

DRAG CUISINES: THE QUEER ONTOLOGY OF VEGANISM

by

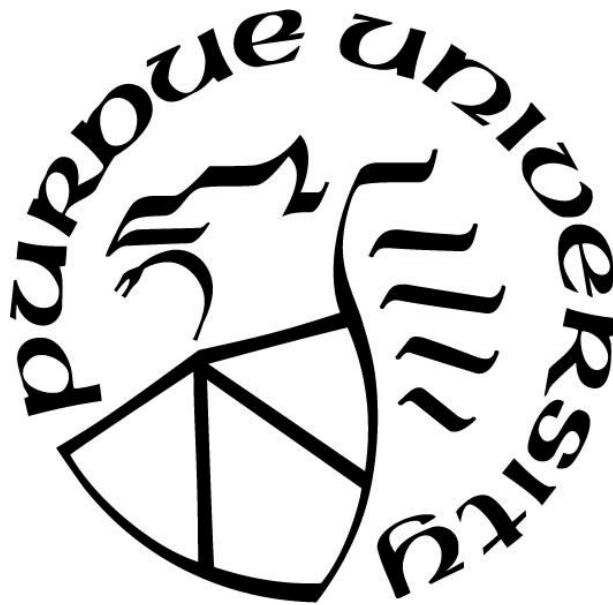
A. Paige Frazier

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty of Purdue University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy



School of Interdisciplinary Studies

West Lafayette, Indiana

May 2023

**THE PURDUE UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL
STATEMENT OF COMMITTEE APPROVAL**

Dr. Bill Mullen, Chair

School of Interdisciplinary Studies

Dr. Yvonne Pitts

Department of History

Dr. Sharra Vostral

Department of History

Dr. T. J. Boisseau

School of Interdisciplinary Studies

Approved by:

Dr. Shannon McMullen

*This work is dedicated to my father, Darrin Frazier,
my lifelong advocate and greatest support. Rest in Peace.*

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my committee, Dr. Bill Mullen, Dr. Yvonne Pitts, Dr. Sharra Vostral, and Dr. TJ Boisseau, for always reading my work carefully, challenging my perspectives, and pushing my research ever deeper.

I would like to thank my partner, Esme' Barniskis, for getting into the weeds with me emotionally and intellectually, providing a listening ear or a sharp critical eye as the occasion called for it. I could not have done this without you.

I would like to thank all of my friends and family for celebrating my successes and nudging me forward in moments of doubt.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	7
FOREWORD	8
INTRODUCTION: INTERROGATING THE INTERCONNECTEDNESS OF VEGANISM, QUEERNESS, AND ANIMALITY	13
What is Veganism?	14
What is Queerness?.....	21
What is Animality?	23
Research Methods.....	25
Chapters	37
PART I: FOOD IN DRAG: VEGAN FOOD AND THE POLITICS OF PERFORMANCE.....	43
How can food be queer?	47
Troubling Food Ontologies.....	51
The Struggle for Authenticity	59
An Alternative to American Food Nationalism.....	66
Rhetorics of Naming	82
Subversive Food.....	88
PART II: “THE HOMOSEXUAL WAS NOW A SPECIES”: VEGANISM AND ANIMALITY IN QUEER LITERATURE AND FILM	94
The Well of Loneliness.....	116
Paul Takes the Form of a Mortal Girl.....	123
The Silence of the Lambs	131
PART III: MUKBANG MICRO-CELEBRITIES: SOCIAL MEDIA AND ORAL HISTORIES AS QUEER VEGAN ASSEMBLAGE	139
“What does being queer have to do with being vegan?”	144
The Institutionalization of Food.....	150
Social Media	153
The Story of Nikocado Avocado	157
Carnivorism, Veganism, and EcoFascism	170
Vegan Restaurants and Trans-inclusive Restrooms.....	181

CONCLUSION..... 190

ABSTRACT

Drag Cuisines is an interdisciplinary study of the cultural, social, and historical interconnectedness of veganism, queerness, and animality. To interrogate these links requires mixed methods such as the collection of oral histories with self-identified queer vegans, analysis of animal themes in queer film and literature, social media analysis, and analysis of food cultures and restaurant rhetorics. Following work by prominent American Studies scholars, this project posits that the practice of veganism embodies queer performativity in how queerness and animality are ontologically linked.

FOREWORD

Back in 2010, long before I had adopted a vegan lifestyle, and long before I was a comfortably “out” gay woman to more than a few people close to me, I remember joking with a friend about lesbian stereotypes. I was devising a pretend test that people could take to determine whether or not they were a lesbian. A few of the questions included, What year is your Subaru? List the names of your cats alphabetically. And, How long have you been a vegan? The joke was that if you could answer these questions *at all*, you were a lesbian. “Straight” women would have to write “N/A.”

Of course, I now know lots of lesbians who don’t drive Subarus (I have never owned a Subaru), and I know a few (though admittedly not many) lesbians who don’t have a cat and aren’t living some version of a plant-based lifestyle. But these stereotypes had been implanted into my brain somewhere and somehow. At the time of my telling this silly and predictable joke, I didn’t even know any lesbians. I was a sophomore at Marshall University in a mid-sized West Virginia college town, studying creative writing, and focusing more on my burgeoning social life than on anything else. I had started an attic band with three of my straight friends. My roommates were straight. My high school friends that visited on the weekends were straight. I had yet to have my first girlfriend. There were almost zero openly gay people in my small hometown in Eastern Kentucky, and the few who were brave enough to be out were relentlessly mocked and made the butt of every joke. In college, for the most part, any contact I had with queer people was in passing. I would see them dancing at the gay bar on Saturday nights, or I would casually chat with someone gay at a party. But I didn’t know any of them. Internally, I had debilitating anxiety about the prospect of talking to another lesbian, particularly one who I was attracted to. This resulted in

many awkward conversational non-starters with lesbian friends-of-friends—cringe fodder that still irks me to this day.

But I “knew” a few things about lesbians. I knew they liked cats. I knew they were often vegan or vegetarian. And I knew they camped and hiked enough to need a rugged SUV. When I reflect and ask myself how I came to “know” these things, I realize that it wasn’t so much lesbian stereotypes I had picked up from cable television, books, and small-town homophobic jabs. Rather, much of it stemmed from messages I had received about all vegans being effeminate and un-manly; or all cat owners being crazy reclusive ladies; and that Subarus were the car-of-choice for queer people everywhere. Looking back on my upbringing in the 90s, androgynous lesbians like myself were almost entirely absent from my personal life, absent from any type of television that I consumed (except very seldom when negatively represented on *Friends*, for instance), and absent from my educational experience or from any adult conversations I overheard. So, any messages I received about lesbians occurred via reverse osmosis. If this is a thing “regular” women don’t do, then maybe it’s because it’s something masculine, androgynous, or “different” women—aka lesbians—do.

