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*The Forgotten Years of Bibendum. Michelin's American Period in Milltown:**Design, Illustration and Advertising by Pioneer Tire Companies (1900-1930).*

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CONCLUSIONS AND MAIN FINDINGS: *The reasons for commercial failure*

The research findings are numerous and very diverse in nature. I also consider that important contributions of this investigative work constitute the location and dating of valuable advertising, as well as the identification of the authors—agencies, designers, illustrators and graphic artists—that generated them. Conclusions regarding the different aspects of the development and utilization of mascots and their specific impact on the advertising of companies in the tire industry are summarized below. The unique case of Michelin's Bibendum and their U.S. subsidiary is also highlighted—the corporate history, advertising activity and use of the character—which has been addressed, analyzed and developed throughout the different chapters of the present investigation.

1. Conclusions on the American subsidiary's corporate history

The corporate history of the Michelin Tire Co. in Milltown embodies the chronicle of a commercial failure. The chapters comprising the first section of the present investigation chronologically reconstruct the history of the U.S. subsidiary, spanning their legal constitution in 1907 to the cessation of their productive and commercial activity in 1930. As exposed in their contents, several factors related to context and internal scope decisively influenced the evolution of the company and their activity. This ended in 1930, with the dismantling of the subsidiary's commercial network and the closure of the factory.

1.1. Context factors

- The blossoming and unexpected rise of the American tire industry during the first decade of the twentieth century—in response to the needs of the growing automobile industry—took Michelin by surprise during the process of implementing their American subsidiary. The dominant imported European automobiles of the early twentieth century, equipped with European tires, gave way to local production. From then on, the Michelin Tire Company had to compete with new giants such as Goodyear, BF Goodrich, United States Rubber and Firestone as well as with more than one hundred smaller U.S. companies.

- The economic crises in the U.S. market affected the activity of the Michelin Tire Co., beginning with the 1907 recession—the year the company was established—the crisis of 1920-1921—intensely affecting the automotive and components sector—and that of 1929-1930, which heightened the delicate financial situation that the American subsidiary was already experiencing.
- The First World War brought about a certain degree of vulnerability for the Michelin Tire Co. as they were dependent on the French parent company's situation and their provision of strategic guidelines and financial capital. In addition, the company did not receive orders from the U.S. government to produce material for the army, as was the case with a large part of the local firms in the rubber and tire industry. Moreover, during the conflict, the productive capacity of the Michelin Tire Co. was reduced to a minimum, due to the scarcity of raw material, the decrease in demand and because a significant part of the Milltown factory's skilled workers and technicians were of French origin and mobilized in August 1914 to fight on the European front to defend their country. In my opinion, these situations greatly weakened the position of the company in the U.S. market and conditioned the efforts to reestablish themselves in the following years.

1.2. Internal factors

- The Michelin Tire Company was legally registered as a U.S. company, but retained a French identity that was made evident in numerous areas, with a Vice President who was member of the Michelin family—Jules Hauvette-Michelin—and managerial positions and technical posts occupied by qualified French citizens sent by the parent company. The American subsidiary exercised their activity continually conditioned by and depending on the decision-making and financial support of Michelin et Cie. In my opinion, this dependency and the distance between France and the United States—not only geographically, but also in terms of trade policies—left a limited margin of maneuvering for those managing the North American subsidiary in their attempts to position themselves to at least the same level as their direct rivals in a market that rapidly evolved technologically and which demanded constant responses.
- In my opinion, and related to the previous section, one of the errors of the Michelin Tire Co. was the company's stubbornness in maintaining, between 1908 and 1915, their range of traditional products unchanged and ignoring the technological renovation carried out by most of their competitors. This decision hurt the company, as evidenced by the specific case of their tires with non-skid treads and metal studs compared to those constructed entirely out of rubber. At the end of 1915, when the Michelin Tire Co. reacted and decided to join the industry trend, they had already accumulated technological obsolescence—and a lag in their commercial positioning—of about eight years with respect to American competitors, a difficult impediment to withstand. As of 1915 and in the following years of activity until 1930, the products offered by the Michelin Tire Co. did not present any remarkable or significant technological innovation as compared with those of their rivals, again placing their competitors as a benchmark for the tire industry.
- The first years of the Michelin Tire Company's activity showed their errors in calculation regarding forecasts on the evolution and enormous productive and commercial capacity of the American tire industry. Between 1907-1908, Michelin started from a place of privilege in the ranking of American companies within the sector, but their position in the list descended as certain rivals grew in an accelerated way and claimed the top positions. In terms of their productive capacity Michelin was displaced early on to the fringe of medium-sized companies. During the last years of their activity, the American subsidiary received limited financial support from the French

parent company. This situation prevented them from maintaining the rhythm needed to strategically control distributors and retail chain stores, a struggle that led to unprecedented price wars in the sector. As I have demonstrated in my research, this led to the company's failure and the decision to permanently cease activity.

2. Conclusions about productive specialization and loyalty

While the French parent company offered tires for a variety of vehicles such as trolleys and carts, baby strollers, horse carriages, bicycles and motorcycles, automobiles, vans, trucks and buses in European markets, the Michelin Tire Company of Milltown was limited to manufacturing automobile tires for supplying the U.S. market. The catalogs of companies that headed the ranking of the U.S. industry in the sector, such as US Rubber, Goodyear, BF Goodrich, Firestone and Fisk, offered tires for bicycles, motorcycles and automobiles, as well as solid rubber and pneumatic tires for vehicles transporting passengers and merchandise such as trucks and buses. In addition, a significant proportion of companies at an intermediate level, including Miller, India, Lee, Federal, Diamond, Kelly-Springfield, Hood, Gillette and Pennsylvania—Michelin's direct rivals—offered tires for automobiles and other vehicles such as motorcycles and trucks.

Of course, this variety of tires was accompanied by all kinds of promotional material and advertising campaigns in the press. In this sense, for example, between 1917 and 1920 illustrated advertisements can be found for bicycle tires manufactured by Firestone, US Rubber, Goodyear, BF Goodrich, Fisk, Pennsylvania, Continental-Vitalic, Federal and Kokomo in publications aimed at a young audience such as *Boy's Life*, *The Youth's Companion*, *St. Nicholas* and *American Boy*.

As such, a person who was born in 1907—the year that the Michelin Tire Co. was established—and who was twenty-three years old in 1930—the year the American subsidiary's activities ceased—could have ridden in a baby stroller and played with tricycles, skates and carts in their childhood; ridden a bicycle during their youth; and driven a motorcycle, an automobile or a truck in their private and professional activity as an adult. They could also have used waterproof coats and footwear—shoes, boots, short boots and sneakers—, as well as other products manufactured by companies in the rubber industry with diversified production such as US Rubber, BF Goodrich, Firestone, Hood and Converse, all of which were also important U.S. tire manufacturers. That person could have grown up protected under the umbrella of a single brand that would respond to all that was required regarding the need for tires and their replacement. This full coverage would have fueled the potential of user/client attachment and loyalty towards those brands that offered integral and satisfactory solutions, be it an individual, a family—including its youngest members, future consumers—, a business or an institution. On the contrary, the importance of the Michelin brand for different generations of American users was restricted by the productive specificity of the Michelin Tire Co. in Milltown, thus shunning the possibility of building and consolidating consumer loyalty with the brand.

3. Conclusions about advertising orientation

Michelin's commercial policy in the U.S. market followed a basic guideline: the recruitment of independent businesses. The aim was to nurture the distribution and retail network in order to adequately cover different areas of the country. Michelin sought to position themselves solidly in the replacement tire (RE) market, given that the early expectations of becoming a supplier of factory original equipment (OE) tires for the American automobile industry did not come to fruition.

The advertising campaigns of Michelin responded to this need, being more directed to the owner of these establishments—distributors, automotive spare parts stores, repair shops and garages—than to the customer or end user. A large part of the advertisements, therefore, employed technical and pedagogical themes about the products and their technology and about the business opportunity that their commercialization entailed. The contents and the way they were illustrated resorted to reasoning about the product's efficiency and profitability, the backing of a historic brand with international branch offices and on tire performance and their achievements in races—an advertising appeal used only until 1912. They were accompanied with figures and lists, demonstrations and surveys as well as with descriptive graphics on the structure and qualities of pneumatic tires and inner tubes.

