



# From the Table to the Mirror: Diet as Gospel in the Late Nineteenth Century and the Twentieth Century

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## ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the transformation of dietary discourses and their relationship with the body in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with particular emphasis on the case of Medellín, Colombia. Through an interdisciplinary approach that combines social history, cultural studies, and gender analysis, the text examines how eating practices shifted from a Hippocratic-Galenic medical conception—where diet and cooking were inseparable—to a modern paradigm that established an opposition between culinary pleasure and health. The research explores the emergence of lipophobia (fear of fat) as a cultural phenomenon, the role of advertising and women's magazines in disseminating new beauty standards, and the contradictions of mass consumption societies that simultaneously promote gastronomic pleasure and dietary restriction. Using sources such as cookbooks, newspaper advertisements, and fashion magazines, the article demonstrates how these discourses configured new forms of social distinction, body discipline, and gender subjectivities, revealing the anxieties and paradoxes of modernity in the Colombian context.

**KEYWORDS:** Diet, Body, Lipophobia, Advertising, Beauty standards, Medellín, Twentieth century, Food culture, Social distinction, Gender.

## INTRODUCTION

It is important to highlight that, although this work is developed under dietary criteria, these cannot be separated from their intrinsic relationship with the body. In other words, rather than revolving around food in said period, it will be proposed how it determines socio-cultural behaviors in relation to the body and the aesthetic demands that arise with the dietary changes of the period under study.

The French sociologist Claude Fischler presents an absurdity typical of societies of abundance, stating that they: “are preoccupied with the need to manage, to regulate their diet. This feeling of urgency manifests itself paradoxically: they are at once passionate about cooking and obsessed with dieting.”<sup>1</sup> Something evident in the promotion of dietary regimes promoted by fashion magazines and newspaper articles, which we will return to later.

1 Claude Fischler, *El (h)omnívoro: El gusto, la cocina y el cuerpo* (Barcelona: Editorial Anagrama, 1995), 219.

On the other hand, and according to Fischler, our society has naturally believed in the opposition between culinary pleasure and dietary restriction, this because we usually assume gastronomy as inherent to pleasure while the regime and dietetics are the domain of health. However, the globalized vision held in the *ancien régime* was that: "Pleasure cannot do good, it can only do harm."<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless,

The pleasure/health opposition, which today seems so evident to us, is by no means so manifest in all cultures or in all eras. The belief in a radical incompatibility between what is good and what is healthy is neither eternal nor universal, since the culinary and the dietary have not always been distinguished.<sup>3</sup>

In other words, their borders are not well defined, insofar as cooking and dietetics are not opposed, but share a deep kinship, given that both structure our eating practices and shape both our relationship with pleasure and our way of thinking about food and, in a certain sense, the world.

The preeminence of this thought -generally associated with the *medical-religious*- persisted throughout the *ancien régime* until the 19th century. Therefore, throughout this period, the medical idea, with religious intervention, on the indistinction between the culinary and dietetics predominated. Thus, during this period "Doctors [...] affirm that food is essential both to preserve health and to care for the sick."<sup>4</sup> All of the above is justified by the predominance of Hippocratic-Galenic medical thought, which considered throughout this period that foods, the times and ways of cooking them, as well as textures and consistencies, influence the body through temperaments and humors, so it is necessary to keep everything in balance and in measure.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, in this sense, illness turns out to be, "in this conception, [...] the result of a humoral imbalance, and diet as the means of restoring or maintaining balance."<sup>6</sup> Reason why the cook would have a double function, both the good preparation of food, suitable for the particular humor of each person; and also as a doctor who prescribes "medicine" to his patient.