When I decided to try out a vegan diet in 2014, I did so with my long-term partner at the time. She and I committed to a 30-day vegan trial to see how we felt eating that way, and to see how difficult it would be to do in a small town in Upper Michigan. At the end of 30 days, as the two of us sat down to a meal of veggie fajitas with rice and black beans, we talked about our month-long plunge into a more ethical and sustainable lifestyle—shopping more frequently at our local co-op for plant-based specialty items, checking ingredients lists before buying food, choosing cleaners and household toiletries made by companies that do not test on animals, and the like. We determined that our spending had not increased much if at all, and the minor inconveniences we

initially felt at learning a new way of eating and buying had now become second nature. We decided that the benefits of a vegan lifestyle far outweighed any inconvenience or learning curve that may have come with it. We decided to stick with it full-time from that point forward.

At the time I was not thinking very deeply about what led me to so readily adopt a complete lifestyle overhaul. I had been presented with compelling evidence: animals were being systematically abused in commercial food operations, and these same operations were responsible for the majority of global environmental destruction. Veganism, as I saw it, was the least I could do to try to not to contribute to these abuses any further. As a consumer, I could hit the industry where it hurt—in the wallet. What I could not reconcile early on in my vegan journey, was why other people, when presented with this same compelling evidence, did not reach the same conclusions I reached. I would tell my family members the facts, show my friends footage taken secretly inside of slaughterhouses, I would even sit people down to full-length documentaries on the subject, and very often it was the same result. Most people would feign concern, pledge to “do better,” and then resume life as usual with few or no changes to their purchasing or eating habits.

At the time, my knee-jerk reaction to this harsh reality was to point the finger at the willfully ignorant, to blame my neighbor for continuing their decades-long, animal-based eating habits out of apathy. After all, my plunge into veganism was an emotional one. It was my despair—at seeing animals harmed and the natural world destroyed—that solidified my convictions and drove me to try to improve this system in whatever small way I could.

But now I understand what I couldn't understand then: My social position and experiences primed me for veganism long before I even knew the word. Because I was a little girl who looked often like a little boy, my relationships with human beings was strained from an early age. My mother relentlessly tried to make me into a “girly girl” by placing me in frilly dresses for our family

photos despite my protestations. She would critique my posture if it was too much like a boy's—relaxed and aloof, rather than upright with ankles together. Kids at school teased me, and often asked me, giggling, if I was a boy or a girl. Boys on the playground were astonished (and maybe a little secretly delighted) that I, a girl, could take them down at dodge ball or flag football. Even some of my teachers discouraged me from playing too much with the boys, and would try to pair me up with girls so that I could learn appropriately gendered activities. All the while, I only wanted to be myself. I wanted to play sports, get dirty, and go on adventures, because those things were fun. I rejected femininity because I associated it with things that were not fun—primarily the relentless policing of how I chose to sit, stand, speak, and behave.

Being myself became a chore, a balancing act. I learned to speak in a more effeminate way in the classroom, so that I might be allowed to run with the boys at recess. I realized that if I grew my hair out, I might still be allowed to wear baggy t-shirts instead of pink dresses and skirts. If I went too far in either direction, I no longer knew myself, and others no longer knew me. Being me became a thing. It became exhausting.

My happiest and most peaceful moments were with animals. Punky, my family's elderly Pomeranian, was my constant companion. We played outside together, he followed me from room to room, and he slept next to me in my bed at night. My relationship with Punky was simple and easy: He loved me just how I was. It never occurred to him that I should be different in any way. And though he was arthritic, and wheezy, and aggressive toward strangers, I felt the same way about him. Just a few months before my parents would divorce, in the winter of 1995, Punky was let outside one night to go relieve himself and he never returned. It's possible he wandered too far from home and couldn't make his way back, but it's probably more likely that he was snatched up by one of several coyotes that populated the hills around our house. Either way, I was devastated.

I cried for Punky at night. I wrote letters to him begging him to come home. And I wrote poems for him in a journal that my grandma bought for me the previous Christmas. Eventually I accepted that he wasn't coming back, and, as kids do, I moved on.

In one sense, my attachment to my childhood dog is not unique or special. Lots of kids love and form close bonds with their childhood pets. But in my case, my relationship with Punky was also cathartic. I was able to let my guard down and be myself with my dog in a way that I could not do with most people. Had I known another queer child or if queer children had been allowed to be recognized as queer children, I may not have placed as much value on my relationships with animals.

What follows is an exploration of the relationships that queer people form with animals. Why do queer people gravitate toward animals? What kinds of relationships do they form with animals? Why do pets appear to have unique value to LGBTQ+ people? What effects do these relationships have on queer- and animal-related activism today, like veganism and animal rights? And what kinds of academic conversations are scholars of queer theory and animal studies having, if any? *Drag Cuisines* is my attempt to answer these questions and more, as I reflect on my own relationships with animals over the course of my life and study queer/animal relationships in other people and popular culture. My aim is to uncover hidden facets of queer culture-making today and make a case for animal rights in the process.

INTRODUCTION: INTERROGATING THE INTERCONNECTEDNESS OF VEGANISM, QUEERNESS, AND ANIMALITY

Drag Cuisines is an interdisciplinary investigation into the obvious links between queerness and veganism (as concepts) as well as the links between the resulting communities of each respective movement. This work involves analyzing what I will term “queer veganism” from many different angles—restaurant culture, menu development, LGBTQ+ literature and film, oral histories with queer and vegan individuals, some supplemental historical materials, advertisements, and social media content. *Drag Cuisines* is the study of a new and burgeoning cultural phenomenon, and as such, will involve synthesizing new critical theory from existing theory in seemingly disparate fields: queer and trans studies, food studies, animal studies, critical race theory, and feminist studies, to name a few. Few are the scholars who have begun to link queer studies with food studies, but that is the work that *Drag Cuisines* sets out to do. This project will “queer” the concept of veganism and its associated actions by first recentering veganism as the primary praxis for animal rights movements, and second by explicating unique queer interests in animal welfare in theoretical, historical, literary, and popular spaces. Following Mel Y. Chen’s groundbreaking text *Animacies*, I will argue that veganism is the political application of queer animality—that there are ontological links across animacy hierarchies that link queer positionality to animality, and that veganism represents the (sub)conscious realization of this link in in various cultural places—in the restaurant industry, on social media, and in literature and film. Collecting queer oral histories, analyzing queer literature, and examining veganism on social media sites like YouTube will help me elucidate these ontologies. My aim is to intervene in animal studies, food studies, and queer studies to show how these fields are often subtly, but should be explicitly, speaking to one another.

To begin this dissertation, I will first triangulate my key concepts: veganism, queerness, and animality. Foregrounding each of these concepts thoroughly will help frame the rest of the work that follows. Each of these concepts is worthy of a longer work in its own right. But my aim is to link these three concepts, by locating them in various cultural realms, identifying and investigating relationships between the three, and then placing them in conversation with each other. My hope is that readers will see, over the course of this project, how queerness, veganism, and animality are philosophically, culturally, and ontologically intertwined.

