


Race, Gender, and the Beats in Tan Magazine's "I Was a Victim of the Beat Generation"

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## Recommended Citation

Stripe, Chelsea M. "Race, Gender, and the Beats in Tan Magazine's "I Was a Victim of the Beat Generation"." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 18.5 (2016): [<https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.2971>](https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.2971)

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**Volume 18 Issue 5 (December 2016) Article 17**  
**Chelsea Stripe,**  
**"Race, Gender, and the Beats in *Tan* Magazine's 'I Was a**  
**Victim of the Beat Generation'"**

<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol18/iss5/17>>

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Contents of ***CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture 18.5 (2016)***  
Special Issue ***Global Beat Studies***. Ed. **Oliver Harris and Polina Mackay**  
<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol18/iss5/>>

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**Abstract:** In her article "Race, Gender, and the Beats in *Tan* Magazine's 'I Was a Victim of the Beat Generation'" Chelsea Stripe discusses the "true to life" story of Sara Howard, a single African American mother who becomes pregnant by a white Beat and struggles to raise their child alone. On the one hand, "I Was a Victim of the Beat Generation" emphasizes the exploitative character of Beats' affinity for African American culture and of their attitudes toward women. Further, Howard's story critiques the social fluidity that Beat privilege allows. On the other hand, the story articulates conservative US-American middle class values and encourages opposition to the Beats as a strategy of African American female respectability and racial uplift. Matters of race and gender intersect in this African American women's popular magazine to complicate and make more complete the picture of popular media during the post-World War II era. Moreover, Howard's story demonstrates how marginalized identities experienced and perceived the Beats, broadening an understanding of the group's place in US-American culture.

## Chelsea STRIPE

### Race, Gender, and the Beats in *Tan* Magazine's "I Was a Victim of the Beat Generation"

In February 1960, Johnson Publishing Company's *Tan* magazine featured "I Was a Victim of the Beat Generation," the story of a single African American woman who became pregnant by a white Beat named Jack, and now struggles to raise their mixed race child. *Tan*, a popular magazine that launched in 1950 as *Tan Confessions* and ran until 1971, targeted a working- and middle class Black female audience, running "true to life" accounts of romance and advice on homemaking. "I Was a Victim of the Beat Generation" shared Sara Howard's "true to life" story as told to associate editor Lawrence "Larry" Still. While not a central narrative in the development of a Beat mythos, with the publication of Howard's experience, *Tan* joined growing media coverage aimed at making sense of, maligning, or, at times, defending the Beats. Further, unlike articles from its mainstream white media counterparts, this story gives perspective on the Beats from an African American woman's point of view. As a result, "I Was a Victim of the Beat Generation," as yet unaddressed in Beat scholarship, provides a broader picture of popular response to the Beats and offers us a new position from which to examine the Beats within the intersecting contexts of race and gender.

*Tan's* original title, *Tan Confessions*, calls to mind other confessional serials of the century like *True Confessions*, which aimed at white, working-class audiences. In 1952, Johnson dropped the word "confessions" from the magazine's title, yet "Stories from True Life" continued to comprise the bulk of the magazine's content. *Tan's* call for "true stories from Negro life and romance" emphasized the magazine's concern for "dramatic interest" over "style" ("Wanted" 63). According to the small print in each issue of *Tan*, names of individuals and businesses had been changed, and models were used in the images that accompanied stories. In the case of "I Was a Victim of the Beat Generation," both Sara Howard and her characters' names have likely been changed, and details of her story suggest editorial decisions made to enhance marketability according to the concerns of the day.

Such were the editorial practices of confessional magazines: Publishers solicited tales of sex and scandal from readers and edited them for publication. The confession magazine appealed to readers through its true-to-life content, while editing practices pushed an ideological agenda. In an essay that has shaped an understanding of confession magazines since its 1958 publication, George Gerbner explains: "One barrel of the editorial formula aims at the insecurities of working-class life in a world of middle-class consumption pressures. The other barrel is loaded with editorial ammunition designed to minimize the risk of this appeal by making social protest appear to be ... unrelated to the insecurities of working-class life" (32). Readers of Howard's story in 1960 may have been gripped by the repercussions this sweeping bohemian youth trend seemed to have within their communities, while readers today can see Howard's story as a critique aligned with conservative political contexts and dominant cultural strategies of the era.