However, this vision began to change at the end of the 19th century and especially throughout the 20th, when the opposition between diet and cooking, pleasure and health, was increasingly questioned. Struggles began between the doctor and the cook, the latter being viewed with suspicion, seeking to rid him of his figure within what increasingly pertains to medical knowledge. However, that figure of the cook began to reinvent itself, showing himself not as a food sophisticator but as "a kind of haughty guarantor of quality and purity, jealously watching, at a high price, his supplies and his minimal cooking."<sup>7</sup> In this context, Michel Guérard created "cuisine minceur" (slimming cuisine), which applies the principles of *nouvelle cuisine*: lighter dishes, with fewer sauces, less fat, and more focused on visual presentation and culinary language than on abundance. However, this change reflects the modern need for clear and reliable

criteria for choosing what to eat. The confusion created by doctors, dietitians, advertisers, and different dietary trends shows a deep crisis: a crisis in the way people relate to food and to diet itself.

## FROM CULINARY PLEASURE TO THINNESS

Could we speak of *advertising* since the invention of the printing press? Although not in modern terms and at the risk of falling into anachronism, we could speak of *proto-advertising* forms because they did create discourses, whether of power, consumption, or social conduct, which perhaps makes them direct antecedents. In our context, the discourse addressed from food marketing and advertising is

in turn the shift initiated by great cuisine. It is once again about reconciling what is good with what is healthy. Like those beautiful women staged by Lesieur: "They want everything" Everything; understand at the same time pleasure (especially food), beauty -that is, thinness- and *fitness*, that recently created entity that encompasses health, beauty, and youth and concentrates internal states in appearance.<sup>8</sup>

At this point, the notions of beauty and food converge, a central idea of this work. Fischler opens his eleventh section with:

Modern societies have become "lipophobic": they hate fat. Mass culture, an unbridled producer of images, gives us youthful and slender bodies to admire. Real bodies seem to strive, almost always in vain, to achieve these dreamed-of or prescribed models.<sup>9</sup>

Modern society, which paradoxically has a greater interest in food taste, yet remains a system of social differentiation, is also obsessed with diet and waistline. This responds to the discourses used in vitamin advertising, according to Alain Corbin: "This growing concern of developed societies, which in some individuals tends towards anxiety, even obsession, [...] of anorexia"<sup>10</sup> This dietary concern responds, according to Corbin, to a patent increase in the negativity of obesity and, on the other hand, to an economic-cultural change, because "In a society where hunger and scarcity disappear, distinction can come through the display of thinness."<sup>11</sup> In other words, distinction no longer occurs only through access to better preparations, or in Jack Goody's words *haute cuisine*<sup>12</sup>, but rather that even having the economic possibility of accessing *haute cuisine*, they can do so under dietary rules that were also applied to cooking.

## ¿MEDELLÍN LA GRASSA?

Now, from the above we deduce that -as Goody posits- taste is a cultural construction generally cultivated by the upper classes. In other words, taste has a function within the class division. In her

8 Ibid. 232.

9 Ibid. 297.

10 Alain Corbin, Jean-Jacques Courtine y Georges Vigarello, *Historia del Cuerpo, Vol. 3: Las mutaciones de la mirada. El siglo XX* (Madrid: Taurus, 2006), 141.

11 Ibid.

12 Cf. Jack Goody, *Cocina, cuisine y clase: Estudio de sociología comparada* (Barcelona: Editorial Gedisa, 1995)

2 Ibid. 221.

3 Ibid. 223.

4 Ibid. 225.

5 Cf. Ibid.

6 Ibid. 226.

7 Ibid. 230.

doctoral thesis, Luz Aidé Rodríguez Cossío tells us that traditional Antioquian food, mostly of peasant origin, was based on products such as corn, beans, yucca, and plantain, with emblematic dishes like beans, sancocho, and sudado, almost always accompanied by arepa. Cooking techniques were those of the countryside, using firewood and charcoal. However, cookbooks of the time did not reflect this reality, but rather proposed an idealized cuisine that aspired to change the population's eating habits.