This whole set of “scientific” approaches to facts and figures comprised part of the sales pitches, but American books and manuals on advertising of the time already insisted on the need to raise issues and appeal, as far as possible, to “human interest.” The advertisements that resorted to human interest topics helped, in the case of tires—which did not differ, insofar as basic structures, from those manufactured by rival companies—, to make a technological and industrial product more accessible to the general public. There was the conviction that the uniqueness of the approach and of the graphic style used in illustrations, the description of situations and characters portraying human needs and their desires—reflecting the everyday and practical as well as dreams and aspirations—, could attract the reader's attention and create a moment of emotional bonding for advertising purposes.

Along with advertisements of a technical and pedagogical nature, the vast majority of American tire industry companies employed this “human interest” approach extensively and systematically in many of their campaigns directly targeting the general public. However, Michelin's American subsidiary opted to almost exclusively target business owners and not the final consumer. In the present investigation, the comparison between advertising developed by the different U.S. tire industry companies has indicated the constant use of certain resources and topics. In most of the press advertisements for the Michelin Tire Company and in the promotional material deployed between 1907 and 1930, the absence of the following topics, as detailed below, stands out.

The American way of life

Within the American public imagination, there is an abundance of scenes representing family and social relationships. The tire—as an indispensable component of the automobile—is present in the journeys on wheels for couples, families and groups of friends. These advertisements recreate and depict both daily life and special occasions when attending social gatherings is depicted—doing sports such as golfing in elite clubs, participating in parties and leisure activities—or organizing excursions to enjoy the landscape of natural parks and tourist facilities along the coast and on beaches. Such actions, portrayed in the illustrations of these advertisements, were developed in idealized, aspirational fictitious scenarios, presenting a world of personal, family and social fulfillment. The publicity of Michelin's American subsidiary did not resort to these type of scenes.

The feminine figure

With the onset of the twentieth century and during its first three decades, the use of the female image in tire advertising—linked to that of the automobile—, oscillated between two poles. On one hand, it was employed as an appeal for an eminently male audience, who constituted being the buyer and habitual user of the automobile and who was also in charge of its maintenance. On the other hand, the feminine figure was the representative model of a new consumer group: the modern female driver.

In this regard, it is worth emphasizing that in Michelin's French and European advertising, as well as that of other tire companies, the appearance of a woman at the wheel of an automobile was referred to as an anecdotal fact. A woman driver was perceived more as an anomaly linked to the "shocking" changes in conventionally assigned gender roles, rather than the embodiment of a growing reality becoming normalized. The scarce feminine presence in Michelin's French advertising is surprising, and is even more limited for use as the featured character. The creator of Bibendum, the illustrator Marius Rossillon "O'Galop," applied the feminine figure as the pneumatic character's partner, reflecting a theme that dominated the covers and vignettes of French satirical magazines from the *Belle Époque*: the wealthy and mature bourgeois accompanied by a beautiful young *cocotte*, a concept that was highly questionable ethically for puritanical areas such as the American context of the time. One of the most representative images of Michelin's early advertising was that which illustrated the achievements of Bibendum in motor racing competitions: the pneumatic character appeared playing the violin and was accompanied by a group of women who each represented a trophy, the "conquered" competition, dancing to the beat of his music. Other French Michelin advertisements used the image of women and children's characters—preferably feminine—, in the midst of a blowout or a tire change to "demonstrate" the "ease" with which these mechanical repairs could be made. If even a child or a woman could tackle those tasks ... imagine how simple it would be for a man!

In the United States, publicity for automobiles and tires from that time also employed the female figure as an advertising appeal. However, unlike Europe, the consideration of women as a new type of consumer soon became a reality which was widely reflected with conviction in advertising media. The woman driver, represented in everyday scenes as well as in other idealized ones, was featured since the beginning of the century and with persistent continuity in numerous advertising campaigns for the majority of American tire sector companies. On the other hand, for the campaigns of the Michelin Tire Co. in Milltown, women were ignored and practically non-existent characters. We can find them in a few advertisements, changing a tire as a demonstration of the technological solution's simplicity and efficiency, or filling in as extras in the humorous vignettes of the 1926-1927 campaigns illustrated by Gluyas Williams. However, in no case were women considered as part of the target audience to whom advertising messages were directed.

The small consumers-to-be.

A large part of North American tire companies paid special attention to children and young people since they were the children of their customers as well as future users/consumers of their products. Caps, pennants, books, badges and all kinds of children's gifts contributed to "familiarize" the family with the brand. In France, Michelin offered different gadgets: dolls, cut-outs, puppets, inflatable balls, games and stories using Bibendum as an advertising appeal for children, a character with whom they would soon become connected to. In addition, Michelin regularly inserted illustrated advertisements, most of which featured the corporate mascot, in French youth magazines such as *Saint Nicolas*—as the subtitle reads, "Journal illustré pour garçons et filles"—or in family publications such as the magazine *Je Sais Tout*. In the United States, Michelin oriented their advertising only to adult and professional audiences. Their advertisements were inserted in generalist magazines and technical journals specializing in the automotive sector and hardly any promotional elements were created—except, perhaps, the advertising floats for parades in festive events—nor any merchandising that could please the smallest of family members. The consistent contact of the American consumer with the Michelin brand only occurred when they were adults.

The endorsement by famous people

Another way of strengthening affinities in a common cultural environment between the advertiser and the public/reader/user/consumer was the advertising strategy of utilizing celebrities and well-known personalities from the performing arts, the world of culture, elite sports and other socially relevant areas. The chapters of the present study devoted to The Fisk Rubber Co. (Chapter 23, pp. 1895-2135) and The Miller Rubber Co. (Chapter 29, pp. 2443-2481) explain how two direct Michelin rival companies—both with active corporate mascots at that time—resorted to the use of celebrities. In several press campaigns, developed between 1928 and 1929, they featured famous singers and showmen, actors, actresses and dancers from theatre and film, baseball players, or figures such as the famous illustrator James Montgomery Flagg—used as an endorser for Miller—, all of them photographed next to their automobiles and recommending tires of the corresponding brand.

The American subsidiary of Michelin employed this strategy, between 1908 and 1912, in certain testimonial advertisements incorporating statements of their sponsored racing drivers, winners in automotive races using their pneumatic tires. From 1912, upon withdrawing from sponsoring such competitions, Michelin delegated all their representation to the spokes-character Bibendum.

Cultural references to historic events.

As has been shown in this research, especially in Chapter 31: “Savage, Standard Four and Mohawk: tires of the legendary Far West,” dedicated to the relationship between the North American tire industry’s advertising and the conquest of the Far West, the foundational episodes of United States history and its protagonists were conveniently exploited for commercial purposes. The construction of the country and the mystified account of the coexistence between settlers and original natives provided fertile ground for popular culture on which to build advertising themes. The assigned roles and stereotypes, typical of the time, and the idealization of a past in which the arrival of progress was combined with the conquest of nature—and the driver and his automobile replaced the rider and his horse—were graphically expressed in the numerous campaigns of different companies. The references to Native Americans even became a foundational orientation for some of them, as seen in the tire manufacturers Savage, Standard Four and Mohawk, whose advertising counted on the constant presence of their respective “indigenous” mascots. The American subsidiary of Michelin did not use cultural references based on outstanding periods extracted from the history of the United States.

Patriotic exaltation

As explained in Chapter 12: “Michelin, the Great War and tire companies,” dedicated to the First World War and the role of the tire industry, commercial advertising acquired a markedly propagandistic tone within the war context. The companies devoted themselves to being recognized as patriots in their respective areas. Most of the companies in the sector—whether or not they had contracts with governments to supply solid rubber and pneumatic tires to the motorized divisions of the different military forces—published advertisements in newspapers and magazines with images of battles and soldiers linked to their products.

