s mother was lucky to have been brought into the US by her husband after she lost her two babies back in China as a result of not being able to feed them. Most Chinese males had to go back to China to have children because there were no mixed marriages allowed either. Kingston’s grandmother was able to come because she pretended to have a paper son⁷ that could enter the US.

8 The intolerability of erasing boundaries is echoed among immigrants and US bicultural residents, and presents itself in different ways. For instance, they are supposed to share their daily lives as equals in a society that denies them citizenship and the rights that come with that status, and once outside the legal system, they become ghostly.⁸ Besides, they are accompanied by their Chinese ancient ghosts and meet new American ghosts when they realize that they are supposed to live alienated in a reality parallel to that of American residents.

⁷ A term coined for young Chinese males attempting to enter the US on identity papers that were brought for them. They were sons in paper only.

⁸ This scenario is, incidentally, reversed when it comes to Chinatown communities, where the ghosts are the Americans.

9 For the Kingstons, the process of migration itself turns out to be both nightmarish and ghost-ridden, and, upon arrival, the family is afflicted by a hunger that extends beyond that of food to include lack of affection in a country indifferent to their cultural upbringing and which expects them to become Americans overnight. Their sense of alienation is expressed in the appearance of ghosts throughout the text. Kingston's childhood memoirs are filled with ghosts, which may explain her eventual career choice of Ghostbuster. She forges this identity from tales of various heroic female ancestors in her own family before engaging in combat with ghosts, a mission that even involves de-ghosting herself. The parallels between life versus death and one race versus another are highlighted by Allen Guttman's observation that, "racial discrimination exists under the assumption of imaginary borders that created barriers between people of different race, just as the immigrant borders that exist between the living and the dead" (188-89). In the light of these comments, the connection he makes between Edgar Allan Poe's horror stories and Ralph Ellison's *The Invisible Man* (1952) is well made. Maxine, Kingston's narrator and alter ego, makes a similar connection to tell us the stories of how she dealt with her uncanny fears in the US by focusing on five different ghosts in each chapter. Sometimes it is necessary to find reconciliation with the past, but ghosts that represent patriarchal assaults on our well-being must be defeated.

10 Worthy of note at this juncture is the evidence that early forms of ancestor veneration were deeply rooted and developed by the Late Neolithic Period in China. According to Kristeva, Confucian philosophy "will be founded precisely on this cult of ancestor worship, finding in it a solid base for the construction of a rationalist morality with a strong paternal authority and a complex hierarchy" (*About* 70). In this way, the elderly were always respected, even after death, and the Confucian patriarchal order cautioned that those who strayed from the path of righteous respect for their elders doomed them to walk the earth as hungry ghosts⁹ as a result of their not being fed in rituals by the living. These beliefs formed the inspiration from which all kinds of ghosts were created. They also exerted an influence over the two religions, Buddhism and Taoism, which incorporated ancient matriarchal spiritualism into their belief systems.¹⁰ Women become powerful only in old age as mothers-in-law, when they assumed the mantle of manly soldiers entrusted to protect the patriarchal

⁹ Confucian morality uses the hungry ghost story of Buddha's discourse on The Scripture of the Spell for Saving the Burning-Mouth Hungry Ghost, a ritual to the ancestors that later started the medieval ghost festival in China in the eighth century. However, the idea of making peace with the ancestors existed in previous Buddhist texts: The Yulanpen Scripture and The Scripture for Offering Bowls to Repay Kindness. Manuals for the hungry ghost ritual were created in 1315 concerning the salvation of suffering beings (Orzech 279).

¹⁰ Most divinities and ghosts are female.

order, or, after death, the role of ghost avengers. Such a figure is the first ghost that appears in Kingston's uncanny book.