These recipe books reveal a deep fascination with French cuisine, considered a symbol of "civilization" and good taste. This influence manifested itself in the ubiquitous use of ingredients like butter and pepper, present in nearly 50% of savory recipes, the adoption of French terms and dishes such as *soufflé*, *aspic*, and *galantina*, and the practice of presenting gala dinner menus in French, considered a sign of elegance. Beyond France, the books promoted an international cuisine with Italian pastas, English dishes, and American desserts, demonstrating a desire to project a cosmopolitan and modern image.

This outward gaze generated a *petitea* with the appreciation of local cuisine. Initially, traditional Colombian dishes were almost absent from *petite* books and were criticized for being considered "backward" and unhealthy. The newspaper *El Bateo*<sup>13</sup>, characterized "for its critique of customs, daily life, and injustices or some socio-political *petite*"<sup>14</sup> in 1908, published:

With the publication of her book, Miss Hernández *pete* do a great *pete* for the families of Antioquia; the services of dining *pete* and refectories in Medellín are stuck at a seemingly immovable point of backwardness; we do not leave the corrupted routine of our grandmothers, and shredded meat and fried rice continue to bring *petitea* and lack of *petite* to stomachs<sup>15</sup>

Therefore, in certain social circles, there was shame in consuming beans, arepa, and mazamorra, branding those who did so as "montañeros" (hillbillies). However, from the 1930s onwards, a reevaluation of creole food occurred, and cookbooks began to include a greater number of Colombian recipes such as ajiaco, sancochos, and tamales. Authors like Sofía Ospina de Navarro explicitly called for not being ashamed of native dishes and preventing their disappearance.

Analysis of the recipe content shows a clear predominance of meat, especially pork, which reflects its cultural importance in Antioquia. It also highlights the great relevance of "sweet food," which occupied almost 40% of the total recipes, linked to the social importance of "el algo" (afternoon snack) and "teas" as social gathering occasions. Furthermore, in line with modern

13 *El Bateo* was a satirical newspaper that circulated in Medellín between 1907 and 1957. It combined political satire with commentary on social customs and is considered a valuable cultural source for the study of Medellín's social and political history.

14 Luz Aidé Rodríguez Cossío, "Libros De Cocina En La Ciudad De Medellín, 1908-1960", (Tesis de doctorado, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2023), 56. <https://bfrrepositorio.unal.edu.co/server/api/core/bitstreams/61da5d47-b978-4686-bbbb67256a3f921e/content>.

15 *El Bateo* (Medellín) 30 de enero de 1908: 3. Citado de Rodríguez Cossío, "Libros De Cocina En La Ciudad De Medellín" 56.

health discourses, the books actively promoted the consumption of vegetables, criticizing their scarcity in the traditional diet and aligning with the "modern diet" that demanded "vegetables and more vegetables," even stating that "one of the greatest defects in the diet of the Colombian people consists of the scarcity of greens and vegetables."<sup>16</sup> In summary, Medellín's cuisine in this period, seen through its recipe books, was the reflection of an elite seeking to build a "modern" and refined culinary identity, looking towards Europe, while debating the value and place of its own traditions.

However, Colombia, in its modernizing zeal, and with the rise of periodical advertising, easily fell into "medical" discourses coming from Europe, mainly from France. Therefore, advertising was not slow to appear in Colombia promoting vitamin supplements that encouraged their consumption, responding to the "modern" dietary demand, and which, as Corbin rightly said, the dietary phenomenon related to shaping the body for aesthetic purposes was a *ermane* social distinction. The newspaper *El Colombiano*<sup>17</sup>, for example, in 1915 promoted an "Easy Method to Obtain Flesh, Beauty, and Strength" which stated that:

The error incurred by almost all thin people who wish to gain flesh and at the same time beauty and strength is that they *ermane* medicating their stomachs with drugs of any kind or partaking of overly greasy meals, or following some foolish rule of physical culture, while the true cause of their thinness receives no attention. No one can increase their weight while their digestive organs do not properly assimilate the food that goes into the stomach. Thanks to a new scientific *ermane*, it is now *ermane* to combine in a simple way the elements that the digestive organs need to assist them in their work of assimilating food and converting *ermane* blood and firm, *ermane* flesh. This modern *ermane* is called SARGOL, one of the best flesh-creators known. SARGOL, through its regenerative and reconstructive properties, helps the stomach in its task of extracting from food the nutritive substances they contain, which it carries to the blood and this in turn disseminates them throughout each and every tissue and *ermane* the body. Very easily you can imagine the *ermane* this astonishing transformation when you begin to notice that your cheeks are *ermane*, the hollows in your neck, shoulders, and chest gradually disappear, and after a few weeks you have gained 10 to 15 pounds of solid and *ermane* flesh.<sup>18</sup>

From the above advertisement, we deduce that in the early years of the 20th century in Colombia, thinness had a negative connotation, probably due to its deep relationship with illness and scarcity. Consequently, "flesh" had not yet been demonized, being part of "beauty." It is by 1937 that the discourse begins to take a different turn, with what is sold as "useful knowledge" aimed at women who want to avoid accumulating "useless" fat.

16 *El Colombiano* (Medellín) 01 de marzo de 1948: 4. Citado de Rodríguez Cossío, "Libros De Cocina En La Ciudad De Medellín" 191.

17 *El Colombiano* is a prominent regional newspaper published in Medellín.

18 *El Colombiano* (Medellín) 11 de enero de 1915: 4.

Obesity is the nightmare of excessively fleshy people and the terror of those who enjoy tasty dishes and not depriving themselves of any delicacy they fancy. On the other hand, the very tendency to increase weight excessively provokes a vicious circle due to the limitation of exercise, caused by the accumulation of fat, which further encourages its production even more intensely, with the consequent discomforts derived from intoxications. Therefore, if one does not want to reach serious states of fatness, it is advisable, as soon as the appearance of fat is noticed, to dedicate oneself to methodical exercise in order to reduce risks and superfluous flesh, avoiding discomfort and strain on the heart.

Those who firmly believe that fat offers no other dangers than weight gain and a bulging, unsightly abdomen are completely mistaken, as obesity can lead to apoplexy due to blood pressure. Diabetes, arthritis, arteriosclerosis, rheumatism, anemia are various results of that disordered eating, lack of movement, which progressively reduces the elasticity of muscles and joints until completely nullifying it.

[...] Women who wish to display a graceful, fine, slender silhouette must flee the temptation to ingest foods capable of causing a pernicious weight increase. To contain these desires, there are established norms and reasoned gymnastics capable of eliminating the circumstantial excesses incurred sometimes unintentionally. If they do not observe these prescriptions, fat will accumulate in the chin and around the kidneys, producing the so feared and detestable deformations.<sup>19</sup>

Well, from the above it is inferred that not only does the discourse change, but exercise is now imposed as a method to lose weight and “display a graceful, fine, and slender silhouette.”<sup>20</sup> Likewise, a change in medical discourse is clearly seen, probably also adapted to the new aesthetic demands of the time. In *La buena mesa* by Sofía Ospina de Navarro, we can perceive not only the class distinction through the recipes contained therein, but also many of them present “modern” preparations that, as already mentioned, come from Europe; obscuring traditional cuisine, something that can be seen in the following recipe:

#### Italian Ravioli

Put 1 glass of water, 3 tablespoons of butter, and 1 teaspoon of salt in a saucepan over heat. When it begins to boil, add 1 pound of wheat flour, stirring frequently until the ball of dough comes away from the pan and does not stick to your fingers. Remove from heat, let it rest, and add 1 beaten egg, mixing well. Separately, make a very good stew with 1/2 pound of pork, stewed and finely chopped, boiled eggs, ground onion and tomatoes, pepper, chopped herbs, and salt. With the dough, make small balls and, spreading them in your hand, thin them as if to make small empanadas, which are filled with a little of the stew. In a pot, empty a can of tomato soup and another of julienne or vegetable soup, and in this sauce, put the ravioli to simmer for a few minutes over low heat so they don't stick. At

serving time, sprinkle grated Parmesan cheese or another very good quality cheese on top.<sup>21</sup>

Undoubtedly a “modernizing” example of cuisine, cultivated deep within the upper class, cultivating *haute cuisine*.