What is Veganism?

Like all other justice-based social movements, veganism and the vegans who practice it are not monoliths. Vegans are a diverse population with myriad backgrounds, socioeconomic statuses, and motivations underpinning their chosen modes of consumption. This means that the task of defining veganism in any kind of strict or rigid terms can be problematic. When the founders of The Vegan Society, Donald Watson and his wife Dorothy, coined the term in 1944, they defined it as, “a philosophy and way of living which seeks to exclude—as far as is possible and practicable—all forms of exploitation of, and cruelty to, animals for food, clothing, or any other purpose; and by extension, promotes the development and use of animal-free alternatives for the benefit of humans, animals, and the environment.”¹ Thus, in the beginning of the movement, early vegans sought to distinguish themselves from (lacto- and/or ovo-) vegetarians whose relationship to animal rights and the consumption of animal products they viewed as poorly defined. The term vegetarian was at least a full century older than the neologism “vegan,” and what counted as vegetarian depended on the practices of each individual adherent. Some vegetarians continued to eat eggs (thus promoting the use of hens for food), some continued to eat dairy (thus promoting the use of cows), and the term vegetarian had no firm historical guidelines for the use of animals

for entertainment, clothing, household goods, or other materials. Vegans in the early 1940s wanted to draw more rigid boundaries for their off-shoot movement rooted in animal welfare.

Since 1944, the term vegan has taken on more meanings and connotations than originally intended. Veganism is now associated with environmentalism, healthy living, and sometimes the subversion of capitalism, which many vegans view as a system that makes possible the wide-scale consumption of excess animal products and fast food via industry lobbying and government subsidies. The proliferation of vegan content online and the popularization of the vegan diet in the last 10-15 years has helped change the public face of veganism, making it more approachable on the one hand, but less clearly-defined on the other. Some vegans now make a distinction between vegan and “plant-based,” the latter referring to dietary behaviors alone, while the former maintains its original definition rooted in avoiding harm to animals.

The looming threat of climate change has helped bring the vegan philosophy into a growing “green” movement. Proponents of a vegan diet for climate change cite its lower carbon footprint, cleaner production practices, and lesser contribution to deforestation and degradation of natural resources. A single quarter-pound beef burger, for instance, uses over 600 gallons of freshwater,ⁱⁱ and produces approximately eight kilos of greenhouse gas emissions.ⁱⁱⁱ Cattle ranching is also the leading cause of Amazon deforestation, which makes carbon sequestration more difficult, contributes to habitat loss, and negatively impacts thousands of indigenous people.^{iv} Burgers made with popular meat alternatives use 200 times less water, 12 times less land, and contribute 9 times fewer greenhouse gas emissions.^v When one compares the impact of processed meat alternatives to black beans or whole vegetables, the environmental impact is even less. Popular vegan documentaries like *Cowspiracy* (2014) have helped educate younger generations about the

environmental degradation caused by meat and animal by-products, bringing more people into the movement for sustainability reasons.

The health benefits of veganism are more hotly contested than either the environmental or animal welfare benefits, perhaps because of the proliferation of competing nutritional guidelines online and even among experts. The rise of popular meat-heavy diets like the ketogenic diet, the paleo diet, and the carnivore diet make advocating for veganism for health reasons more difficult. But there is growing evidence to suggest that vegans have a lower incidence of all-cause mortality,^{vi} longer lifespans,^{vii} lower cholesterol,^{viii} lower BMIs,^{ix} lower rates of cancer,^x lower rates of diabetes,^{xi} and lower rates of autoimmune diseases.^{xii} The health benefits of plant-based eating are also documented by many social media influencers who attempt to bring new people into the movement by showing them how they can optimize their health and well-being with plant foods. I detail this trend at more length in Part III.

For all of its popular associations—Instagram influencers promoting tropical fruitopian lifestyles, or the rise of fake meats and vegan junk foods, or the social sharing (online or otherwise) of vegan recipes, to name a few—it is important to begin this text with a discussion of veganism as a social movement, because at its core the practice of veganism is both an individual and personal boycott of animal products and animal exploitation, and it is a demonstration of vegan actions that aims to draw people into a broader movement. That movement seeks to end (or greatly reduce) animal suffering and exploitation and reduce harm done to the planet. Social movements could be defined as, “collective challenges, based on common purposes and social solidarities, in sustained interaction with elites, opponents, and authorities.”^{xiii} According to accepted sociological theory, there are four main properties that make up any social movement: collective challenge, common purpose, social solidarity, and sustained interaction.^{xiv} Below, I will detail the

ways in which each of these properties can be observed in current and past vegan and animal rights movements.

First, collective challenges, or collective actions must be contentious in the context of a social movement. That is, the collective actions must involve “disruptive direct action against elites, authorities, other groups, and/or cultural codes.”^{xv} These contentious collective actions often seek to interrupt, obstruct, or somehow muddle others’ hegemonic, normative activities. These actions may coalesce around a catchy movement slogan or other cultural norms practiced within the movement. In the case of veganism, such a slogan may be, “Not your mom, not your milk,” an anti-dairy phrase shouted at many vegan protests and printed onto bumper stickers, t-shirts, and other pro-vegan merchandise, with an accompanying picture of a cow. The slogan is catchy and easy to remember, but it also inserts knowledge and perspective where it may otherwise be lacking. Vegans routinely call attention to the fact that human beings are the only animals to drink the milk of another animal, and well into adulthood, no less. Though this practice is strange to some, it is not a reason in and of itself to stop doing it. After all, human beings are unique to other animals in countless other ways which we do not condemn. But the rhetorical use of the word “mom,” to refer to a female cow who is forced to give her milk to human beings instead of to her baby, makes it the most contentious aspect of this slogan. “Motherhood,” as an archetype, calls to mind practices of nurturing, caring, protection, and nourishing (via breast milk). Implicit in the slogan is the idea that the cow cannot mother her young as nature intended, but instead must give her milk to farmers and see her calves torn away from her and sent to slaughter, a practice that causes much emotional distress in mother cows.^{xvi} Thus, the slogan not only unites people in a common cause, but also promotes a contentious politics that forces those who hear it to consider the plight of cows reared for dairy.

Another key characteristic of social movements is common purposes—that is, a group of people “mounting common claims against opponents, authorities, or elites.”^{xvii} The movement must be made up of people with common interests who have identified a common issue in their own lives or in the world around them, and thus, set out to achieve a common goal. In short, the people participating in the contentious politics of a social movement must have good reason for doing so. The common purpose constitutes a reason good enough for taking collective action.