The present analysis of *Tan's* "I Was a Victim of the Beat Generation" extends from Beat scholarship, adapting its methods and frameworks to a new source for understanding the Generation. In "Rumblings of Discontent: American Popular Culture and its Response to the Beat Generation, 1957-1960," Stephen Petrus maps media representations of the Beats alongside the group's shifting popular image. Collections such as *Girls Who Wore Black: Women Writing the Beat Generation* reflect efforts to identify and investigate the work of female Beats, who historically have been overlooked and undervalued in the Beat canon. Women among the Beats largely elected affiliation with the Beats and often enjoyed privileges of middle-class backgrounds, yet were forced to negotiate sexism within the Beat Generation and the larger culture. Several works examine Beat texts and contexts to parse the relationship between Beats and African American culture, questioning, for instance, whether the influence of Black cultural productions, such as jazz, in Beat writing amounts to cultural appropriation. Within a climate of mid-century legal and practical discrimination and a history of institutionalized racism, the predominantly white Beats' borrowing of African American cultural productions becomes further fraught.

Criticism grounded in gender or race analysis enlightens differences in marginalization experienced by women and by African Americans. Other analyses of the Beats approach the interplay of race and gender oppressions within the Generation's texts. Jon Panish situates romantic primitivism and exoticization of African American women in Jack Kerouac's *The Subterraneans* within race relations of the Beat scene, asserting that Kerouac effectively "trivializes the true nature of racial oppression by blurring ... the difference" between the oppression of African Americans and the voluntary "outsiderism" of the Beats (121). Like Panish, Nancy M. Grace addresses *The Subterraneans* as well as other

Dulouz legend texts through a study of race, gender, class, and ethnicity in Kerouac's writing, which, she argues, is complicated by his own hybrid identity (40).

Ultimately, such scholarship has paved the way for an analysis of Howard's story—for mapping and applying an intersectional lens to her representation of the Beats. First, the socio-political contexts within which Howard's story appears help to define the post-World War II culture and situate *Tan* against this backdrop. Further, examples of media representations of the Beats place Howard's story in dialogue with popular press on the Generation. Finally, close reading and analysis of "I Was a Victim of the Beat Generation" illuminates the ways that Howard's story aligns with and complicates narratives of the Beats perpetuated by the media that advanced the era's cultural hegemonies, including ideologies of domestic Containment and race.

Outlets from general interest weeklies to independent quarterlies participated in the boom of coverage that contributed to a popular (mis)understanding of the Beats during the late 1950s and early 1960s. While commentary by Beat sympathizers and Beat writers themselves comprise some of the press given to the group during this period, more often, media mocked and disparaged the Beats. Anna Jessmer surveys such articles and argues that negative representation of the group served a larger political and socio-cultural Cold War Containment agenda. By delegitimizing the Beats, the mainstream press could "contain" the threat their unconventional and non-conformist lifestyles posed to hegemonic ideals. Jessmer's point helps to situate anti-Beat media as an ideological tool to advance capitalist values. Beats, whose nonconformity extended to a rejection of consumer culture, were a particularly useless target market for publishers financed largely by advertising. Serving as a voice of dissent, Beats needed to be minimized and undermined—caricatured and characterized as bumbling deadbeats, or worse, as threats to the US-American social order.

To this end, the media frequently conflated the small circle of antiestablishment writers with the larger bohemian youth subculture emerging in the late 1950s and 1960s. The Beat Generation is formally understood as a group of post-World War II writers whose core membership included Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, and William Burroughs, and whose ideals and aesthetics were rooted in a rejection of dominant US social convention. The bohemian youth subculture shared some of these Beat ideals and took inspiration from their literature, but in time this subculture grew to bear less resemblance to the Beats than to the media-peddled image of the stereotypical beatnik. "I Was a Victim of the Beat Generation" trades on the popularity of that group of writers to describe a scene more bongo drums and berets than literary experiment, spiritual experience, and contempt for US conformism. The misunderstood version of the Beats that appears in Howard's story should not invalidate entirely the critique it contains; instead, "I Was a Victim of the Beat Generation" reflects a perception of Beats and bohemian youth perpetuated by African American media and communicated to its consumers. Moreover, it reveals *Tan*'s participation in the construction of this stereotype, leveraged to advance the conservative racial and gender politics of Johnson Publishing during that era.