In Europe, Michelin depicted Bibendum as another allied soldier, portraying him—in French, British and Italian advertising—taking part in different battle scenes. Sometimes Michelin’s mascot acted as an ambassador and representative not only of the company, but also of the people and the French army. The mascot assumed the role of patriotic representation embodied by other characters of popular culture. Thus, Bibendum was portrayed appearing alongside emblematic figures

such as the British John Bull and Britannia. The traditional anti-German sentiment already depicted by Michelin through their advertisements and posters created by the genius of O'Galop—so as to disqualify their major European rival, the German Continental—provided a fertile context on which to grow and develop.

Michelin's U.S. subsidiary contributed to the Allied war effort. Part of the company's French and American personnel went to the European front while various campaigns were carried out for buying war bonds issued by the U.S. Government. However, the Michelin subsidiary's press advertisements did not mention or refer to the situation and did not exhibit, with the exception of a few given cases, images of patriotic exaltation. The advertising stance of the American Michelin Tire Company contrasted with the advertising of the French parent company in other markets and with that exhibited by all their American rivals.

Comparative advertising.

In this investigative work I have exposed and analyzed the importance of comparative advertising used and applied as a basic guideline in Michelin's European campaigns from 1898 until the beginning of the First World War. The rivalry with Britain's Dunlop and Germany's Continental resulted in aggressive disqualifying advertisements that even ended up as court cases. Commercial interests were hidden behind these actions, unleashed by the international expansion initiated by Michelin and by similar policies of manufacturing and commercial settlement developed by Dunlop and Continental in French territory.

The commercial confrontation intensified when mixed with propaganda themes and growing patriotic sentiment as the beginning of the First World War approached. Perplexing situations occurred, such as the conflict of commercial interests between Michelin and Dunlop, commercial rivals belonging to the same ally, as well as other foreseeable incidents such as the outpouring of anti-German sentiment targeting the Continental company.

Michelin took advantage of comparative advertisements in the French and British markets, a strategy that was also used to defend their non-skid tires with metallic-studded treads against the unstoppable adoption of the technology of non-skid tires with rubber-studded treads. This is covered in Chapter 11: "The technological and commercial battles (1910-1915)" which also includes Michelin's attempts to transfer their policy of comparative advertising to the U.S. market through advertising and promotional material published by the American subsidiary.

In a market where Michelin's American subsidiary did not hold a leadership position and in which almost all competitors chose to implement the new technology, Michelin's campaigns against non-skid rubber treads generated, at minimum, indifference. In addition, the disqualification of rivals and praising their own product was, for American advertising purposes, a practice considered ineffective. The Michelin Tire Co. utilized comparative advertising to defend their products in the U.S. market. However, due to the aforementioned indifference, this approach did not develop as it did in European markets, where it became a basic feature of the parent company's policy.

Corporate magazines

Many of the American companies in the tire sector owned their own corporate or house organ publications, as detailed in Chapter 19: "Media, promotional supports and advertising expenditures." These had a markedly promotional character, targeting the general public and the firms'

customers. Others were clearly aimed at reaching their production and commercial staff, designed to generate cohesion and a corporate spirit, with news and articles about employees, their families, the achievements of sports teams formed by workers, leisure activities and certain messages with guidelines issued from the company's managers. Both types of publications were an effective instrument to project, in a controlled manner, a solid image of the company and their products, and to share this with the surrounding environment.

The Italian subsidiary of Michelin published in different stages, from 1908 until beyond the forties, a corporate magazine of their own, illustrated with numerous images and in which Bibendum was the protagonist. The French parent company also published in 1910 their first corporate magazine model that was followed by others in the subsequent decade.

During twenty-three years of activity in the United States the Michelin Tire Company of Milltown did not publish any corporate magazine as an entity. In the twenties there was a simple bulletin designed to provide technical indications to the commercial network of establishments. However, beyond this, they never edited in-house publications that would enhance internal business cohesion nor the external projection of the company, their brand and their products.

4. Conclusions on advertising policy guidelines

The key decisions about advertising orientation, the choice of sales pitches and themes and the use of the mascot Bibendum as well as the graphic line suitable for advertising products of the Michelin Tire Company in Milltown appear to lack documentation. Or at least it seems to be as such, after conducting research on their identification in available sources and not finding any evidence of this in any memorandum or report from that period as well as in subsequent studies.

It is clear that each entity had their share of prominence and responsibility. On the one hand, the Michelin Advertising Department was responsible for the advertisers who were to develop the strategic configuration of the basic characteristics for advertising that targeted the U.S. market. This was conducted from the Milltown offices and through the manager in charge of that area, who transmitted to the external agency the corporate and advertising communication needs of their products. In addition, the Wales advertising agency, in charge of Michelin's account during those years, presumably took on the demands of their client and advised them on the actions and campaigns that should be undertaken in the interest of maximizing advertising effectiveness. Finally, there was also the responsibility and work carried out by Arthur Norman Edrop, art director, designer and illustrator for a large part of the campaigns conducted over a decade, between 1916 and 1926. He applied a consistent and homogeneous graphic criterion that was endorsed by the Wales agency and the Michelin Advertising Department.

Jules Hauvette-Michelin, Vice President and in charge of the American subsidiary, was the family representative in which the brothers André and Édouard Michelin had placed their trust and who would defend the corporate culture ideology emanated by the French parent company. Hauvette-Michelin periodically went to France to meet with them and report on the implementation of the guidelines and the results obtained. The Michelin brothers ruled with a firm hand and precise control over strategic decisions concerning policy and the actions to be followed by all the foreign subsidiaries. Thus, the decisions made regarding the particular advertising policy for the American Michelin Tire Company were established, controlled and endorsed by the management of the French parent company. As I have

previously expressed, supervision of the Michelin subsidiary's activities by French management, in my opinion, hindered the responsiveness and dynamism required by a company that sought to play a leading role in the competitive U.S. market.

5. Conclusions about the use of mascots by tire companies

Companies were created that placed their stakes on tires or expanded the horizons of traditional rubber sector manufacturers to cover the production of the new article; as such the need arose to properly promote it. Several of these European and American companies chose, like Michelin, to resort to employing mascots, either in campaigns having a limited duration or utilizing them for years. These figures populated not only the specialized magazines of the automobile sector, but also the pages of general press, posters and outdoor billboards, service station shop windows and counters of specialized establishments.

In the advertising for American tire industry companies during the first two decades of the twentieth century I have located significant examples belonging to the mascot typology proposed in Chapter 1: "The conception of corporate and advertising mascots." These cases are representative of the usage of distinct cultural patterns applied to advertising figures. The unique examples of American mascots for companies in the tire sector listed below have, for the most part, been dealt with in detail in subsequent chapters of the present study.

Among the **celebrities** who were employed as tire-endorsing mascots—usually limited to temporary campaigns—we can find the comedian and showman Will Rogers. He was portrayed as a caricature illustrated in a series of postcards published in 1929 by Goodyear, as shown in Chapter 31: "Savage, Standard Four and Mohawk: Tires of the legendary Far West." If we consider the **founding fathers**, we can find an illustrated and also a photographic portrait of the racing driver Barney Oldfield, founder and director of the Oldfield Tire Company in Cleveland, Ohio, in their advertisements from the twenties, as shown in Chapter 16: "Racing events as a tool for tire promotion." It should be noted that, in the case of portraits depicting real people, the use of caricatures as well as realistic or stylized illustrations and photographs were used interchangeably. Photography, however, was preferred as it was more accepted due to the verisimilitude of what it represented, a trend that intensified over the years.

The category of **models, stereotypes and complacent characters** included ascribed mascots such as the attractive Lotta Miles, the Kelly-Springfield Tire Co. girl, shown in Chapter 27: "Kelly-Springfield and Miss Carlotta Miles" and the pajama-clad child for The Fisk Rubber Co. from Chicopee Falls, Massachusetts, shown in Chapter 23: "Fisk Tires and the Sleepy Boy." With regard to ethnic diversity, shown in Chapter 31: "Savage, Standard Four and Mohawk: Tires of the legendary Far West," the original Native Americans were utilized by several companies. These include: the California-based Savage Tire Co. in San Diego, with their young Indian chief Little Heap; Indians of the Sauk and Fox tribes and Chief Keokuk of the Standard Four Tire Co. in Keokuk, Iowa; and the Honest Injun of Mohawk Rubber Co. in Akron, Ohio, especially active in his appearances for the company's corporate magazine.

