

that environmental justice frameworks laid the basis for communities to pursue food justice. In the preface to *Tainted Tap*, Davis, who was raised in Flint, lays out her personal connection to the city. Her most vivid memory of watching the state neglect her neighborhood features the local grocery store. Full of rotting meat, stale bread, and brown vegetables, and yet charging high prices, the local market was the “store of last resort” (p. xii) for those who couldn’t drive across town. Davis describes that store as part of an insulting local landscape, “like the unexplained fires that burned throughout the night” (p. xii). This experience sparked her desire to investigate the water crisis in the context of the racialized and class-based allocation of essential services in depopulating cities. To scholars of food studies, it can also serve as a reminder. Investigating the presence or absence of a grocery store is not enough. Inequitable access to food is part of a broader landscape of neighborhood abandonment, brought on by processes of urban development that deprive poor communities and communities of color of the ability to live healthy lives, and resulting in disproportionate vulnerability to premature death. We would do well to continue to bring this important context into our work.

—Alison Hope Alkon, *University of the Pacific*

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Meat the Future

Liz Marshall, director

Bullfrog Films, 2021

Released 2022

88 minutes. DVD; Streaming on CBC Gem

Addressing an assembly of secondary-school students in his hometown of Vijayawada, India, Uma Valeti, co-founder and CEO of US-based Memphis Meats (now Upside Foods), recounts when he first conceived of harvesting meat without animals. He was a young boy attending a birthday party. As the other children played in front of the house, he wandered to the backyard where he found older family members slaughtering chickens for the afternoon’s feast. It was a moment of striking clarity about the death required for meat, one that shaped the course of his life. This story, documented in Canadian director Liz Marshall’s film *Meat the Future* (2022)

about Valeti and Co’s high-stakes endeavor to bring lab-grown meat to the US market, emphasizes an underplayed aspect of this fledgling industry: that animal welfare motivates its leading figures as much as any other concern.

In general, popular media frames “clean meat” (the industry’s preferred term) as an imminent technology for mitigating conventional meat production’s significant contributions to anthropogenic climate change (Rogers 2022). Meanwhile, scholarly treatments of lab-grown meat, such as Benjamin Wurgaff’s *Meat Planet* (2019), explore the promethean discourse surrounding the uncertain science. From pioneering Dutch eccentric Willem van Eelen in the 1990s to tireless Valeti, scholars examine how the science of lab-grown meat relates to venture capital’s role in financing research, which as of 2022 still has no other revenue stream. Marshall’s film neither challenges her subject’s perspective nor contests the industry’s claim to be leading a world-historical scientific revolution. Yet, by focusing on their shared commitment to animal rights (consistent with her past filmmaking), she nevertheless captures a fascinating paradox—why proponents of ethical veganism have become utterly fixated with replicating animal flesh, cell-for-living-cell.

Meat the Future (2022) documents Memphis Meats’ journey from Midwestern start-up to Silicon Valley darling. Having raised \$400 million (USD) in its latest round of financing, its backers include tech titans and conventional meat processors. Today, the company is headquartered in Emeryville, California, which includes a 53,000-square-foot production facility where it carries out growth-media preparation, bioprocessing, harvesting, and food formulation. The film briefly introduces the technical process of growing animal tissues in human-controlled conditions and the enormous difficulties performing this at a scale required for mass distribution. As Marshall shows, bringing the animal to life is not only the responsibility of biologists working in laboratories but relies equally on company chefs and marketing managers to treat the harvested tissue as a culinary object. The film shifts from documenting to participating in this aspect by repeatedly presenting vivid slow-motion close-ups of lab-grown meat sautéing in pans before being sliced, garnished, and handed to expectant tasters. Considering the incredible costs of producing the first cell-cultured hamburger in 2013—approximately \$500,000 (USD)—*Meat the Future* features a cornucopia of visual content that suggests an equivalence has been reached between lab grown and conventional meat, from its inherent textural properties to the way it looks while being cooked, plated, and discussed by those trying these products. If there is doubt or disappointment among the tasters shown, Marshall does not let on.