### FROM POOR TO FASHIONABLE

Undoubtedly, in the early 20th-century recipe books like Sofía Ospina's, lipophobia is not directly discussed or easily visible. However, hints of a nascent concern for moderation and health can be perceived, which could be interpreted as a very early precursor to future dietary concerns. The author's focus is not on the elimination of fat, but on avoiding excess and adapting food to circumstances. For example, a clear preference is shown for the modern and simpler meals of her time compared to the opulent banquets of the past, stating that menus with “six or seven courses, which are not in keeping with the activity of modern life nor with hygiene itself”<sup>22</sup> are inferior to simpler meals. It can be inferred at this point that when she mentions “hygiene,” she is referring to health and moderation, an attitude typical of the upper class.

Now, the idea of having a good figure had been present since the early 19th century when corsets were used to improve posture, more as an indication of elegance than aesthetic improvement. Its use became widespread among almost all adult women; however, its use became uncomfortable, so “criticism intensifies, especially medical criticism” maintaining that “The corset is an insult to nature.”<sup>23</sup> The above, at the end of the century, responds to a demand for more slender bodies and “forms marry more with fabrics”<sup>24</sup>, that is, it was no longer the fabric that had to conform to the body but quite the opposite, creating standard sizes, which soon evolved into “modern disorders” because “Slenderness becomes ‘undulating,’ tunics become tight, with ‘cuirass jackets’ or ‘tailored jackets’; all bring pleasure to ‘thin people’ and ‘despair to others.’”<sup>25</sup> In short, slenderness began to predominate in beauty standards.

Consequently, and with the arrival of the new medical discourse regarding thinness, not only as a sign of social status but as a state of “health,” and as Corbin rightly points out, the birth of modern dietetics begins with the development of vitamins. Therefore, it is not strange to see periodical publications in the first decades of the 20th century with promises of weight loss, as shown by this publication from *El Tiempo*<sup>26</sup> in 1940:

#### Harmless Vegetable Weight Loss Cure Fucusol

##### FUCSOL

Selected extract of seaweed, slowly but surely provokes the

21 Sofía Ospina de Navarro, *La Buena Mesa: Sencillo y Practico* (Bogotá: Editorial Cromos), 30-31.

22 Ibid. 7.

23 Georges Vigarello, *Historia de la belleza: El cuerpo y el arte de embellecer desde el Renacimiento hasta nuestros días* (Buenos Aires: Nueva Visión, 2005), 162.

24 Ibid. 163.

25 Ibid. 165.

26 *El Tiempo* is one of Colombia's leading national newspapers, based in Bogotá.

19 *La Opinión* (Cúcuta) 11 de enero de 1937: 4.

20 Ibid.

elimination of useless fat. It is an incomparable product for slimming, of sure efficacy and completely harmless.<sup>27</sup>

These “modern” eating habits *-proto-lipophobic-*, fostered not only through vitamin supplements, but also visible in *moderation* and *hygiene* as suggested by Ospina de Navarro’s recipe book. It should be added that, although the recipe book is not directly lipophobic, it is possible to find recipes like this one:

#### Consommé Royal

Grind two pounds of fresh beef loin in the grinder and place in enough cold water, with one small chicken crushed with bones, a bouquet of herbs, a bay leaf, and a little pepper. After a while, put it on the heat and let it boil for an hour, and before removing it, add enough salt. Let it cool *to remove the fat*, strain it, and before serving, heat it very well and add half a glass of white wine and some toasted almonds.<sup>28</sup>

Aside from the “modern” ingredients included in this recipe, we can find in it a wariness of fat, considering that it is a *consommé* in which the substance is provided by animal fat, or at least in traditional, not to say popular, Antioquian food. Parallel to this, as we mentioned a few lines earlier, the dietary discourse grows, but not only as diet and vitamin supplementation, but now with the physical factor, as can be seen in this newspaper article from 1941:

¡SURPRISING! ¡It Works! That combination of supervised diet and exercise is healthy and not harmful. An endocrinologist sometimes allows you to eat sweets and “other things you like to eat” to ensure the patient gets energizing food that keeps them in good health.