For vegans and animal rights activists, the common purpose is the mass reduction of animal suffering at the hands of individual human beings and vast industrial systems. Vegans may feel a deep emotional bond to animals which spurs them to act, or they may empathize with nonhuman animals on the basis of their shared sentience (and their ability to feel pain and suffer) and thus act on their behalf. To act as a vegan activist does not require that one first develop a close bond with animals, but recognizing animal cruelty and committing to stop it is the most common factor driving vegan social movements.

Third, is social solidarity, or the mobilization of consensus. The group constituting the social movement must recognize their common interests and translate this into collective action. It is the role of movement leaders to “tap into and expand deep-rooted feelings of solidarity or identity.”^{xviii} It is this aspect (among others) that separates social movements from the isolated actions of a mob. A mob of people may be acting collectively, but they do not necessarily identify with each other beyond the fleeting contention of the riot.

With regard to identity, vegan social movements vary from social movements rooted in race, ethnicity, religion, or social class. In the latter, the movement arises from a shared identity and a perceived wrong directly related to that shared identity—a group of people first identifying as Black, and then witnessing police murdering Black men, for instance. For vegans, the perception

of wrongdoing precedes the formation of identity. Vegans do not necessarily identify with each other prior to their entrance into the vegan movement. In the case of veganism, it is the movement itself that helps solidify a sense of shared identity and social solidarity. Vegans, by engaging in vegan activism, come to feel solidarity with others acting on behalf of animals. Because animals cannot act on their own behalf, vegans cannot feel solidarity with them in a common movement (though they often do empathize with them). Thus their solidarity is felt with other people who also recognize the plight of nonhuman animals.

And the fourth characteristic of social movements is sustaining contention. Social movements are made up of sustained collective action against antagonists rather than a single contentious episode. Social movements must maintain their collective challenge to the status quo or risk dissolution. The question of how to maintain collective action over the long term is central to nearly every social movement. In order for their collective challenges, common purpose, and social solidarity to bring about change, the movement must sustain itself long enough to bring these desired changes to fruition.

The vegan/animal rights movement has been sustained in various iterations throughout recorded history. The earliest known written record of a refusal to eat animals or their by-products can be traced back to Pythagoras around 500 BCE.^{xix} Vegetarianism may have existed in some Eastern cultures even before then. Most food historians would agree that for as long as human beings have been eating animals there have been human beings who refused to eat animals on ethical grounds. And while the movement has experienced periods of popularity and unpopularity across cultures over time, most would agree that the movement today is experiencing what some would call the pinnacle of its success in the Western world. Some have argued that veganism has hit its stride under capitalism, which allows for the production of a range of consumer products

that aid one's ability to more easily replace animal products in their diets and lifestyles. And it is true that there are more "vegan products" sold in stores than ever before. But capitalism cannot take all the credit. After all, demand for these products has also gone up. And a person can adopt a vegan lifestyle without ever purchasing products like Beyond Burgers or Just Egg. I would attribute veganism's current popularity to Internet content more than anything else.

My aim in dissecting the precise ways in which veganism meets all the criteria of a social movement is to reclaim it from the feel-good corners of lifestyle internet and reground it in its original ethics, politics, and philosophy. Veganism is distinct from other popular diets because it is not simply a diet. Keto, paleo, Whole 30, and other recent trends in eating are rooted in health and fitness, not in overarching ideals, a shared vision for the world, or collective action. Veganism is a social movement that involves diet, but it is not first and foremost a diet. Understanding this first may help readers understand why vegans engage in practices that may seem contradictory to achieving the optimal health and fitness benefits that other popular diets promise. One common non-vegan gripe when confronted with meat replacement products is, "If you hate meat so much, why do you want your plant foods to look, smell, and taste like it? Why not just eat more vegetables?" The reason is because many vegans do enjoy the taste, smell, and texture of meat, but eating meat derived from animals does not align with their ethics and worldview. Some non-vegans argue that faux meats are as unhealthy as "real" meat. This may be true. But the point of eating faux meats is not to optimize one's health. It is to minimize violence committed against animals and the planet.

Good faith discussions on veganism necessarily involve a discussion of a culture's shared values, and where, if at all, eating animals belongs in that value set. Some populations of people living in remote or underdeveloped areas may not be capable of adhering to a strictly vegan

lifestyle. People living in food deserts may not have reliable access to nutritious food of any kind. Those living in poverty and struggling to provide for their families probably won't prioritize shifting their entire worldview for the sake of farmed animals whom they will never see or know, or for the sake of the changing climate which they may not see as an immediate danger.

What is Queerness?

Queerness, by definition, resists definition. Nevertheless, queer theorists have long attempted to define the word "queer," often for their own theoretical purposes if not as some cultural prescription. Judith Butler, whom some have cited as one of the earliest queer theorists, has written extensively about the multiple meanings of the word "queer." She explains that,

The term "queer" emerges as an interpellation that raises the question of the status of force and opposition, of stability and variability, *within* performativity. The term "queer" has operated as one linguistic practice whose purpose has been the shaming of the subject it names or, rather, the producing of a subject *through* that shaming interpellation. "Queer" derives its force precisely through the repeated invocation by which it has become linked to accusation, pathologization, insult. This is an invocation by which a social bond among homophobic communities is formed through time.^{xx}

Butler is speaking about how the term "queer" has been "reclaimed" over time by communities of LGBTQ+ who have been subjected to its use in violence. "Queer," like many terms used by majority groups to describe marginalized groups, was once a term used to dehumanize and humiliate a minority population deemed a threat to the social order. But, over time, communities once harmed by its use have reclaimed it for their own purposes of collective empowerment.

Others, like Sara Ahmed, have defined queerness in terms of its "oblique" or "slant" quality—or, the inability to pin it down in firm and clear terms. In her earlier work, Ahmed links queerness to phenomenology, because the concept of orientation, she argues, is central to discussions of both queerness and phenomenology. She writes,

Orientations allow us to take up space insofar as they take time. Even when orientations seem to be about which way we are facing in the present, they also point us toward the future. The hope of changing directions is always that we do not know where some paths may take us: risking departure from the straight and narrow makes new futures possible, which might involve going astray, getting lost, or even becoming queer.^{xxi}

The link between queerness and the orientation of one's identity and/or body is often an implicit one—one that Ahmed attempts to make explicit. Queer people of many types are asked to identify with (and thus orient themselves and their lives to) a particular gender or sexual group; they are often asked to list their sexual “orientation” in government forms, job applications, and the like, for record-keeping and demographic, DEI purposes; and while minority sexual and gender groups are listed alongside racial, religious, national, and other minority groups for the human rights protections under American law, none of these other minority groups is spoken of in terms of their orientation toward that group or away from majority groups (though race, religion, nationality, and citizenship status involve myriad orientations, to be sure).