Instead, the film suggests and appears to accept that the project's success is vital for animal rights. Valeti and industry partners rehearse the idea that recreating the essence of life itself—growth—is the surest way to convince meat-hungry people to stop eating animals.

During a gathering of major figures in lab-grown meat featured in the documentary, Josh Tetrick, CEO of Just Inc., a plant-based egg producer and himself a committed vegan, explains that he “couldn’t imagine a world where McDonalds would replace all its hamburgers with a plant-based meat.” Biological equivalence is accepted as the prerequisite for those interested in diverting consumers away from eating conventional meat. Marshall finds this idea at work in industry conversations around production scale and state regulation. For example, while covering the opening round of FDA hearings on cultured meat labeling, she documents how the industry’s supporters blend technical justifications with appeals to ending animal cruelty. Besides productive enterprises, groups like the Animal Wellness Action, Animal Legal Defense Fund, and the Good Food Institute—the “vegan food lobby”—can be found speaking in support of lab-grown meat. According to Good Food founder and CEO Bruce Friedrich, interviewed earlier in the film, “It is just true that the vast majority of people are not going to incorporate ethical considerations into their dietary choices. So, let’s take ethics off the table. And let’s just create products that people want to buy because they are delicious, they are reasonably priced, and they are everywhere.” As Marshall’s film demonstrates, lab-grown meat’s unprecedented potential to recreate the aesthetics of meat stands to relieve animal advocates of having to appeal to individuals’ ethics to dramatically alter their consumption habits. Instead, it builds their ethical vision into the food system from the ground up, irrespective of any commitment on the part of the public.

Marshall does not wrestle much with the merits of solving such political questions through technological means. But she does show that this future, for all its supposed benefits, remains highly uncertain. In its concluding frames, the film shows Valeti and team inching toward success in Memphis Meat’s new facility. While the future looks bright in sunny California, Valeti reveals they have yet to find a suitable replacement for fetal bovine serum, the vital nutrient soup harvested in slaughterhouses from cow fetuses that induces tissue cells to agglomerate in meat-like ways. Doing so is the final step toward ultimately separating meat-making from sentient animals, one that matters as much to the industry’s financial backers as to the animal rights activists who have staked their moral position on its success.

—Joel Dickau, *University of Toronto*

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Gastropolitics and the Specter of Race: Stories of Capital, Culture, and Coloniality in Peru

María Elena García

Oakland: University of California Press, 2021

320 pp. \$85.00 (hardcover); \$29.95 (paper); (eBook)

Shortly after I arrived in Lima for a visit in July 2022, I attended one of the first dinners two friends had hosted since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. The binational couple lightheartedly expressed pride when their young son declared that carapulcra (a stew of pre-Hispanic origin) was his favorite dish—“Like a good Peruvian!” The next day, I tried to be a decent line cook as my roommate prepared a causa limeña using ingredients from a farmers’ market (agroferia campesina) frequented by socially and environmentally conscious consumers. At dinner that evening, when the subject turned to Chile—Peru’s main historical rival—guests made some digs at the country’s comparatively underdeveloped national cuisine.

María Elena García’s *Gastropolitics and the Specter of Race* certainly offers material for thinking about such interactions, but it is much more than an exploration of food and national identity in the Andean country. The book presents a stunning and innovative analysis of the politics of Peru’s recent gastronomic boom, which can be understood as the principal cultural project of the country’s neoliberal era. Images of celebrity chefs, tales of social mobility through culinary-entrepreneurial achievement, and attempts to elevate Peruvian gastronomy’s position within a global culinary order became entwined with representations of the country’s twenty-first-century economic growth and supposed recovery from political violence that officially ended in 2000. The international success of restaurateurs like Gastón Acurio, along with productions such as the Mistura food festival, gave symbolic weight to a sense that “Peru is advancing” (a slogan used by one of the era’s disgraced former presidents). So did the accompanying narratives of culinary revalorization and renewal. (Popular accounts often emphasize chefs’ historical underappreciation of national dishes and ingredients, though as García notes, the promotion of high-end Peruvian cuisine in restaurants can be traced at least to the 1980s.) No