Among **prescriptive** characters, the following are highlighted: the Red Service Man of Hood Rubber Co., presented in Chapter 25: "Hood Rubber and the Red Man;" the skilled worker of The Miller Rubber Co. in Akron, Ohio, shown in Chapter 29: "Miller Rubber and the Exemplary Tire Builder;" and the wise Old Man Mileage of Republic Rubber Co. in Youngstown, Ohio, detailed in Chapter 30: "Republic Tires, the voice of experience."

With respect to **symbolic bestiary**, the following examples stand out: the polar bear of Gillette Rubber Co. from Eau Claire, Wisconsin, presented in Chapter 24: “Gillette Tires and the mighty polar bear;” the Asian rhinoceros of the Cupples Company from St. Louis, shown in Chapter 22: “Cupples Tires, the power of the rhinoceros;” and the Minerva owl of The India Tire & Rubber Co. from Akron, Ohio, described in Chapter 26: “India Tire & Rubber, the wise gaze of the owl.”

Among **symbolic personifications**, we can enumerate mascots that would also deserve their own chapters but were not presented in the current investigation. These include the corporate symbols that turned into mascots such as the Ajax Colossus of the Ajax Rubber Company from New York; the untiring Greek runner of The Marathon Tire & Rubber Co. from Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio; and the Colossus of Roads from the Firestone Tire & Rubber Co. in Akron, used as a mascot between 1914-1917. It would also include the winged foot of Mercury, converted into a Goodyear symbol via a metonymic process that eliminated the figure of the mascot, although the complete mythological character was used during the 1920s in several advertisements for the tire brand.

In terms of **product impersonation**, I would highlight the tire section with a smiling face of Lee Tire & Rubber Co. in Conshohocken, Pennsylvania, shown in Chapter 28: “Lee Tire & Rubber and the smiling pneumatic.” Finally, within the category other fictional characters, we could name the American colonial hero Paul Revere, mascot of the Revere Rubber Co. in New York—which was also not detailed in the present investigation. In terms of advertising and publicity, Bibendum had to battle against all of them and many more.

6. Conclusions about mascots as applied to Bibendum

In the initial chapter of this investigative work, “The conception of corporate and advertising mascots,” the configuration, classification, function and uses of these elements of corporate identity and advertising have been analyzed. As such, the graphic and functional context—illustrative and discursive—of this advertising element have been defined. As a starting point, I knew intuitively that Michelin’s pneumatic mascot was exemplary in many aspects, responding with great efficacy to the characteristics deemed necessary for these corporate and advertising figures. The conclusions reached upon considering the communicative effectiveness of a unique mascot are presented as follows.

The typological hybridization

Bibendum complies with most of the qualities assigned to the different types of mascots included in the classification that was proposed in the chapter. This unique typological hybridization of Michelin’s character ambassador results from the positive sum of different parameters, of which each help to profile and understand this mascot at three essential levels: his social role, his appearance and his activity as spokesperson for the brand.

On the one hand, Bibendum is a portrait of the **founding father** or, at least, represents the founding father’s son, as André Michelin himself constantly recalled in his writings and interviews. In addition, as has been shown in Chapter 2: “The Birth and Baptism of Bibendum,” certain French advertisements featuring the mascot where he was given his own voice and speaking of André Michelin depict Bibendum referring to him as “mon pere.” On the other hand, since the beginning of the Michelin tire company saga, Bibendum has always been considered, by the founders and their descendants, as one more member of the family, a patrimonial asset who was treated with care and inextricably linked to the fortune of the business.

As for **models, stereotypes and complacent characters**, Bibendum embodies several of the parameters analyzed in these types of figures. In the first place, he personifies stereotypes of social condition, race and gender. The original Bibendum, prior to the First World War, portrayed the wealthy bourgeois—he drank champagne, spouted Latin phrases and wore nose spectacles, spat-covered short boots and cufflinks. He was also audacious, able to afford an automobile and its tires, ate copiously and had a healthily robust and “inflated” aspect. He was a masculine, white-skinned character, as evidenced by the numerous advertisements in which he was the absolute protagonist. The ingenious humor in the advertisements is the base that allowed for portraying all these attributes in an engaging way and, therefore, comprehensible for the general public. This element is one of the basic principles of the character’s representation in his early years.

With regard to **prescribing characters**, Bibendum himself assumes this role and appears pontificating and advising the driver, firstly, from his vantage point, exhibiting a position of superiority; subsequently, he seeks complicity and recognition from the consumer public. In fact, it is clear that the mascot, when expressing himself in advertisements, knows what he is talking about and is an expert in tires. And this was endorsed by the success of the brand in cycling and automobile competitions.

If we look at the illustrative process of **product personification**, it is clear that the Michelin mascot perfectly fits this concept: he is formed by the superposition of different sized tires with distinct diameters, which is a reference to the variety of models manufactured by Michelin. He comprises an anthropomorphic figure as he incorporates its basic elements: a head with a face and features, a trunk and upper and lower limbs. He is not simply a tire with legs, he is a pneumatic being in its fullest conception. The mascot’s white color also responds to the color of the first tires before the discovery and application of carbon black. A visible detail in the first posters and in given illustrations is the portrayal of Bibendum as a hollow being. He had a rubber epidermis that protected him but his interior was a vacuum, thus depicting the inherent characteristics of tire technology.

Finally, with respect to the rhetorical operation of **symbolic personifications**, Bibendum embodied the concepts of technology and progress at the turn of the century. This constituted a historic moment in which the industrial revolution and the steam engine gave way to a second revolution led by the development of electrical power and the combustion engine. A result was the full development of the automobile and its components, such as batteries and pneumatic tires. Bibendum was an extraordinary being, a product of the turn of the century, half man half machine and he provided a human, modern and popular dimension to ancient references of mythological beings and deities. Like the hybrid figure of the centaur—the upper trunk of a man grafted onto a horse’s body—the figure of Bibendum was utilized in numerous advertisements and posters to metaphorically express the modern image of the driver at the wheel of his vehicle during an era of progress and technological change. In addition, as shown in the numerous examples contributed and analyzed in Chapter 2 and in others—such as Chapter 12, dedicated to the role of the tire sector companies during WWI—, Bibendum also assumed the role of France’s national symbolic figure. He was depicted posing as a character of **patriotic representation**, along with the well-known characters of America’s Uncle Sam and Columbia or the British John Bull and Britannia.

Metaphorical construction

If we analyze the processes of constructing visual metaphors as summarized in the initial chapter dedicated to mascots, we see that Bibendum, once again, is the result of the combination of three

rheterical operations: anthropomorphism, teramorphism and mechanomorphism. In the first place, through **anthropomorphism**, he acquires characteristics inherent to human beings, both in his physical configuration and in the properties and forms of behavior and expression that he portrays. In the second place, his figure is the product of **teramorphism**, incarnating an imaginary and supernatural creature and breathing life into an airy being. Finally, he presents a particularity acquired in a process that combines the previous ones with **mechanomorphism**, where a living being—in this case “animated”—is ascribed characteristics of machines and their mechanical components, such as the case of the automobile and pneumatic tires. Bibendum is a figure that is truly characteristic of industrial modernity.

Uninterrupted activity: the value of longevity and continuity

Many of the mascots created in the past were developed to respond to concrete advertising needs, and were used in campaigns that were already programed in advance to terminate at a given point in time. The launch of a new product, the actions specifically programmed for a targeted segment of consumers and other promotional requirements were supported by these characters in a temporary manner without any continuity. Other mascots were sporadically utilized, going from lethargy to action over the years in accordance with the criteria of their proprietors.

The case of Bibendum demonstrates a continuous use of the mascot over time and in quite distinct markets. The survival of a company does not imply per se the immutable maintenance of their corporate symbols. In the case of Michelin, the longevity of their mascot was the result of the firm decision to keep Bibendum ‘alive’ and active ever since he took his first steps in 1898.