2-Here are the essential foods that, according to Dr. Vermilye, an adult should eat every day. Two fruits, one of them citrus; half a lettuce; two servings of vegetables, cooked or raw; meat once a day, at least; cheese, fish, or eggs - or more meat, at the second meal; a pint of milk a day; two or more slices of brown bread; a quarter of an inch of butter.

3-Do not rely on a masseuse to do all the hard work. Reducing requires effort and patience, as well as common sense. But it’s worth it.<sup>29</sup>

Finally, the course of the 20th century reveals the concern for “curves” or elimination of “useless fats,” advertising constituting a determining element in the configuration of this new phenomenon typical of societies of abundance.

### DIGESTIVE ADVERTISING: HOW THE 20TH CENTURY COOKED OUR MINDS AND SEASONED THE BODY

The period comprising the 20th century, especially after the First World War, saw an imminent advertising boom, where not only is the flourishing of industry visible, but also how it globalized, reaching every corner, class, and gender. On the other hand, in the context

of gender, there is a transformation in which women began to have greater control over their own bodies, something evidenced in what was previously presented regarding the suppression of corset use. Now, one might ask, “Who will be made to believe that female aesthetics is not one of the most notable symptoms of the evolution of civilization?” Did they seek “to compete with the masculine? To increase freedoms?”<sup>30</sup> Thus, it is interesting to observe that under these discourses a new, more active woman emerges, not only in decisions about her body, but also regarding social, political, and economic aspects. An example of the latter is the magazine *Letras y Encajes*<sup>31</sup>, in which these elite women not only opined on what was aesthetically best seen for a woman but also commented on the social reality of the country.

It is observed that during this period the female image transforms, although her role remains the same according to hegemonic patriarchal thought; it is possible to perceive how she becomes more susceptible to medical and aesthetic discourses. Vigarello, for his part, suggests that

This presentation of sun-kissed, active, half-naked bodies has a consequence on the images presented: it mixes vigor and thinness. The effects of muscle are added in this case to those of flesh: “What configures beauty is a thin and muscular body that moves with grace.”<sup>32</sup>

In this period, for the first time, the female figure is associated with a trait previously reserved for the male body: activity expressed in visible, firm, and trained musculature. Beauty manuals from the thirties repeatedly take up this conception, highlighting a sporty appearance as a model of female attractiveness: a slender body, thin but strong limbs, free of excess fat, and with a vital and energetic presence.<sup>33</sup> The readership of fashion and beauty magazines in the 1930s multiplied, but their concerns also multiplied. An example is a letter sent to *Votre beauté* magazine in August 1938, in which it is possible to see the distress:

I have shoulders and hips that are too wide. When I look at my back in the mirror, I look too fat because of my hips and those shoulders, but yet I am thin. On the other hand, it is impossible for me to gain weight; I saw a doctor, who simply prescribed rest and a strengthening tonic. There is nothing to be done. Deep down, and honestly, I do not wish to gain weight, because if I am ugly naked, if I gain weight I will be even uglier when dressed. I have a formidable excuse: it is irremediable. The movements you indicated in January for bow legs, are they really effective? Can bow legs really become beautiful? In how long? Despite my lack of fat, I still manage to have a bit of a belly. I think that could come from a strong arch in the lower back. Do you think a girdle is more advisable than a corset? I have very large hip bones. And

30 Vigarello, *Historia de la belleza*, 129.

31 *Letras y Encajes* was a cultural magazine published in Medellín from 1926 to 1959, directed by women and aimed at a female readership, promoting art, literature, and practical journalism training.