Mainstream white media outlets promoted similarly conservative agendas, as demonstrated in popular publications of the time. In 1959, *Life* magazine published an article titled "The Only Rebellion Around: But the Shabby Beats Bungle the Job in Arguing, Sulking and Bad Poetry," by Paul O'Neil. The title is telling of O'Neil's condemnatory approach to the Beats, quickly dismissing the group as culturally ineffectual in their literary ineptitude: "The bulk of Beat writers are undisciplined and slovenly amateurs," he writes, and the "general level of Beat writing is appalling" (434). While O'Neil takes care to catalog the Beat Generation's major players and works and to summarize what he perceives to be their ideals, his dismissive tone makes clear that any buzz surrounding the Beats is not indicative of the group's actual worth. The Beats, he claims, have caused recent stir in the otherwise placid era only "by default": "But default or no, who ever heard of rebels so pitiful, so passive, so full of childish rages and nasty, masochistic cries?" (439).

At the same time, embedded in O'Neil's scorn of the Beats is indication of popular discourses, or lack thereof, surrounding race and gender among the Beats. His mention of the "Negro"—"hero to the Beat"—and the "chick"—"hostile little females"—reflect and respond to race and gender relations within the Generation and the larger culture (425, 428). Notably, O'Neil's portrayal of the Beat affinity for African American culture parrots concurrent popular observations of race and the Beats, joins intellectualized discussion among figures such as Norman Mailer, and anticipates later scholarly criticisms of their writing. The author explains, "It seems doubtful that antisegregationists or many Negroes could take comfort [in Beat adulation for African Americans]. The things that the Beat treasures and envies in the Negro are irresponsibility, cheerful promiscuity and subterranean defiance which were once enforced in him during his years of bondage" (425-26). His claims regarding women's role among the Beats are less prescient, yet similarly in line with the limited critical attention the issue received from the public. According to O'Neil, female Beats "are relatively few" and their bohemian lives unglamor-

ous: "What the boon Beats really want from femininity ... is financial support, and the 'chicks' who are willing to support a whiskery male are often middle-aged and fat" (437-38). Thus, by popular media's estimation, for African Americans and for women, the alternative social structures among the Beats do not amount to social progress. In fact, as O'Neil would have readers believe, life among the Beats for both groups would be a setback from the status quo.

Passing references to the female Beats reinforce the dominant image of womanhood in the 1950s and early 1960s. Limiting the mention of female Beats preserved a similarly limited range of acceptable femininity. At the same time, ridicule for and quick dismissal of women among the Beats discouraged women from straying too far from white, middle-class domesticity. Even the alternative weekly, *The Village Voice*, sweepingly disparaged female Beats. A "Feminine Voice" piece by an author identified as "Flavia" represented women's bohemian lifestyles as a mere pretense, masking "square" professional and personal ends. In return for the "success, notoriety, or potential talent" that male Beats had to offer, the female Beat "accepts the role of housekeeper, mistress, and nurse. While her 'hip' lad is around, she will be a faithful drudge, an earnest listener, and often his sole economic support" (qtd. in Charters 613). As far as Flavia depicts them, female Beat aspirations are as conventional as those of her suburban housewife counterpart: "From the moment she gets back to the Pad until she leaves for work the following day, she's demonstrating what a great wife she'd be. She understands all—and what's more, she's younger, prettier, and stronger than his mother" (qtd. in Charters 613-14). As it turns out, "Flavia" was the penname for *Mademoiselle* writer Corinne Robbins (McAuliffe 53). The author's affiliation with a mainstream fashion magazine may help explain her relatively conservative take on the topic, but it also calls attention to a lack of female Beat voices in discussions of the group. Ultimately, rather than addressing Beat gender dynamics in careful critique—through which later scholars would find the complex interplay of sexist attitudes and (proto)feminist acts—popular media writers mocked female Beats, further silencing and sidelining women's experiences within bohemia.