A strategic wager

The first chapter of this investigative work analyzed two cases of mascots created for specific markets to advertise imported products: the first, the monkey of Monkey Brand representing the cleaning product manufactured in Philadelphia and marketed in England, created in 1890; the second, the strongman of the beef extract Armour made in Chicago for the French market, created in 1894. None of these mascots, both prior to Michelin’s Bibendum, was used in their country of origin. In contrast, Michelin et Cie’s advertising policy during the international expansion initiated in the first decade of the twentieth century was to transplant their mascot to different foreign markets. He would undergo slight variations in the graphic aspect—established by the style of the respective local illustrators who interpreted him—as well as in facets of his conduct. This policy had the risk of leaving Bibendum, in each case, in the hands of a specific illustrator. In France, this was the case with “O’Galop” who lasted from the mascot’s beginnings until the First World War, relieved by Édouard Louís Cousyn and Georges Hautot, among others. In Italy, the most active person responsible for interpreting Bibendum was Carlo Biscaretti di Ruffia. In the United States, the character was managed by Arthur N. Edrop, who applied a striking and unique graphic style. However, as I understand it—and as discussed in Chapter 21.1: “Arthur N. Edrop (1884-1973)” —his efforts were inadequate to favor communication with the target consumer population, basically comprising owners of independent companies for tire distribution and direct sales.

Empathy and emotion

Real human and animal figures as well as humanized fictional beings comprise part of our culture’s everyday landscape. Alongside fixed and inanimate symbols, they tinker with rules that govern the behavior of social relationships, marked by conventions and impregnated with emotions. This can happen between individuals as well as between people and their domestic animals. Moreover, to a

large extent, they also impact on the association with humans and wild fauna. It was on the basis of these human relationships that mascots were construed. Before a live or 'animated' being, we assume a vital response and a dynamic interaction. If we are dealing with an inanimate entity, our actions emanate from a contemplative and reflective attitude. A logotype offers monologue; in contrast, the attitude of a mascot predisposes us to dialogue.

Michelin's Bibendum is a particularly active mascot in that, as part of his multiple and distinct appearances, he shows, advises, questions and dialogues with the consumer. He collects opinions from third parties and expresses himself with his own voice and in the first person. Bibendum interacts with the medium, the relevance of every moment and with all types of audiences through the different configurations that he adopts. He accomplishes this through his graphic bi-dimensionality in advertisements—from pages of the press and from billboards. Through his static three-dimensional configuration he reaches the public in the form of advertising figures—from shop windows and shelves or as an amulet that accompanies truck drivers on their journeys by road. Finally, he also uses his dynamic configuration to reach audiences—coming to life in promotional events when interpreted by a costumed human animator as well as from advertisements in media such as the television and internet.

In addition, humor is an omnipresent factor in Bibendum's adventures and advertising proposals since his inception. This is a characteristically French advertising element, habitually employed by poster designers, cartoonists and illustrators of the *Belle Époque* to create their commercial commissions. By means of a smile and complicity, a positive and empathically receptive atmosphere and attitude is generated. This favors capturing the viewer's required attention so that Michelin, through Bibendum and in a process of ventriloquism, can develop their advertising sales pitch. In classical rhetoric, this procedure would respond to the literary device of the *captatio benevolentiae*, in which the author of a discourse or exposition—the figure of the mascot in this case—seeks the benevolence, sympathy and predisposition of the audience.

7. Conclusions on graphic and conceptual constructions

Throughout the process of the Michelin company's development as a multinational from their French foundational stronghold, Bibendum's personality tended to blur, losing part of the essence that had originally characterized him. Michelin transitioned from being a French company with a commercial presence in different countries and markets through agency representatives to one that established subsidiaries abroad with their own production centers: the Italian factory in Turin (1906), the American factory in Milltown (1907) and the important British Michelin Tyre Company Ltd. (1905) which, in 1927, had its own factory in Stoke-on-Trent.

He was a combative character who, from a French point of view, depicted and positioned himself on distinct and sensitive issues such as politics, religion or patriotic feelings, and who had to adapt his discourse—even lowering it for the sake of greater acceptance—to the new challenges that an incipient globalized image of the company required. The Michelin Tire Co. opted for creating a coherent advertising communication strategy. This was maintained for years and particularly reflected in press advertisements, regardless of the conceptual trends and graphics developed for the campaigns of most of their American rivals. This persistence seems not to have generated the expected results, given the business failure that led to the cessation of their production activities in the United States.

An anodyne tire-man:**The combat between cultural identities in the development process**

The American adventure was enthusiastically undertaken as it represented a business opportunity for the French Michelin company. Shortly after the start of activities, it became clear that the distance between the two countries was greater than merely geographical expanse. The United States showed itself to be a highly competitive trading territory. It was difficult to control and its conditions and impetus were imposed on the wishes, proposals and guidelines set by the Michelin et Cie. directors, expressed locally through the Vice President Jules Hauvette- Michelin.

Therefore, Bibendum's utilization by Michelin's American subsidiary was subject to parameters of control which differed from those applied in France, Italy and Great Britain by their respective subsidiary companies. As discussed in Chapter 20: "The Michelin Tire Company's press advertising (1903-1930)," the name of the mascot itself was the subject of debate in the U.S. market. It was quickly circumvented in his advertising appearances, for the meaning of his name was linked to the act of drinking and was subject to social and political pressures regarding the sale and consumption of alcohol. This issue had existed since the beginning of the century and finally evolved into the prohibition laws that prevailed during the 1920s in the United States. The representation of the scene where the mascot Bibendum toasts with a glass of champagne, a typical and positive image in European markets, was sparingly utilized in the U.S.

Attempts to resort to the pugnacious and instructive Bibendum employed in Europe also failed. The aggressive strategy of comparative advertising, with disqualifying arguments against rivals, did not thrive in the American advertising environment which was not receptive to this type of approach. It became clear that the communication activity in that market required a change of values in order to effectively communicate with a new and different consumer audience. These facts and other similar ones that occurred in adapting the mascot's character to the U.S. market led to the dismantling of his original personality. His unique character was diluted, and he was presented in an insubstantial manner which did not at all contribute to his reconstruction and reformulation as he lacked an identifiable and defined "American" personality.

This American Bibendum, innocuous but graphically consistent, was not the result of happenstance. The conclusions in this section point to a strong intention on the part of his "parents," the brothers André and Édouard Michelin, to avoid the denaturalization of the original imported European Bibendum, focusing on the preservation of his unique identifying characteristics. The safeguarding of their original corporate symbol was also a reflection of the struggle to maintain Michelin's identity in a hostile environment in which the company gradually lost prominence and tended to blur and blend in with the enormous mass formed by the large number of medium-sized companies that populated the panorama of the American tire industry.

After the end of the First World War, a change regarding a previously in vogue trend in the U.S. market was accentuated: the label "French" no longer sold on its own. Therefore, before changing the mascot, his personality and his name, Bibendum would be reconfigured in a way that limited his functions to only representing the company and presenting their products. Thus, his advertisements would attract the public's attention but without added meaning or being involved in any another issue or mandate that was not strictly publicity. Although the communication and commercial interests of the Michelin Tire Company in Milltown may have required that this new tire-man have an American personality and passport, this option was not taken into account

A happy [fictional] world?

There is an enormous contrast between the press advertising campaigns for the Michelin Tire Co. in Milltown and the American advertising trends at that time. In general, persuasive texts, slogans and mottos were maintained as priority, holding far more importance than graphic representation. In addition, however, advertising in the U.S. publicity landscape resorted to the construction of worlds depicting idealized and aspirational fiction. Scenarios were presented in which the advertised product—ranging from a car or a tire to toothpaste or cereals—was integrated into recreations of the family environment and of a satisfying public life, portraying social fulfillment and success. This fictional nature required the use of human models, as real characters, and resorting to landscapes and recognizable physical reference environments. A family traveling by car without suffering roadside accidents—such as a flat tire—was an image that highlighted the importance of a good tire brand for successfully achieving one's objectives. In the United States, all the leading firms—BF Goodrich, Firestone, Goodyear, US Tires, Fisk—and most of the medium and small tire manufacturers based many of their advertisements on this concept. Michelin had opted for another very different path that proved to be unfruitful.