32 *Ibid.* 204.

33 *Cf. Ibid.* 204-205.

27 *El Tiempo*, (Bogotá), 12 de enero de 1940: 5.

28 Ospina de Navarro, *La Buena Mesa*, 13-14. My emphasis.

29 *La Opinión*, (Cúcuta), 6 de julio de 1941: 25.

there is also another question, which they consult you about very often, and which I absolutely must know: a small chest, sunken about three or four centimeters, can it be improved? My chest spoiled very quickly and the birth of a baby did not improve it; on the contrary. When I stretch my arms and puff out my chest, my breasts stay in place. I am not asking for the impossible, but a noticeable improvement: is it possible?<sup>34</sup>

From the above, it remains only to add that anxiety is the symptom of the entire 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, in the search for those new measures imposed by advertising, even reaching the point of discussing ideal measurements, like those shown in this table published in the aforementioned magazine:

**Table 1:** Votre beauté <sup>1</sup>

Ano	Peso en kilos
Enero de 1929	60
Abril de 1932	54
Agosto de 1932	53-52
Mayo de 1939	51.5

Pesos aconsejados por Votre beaute para una mujer de un metro sesenta.

1 Ibid. 206.

The “recommended weights” disseminated by this and numerous magazines affect not only female consciousness, but also male consciousness, by distorting the perception of the female body and imposing the internalization of stereotypes that conflict with reality, by assuming that the ideal weight standards promoted by aesthetic advertising should be applied uniformly. In Nancy A. Collins’ horror story titled *Aphra*<sup>35</sup>, the above is easily appreciated. In it, the protagonist develops an unhealthy fascination for a female skeleton named *Aphra*, who embodies his ideal of beauty. This obsession reflects lipophobia by contrasting *Aphra*’s body with imperfect bodies, especially that of his wife, whose post-pregnancy fatness he finds repulsive. This story evidences a critique of beauty standards that demonize fat and glorify extreme thinness, showing how this obsession can lead to a certain type of alienation. On the other hand, the grotesque culmination, where the protagonist prefers the cadaveric perfection of *Aphra* to living flesh, exposes the ultimate horror of a culture that equates thinness with purity and fatness with moral failure. The tale functions as a dark allegory of how lipophobia distorts desire and humanity, especially that of men.

However, it is paradoxical that a society so concerned about its silhouette is the same one that *McDonaldized*<sup>36</sup> its customs, turned food into junk, and displaced domestic and traditional eating with

fast and pre-cooked foods. As Fischler suggests:

Food becomes a true mass consumer market: now they are products highly transformed by cutting-edge industrial processes. Designed and marketed with the latest marketing, *packaging*, and advertising techniques, they are distributed through commercial networks that constantly perfect their power and complexity, implementing extremely elaborate logistics.<sup>37</sup>

Ultimately, a society marked by high levels of alienation hardly manages to discern the mechanisms underlying advertising. Our reductionist perspective lacks the critical elements necessary to unveil the underlying reality, unlike the *truth glasses* used by the character John Nada in John Carpenter’s film *They Live*. A film in which Carpenter exposes advertising as a language of biopolitical commands that discipline bodies and desires: consume, obey, marry, and reproduce. *Beauty* appears as a class mask (television and advertising *glamour*) that hides the carrion. The body is the battlefield: an object of media sedation and directed reproduction, but also a place where illusion breaks when we truly “see.”<sup>38</sup>

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11. *El Tiempo*, (Bogotá), 12 de enero de 1940.

37 Ibid. 1049.

38 Cf. John Carpenter, “They Live”, Estados Unidos, 1988 (1h 33m).

34 Ibid. 205.

35 Cf. Nancy A. Collins, “Aphra”, en *Caricias de Horror Vol.2*, comp. Michele Slung (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1994).

36 Cf. Jean-Louis Flandrin y Massimo Montanari, *Historia de la Alimentación* (Asturias: Ediciones Trea, 2004), 1043.

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