While the complexity of gender roles among the Beats would remain underexamined in most media of the era, meaningful dialogue around the issue of race played out more frequently in small-circulation magazines. Such dialogue, particularly when it presented African American men with the opportunity to intervene, advanced understanding of the complexity of race among the Beats. Consecutive issues of *Partisan Review*—Spring and Summer 1958—featured an exchange on the Beats between conservative commentator Norman Podhoretz and Amiri Baraka, who at that time affiliated with the Beat Generation and identified as LeRoi Jones. In the Spring issue, Podhoretz's scathing assessment of "The Know-Nothing Bohemians" condemns the Beats' "worship of primitivism and spontaneity" and at the same criticizes their romanticization of African American hardships (315). Moreover, for Podhoretz, "Bohemianism ... is for the Negro a means of entry into the world of the whites" (311). The Summer issue gave Baraka a platform to respond to Podhoretz's "rather early-'30's middle class assumption," explaining, "The Negro Bohemian's flight from Harlem is not a flight from the world of color but the flight of any would-be Bohemian from what Mr. Podhoretz himself calls 'the provinciality, philistinism and moral hypocrisy of American life'" (473). For Baraka, the values of dominant white society exist even among Black bourgeoisie. Further, the Black intellectual's entrance into Beat bohemia is not an assimilationist move, as Podhoretz implies, but rather it counters hegemonic ideals held by Black and white establishment cultures alike.

Similarly, James Baldwin would challenge Norman Mailer's assessment of the relationship between African Americans and Beats in discourse drawn out over the course of years and across two quarterlies. Mailer's "The White Negro," featured in the Fall 1957 issue of *Dissent*, was met by Baldwin's response, "The Black Boy Looks at the White Boy," in a 1961 essay published first in *Esquire*. According to Mailer, the modern hipster was born from society's atrocities—World War II, atomic bombs, concentration camps—and found in African American culture a model for survival and new set of values. Having "absorbed the existentialist synapses of the Negro," Mailer writes, "for practical purposes [the hipster] could be considered a white Negro" (qtd. in Charters 587). Baldwin's "The Black Boy Looks at the White Boy" reproaches Mailer's racial essentialism and confronts so-called "white Negroes" like Kerouac, whose envious gaze at the "colored section of Denver" and at "overworked Japs" Baldwin calls "offensive nonsense" (Kerouac qtd. in Baldwin 104). Baldwin writes, "I know how power works, it has worked on me, and if I didn't know how power worked, I would be dead" (105). White rebellion relies on the very privilege these hipsters purport to eschew, and their failure to acknowledge race power relations perpetuates the real danger of this design.

Cataloging media representations of the Beats demonstrates how the popular press framed the Generation. Mapping examples from newspapers and magazines also reveals prevailing concerns of and surrounding the Beat Generation, as well as the gaps and omissions in Beat and mainstream discourses. Women among the Beats went under- and misrepresented in the popular press. And while

African American men such as Baraka and Baldwin took rare opportunities to correct problematic discourse on race relations among the Beats, African American female accounts of the Beat Generation remained nearly absent from the record. Howard's story, "I Was a Victim of the Beat Generation," intervenes against this omission. Aside from Kerouac's rendering of the African American female subject through *The Subterraneans'* Mardou Fox, Howard's story stands as a seldom-heard voice on the Beats, emerging from *Tan* magazine at the intersection of race and gender. While far from the deliberate and direct responses to race and the Beats heard from Baraka and Baldwin, careful reading of "I Was a Victim of the Beat Generation" helps fill in the picture of how marginalized identities experienced and responded to the group.

Further, contextualizing the story's appearance in *Tan* magazine illuminates its engagement with Beat and hegemonic discourses. As anticipated by the story's title, Howard would find herself exploited and abandoned as a result of her time with the bohemian youth. On the one hand, Howard's story recalls sexism experienced by the primarily white female Beats, in this case compounded by race marginalization. On the other hand, *Tan's* participation in popular misrepresentations of the Beats Generation as stereotypical beatnik youth exposes the magazine's anti-Beat discourse toward a conservative agenda shared by mainstream white media.

"I Was a Victim of the Beat Generation" follows its narrator from her entrance into the Beat world through her troubled relationship with Jack, a white man who figures as an emblem of the Beat Generation throughout the story. Following graduation from teacher's college, Howard leaves her small hometown for life in a large mid-western city, where she becomes another "hanger-on" among the largely white bohemian crowd. Among her new friends is Frank, an African American writer, and Jack, a white, bohemian college student. Howard and Jack date for a year despite Frank's warnings that the interracial relationship could bring her trouble. Soon, when Howard becomes pregnant, Jack refuses responsibility and withdraws from Howard's life. Her story concludes with the difficulty she now faces as a single mother of the child who resulted from the affair. Howard struggles against the financial realities of single motherhood and social realities of raising a mixed race child in the racist, antimiscegenist climate of the 1960s, while Jack resumes a privileged social position, moving to the suburbs to marry a white woman and celebrate the publication of his first book.