A graphically isolated biotope

The American Bibendum developed into a complex and highly competitive advertising ecosystem. Michelin opted to establish the limits of their own vital space, a unique, isolated and controlled biotope, from which to express themselves publicly through their mascot. This was evident in the period between 1915 and 1926, when press advertisements persistently presented a design where the illustration, color, typographical uses and the ubiquitous presence of Bibendum construed aseptic scenes, disconnected from any reference to the reality of the environment.

Through the compilation of Michelin's advertisements in American magazines and newspapers, chronologically arranged, presented and analyzed in Chapter 20: "The Michelin Tire Company's press advertising (1903-1930)," it can be observed that, on rare occasions, Bibendum appeared accompanied by other characters. However, in these circumstantial appearances, his peers were mere extras having a blurred appearance or reduced to a smaller scale. The backgrounds and scenographic elements of the advertisements, if they existed, tended to be standardized or minimized to highlight only the mascot and the product. Occasionally, the tire itself acquired prominence—especially in advertisements that exposed technical appeals about the properties of materials used for tires and inner tubes—, although it was unfailingly accompanied by Bibendum. The mascot was represented on a comparatively reduced scale, reinforcing an image of unreal graphic construction.

The use of illustration, caricature illustration, is another of the basic structural graphic elements employed in the construction of that fictional world. Most of Michelin's rivals in the U.S. market had already applied the use of photography in their advertisements since the beginning of the 20th century, at one time or another and in different campaigns. The press advertisements of Michelin's American subsidiary published after 1912 and until 1930, faithfully remained committed to the company's graphic formalization, renouncing photographic representations. Photography was only utilized on certain occasions during an initial stage—1907-1912—in which automobile competition victories were the basis of the tire manufacturer's advertising, showing scenes of races and portraying pilots and their automobiles.

As a consequence, in Michelin's campaigns aspirational images or human interest appeals are not presented. The effectiveness of the advertisements inserted in the press exploited Bibendum's capac-

ity as a mascot to act as an advertising appeal and to identify the message as coming from Michelin, relying on the presumed persuasive gifts of his character. To a great extent the advertisements presented Bibendum as a monologist, confined in a bubble and isolated from the complexity of external reality, delivering his message only for business owners selling tires. In this way, Michelin's U.S. subsidiary departed considerably from advertising trends reflected in their rivals' advertisements, in which the latter established a dialogue between the advertiser's proposals, aspirational appeals and the response to practical needs of the consumer's daily life.

Poetry and prose in advertising communication

In the case of the American Bibendum, it would be necessary to wait until 1916 to see him employed at his full potential as a mascot. This occurred after the incorporation of Arthur Edrop as illustrator and art director of the Michelin campaigns. Edrop intervened from that moment, experimenting with an incipient Bibendum that resorted to, as had been done in France, the foundation of popular culture—poems with advertising appeals, nursery rhymes and tongue twisters—to communicate with the general public. However, the initiative was soon deactivated, due to the requirements of responding to an advertising policy based on direct communication with the owners of businesses involved in tire commercialization and sales. The idea was to seduce them to adhere to Michelin's commercial network with appeals such as product quality and technological value, as well as the security of being supported—also in terms of advertising—by a leading European company. There was no room for poetry in the face of such prosaic challenges.

Thus it is logical that, due to the given requirements, the response of the advertising agency hired by Michelin was to develop—through the advertising designs proposed by Arthur Edrop, the art director—campaigns that did not “speak” to the consumer, but rather, directly to the professional who commercialized the tires. This is probably the parameter which generated a graphic line that shunned the representation and construction of complex referential and human interest settings.

Art direction and graphic design:

Discovering the authors, designers and illustrators behind the advertisements

The need to address the American consumer in a specific way required, after a period based on the utilization of clichés imported from Michelin's French and English advertising, the hiring of local professionals who knew how to take on the challenge. As explained in Chapter 18: “The Michelin Tire Company's advertising management team,” since the beginning of 1916, the Wales Advertising Co. was the agency in charge of managing the advertising account for the Michelin Tire Company in Milltown. The professional chosen to create the campaigns was the art director, illustrator and designer Arthur Norman Edrop, whose work lasted for a decade. The choice of Edrop as the person responsible for graphics was probably due to his experience as a humorous illustrator, caricaturist and character creator. Part of the research presented in Chapter 2: “The Birth and Baptism of Bibendum” explains how the Michelin brothers had previously relied on this type of creative professional profile to develop their European advertising, with satisfactory results: first, with the genius of O'Galop for the creation of their French advertisements; subsequently with Carlo Biscaretti to illustrate their Italian subsidiary's advertisements and corporate magazine; the unidentified artist who illustrated the press campaigns for the British subsidiary also filled this role with respect to this professional profile.

As explained and analyzed in Chapter 21.1: “Arthur Norman Edrop (1884–1973),” this designer provided graphic consistency to Michelin's advertising with respect to previous campaigns. As an

art director, he established a homogeneous, persistent and distinguishing criterion in the harmonizing as well as in the utilization and control of graphic and typographical elements, focusing especially on the use of color as an identifying feature. However, Arthur Edrop's graphic approach as applied to Michelin campaigns conducted between 1916 and 1926 was based on principles that corresponded more to inherited conceptions of languishing Modernism—and more specifically of certain European variants—than to advertising and graphic trends prevailing in the U.S. panorama during that time period. The traces of rusticity, the craftsmanship of the British Arts and Crafts and the revival of the American Colonial Style, are perceptible in the work of Arthur Edrop. This is evidenced by his way of illustrating as well as the use of singular inscriptions in titles and slogans. The forcefulness of employing color and graphic synthesis, the two-dimensionality of the dialectic background/figures as well as the rotundness and compactness of labeled texts correspond to innovations akin to the German Plakatstil from the early twentieth century. Was it due to his knowledge of “the European” that connected Arthur Norman Edrop with Michelin's French management?

This type of graphic design and illustration was also utilized by certain well-known American professionals, although they were a minority. In addition, they had to adapt their proposals to the discourse of “human interest”—the portrayal of characters in an aspirational social and family environment—as requested by the agencies and their advertisers. In addition, it should be considered that the First World War was not particularly conducive to generating a climate of acceptance towards proposals of a style that was clearly influenced by Central European and German movements.

The reflection of artistic trends in illustration and in American editorial and advertising graphics during the interwar period pointed towards a very different direction than the one undertaken and maintained for Michelin's advertisements. During the decade of the twenties, an eclectic and complacent decorative art style was applied to graphic designs for the advertising of products and services, including that of the tire industry. In the United States, this proposal drew on references from ancient cultures—such as the Egyptian, with its imagery, decorative features and stone monumentality—as well as from the cult of urban and industrial aesthetics. The latter focused on machines and steel, reflecting the dynamism of technological progress and material achievements characteristic of an incipient Art Deco. In addition to all this would be added the advent of graphic, photographic and typographic experimentations stemming from avant-garde movements and a new realism that was already permeating Europe.

Michelin's American publicity remained immutable and impervious to these new trends, uninterruptedly employing throughout a decade, between 1916 and 1926, the same graphic elements established by Arthur Norman Edrop. In short, the design of Michelin's advertisements and the restricted role of their mascot, isolated from his environment and time period, failed to position the brand in a highly competitive and dynamic market such as that of the United States.

8. Conclusions about Bibendum as an icon

The symbolic construction of Bibendum and his impact on the collective memory, whether promoted from corporate action resulting from appropriations by persons outside the company, was very different on both sides of the Atlantic. In the French and European context, the figure of the mascot transcended the advertising field early on to become a symbolic reference and, consequently, an icon of popular culture. The process of interpretation and reinterpretation carried out on the original Biben-

dum—who had an established, complex and pugnacious character—could not be repeated in the American Bibendum, who was devoid of personality. The following presents distinct conclusions regarding various factors that, be it from a historical context or the role played by different actors who intervened in the mascot's development, marked the process of this mascot's iconization until he became an emblem of the industrial era's popular culture.