11 "No Name Woman" is the title of Maxine's first memoir. The title refers to a woman who, instead of belonging to the symbolic¹¹ order of the law of the father, is somebody who has been abjected from it, according to Kristeva's psychoanalytic theory. For Hetty Lanier Keaton, this "Chinese aunt is left hungry both because the family refuses to talk about her and because the family refuses to make food offerings to her ghost" (37). Her sin was to get pregnant while her husband was away. After being humiliated by villagers in her own house, she committed suicide and filicide by drawing and poisoning the drinking water, a crime for which she was then rejected by her family, who denied her existence and erased her from memory. She suffers the trauma of hearing these words thrown in her face: "Pig. Ghost. Pig. They sobbed and scolded while they ruined the house" (5). Maxine appropriates the words No Name Woman to give her a name to bring her back into the symbolic realm and a Chinese paper offering by printing her story. She retells the story many times, all the while changing the circumstances of her aunt's pregnancy with each version before finally turning her mother's tragic memory into a rebellious one; individualistic by nature, her aunt is unfaithful to her husband by having a relationship with and then a child from another man. No Name Woman is now part of a modern community that understands the fear and social control of women's sexuality. Her story provides healing medicine to abjected women like her, and the Chinese hungry ghost gets busted away.

12 The second ghost is also Chinese. The heroine *Fa Mu Lan*, is a girl that haunts Maxine's mind in a positive way because the experience inspires her to become a strong swordswoman who protects her family and village in the end. She realizes that the bird she should follow is not really a bird, but her own desires. This story details a rite of passage in which Maxine learns to be patient with her parents, who, while unable to train her themselves on account of being Chinese, nonetheless do their best to prepare her for a successful life in the United States, one that does not entail her becoming a slave or a wife, but rather an independent career woman as a writer. Isabel Capeloa Gil makes the remarkable observation that valor in a woman has been considered monstrous in western culture ever since Homer's *Illiad* and Virgil's *Aeneid* (229-31), which was why Kingston turned to the Chinese *Fa Mu*

¹¹ The symbolic is a way of signifying whatever depends on language as a sign system, complete with its grammar and syntax, while the semiotic is a way of signifying that which depends on bodily energy and performance, such as music, dance, poetry, and it is connected to the unconscious and emotional responses. No Name Woman belonged to the semiotic realm when feared as a ghost because she performed suicide and vengeance; however, Kingston brings her back to the symbolic realm by writing her story consciously and making her part of the social cultural order.

Lan as her role model for female strength. Stella Bolaki notices that this character is fortified still further by other sources: “Kingston blends *Fa Mu Lan*’s legend with the story of Yue Fei, a male general of the Sung dynasty, from which she borrows the word-carving episode” (45). This detail sheds light on Maxine’s linguistic and symbolic method of busting ghosts. The tools of conflict have evolved, and whereas sword fights were the norm in medieval times, words have taken over as the weapons of choice in the modern era, and it is with these that Kingston fights for justice on behalf of Chinese immigrants. This explains why Maxine ends up saying that she and *Fa Mu Lan* are similar: “what we have in common are the words at our backs” (53).

13 The third spirit is Chinese Hairy Sitting Ghost, who, we learn, overcomes her victims by means of a “suffocating, paralyzing weight” (Sato 141). She is, however, defeated by Maxine’s mother, Brave Orchid, who, we learn, goes to study in the city of Canton alone while her husband remains in the US. Her decision to enter the masculine-dominated public sphere triggers her insecurities of not being able to succeed, but, once more, she manages to prevail over the ghost through the use of language rather than brute force. Her technique involves screaming at the ghost, “defeating him with the boldness of her word and the power of the images she voices to taunt him into submission and cowardice” (Smith 239). No one will ever put her down. She encourages all her female classmates to burn the monstrous ghost and thus put an end to their fears of ignorance. Once the ghost has been put to rest, she entreats them to find the courage to pursue their studies and gain knowledge at the university. As a Shaman or Ghostbuster like her mother, Maxine realizes that ghosts do not only originate from the old Chinese patriarchal past, but that her present in the US has “machines and ghosts— Taxi Ghosts, Bus Ghosts, Police Ghosts, Fire Ghosts, Meter Reader Ghosts, Five-and-Dime Ghosts [...] White Ghosts, Black Ghosts [...] Gypsy Ghosts” (96-7). She leaves the reader to consider that whatever and whoever creates barriers creates abjection, a syndrome that resurfaces in the following memoire.