On the surface, the Beat scene setting for Howard's sensational tale makes for entertaining reading relevant to the early 1960s backdrop of its publication. However, the prevalence of Beat clichés in this popular magazine feature serves a purpose for the publisher that goes beyond mere participation in a media trend. Familiar scenarios of youth and stereotypes of the Beats contain a message for *Tan's* audience, as the "true to life" structure of the magazine's stories raise the stakes for readers. Restless with her small town surroundings, a young woman relocates to the "big city" and finds a room at the YMCA in a "white section of town" (12). She quickly becomes taken with her surroundings and begins to interact with the community around her. She explains, "I was attracted by the area's bright lights, bohemian night clubs and mixed crowds ... The area was something like Greenwich Village in New York. I started going around with a group of young writers and artists and hangers-on, like myself" (12). Howard's descriptions of the Beat Generation take advantage of tropes familiar to readers, relying on Beat names and stereotypes prevalent in popular media. She attends "one of those parties where they play bongo drums and everybody sits around talking about what's wrong with society and middle class morals and how nobody appreciates new genius in the arts" (12). She even begins to enjoy the regular company of one of the white bohemian men named Jack. She slowly falls for Jack, who seems to embody the Beat habits and ideals depicted across newspapers and magazines: "Jack was in college then. He was always talking about geo-politics, world population problems, and how everybody must learn to live together. He didn't seem phony then, and it seemed to make sense. We'd go to the park and to libraries and to all the 'way out' places where they read poetry and played jazz" (12).

*Tan* relies on situations so common that African American female audience members read themselves into the narrator's story. In this way, Howard's story becomes a cautionary tale, warning of the ease with which a young woman could find herself caught up with Beat bohemia and by its exciting and unconventional ideals. Howard's use of the word "then" throughout this introduction—as demonstrated in the passages above—helps establish the before-and-after structure of this story, and shape the outcome of "I Was a Victim of the Beat Generation" into a warning for readers. Jack doesn't seem "phony" at first, and race is an afterthought until both mistaken ideas become Howard's irreversible error. The naiveté that Howard exhibits bring about her eventual struggle, and, according to the cautionary format, could lead to the same consequence for the audience. Lest her story be confused with that of a wide-eyed girl gone wrong, central to "I Was a Victim" is a warning about the Beat scene and

the motives of white Beats. Howard's story, in part then, serves an ideological purpose: to encourage an understanding of how the innocuous-seeming Beats are affecting the African American community.

In *Ladies Pages: African American Women's Magazines*, Noliwe Rooks provides a history of African American periodicals, pointing to political origins of African American newspapers that would have a later presence in magazines. With increased rates of literacy and mobility among African Americans, she explains, the US witnessed an "explosion" of African American newspapers following the Civil War (6). Moreover, the political climate of the antebellum era called for an increase in "advocacy in the battle against segregation, disfranchisement, and lynching" (6-7). African American newspapers, then, began as "organs of protest"; yet, even following a conservative shift at the turn of the century, magazines emerged as the source for stories of "racial progress, success, and advancement" (6-7). Johnson Publishing Company would continue in this tradition, making space for such stories in magazines including *Tan*. As Ayesha Hardison explains in *Writing through Jane Crow: Race and Gender Politics in African American Literature*, John H. Johnson founded a series of magazines to act as "counternarratives to hegemonic discourses' systematic whiteout of African American subjects" (144). In particular here, *Tan* counters the absence of African American female subjects in popular white mainstream magazines, and specifically, "I Was a Victim of the Beat Generation" brings a perspective of race and gender dynamics from a voice that is otherwise unrepresented in the era's popular discourses on the Beats and bohemia.