When Ahmed, the US government, and others speak of “sexual orientation” as it pertains to queer people, it is possible that they are referring to the necessary re-orienting of one's identity and lifestyle via the process of coming out. One is oriented toward heteronormativity by default, and the process of queer-becoming necessarily involves a massive identificatory reorientation. To be queer, then, is to move away from—psychically, and in one's life practices—heteronormative hegemony. Ahmed speaks of this process in terms of (re)orientation, while others conceptualize it as a type of “disidentification,”^{xxii} “subversion,”^{xxiii} or even “rebellion.”^{xxiv}

Renate Lorenz, author of *Queer Art: A Freak Theory*, speaks of queerness in terms of “denormalization,” or, simply put, the turn away from that which has been bestowed with a sense of normalcy. Lorenz writes,

How can queer art be taken up in a way that does not classify, level, and understand, but continues, by other means, the denormalization that it incites, the desire for

being-other, being-elsewhere, and change? Current political discourses do not...necessarily exclude change, but they do tend to overemphasize the risk that could be associated with it. In this way, conservative politics and hierarchical economies are privileged. In contrast, a radical queer politics requires us not only to propose images and living strategies for alternative sexualities and genders, but also to promote all kinds of economic, political, epistemological, and cultural experiments that seek to produce difference and equality at the same time.^{xxv}

This utility of the word “queer” closely resembles my own use of it here. Queer, more than being simply a term deployed in service of gender and sexual minorities, is a philosophy—the philosophy of resisting conservatism and pre-established hierarchies of control, while at the same time promoting new and subversive cultures.

In this project, the word “queer” will denote a deviation (of many forms) from anything considered to be “normal,” culturally pervasive, or hegemonic, in a US context, particularly if that taken-for-granted normality is violent or oppressive in nature. It is important to note here that what is considered to be queer by the average American may not be considered queer in another nation or cultural context. This project will focus on US culture, not just because it is my home country, but because, as many historians have noted, American economic and cultural hegemony is spreading globally, and this spread brings with it a host of violent and destructive consequences.

Additionally, I will sometimes deploy the term “queer” as a stand-in for the clunky and cumbersome LGBTQ+ acronym, or to refer to specific aspects of LGBTQ+ culture. “Queer film,” for instance, may refer to any work of cinema featuring LGBTQ+ characters or themes. “Queer food,” which is discussed at length in Part I, will refer to cooking and eating practices by LGBTQ+ people, as well as the ways in which food itself could be perceived as queer.

What is Animality?

My theoretical understanding of animality was sparked by Mel Y. Chen’s book *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect*, and particularly Part II of their text which begins

with the heading “Queer Animality.” Chen writes about animality in ecological (which they deploy to mean systemic or systems-related in an imagined sense) and ontological terms. Chen writes,

This chapter considers in particular how animality, the “stuff” of animal nature that sometimes sticks to animals, sometimes bleeds back onto textures of humanness. I suggest that thinking critically about animality has important consequences for queered and racialized notions of animacy; for it is animality that has been treated as a primary mediator, or crux (though not the only one), for the definition of “human,” and, at the same moment, of “animal.”

Understanding how Chen deploys this tricky term “animality” requires an understanding of the basic premise of *Animacies*, which is that the concept of animacy—that is, the degree to which one (a person, animal, or object) is animate or has or is given life and liveliness—is one that informs, restricts, defines, and/or dictates some of our most fundamental norms and institutions, from warfare to animal rights activism to legal definitions of life, personhood, citizenship, and death. Animality could be thought of as a subcategory—as one type—of animacy. Animals are animate. They have varying degrees of agency. They are alive. And yet their animacy is commonly thought of as being drastically different (and certainly is industrially and legally defined as inferior) from our own.

Chen writes about cultural moments when the relationship between human and animal (or humanness and animality) blend, blur, or become entwined. For Chen, cultural depictions of human animality often take on racial dimensions, as with the fictional character Fu Manchu. But they also theorize that the kinship formations between human and animal, as with the famous chimp named Travis, can take on queer dimensions. Chen writes,

While it would be false to equate the two, relations between the two epistemological regions of *queer* and *animal* abound. The animal has long been an analogical source of understanding for human sexuality: since the beginning of European and American sexology in the nineteenth century, during which scientific forays into sexuality were made, homosexuality has served both as a limit case for establishing the scientific zone of the sexual “normal” and, more recently, as a positive validation for “naturalness” (in which what nature maps is fail-safe to the

nonhuman animal, as opposed to the messy interventions of culture in the human animal).

That the discourse of sexuality is often couched in animal terms means that groups of people who identify or are identified purely on the basis of sex and sexuality may be perceived to be closer (ontologically) to animals, or more “in touch” with their own animality. Those occupying the (default) category of “heterosexual” will not be defined purely in sexual (and thus animal) terms, because “heterosexual” is the norm from which one deviates.

In *Drag Cuisines*, I will deploy “animality” in a couple of different ways. First, “animality” will mean “of an animal,” or to refer to any particular person, place, or thing’s relationship to real, literal animals. Second, I will use “animality” to refer to any particular person, place, or thing’s relationship to the archetypal animal. The figure of the moth in *The Silence of the Lambs*, for instance, is a symbol of a real animal and of the archetypal animal—that which *is* animal, that which is *of* animal or *imagined to be* animal. Animality refers not just to animals themselves, but to the myriad meanings we attach to animals or a particular animal. For my purposes, these varied mutations of animality will be discussed in terms of their relationship to queer people—again, real, fictional, or archetypal—in order to understand the ways in which queer nature and animal nature are related; that is, queer-animal or queer-vegan ontology.

Research Methods

Drag Cuisines is an interdisciplinary project that attempts to answer complex cultural questions by employing a diversity of research methods. Methods used to conduct this research include but are not limited to social media analysis, literary and film analysis, interviews, analysis of food practices including food rhetorics, culinary practices, and food production practices, and ethnographies, including autoethnography. As a queer cultural critic, my research questions were

best answered by qualitative methods centered around the analysis of personal experience, as well as various cultural “texts,” artifacts, and phenomena. Below, I will list my guiding research questions for each Part of this project, explain how my chosen methods effectively answer these questions, as well as discuss the authors and methodological sources that influenced my research decisions.

But before getting into my methodological decisions for each Part of this project, a discussion of broader approaches to Cultural Studies methods is warranted. Cultural Studies (or, American Studies in my case) is typically categorized as an interdisciplinary field. This interdisciplinarity makes for a wide variety of possible research topics, themes, frameworks, and projects that fall under the Cultural Studies umbrella; after all, almost any topic of inquiry could fall under the “study of culture.” Likewise, research methods from a wide array of disciplines are fair game for Cultural Studies scholars, though because the field is usually housed in Liberal Arts and Humanities colleges, scholars in the field tend toward common humanities and social science methods. These varied approaches to research topics and methods means that this field often produces dynamic, exciting, experimental, and innovative scholarship. But the choose-your-own customizable scholarship of Cultural and American Studies can, at the same time, present an overwhelming number of research options for scholars, particularly new scholars. I chose an American Studies department as home for my dissertation project because as someone trained in English and literary studies prior, I knew that I wanted to continue my research in a humanities field (where I felt most comfortable), but I also knew that the deeply theoretical questions I was asking about niche cultural phenomena (such as, are queerness and animality ontologically linked?) warranted study from multiple methodological angles. In American Studies, I was surrounded by

scholars doing mostly qualitative research, but I still had the flexibility to branch out and employ mixed methods as my research questions demanded.