14 The fourth ghosting experience is bicultural. It symbolizes the abjection inflicted by the American people as well as by all other assimilated immigrants upon Chinese people like Maxine’s aunt, Moon Orchid. She lacks the courage of her sister, Brave Orchid, and loses her mind after her husband tells her he never wants to see her again. At that moment, “her husband looked like one of the ghosts passing the car windows, and she must look like a ghost from China” (153). She ends up finding greater happiness in a mental home, where other inmates, those able to speak her language and understand her, become her daughters. Communication is thus important for her well-being, and this aunt becomes the anti-model

for the family because “all her children made up their minds to major in science or mathematics” (160), instead of dedicating their love to undeserving men.

15 The fifth ghost is Chinese-American. It manifests itself when Maxine comes to terms with her own silent ghost identity. Unfortunately, she mirrors herself in another Chinese immigrant who is also silent and she bullies this immigrant to the point of tears. She says she hates her on account of all the things she did to herself when she was younger and that the immigrant should learn to speak out and stop the violence. However, that little girl is not ready, and she has to suffer Maxine’s rage against her passivity. We may observe a correlation between this event and Kristeva’s theory of abjection in which she says: “I expel myself, I spit myself out, I abject myself within the same motion through which ‘I’ claim to establish myself” (*Powers* 3). The guilt she feels after this purge makes her sick for a whole year. Facing her own ghost causes her to speak angrily to her mother and tell her that instead of accepting the role of a passive Chinese, she will choose to be a strong Chinese-American woman who pursues a career and will not agree to an arranged marriage like various other female members of the family who ended up losing their minds. She achieves a moral victory when, after recalling another of her mother’s stories, she changes the ending by making the female character Ts’ai Yen a well-adjusted person who celebrates her bi-cultural background communally. Kingston asserts that: “the beginning is hers, the ending, mine” (206), just as she does in her uncanny book *The Woman Warrior*.

16 Kingston’s *The Woman Warrior* can be considered both a healing text and a *Bildungsroman* because the narrator moves from a sense of fear occasioned by her unknown roots to a discovery of and reconciliation with her past. By identifying herself with the warrior *Fa Mu Lan* and other strong women like her, she fights against discrimination and abjection in her refusal both to be a ghost and to feel haunted by them. On her journey, she is able to include many cases of women whose traditional feminine identity and helpless dependency on male supremacy leave them unable to exorcise their ghosts. In the last two chapters we find women who lose their sanity, like her mother’s sister, Moon Orchid. The courage to conquer our demons, we learn, is not an innate quality, but one that may be acquired through persistence, a lesson exemplified in the life of Maxine’s mother, who became Brave Orchid after fighting a Sitting Ghost. This specter provides a symbol of

patriarchal oppression that prevailed at the university where she studied medicine, a career typically considered masculine territory at the beginning of the 20th century.¹²

17 Moon Orchid's life has none of the panache of her sister's. Disinclined to act on her own initiative, she never does anything for herself and depends on the money being sent to her by her husband in the US. Her sister, Brave Orchid, takes her to confront him face to face, but she is not able to answer back to his humiliating remarks, which define her as a ghost: "I have a new wife [...] I have important American guests who come inside my house to eat." He turned to Moon Orchid, "You can't talk to them. You can barely talk to me" (153). For Moon Orchid, dismay is replaced by paranoia when she says: "Don't come see me because the Mexican ghosts will follow you to my new hiding place. They are watching your house" (155). Such a family case history seems to be common in Chinatown. Female neighbors such as Pee-A-Nah, the village idiot and the witch, whose antics prompt Maxine to make the following personal observation: "I thought every house had to have its crazy woman or crazy girl, every village its idiot. Who would be it at our house? Probably me" (189). Madness is among a woman's worst fears because in rendering her totally dependent on either family or community, it transforms her into an automaton, a ghost, a nobody excluded from the symbolic world of ordered civilization to be used and abused in a world where manly reason prevails over the body. It is to prevent this downward slide into vacuity that Cixous says: "Woman must write her self" ("The Laugh" 2039).