"I Was a Victim of the Beat Generation" includes another voice significant to Howard's story—that of Frank, an African American man and the only other person of color in Howard's bohemian social group. In contrast to Howard's naiveté, Frank conveys an awareness of the complicated race and gender dynamics among the group. He counsels Howard on her involvement with Jack, explaining: "Look, baby, you and I both know the score. No matter what you do, these Crackers don't change. I've been on the scene a long time. If everything is straight between you and Jack, that's cool. But, if you don't know what you're doing, you'd better ask somebody" (13). Frank's social shrewdness informs his cautious attitude toward the motives of not just Jack but the white Beats—and perhaps white society—in general. Frank's warning seems to suggest that despite any current camaraderie with African Americans, their white bohemian friends will remain racially self-interested in the end. While the real life core figures in the Beat Generation were not following the same trajectory as Jack, Frank's point of view reminds readers of the social fluidity that certain Beats and bohemians enjoy because of their whiteness. He warns Howard against confusing this crowd's camaraderie with an equality that is otherwise unattainable in 1960s US-American society. Ultimately, what Frank knows about the Beats, Howard will suffer for not knowing. The consequences for an African American woman are starkly different than those for men of any race.

In "I Was a Victim of the Beat Generation" the difference in experiences manifests in the form of Howard's unplanned pregnancy—the burden of which falls on the narrator alone. When Howard approaches Jack about her pregnancy, he dismisses her predicament and shirks responsibility. After Buddy is born, Howard turns to Jack for financial help. Once again, he avoids accountability, explaining he is unable to help. Not only is he finishing his first book, he has plans to marry a woman from an "important family" (81). Moreover, Howard relates, Jack and his fiancé plan to "[buy] a home in an exclusive suburb where Negroes couldn't live" (81).

This revelation is the story's strongest indictment against the Beat Generation and bohemian youth adherents: Their hipness hinges on an interest in African American art forms and linguistic style, and their whiteness grants them access to aspects of African American culture that are always outside of the white American mainstream. The same race privilege that allows white Beats entrance into African American cultural spaces permits them to reenter white mainstream society whenever they deem it beneficial. When Jack grows tired of jazz and bongo drums, he can reassume his dominant place in American society and enjoy career success, the status that important family brings, and the comforts of racially exclusive suburban life. Moreover, gender privilege means that he can refuse responsibility for his son and leave Howard to raise him on her own.

Through Howard's experiences in Beat bohemia and struggles of single motherhood—consequences presaged by Frank—*Tan* articulates a critique of race and gender among the Beats and beatniks. This critique comes on the heels of Kerouac's publication of *The Subterraneans* in 1958, an account of an affair between the white male narrator and an African American woman in the emerging San Francisco Beat scene. As Howard's story reframes that scenario from the inverse perspective as a warning to African American women involved in the bohemian subculture, renaming the white male Beat "Jack" may have been a sly editorial allusion to *The Subterraneans* and reference to Kerouac himself. The presence of a Beat named Jack in the story—and its title—also capitalizes on popular attention paid to the Beat and bohemian youth cultures, and participates in the media efforts to undermine the literary

movement, construct a beatnik stereotype, and confuse any distinction between the two. Jack is a selfish and one-dimensional stand-in for Beat writers, and, marked by an interest in jazz and bongo drums, Howard's social circle is a superficial representation of bohemian youth. "I Was a Victim of the Beat Generation" remains in line with popular media misrepresentations of the Beats as beatniks and with dominant cultural ideals. Further, as *Tan* reframes Howard's experience to articulate a standard of behavior for African American respectability, her story ultimately reinforces, rather than counters, hegemonic discourses.

The cautionary design of her story establishes a narrow range of appropriate behavior for African American female readers. As Howard's story concludes, the lesson it suggests to readers reflects the magazine's prescriptive nature. Alone and with Buddy to care for, Howard must "make rounds" to the "public welfare offices, social workers, domestic relations court, assistant state's attorney's office," meanwhile losing three jobs and discovering someone had ransacked and set fire to her home (81). She only begins to find resolution to her problems when she returns to a "colored neighborhood" and meets a young African American man named Ronald who proposes marriage (82). Thus, the complications she faces as a result of her experiences among the Beat Generation are resolved when she eschews its interracial camaraderie, and embraces marriage and the nuclear family it will create.