The role of the Michelin company itself

The Michelin brothers, especially André, the oldest and who was in charge of the company's communication and advertising service, consciously and systematically applied a commercial policy based on the construction of a mythicized corporate history accompanied by a considerable advertising investment that would sustain and allow for its establishment. The founding story and the sum of achievements, accomplishments and triumphs—many of them incarnated, represented and related through Bibendum, their mascot spokesman—was repeated invariably throughout the years. This historical endorsement, invoked and activated as a corporate mantra, was regularly utilized for the firm's illustrated advertisements as well as for reviews and articles published in magazines and newspapers aligned to Michelin, thus contributing to its perpetuation.

André Michelin consciously utilized a mascot with a unique, bourgeois and urban identity, capable of reflecting and connecting spheres between high and low cultural levels, between knowledge of classical heritage and of tradition and popular culture. Bibendum was the reflection of the Michelin brothers' own personality, educated in the bosom of a wealthy family and having solid academic training ... without forgetting that they used to frequent the bohemian and commonplace atmospheres of Paris' Montmartre. Michelin's French advertising, through a metamorphic Bibendum, depicted the historical deeds of figures such as Napoleon as well as popularizing Latin sentences. In addition, he also embodied the moralizing fables of La Fontaine, combined the irreverence that he drank from the sacred and the profane and reflected the moments and political movements of his time, a faithful reflection of the education and the secular value system for that nation. Although the pneumatic mascot was the result of an artificial construction and was expressed in the world of advertising fiction, he was intimately linked to the tangible reality of his time and interacted accordingly, reflecting it, but always in benefit of his definitive commercial purpose.

The role of competitors in the sector

The commercial illustrators and poster artists commissioned to formalize proposals for advertisements of products alternative to the tire also resorted to the image of Bibendum, applying the synecdoche's classic rhetorical figure. Concrete cases of this application, dating from the first decade of the 20th century, have been analyzed in Chapter 11: "The technological and commercial battles (1910-1915)," and in Chapter 13: "The Michelin Steel Disc Wheel, a business opportunity." In these episodes it shows how the companies supporting cushion tires and other rival technologies attacked the manufacturers of pneumatic tires and inner tubes—including Michelin—employing the singular image of Bibendum. The mascot not only served as an ambassador for his company, but was also converted into a symbol for the entire tire industry, an example of the character's early iconization in Europe.

Beyond Michelin

Since the beginning of the twentieth century the figure of Bibendum in Europe was subject to uses outside of the company's control. An exemplary case is the role played by illustrators of French satirical magazines. In their humorous vignettes, the illustrators extracted all sorts of metaphors

and analogies based on the mascot's physical characteristics, his personality and sphere of action, which include, among those analyzed: his inflated/deflated aspect, ability to swallow obstacles, relationship with automobile races, aggressiveness against commercial adversaries, identification with the Michelin company founders and with other political and public personalities and his French nationality. Chapter 2: "The Birth and Baptism of Bibendum" presents and analyzes several of the early appropriations by storytellers of everyday life regarding Bibendum's figure as a symbolic and metaphorical element, being specifically applied to political caricatures, a strategy which is still active today. The character's constant repetition as an expression of certain attributes, portrayed in different contexts and with functions distinct from those originally ascribed—a mascot for the identity and corporate and advertising representation of a specific company—enhanced the process of consolidating Bibendum as a popular icon.

The role of illustrators

The presence of the Michelin company in different markets, already since the beginning of the 20th century, favored the open and adaptive configuration of their corporate mascot. From his creation in 1898, and until the 1930s, the figure of the pneumatic man was modeled according to the contribution and particular vision of each of the artists who brought him to life in his advertising adventures. This process helped to construct a kaleidoscopic figure, an "elastic" symbol that could be updated and was capable of being adjusted to each requirement while maintaining its essence, a basic virtue for the success of a mascot.

In Chapter 1: "The conception of corporate and advertising mascots" and Chapter 2: "The Birth and baptism of Bibendum," the fundamental role of illustrators in the graphic configuration of mascots, in general, and Michelin's Bibendum, in particular, has been discussed. As demonstrated, illustrators played a decisive role as mediators and creators, as competent professionals in translating the advertiser's requirements into intelligible graphic language. They were capable of forging consistent visual metaphors by resorting to elements of popular and classical culture. In my opinion, nowadays the dynamics of mass culture and mass media have replaced, limited or diluted the presence of these classical references as raw material for creating design proposals.

Old Europe and New America: the migration of cultural patterns

During the first decade of the 19th century, under the command of Napoleon Bonaparte, the foundations of a centralized, public, compulsory and free educational system were laid out in France. During the beginning of the Third Republic, after 1882, once the control over education that religious orders had held in the past had been reduced, compulsory, free and secular education was imposed by the government, who employed it as a binding instrument of the republican spirit and national identity. These structures allowed the transmission of knowledge through schooling and at different levels of education to be carried out in a uniform manner, implementing an established basis of common patterns and contents. These shared spaces, added to the flow of everyday life and the traditional roots of popular culture, constituted the reference framework that advertising language, as a further cultural manifestation, employed in the articulation of its arguments. The French company Michelin consciously utilized this common foundation, articulating it through the humor, parody and irony that dominated Bibendum's presentations in the advertisements for their tires.

The original Bibendum, animated by O'Galop since his debut in 1898 and until the end of the first decade in the 20th century, was a figure with a distinct and defined personality that was embodied in his advertising appearances: he was haughty and arrogant, reckless and combative, irreverent in

the religious realm, politically active and knowledgeable in classical and popular culture. He was the portrayal of a human belonging to a high social status, a position from which he could “freely” pontificate on politics, economics, morals, religion and refer to remarkable historical events of the past as well as of present times. According to our current moral codes, Bibendum was not an exemplary model of behavior, exhibiting markedly classist and macho conduct, and accompanying his appearances with all kinds of stereotypes from that period. Nor was he a half-hearted character; he took sides on each occasion without any hesitations, steadfastly assuming his role as spokesman and prescriber of Michelin’s advertising policy.

The Bibendum of the post-World War I period, animated in France by Georges Hautot—once O’Galop was displaced of his responsibility for Michelin’s advertising—underwent a profound transformation. Although he was involved in causes such as repopulation and promoting natality, the Taylorization applied to Michelin’s French factories and the promotion of utilizing the automobile, he behaved as an advertising character who was complacent in his attitudes. He depicted a personality with a more ambiguous and neutral profile, far from the virulence he had exhibited in the past.

For the moment, the continuity of Michelin’s production and commercial activity in Europe also led to the maintenance of their advertising and promotional policy. The flow of their corporate actions and communication to the consumer society enhanced the consolidation of their corporate symbols. This was especially true for their mascot Bibendum, an incessant protagonist since his first appearance in 1898. The abilities bestowed upon the character to bring together common feelings and causes, to retain and convey the shared essence of popular culture and, finally, to take on corporeal form and express himself as a human being, were fundamental in his early captivation of French popular imagination. That is the heritage on which his preservation was based in subsequent years, through his constant presence in—and outside of—advertising settings, until he was established as part of the collective memory.

The old French Bibendum was the one that had been created in the republican and secular France of 1898, offspring of a French company’s commercial interests and representation of the Gallic and bourgeois bon vivant who enjoyed the permissiveness of the *Belle Époque*, who indiscriminately recited Horacio and La Fontaine, rubbed shoulders with Napoleon and toasted with champagne. This was the one and same character who was appointed to be the traveling companion in Michelin’s North American adventure.

The host environment that he was integrated into was governed by rules that were quite different from the French. There, he could not express himself with the naturalness and abundance that he was accustomed to in his European commercial battles. Nor could he resort to those common references and nexuses from the original French context. The early twentieth-century United States of America was not the *fin-de-siècle* France. The dialogue with the consumer and the American public required the identification of clearly defined interlocutors and a common language. The new shared context that had to be explored—the amalgam of immigrant cultures within the United States—required a total reconfiguration of the mascot’s personality. This, in fact, did not occur but still and all, occasioned a denaturalization of his character that led to the mascot’s lack of personality in his American adaptation. Devoid of his attributes as well as the popular and cultural foundations shared with the whole of the local population, the American Bibendum fulfilled his representative functions as a corporate and promotional mascot, but he soon became a character who

lacked his own personality. The magnetism, empathy and appealing capacities of the French original, basic for communication and advertising success, were not adequately developed.