18 Kingston is successful in abiding by Cixous' principle to the extent that she takes evasive action against losing her own mind, and her independence of mind saves her from the insanity that overcomes Moon Orchid and Pee-A-Nah. In so doing, Kingston manages to write her self. Maybe her listening to Chinese-Ghost stories¹³ helps her see the ghost-immigrant or bicultural identity connection. Kingston creates her alter ego narrator, a young girl called Maxine, who trains herself to become her own heroine and avoids being ghosted in the US. She achieves heroic stature when she tells a story in her own words using *écriture*

¹² Kingston's mother was only able to study a feminine branch of medicine, midwifery, before Mao's socialist plan encouraged women to become professional doctors in 1949. Mrs. Kingston could not find a medical school for women in her town, so she moved to the city of Canton to study at Keung School of Midwifery. According to Benjamin K. P. Leung, it is hard to comprehend the full extent of women's oppression and misery under patriarchal values during pre-industrial China before the 1950s. The deprivations and discrimination they experienced can be inferred from the few studies of special categories of women in the early twenty century (23-4). Maxine Hong Kingston was fortunate to have been born in California in 1940 to first-generation Chinese immigrants.

¹³ Chinese ghost literature had its golden period from 1580 to 1700 and Western ghost literature flourished from 1700 to 1900. However, we might be witnessing a rebirth of the multicultural gothic in the twentieth first century.

feminine, busting her own ghosts in uncanny territories and coming back full circle to hold the deserved laurel.

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Masculinity and the Expansion of Women's Rights in Ben Griffin's *The Politics of Gender in Victorian Britain*

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1 This monograph offers a thorough history of the fight for women's rights in Britain during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Ben Griffin's writing is engaging and clear, and he offers a unique perspective on gender studies of the Victorian period. Griffin recognizes the extraordinary strides made by British women in terms of their political and legal status during the latter half of the nineteenth century, but he argues that studies of the women's movement only offer insight into part of the picture. For Griffin, in order to fully understand how women could gain more power, one must also study the men who gave over some of their power to women. He does not devalue the women's movement, but he attempts to construct a broader picture of the climate in which these changes took place (the Married Women's Property Act, the Infant Custody Act, the Matrimonial Causes Act, and the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts). He thus focuses his attention on the men serving in parliament and "the context of the broader liberal and conservative ideologies that animated their political behavior" (25).

2 Griffin begins by deconstructing the idea that male politicians were either for or against women's rights. By tracking the votes of MPs on issues like suffrage and married women's property rights, Griffin shows that most MPs did not vote consistently on bills related to women. Griffin highlights this disconnect to show that the debates over women's roles in society were complex and that MPs switched sides, changed their minds, and were pressured by more than one political interest and ideological force.

3 From here, Griffin delves into the political, religious, and ideological pressures that contributed to the ways MPs voted for or against bills that affected women's rights. One of the most intriguing arguments of the book is in Chapter 3 when Griffin focuses on the tension between politicians' desire to defend the masculinity of elites and their wish to extend rights for women. In other words, these men needed to find a way to preserve their own power while also acknowledging the abuse of women at the hands of men. They tactfully accomplished this by pointing to poverty as the primary cause of domestic violence and promiscuity and shifting the

scrutiny from powerful aristocrats to the poor. This political maneuvering allowed MPs to pose “as disinterested defenders of working-class girls” (105). Griffin effectively describes this process:

politicians were reluctant to accept that their own homes should be affected by changes to women’s rights, both because they feared that these changes would reduce their domestic authority and create discord in their homes, and because they did not think that the critique of male behavior which justified the reforms should apply to them or their class. The stakes in these debates were considerable: the political legitimacy of the governing male elites rested on their ability to construct identities as disinterested and virtuous husbands, fathers and legislators. For these reasons, their ability to confine both charges and abuse and the effects of the Acts to the poor was essential to the successful passage of the Married Women’s Property Acts. (109)

By pointing the finger at lower-class men as the perpetrators of domestic abuse and tyranny, MPs could distance themselves from scrutiny while also conceding power to women and being seen as reformers who were concerned with making conditions better for the poor. Griffin goes on to make clear that this strategy only worked for so long. By the end of the nineteenth century, elite men were unable to distance themselves from criticism—especially as new woman novels challenged upper-class male sexuality directly—and by the start of the new century, “it was much harder for elite men to construct a defence of patriarchal privilege on the basis of their own claims to virtue, and the strained assumptions of Victorian domestic ideology were left hopelessly exposed in an unforgiving new environment” (108).