Michael Pickering's book *Research Methods for Cultural Studies* has helped me articulate why I tend toward qualitative research methods (particularly ethnography, interviews, and textual analysis) and leave more quantitative methods to researchers in other fields. Much of it has to do with the value that I place on stories and narrative. He writes,

Stories are central to the ways in which people make sense of their experience and interpret the social world. In everyday life and popular culture, we are continually engaged in narratives of one kind or another. They fill our days and form our lives. They link us together socially and allow us to bring past and present into relative coherence.^{xxvi}

I think of my own research as analyses of various types of cultural narratives. Sometimes these cultural narratives are oral histories relayed to me in narrative form over the course of an interview, sometimes they are literally in narrative structure, i.e. works of film or literature, and other times they are online videos in which a prominent content creator constructs a new social or political narrative about food, eating, sex, or gender. As a researcher, I have always been compelled by the analysis of stories and how these stories sway or influence a broader culture. To understand the driving narratives presented in this project requires analysis of many different types of texts, images, discourses, and personal histories.

In the anthology referenced above, another cultural studies scholar discusses how the study of narratives as method helps link broader cultural stories to our own personal stories. She writes,

The world is intelligible because we can situate it within a story. We are intelligible because we can turn the multiple events of our lives into stories. In this respect, existing stories, whether in literary or cultural forms, or underwriting social or scientific theories, become resources to use for social actors to construct their own stories.^{xxvii}

The foreword to this project helps link my research questions to my personal experience, thus linking my story to broader cultural stories about the queer-vegan phenomenon. As a nonfiction writer, and as a literary researcher prior to this undertaking, this is one primary reason why I view many cultural artifacts and phenomena as “stories,” and choose to interrogate them as such.

I will now spend some time detailing the guiding questions for each Part of this project and address the specific methods I chose to help answer them. Some of my guiding research questions for Part I include: In what ways does vegan food legitimize itself in established American foodways? How do the purveyors of vegan food counter attacks on its authenticity? Does vegan food ever “pass” as non-vegan food, and what are the social and political implications of its relationship to “passing?” How does vegan food subvert cultural norms around the production, cooking, and eating of food? And how does each of these related issues contribute to vegan food’s perceived queerness? Several selections in Leer and Krogager’s anthology *Research Methods in Digital Food Studies* influenced my methodological decisions for this work. In this anthology, the piece, “Fieldwork in Online Foodscapes: How to bring an ethnographic approach to studies of digital food and digital eating,” informed my understanding of the difference between studying digital food and digital eating ethnographically. The authors write,

Whereas studies of digital food attend to the digitized histories, economies, and trajectories of new food items, studies of digital eating focus on altered subjectivities and the roles that eating and its digitally mediated practices play. Thus, studies of digital food focus primarily on what people eat as a result of digitized and datafied innovation and production processes, while studies of digital eating aim to understand how people eat differently (or not) when using digital technologies, platforms, and devices and the resulting information.^{xxviii}

Part I of this project is concerned primarily with the study of digital food, while Part III (the methodologies of which I will discuss at greater length below) is concerned primarily with the study of digital eating. To answer the research questions for Part I listed above requires analysis of online news, vegan foods and products popularized and promoted by social media influencers,

and contentious online rhetoric about (vegan) food's authenticity of lack thereof. This required that I cite many popular journals like *Business Insider* or *Men's Health* to grapple with the ways in which common ideas about vegan food and nutrition are circulated to the general public. The study of actual food, food products, innovations in vegan food analogues, and how these are marketed and promoted in restaurants, in the news, and in online cultural spaces distinguishes Part I from Part III which is focused on the study of distinct online food cultures, niche eating styles, and how these intersect with gender and sexual ideologies and politics. Both of these Parts, however, employ digital ethnography, or, "the detailed inductive investigation of a phenomenon"^{xxix} online.

To frame Part I's ethnographic study I bring in several prominent cultural theorists including Gramsci (to situate vegan food in a broader food "hegemony"), Bourdieu (as I analyze the hierarchy of taste and distinction of animal- vs. plant-based foods), and several queer theorists—Sara Ahmed, Jose Esteban Munoz, and Judith Butler—to help me argue that vegan food's position in the American foodscape is fundamentally queer. Part I also includes a discussion of American "food nationalism," and to this conversation I bring several American Studies authors—Philip Deloria, Erika Lee, and Margot Canaday, to name a few—who have each, in their respective works, argued that American nationalism is primarily defined along racial, sexual, and class lines. I argue that this is true for food nationalism as well. Lastly, menu analysis of several well-known vegan restaurants in the US serves as evidence of how the purveyors of vegan food must qualify its presence in various ways in order to succeed in a Western meat-centric culture. The "rhetorics of naming," as I call it, determine how a consumer perceives vegan food in a restaurant experience; and these rhetorics sometimes resist normative dining experiences in the US, and at other times work within the food industry's existing power structures. The primary aim

of Part I is to show readers what vegan food must do, or how it must perform—socially, culturally, politically, and even legally—in order to succeed in a culture that is largely hostile to vegan food. I make the case that vegan food’s struggle to succeed—in whatever form “success” may take—is inherently queer.

Part II’s methods involve literary and film analysis exclusively. I have chosen four works among many that showcase queer-vegan and/or queer-animal relationships and ontologies. These works include two films: *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991) and *Kanarie* (2018), as well as two novels: *The Well of Loneliness* and *Paul Takes the Form of a Mortal Girl*. Though there were several others works I read with these themes (Alexander Chee’s *Edinburgh*, Patricia Highsmith’s *The Price of Salt*, and one television series on Netflix come to mind) I chose the four listed above because they were produced in different time periods, different places, and take up very different themes, historical events, and political issues. These four works differ greatly in style, genre, period, and region, and yet each of them is linked by queer veganism or queer animality, which is significant to my study. It is important to think of these works relationally, I argue, because it supports the idea that queerness, animality, and veganism are ontologically linked at both the individual and cultural levels. I also highlighted these four works because doing so provided enough material to support my claims without bogging down the reader with too many disparate works to consider in one chapter. However, to be sure, a future project could expand Part II into an anthology of articles on queer-vegan themes in film and literature—one that includes dozens of potential works.