In the United States, the continuity of Bibendum's complex impact on the collective memory was interrupted and diluted after the failure of the first production and commercial launch, initiated in 1907. The process terminated in 1930, after ceasing the activities of the Michelin Tire Co. in Milltown. The return of Michelin to the North American market did not occur until almost four decades later, beginning the process again practically from scratch and within a very different context. From then on, the configuration of the American Bibendum counted on media coverage by written press and the full emergence of television as an advertising medium. It is this latest Bibendum, complacent and friendly, who the American public is familiar with.

Prior to the change from the nineteenth to the twentieth century, the iconography of sacred and profane themes and figures, associated with classical and popular culture and expressed through art and decorative arts were, to a large extent, the reference sources used by incipient advertising. The development of mass culture required the means of mass dissemination and reproduction, the same ones used by advertising to reflect certain realities and to propose new models and cultural patterns. Michelin's advertising was the instrument which allowed for the presentation, maintenance and establishment of the mascot Bibendum over the years and in different scenarios.

Incorporated into the pantheon of symbolic figures—such as religious deities and classical Greco-Romans—and present in the collective memory, Michelin's Bibendum has repeatedly been invoked by authors, designers and artists since his advertising beginnings to the present. He is sought after for communication campaigns given his status as a kaleidoscopic mascot. At present, the figure of the American Bibendum is fully construed in mass culture, while that of the French Bibendum and, in part, the European one, has transcended to a new level. The process of osmosis and cultural penetration of this mascot into the collective memory over the years, his use and reinvention beyond the scope of corporate communication and, at times, outside the control of the company he represents, has consecrated him as a popular icon of the masses.

9. Future areas of research

The process of elaborating the different chapters for this research has generated a multitude of possibilities to investigate in the future. Many of these respond to the enormous gaps in the relationships between graphic design, advertising and the use of mascots in tire industry companies, both in Europe and in the United States. Others refer to particular cases, such as the lack of books, monographs or reliable studies on the history of tire companies, except for large companies in the sector such as Michelin, BF Goodrich, Continental, Goodyear, Firestone, United States Tires, Pirelli, General, Seiberling and Kelly-Springfield, among others. It is surprising that there has been limited or practically zero attention dedicated to hundreds of small and medium-sized companies which have had remarkable productive and commercial activity, as well as exerting an economic, social and cultural impact on their sociocultural environment and the populations in which their production centers were located. It goes without saying that the advertising and graphic activity for each of them—and as a whole—deserves particular attention.

The U.S. tire sector companies' advertising investments in media and related supports from that time period remains an issue to be addressed, particularly with respect to the press. In the present investiga-

tion, data have been provided for Michelin and, in certain aspects, for other rival companies. A global and comparative study would help to understand the true dimension of the economic and advertising impact developed by the list of more than one hundred tire companies that were active in the first three decades of the 20th century. They were competing with each other and with the Michelin Tire Company on a number of distinct fronts.

In the present report no data has been incorporated on a set of topics that are key to globally understand the corporate history of the multinational Michelin. These include the campaigns for road management and signage, the importance of maps and guides edited by the company, the Taylorization of policies and productive processes, and the role the company played in the promotion of aviation as the new technological challenge following the bicycle and automobile. This is due to two basic reasons. First, although these topics were not included, reliable bibliography exists for each particular case. Secondly, they were excluded because they are tangential issues to the specific history of Michelin's American subsidiary and with no notable impact on the advertising landscape of the U.S. market. In any case, those interested in developing research on these issues will find new data and bibliographic contributions in this study, basically derived from U.S. sources from the time period under study and which complemented existing texts in that regard.

On another note, and regarding the history of the Michelin United States subsidiary which is the subject of this research, this study closes an important information gap that existed in reference to the years of productive and commercial activity in Milltown. Similar studies could be carried out to cover other large gaps that remain, such as the corporate history of the British and Italian subsidiaries and other minor subsidiaries, which are sure to be equally fascinating, such as the German and Russian agencies, to name just a few. There are no reliable studies in this regard, beyond the contributions contained in commemorative books published locally between 1997 and 2006 by the Michelin company themselves.

It is worth noting the limited information that exists about the activities of Michelin and tire industry companies on both contending sides during crucial periods such as the First World War, a latent theme in the recent commemoration of its centenary. In this sense, the two volumes of Annie Moulin-Bourret's (1997) work, focused on the Clermont-Ferrand industries, constitute mandatory reading. The performance and activities of the most important tire manufacturers in each country—pillars of the industry and true national symbols—during the two world wars are replete with intriguing actions. The role of multinationals such as the French Michelin, the German Continental, the British Dunlop or the Italian Pirelli, all of them with foreign establishments in geopolitically complex territories, should be understood as a sum of patriotic adscription and of trade balances carried out to keep themselves afloat. These periods, conveniently forgotten, constitute pitfalls that hinder global analysis and they deserve a detailed study to reconstruct a history that would show the impact of this industry on the economic, corporate, social and cultural episodes that took place.

With regard to the mascots employed by tire industry companies, and despite the selection of examples and cases developed in the present investigation, a part of the typology existing in those early years still remains to be collected and analyzed. A currently relevant example is the utilization of the dog as a metaphor of fidelity and reliability, as well as the constant references to a tire's hold on the road being comparable to the locking jaws of dogs when they bite, especially bulldogs. Moreover, analogies have been made with the athletic ability of racing breeds such as greyhounds. These are the cases of American companies such as Braender and Greyhound, among others. Other animals were used intensively as corporate and promotional mascots, including felines—especially lions, the king of the asphalt jungle—

and pachyderms—elephants, rhinoceroses and hippopotamuses—, animals with thick, impenetrable skin, similar to the advertised pneumatic tires. In short, a long list of fauna remains whose symbolic attributes were intensely utilized in the promotion of different brands in the sector.

For companies in the tire sector, the utilization of figures and images related to gender, race and social status issues for advertising purposes also constitutes a very interesting field of study to explore. In the present investigation two exemplary cases have been addressed in this sense, with a chapter dedicated to each one of them—the use of Kelly Springfield’s female mascot, in Chapter 27, and employing Natives Americans in the imagery of the Far West, in Chapter 31—, but there are many more that can be addressed. Regarding gender issues, an area of research could provide information that would allow for analyzing the use of the female figure and its representation in tire advertisements. This could address a wide range of issues spanning from utilizing sex appeal to attract male consumers’ attention, analyzing the construction of models and stereotypes that female figures represent, up to commercial considerations towards modern female drivers as a specific new type of consumer that was rapidly on the rise.

Many other proposals have remained in the pipeline, waiting to be investigated or for initiatives to do so. Among them can be found the biographies on the life and work of so many European and American graphic artists, illustrators, designers and art directors—the majority of them little known or forgotten—whose brilliant participation contributed to the graphic formulation of the tire companies’ corporate identity as well as their promotional and advertising elements. The list is immeasurable and, during the present investigation, efforts were made to provide the most accurate information available about each of the aforementioned as they were found, identifying their style and signature in given advertisements. An important contribution of this present research has been its contribution to dispelling certain anonymities.

Indeed, as a result of the present investigation, presented in Chapter 21.1: “Arthur Norman Edrop (1884-1973)” and 21.2: “Gluyas Williams (1888-1982),” two biographies have been completed for two artists, Arthur Norman Edrop and Gluyas Williams. They participated as press advertising designers and illustrators for Michelin’s American subsidiary and there had been no reliable information available on them prior to this research. The analysis of their professional activity and work provides us with a vision of the great stylistic permeability between European and American trends in design, illustration and advertising in this first third of the 20th century, a movement that flowed in both directions. Future comparative research can help to reinforce and manifest these links as well as the limits and barriers that generated their processes of assimilation and application.

Finally, digital media harbors new virtual worlds where mascots can be activated to perform their corporate and advertising functions. Videogames, spaces of interactivity and proximity that social networks facilitate with the consumer—which companies and institutions are already utilizing in this sense and whose uniqueness is the subject of the first academic studies on this subject—, offer a fascinating field of research. This is due to the novelty of their possibilities as well as the fact that the accelerated construction and evolution of these virtual worlds and their peculiarities are changing the rules of traditional advertising communication and requiring designers to acquire new skills.