4 Central to Griffin’s argument is that “debates about women’s rights were often also debates about masculinity, and that politicians’ actions were fundamentally shaped by the identities that they constructed as men” (309). In Chapter 6, Griffin focuses on a couple of men whose performances of masculinity in parliament reveal the interconnectedness of the women’s rights movement and understandings of Victorian “manliness.” Sir Henry James, for example, gave a speech in 1871 in which he powerfully reinforced the framework of separate spheres and successfully persuaded some MPs to change their positions on women’s suffrage. James “insisted that women were too ignorant and emotional to involve themselves with politics, that participation in public life would corrupt women’s moral sensibility, and that women’s proper responsibility was to care for their families in the domestic sphere” (164). Griffin notes that James’s ideas were not particularly new, although his speech was influential, but that James had reasons beyond simple anti-suffragism for making his public plea. Griffin claims that it was an

act meant to gain attention and align him with a normative masculine identity since, in reality, James did not fit the mold of an ideal Victorian man. He never married and was rumored to have had a sexual relationship with Lord Randolph Churchill and several illegitimate children. These rumors cannot be substantiated, but his reputation and standing among other MPs make his public stances on suffrage intriguing works of self-fashioning. “In those speeches,” Griffin writes, “he posed as the defender of conventional gender norms but in practice his relationship to those norms was profoundly ambiguous at best” (166). Griffin’s analysis in this chapter is particularly convincing and new; “The argument is that posing as defenders of the patriarchal order proved extremely attractive to men whose claims to ‘manliness’ were profoundly insecure, because parliamentary performance offered a way for men whose own masculine status was uncertain to claim the authority of the culturally dominant normative masculinity” (167). This finely articulated examination of gender performance adds another layer to our contemporary understanding of how Victorian women were subjected to the power plays of men and shows that men’s positions were being renegotiated while women were gaining more power in the public sphere.

5 Overall, Griffin’s study is helpful, clear, and revealing. Not only is the book a thorough historical study that allows for a more nuanced understanding of social reforms during the Victorian period, but it is also a helpful reminder that political debate and reform is never simple. This monograph is approachable enough for students of Victorian history and complex and detailed enough for seasoned scholars. Those who research and write about women’s history, British politics, masculinity studies, and even Victorian literature will find *The Politics of Gender in Victorian Britain* helpful in their work.

Sandra Caron. *The Sex Lives of College Students: Two Decades of Attitudes and Behaviors*. 2013. Maine College Press.

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1 Sandra Caron, the author of *The Sex Lives of College Students: Two Decades of Attitudes and Behaviors*, produces the largest survey on college students' sexual lives over a span of two decades. With an annual survey with students in her human sexuality class at a mid-sized public university, the University of Maine, she traces the similarities and differences between the two-decade old generation and the present generation. The survey, with close to 5000 students, includes 100 questions on almost all aspects of sexual attitudes and behaviors. In addition, to reflect the changing trend, she also adds questions relevant to today's students and social context. As she acknowledges, the survey cannot be generalized to all college students in the country. Her work is to provide a portrayal of the changing trend on sexual patterns among college students. It is definitely one of the most ambitious academic studies on sex among college students.

2 The author mainly focuses on the comparison between men and women as well as generational difference between two decades. The former focus enables us to know how college men and women at present are similar or different in their sexual behaviors and attitudes. The latter enables us to see if men and women have changed and what has changed. She divides her book into several sections, including sexual behaviors, sexual attitudes, parental influence, safer sex and HIV/AIDS, etc. One section contains new questions. I will discuss a few results that are worthy of in-depth exploration.