Both Rooks and Hardison position the conservatism of *Tan* and other Johnson Company publications as a consequence of promoting middle-class respectability, specifically achieved by adopting materialist values. Both call on Elizabeth Cohen's notion of a "consumers' republic" to describe Black media discourses that promised "greater freedom through mass consumption" (qtd. in Hardison 150). For African Americans, citizenship during the post-World War II era relied on accepting capitalism's consumer agenda. According to Rooks: "In keeping with the burgeoning post-World War II social strategy to promote racial progress for African Americans, [*Tan*] equated racial success and advancement with the possession of material goods. The purchase of such products was positioned as an instrument of aggression, or a weapon, in the overall struggle for a racial equality" (115). For women, this equation had further implications. Rooks explains: "Readers of this publication were cautioned that only within the confines of committed domesticity would they ever be able to fully enjoy the privileges of product consumption, or to find sexual satisfaction and personal happiness" (24). Similar to patterns in white mainstream media for promoting a capitalist Cold War agenda by maligning male Beats and mocking female Beats, *Tan* magazine communicates strategies for racial advancement through Howard's example. To achieve middle-class respectability through materialist means required Howard and readers like her to reject the Beat lifestyle and embrace domesticity.

While mainstream white media disparages the Beats in promotion of capitalist values, at the intersection of race and gender in Howard's story, anti-Beat strategies become more complicated. Howard's own struggles with bohemian life have her siding with square US-America. In the end, "I Was a Victim of the Beat Generation" cautions against youthful rebellion. *Tan* offers readers a path around Howard's struggles as it reinforces dominant cultural values—particularly those established for women, including marriage, domesticity, and traditional family structures. But more, discoveries from Howard's experience encourage skepticism toward any notion of the interracial community entertained by the Beats.

In order to achieve respectability, Howard must separate herself from the community with whom she had previously associated, specifically on the basis of race. Howard explains: "Ronald wants me to forget about my old friends. He says they are all right, but that they are mostly white" (82). While Howard is hesitant to dismiss the entire white community, she describes herself as having "fallen victim to my own disdain for one of the basic canons of society" (11); and in the context of the story's conclusion, such statements may imply an argument for separatism. As "I Was a Victim" culminates, for example, Howard resolves: "No more do I turn up my nose at the squares who stay home with their families and raise their children by the accepted codes ... I am beginning to teach [Buddy] to live by all the standards I rejected just a few years ago" (82). Further, Howard accepts the hard learned lessons from her life and imagines the ways it will help her children: "Certainly I shall be able to guide them through that dangerous period when all youths turn their back on tradition and custom of the day. While I am trying to teach my son to live free from all the complexes and frustrations of modern society, I don't intend to have him grow up thinking that all artists and people who think independently are just looking for that spark of understanding in each other which makes all persons brothers under the skin" (82).

This conclusion portrays Howard's attraction to the bohemian subculture as an act of youthful rebellion and an unsophisticated understanding of the world's workings typical of the many young people who do the same. Such estimation of Howard's rebellion characterizes Beat and bohemian cultures as immature and, worse, deceptive. Howard echoes Frank's earlier warning that false demonstrations



of interracial camaraderie hold heightened risks for Black bohemians. Thus, these culminating lines of Howard's story issue the moral lesson *Tan* advances in "I Was a Victim of the Beat Generation": The consequences Howard suffers as a result of her naiveté warn readers to take these trends seriously and to realize the real harm in rejecting social convention. At the same time, below the surface of this lesson is a conservative strategy for achieving middle-class respectability and maintaining Black readers as a potential consumer base for *Tan*'s advertisers.

Ultimately, *Tan* encourages readers to set themselves against white bohemians as means for attaining social currency otherwise hard won during the era. In doing so, however, "I Was a Victim of the Beat Generation" reinforces capitalist strategies in mainstream media. On the one hand *Tan* replicates the hegemonic discourses perpetuated by the popular press. At the same time, Howard's story, in which matters of race and gender intersect, also illuminates experiences that are specific to African American women. The complexity of its hegemonic and counterhegemonic maneuvering substantiates investigation into the article's place in Beat discourse. Despite being tangled in dominant Containment narratives, "I Was a Victim of the Beat Generation" is a critical source for considerations of popular response to and representation of the Beats. It aligns with and complicates other popular media on the Beats, as well as writings by and about Beats. Moreover, as it is published by an African American run company and for an African American audience, it also offers a glimpse into popular reception of the Beats that have Black female perspectives in mind. In the end, "I Was a Victim of the Beat Generation"—previously unaddressed by Beat scholarship—helps place the Beats alongside intersecting race and gender identities, and suggests new opportunities for analysis of the Generation within broader cultural and historical contexts.

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