I want to take a moment here to pause and discuss “ontology” as an appropriate framework for my research. As I note in several places throughout the dissertation, I am interested in (and framing my research as) ontology because I am discussing inherent—subconscious, unconscious,

acquired at birth and/or acquired inadvertently or culturally—those traits, cultural logics, beliefs, or behaviors that link the Queer, writ large, to the Animal. American Studies scholar Mel Y. Chen provided my jumping point for this thinking, effectively opening my eyes to the unseen ways in which queerness and animality are related. But since reading their work I have encountered this term *ontology* in a number of works by queer theorists. From my reading, *ontology*, in queer theory, can be deployed to either mean, *the nature of*, or to mean *the beginning of* (and in some cases these are the same thing). In my work, when I deploy the term ontology I mean strictly *the nature of (a) being*, not because I think beginnings of many types do not warrant careful consideration, but because beginnings begin in myriad ways. A queer beginning could mean “born this way,” as the cliché goes, or it could mean some more complex sociocultural phenomenon imbuing a person or a people with a queer dimensionality. I am less concerned with how one becomes queer, and more concerned with why queerness as it takes on so many animal textures in film, literature, popular culture, rhetoric, and so forth.

As referenced above, Part III’s methods are comprised primarily of digital ethnography of eating practices on social media—especially digital ethnography of niche eating content such as the mukbang, the carnivore diet, raw foodism, and others. I analyze YouTube eating content by popular content creators who promote or grow niche eating styles with their videos. This online “culture-making” is often facilitated by political ideologies that lead one to particular styles of eating and living. More specifically, I examine the ways in which attitudes about gender and sex influence or are influenced by one’s attitudes about eating, particularly when one or both of these attitudes could be categorized as “extreme.” As some recent scholars of digital food studies have noted, eating videos on YouTube have become increasingly “carnavalesque.”^{xxx} Videos that are designed to shock and fascinate viewers by depicting grotesque indulgence—such as mukbang

content and extreme fad diets—often operate along gendered lines, with men or masculine subjects promoting stereotypically masculine foods and ways of eating, and women promoting feminine foods and diets.^{xxxii} Much of the YouTube food scholarship focuses on sex and gender in some way, and much of this gendered eating content is created by amateur “foodies” who are responsible for making, expanding, and in some cases polarizing online cultures. As one scholar writes:

Gender norms, constructions, and performance are recurring motifs in all contributions. Besides these, politics is a significant theme and also emphasizes a democratic perspective on YouTube; the platform has empowered anyone with internet access and sufficient skills to partake in the dispersal and sharing of ordinary, amateur expertise. “Ordinary” people offer guidance and provide know-how on food and cooking-related topics, and thus, the lines between professionals, celebrities, and amateurs are increasingly indistinguishable. These amateur social media influencers are one of the most distinct categories on YouTube and they play an imperative part in generating attention for food cultures and trends.^{xxxiii}

That many scholars of digital food studies were already discussing issues of eating and gender on YouTube using ethnography and qualitative methods, meant that my project could contribute meaningfully to that conversation. Part III of *Drag Cuisines* takes up the issues stated above—the relationship between sex, gender, and eating, political ideology and extreme dieting, and the role of the amateur influencer in shaping (and making more extreme) food and eating practices. I decided to employ small-scale qualitative methods (ethnography and interviews) instead of broader-scale quantitative methods (data analysis, user metrics, etc.) because for this project I was more interested in interrogating the specific eating content, topics, politics, and rhetorics of particular users, rather than studying the demographic make-up of such content, the hard numbers of users creating these types of content, or the platform’s algorithms. While I think a study of YouTube’s algorithms and how these contribute to niche online culture-making is fascinating, these methods were outside the scope of this particular project.

Part III’s digital ethnography of eating practices is supplemented by oral histories conducted with self-identified queer vegans and vegetarians living in the greater Indianapolis area.

Indianapolis is a city ripe for queer vegan cultural analysis because it is home to ten or more fully-vegan restaurants, food trucks, and catering businesses, as well as dozens more vegan-friendly businesses. Indianapolis is home to several vegan and vegetarian meet-up groups, including at least one group that holds vegan potlucks for LGBTQ+-identified people exclusively. My partner and I attended one such potluck only weeks before the lockdown imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, and as a result, I was later able to collect oral histories from queer vegan people who had attended.

Additionally, networks of queer and vegan people in Indianapolis are interconnected via online social groups. Two online groups in particular play a central role in the organization of queer and/or vegan meet-ups and events: Queering Indy and the Indianapolis Vegetarian and Vegan Meet-up Group, each with several thousand members on Facebook. It was in these two groups that I recruited nearly all of the participants for the oral histories section of Part III.

Lastly, Indianapolis served as an appropriate research site because its size, political make-up, cost of living, and urban design is similar to that of other “flyover” cities of its size in the Midwest. Cities like St. Louis, Cincinnati, Columbus, Detroit, Milwaukee, Louisville, Pittsburgh, and others have seen upticks in all-vegan and vegan-friendly businesses in the last 10-15 years; thus, in future research queer vegan trends happening in Indianapolis could be extrapolated (or studied comparatively) to these and other locations in the Midwest region.

In addition to the digital ethnography of social media content in Part III, I also conducted interviews with self-described queer vegans and vegetarians to collect oral histories about their eating habits and relationships to animals. Below is a detailed explanation of how these interviews were conducted and the IRB protocols I submitted beforehand.

First, I submitted an exemption request with the IRB because, while I was asking participants about sensitive topics (sexual and gender identity, relationship to food and animals, childhood memories, and so forth), I chose to keep all of my participants anonymous. I made this decision in order to protect my research participants from being inadvertently "outed," and so that they knew they could speak about sensitive topics like gender and sexuality without fear of having their names published. The anonymous nature of the interviews and the fact that I kept all of the information stored on a password-protected computer (and promised to destroy the interviews after publication) meant that I qualified for exempt status with the IRB. After submitting a detailed proposal of my interview methods, the IRB approved my exemption.

In total, I conducted 11 interviews with queer vegans and vegetarians in the Indianapolis area. I chose only to recruit participants from Indianapolis because I was aware of several city-wide online groups for vegans or LGBTQ+-identified people in this area. I primarily used these groups as a place to recruit participants. I posted a call-out that briefly explained the nature of the project and the types of questions that would be asked during interviews, and I described the types of participants that I was interested in speaking with (individuals who identify as *both* vegan, vegetarian, or plant-based, *and* LGBTQ+). Those interested in participating were asked to either email me at the address provided or send me a direct message on Facebook. In a few cases I also sent interview requests directly to prominent queer vegans on social media using roughly the same call-out, but none of these received a response. Ten of the eleven participants were recruited via the social media call-out, and one participant was put in touch with me by a mutual friend who knew the nature of my research.

To conduct the interviews, I gave participants a choice between a phone call and a Zoom meeting. I also made sure that every participant understood that they could decline to answer any

question for any reason. I asked each participant approximately 20-25 questions. Some of the questions were demographic in nature and required simple, direct responses (such as, What is your gender?), but most of the questions required careful consideration on the part of participants and longer-form answers (such as, Is there any relationship between your gender and your diet? If so, please explain.). I asked about each participant's upbringing, particularly what types of foods they ate growing up, and also what types of relationships they had with animals as a child. I asked about each participant's coming-out process--at what age this occurred (if it had), how their coming-out was received by their friends and family, and so forth. And I asked each participant how they came to know themselves as queer--did they have LGBTQ+ friends growing up, or at what age they became aware that LGBTQ+ people existed. I often asked multiple follow-up questions about each participant's responses.