3 One major issue that stands out is surprising yet predictable at the same time. It is the persistence of double standards for men and women irrespective of the progress women have made through the women's movement in the 1970s. These college students are asked if they have lied about how many people they have been with sexually. 78% of college students reply that they are always honest, which seems surprisingly high. The present statistic is no different from that from 20 years ago. What is interesting to note is the difference between men and women among the 22% of the students who lie. For men, they will increase the number of partners when asked by other men. They will decrease the number when asked by potential female partners. This should not be a surprise since the number of sexual partners heightens

these young men's sense of manhood and proves their 'heterosexual' hegemonic masculinity. This would elicit the approval and respect from their peers. For women, they would underreport regardless who asks the questions. This is where the double standard comes in. Women, if they admit that they have been with a number of partners, would be deemed as promiscuous, slutty and immoral. Other scholars have also pointed out a paradox. That is, women are expected to be sexually demure in public yet sexually sophisticated in bed. With the progress of women's status in society, women are still not truly empowered to express their sexuality. Women's sexual desire and sexual behaviors continue to be under intense scrutiny. Sexuality remains at the forefront of social regulations and the most difficult battle in achieving gender equality.

4 Another question that reflects the double standard is if these students have ever faked orgasms. More than 56% of the students indicate that they have faked an orgasm. What is more astonishing is that, while 28 percent of men indicate that they have faked an orgasm, a high percentage of women (69%) indicate that they have done so. Furthermore, there is a huge increase of faking orgasms among college students from early 1990s to 2010, from 33% to 50%. This huge gap is a result of the increase of women faking orgasms. While women fake an orgasm in order not to hurt their partner's feeling and to boost their ego, it is also a way for women to ensure their partners and themselves that there is nothing wrong with them. The question is why a much higher percentage of women these days feel pressured to perform orgasms. Why do young women feel the need, more so than two decades ago, to ensure their partner's ego and manhood through faking orgasms when the main goal of sex should be about pleasure? Why do women as well as men continue to believe that they would and should experience orgasms through intercourse? It should not come as a surprise that the Internet and the availability of pornography are students' primary source of information about sexual acts. Students learn how one should react, act, and talk during sex. They also learn that orgasms should be the end goal of sex rather than pleasure itself. Women in pornography have orgasms through intercourse when most women do not. College students might not understand that these women are the object of (male) gaze and the focus of the camera is mostly on the performance on their face throughout. The money shot is a demanded scene and cum on women's face and her enjoyment of it reinforces the idea that women deserve and enjoy humiliation and degradation. Sex ends when

men orgasm. As the author points out, most college students are simply performing what they think sex should be rather than actually having sex.

5 While the data allows us to have a glance of all facets of college students' sexual attitudes and behaviors, there are also some major weaknesses in this study. The author compares only men and women in the survey. Yet gender is only one component of one's identities. Men and women of different races, class status, religion, culture, and sexual orientation would have different sexual attitudes and behaviors. Simply focusing on gender differences is to lose out the complexity and intricacy of college students' sexual lives. As the author admits, the majority of the students are white and Christian. This particular background among survey participants definitely determines certain results. Second, the survey questions are hetero-centric. For example, sex is defined as intercourse between men and women. It raises the question how gay and lesbian students answer the survey questions. It seems to make sense for the author to have a critical reflection on the above issues and the specific positional and epistemological frame that constrains what and how questions are asked. The other issue is that the book suffers from the lack of in-depth discussions to explain the results. The explanations provided only scratch the surfaces and can broaden readers' knowledge to a certain degree.

6 The most problematic issue of the book is its self-presentation. The survey is taken at a particular human sexuality class at a mid-sized public university. The students who take this human sexuality class mostly come from social sciences majors and are already self-selective. The survey results do not even represent the student population as a whole at the University of Maine, not to mention college students at the region and in the whole country. The author briefly mentions that the survey results do not represent the whole student population in the country in both introduction and conclusion without stressing more specifically what implications of this limited scope mean. Even though the author mentions that the survey cannot be generalized, she states that the results give us some knowledge of college students' sex lives. I applaud the fact that the book is written in a very accessible way that can appeal to a wide range of audience, including undergraduate students and the general public. Yet the brief mentioning of limited generalizability, the contradictory claim of a glimpse of college students' sex lives, and the general title are rather misleading, particularly for undergraduates or the general public. Unfortunately this problem colors the ambitious efforts the author has taken.

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