I logged each response by making notes while each participant told their story. Occasionally I would ask a participant to pause if I wanted to write down their exact wording for a possible quote in the final project. Each of these interviews took approximately one hour to conduct. I currently still have all of the interview materials stored on a password-protected computer, but will delete those files once *Drag Cuisines* is complete and pending publication.

My research findings were qualitative rather than quantitative. The benefit of these interviews is in seeing how others understand the relationship between queerness and veganism in their own individual lives. These oral histories help to elucidate how individual people became queer and became vegan, and draw connections between these two personal processes. The limitations of these interviews is that one cannot draw broader demographic conclusions about who queer vegans are, or determine whether the thoughts, feelings, and attitudes documented in this project would be present for a majority of participants on a larger scale. Because these

interviews were only conducted in a single city, one can also not make regional comparisons. In order to extrapolate quantitative data from these types of interviews I would need to conduct many more of them on a longer time frame and in different locations. Then, I may be able to answer questions about how many vegans in a given city also identify as queer, the myriad reasons why queer people adopt a vegan lifestyle, or the racial diversity of queer vegans, for example.

I chose to include oral histories as a primary methodology because of the power of oral histories to convey the unraveling of complex social phenomena over the course of an individual life or experience.^{xxxiii} Oral histories contain rich detail which allows them to answer the “why” and “how” much better than raw data or quantitative work. Where surveys may be able to better answer questions about who large swaths of the vegan population are, surveys would not necessarily provide cause and effect, or link certain life events to other life events. For example, the interviews I conducted showed that the participants themselves believed that their lack of queer friendships and community growing up may have led them to seek out friendships with nonhuman animals. In order to understand this link, one must dig deeper into individual human experience and perspective rather than looking more broadly at population trends.

It is for this reason and many others like it that I chose to use only qualitative methods. Because my primary research question, from which all other questions flowed—How are queerness, animality, and veganism ontologically linked, and where can this link be seen?—required deep theoretical consideration and analysis, and determined *where* my research would take me. The places where I found the queer-vegan phenomenon were in several works of film and literature, online, in my own experiences, and in eating practices and food itself. This mean that I would need to analyze works of film and literature, analyze social media content, interrogate social norms and question food categories, and interrogate my own experiences and the experiences of

other queer vegans. I allowed my methodological choices to flow naturally from my own curiosity (to some degree) rather than trying to conduct this research within the confines of one fixed set of disciplinary methods.

Chapters

In “Part 1: Food in Drag: Vegan Food and the Politics of Performance,” I will argue that vegan cuisine represents a type of “queer food culture,” in three key ways. First, vegan food troubles established food ontologies, by complicating and changing the terms of food categorization. And the troubling of fundamental categories is, I argue, a hallmark of queer culture and queer performativity. To be queer is to trouble the strict categorical lines of “man,” “woman,” “sexual,” “family,” and the like. Just as Monique Wittig famously asked, “Is a lesbian a woman?,” prominent food critics (and average food eaters) have regularly asked, “Is vegan food even food?,” or more pointedly at specific dishes, “What is this made out of?,” as our common, simplistic understandings of “vegetable,” “grain,” or “meat,” often don’t suffice to describe vegan ingredients or vegan culinary innovation. The Impossible Burger (and other products like it) are not so easily categorized as, say, bacon or broccoli. Vegan foods—whether faux meat, cashew cheese, pasta primavera, or nutritional yeast—often force people to reconsider the nature of food—that is, what food can be made out of, how it can be made, and what food is, fundamentally.

Second, vegan food must continually address attacks leveled against its authenticity. Any vegan will concur: The presence of vegan food warrants an explanation. Why the Beyond bratwurst instead of a real one? Don’t you get tired of eating tofu and fake meat? How do you stay full and satiated eating like a rabbit? And the timeless classic, Where do you get your protein? While it may be difficult for people to categorize vegan food by ingredient or preparation, mainstream US culture has found it remarkably easy to categorize plant-based food as simply

“fake,” and animal-based foods as “real.” This means that legitimizing vegan food to the average American is a tricky project. Americans love meat and eating meat. This means that foods like salad may be considered real food (that is, as a complement to meat dishes), but will never be the center of the plate as animal flesh is. Conversely, seitan tenders may look, feel, and taste just as good as chicken tenders, but these are “fake,” and therefore not awarded the levels of class and distinction reserved for the animal-based counterpart.

Queer people (as well as other marginalized groups) understand the authenticity dilemma all too well. Questions about virginity, family, marriage, sex, and intimacy are couched in heteronormative terms. Because sex is often assumed to mean penile-vaginal penetration, for instance, other (queer) forms of sex don’t count as “real” sex. Lesbianism is explained away as women not having met a “real” man. Transgender people must assert the legitimacy of their gender identities. The Real and the Fake—that is, the authenticity dilemma—has always plagued queer people and culture, just as it plagues alternative foods.

And third, vegan cuisine subverts the current American hegemonic order of food and eating, which centers meat on the plate and privileges (in various ways) the meat eater. Veganism is a moral and political philosophy, and to serve or eat vegan food is a subversive political act. Most people who call themselves vegans understand this intimately. Whether one adopts a vegan lifestyle for environmental reasons, health reasons, or for the animals, it is understood that veganism is a conscious political act, chosen daily in opposition to the violent and destructive status quo. Not only has the so-called Standard American Diet made Americans increasingly unhealthy, it is also responsible for numerous humanitarian crises—everything from the destruction of rainforests, species extinction, indigenous genocide, water and air pollution, and of course, the mass suffering of nonhuman animals.

Each of these—the disruption of established ontology, the creation of a new authenticity, and the commitment to subversion of the status quo—are also hallmarks of queer culture and history. Queer people have struggled and still struggle with an oppressive and pervasive dominant culture in these key ways, which, I argue, means that the queer psyche is always already primed for other types of “reordering.”

Further, those who opt for vegan entrees are participating in a type of queer eating practice with its own rich set of subversive performances, and disidentification with meat-centric Western food nationalism. The queer performativity of vegan food—or, the ways in which vegan food postures as or passes for animal-based food—as well as the vegan eater’s disidentification with Western food hegemony also makes vegan food and eating queer.

In “Part 2: ‘The homosexual was now a species’: Veganism and Animality in Queer Literature and Film,” I will examine many works in which a queer protagonist develops intimate relationships with nonhuman animals. I argue that the propensity for queer people to develop these relationships is rooted in queer isolation and disidentification, queer affect, and what cultural theorist Mel Chen terms “queer animality.”^{xxxiv} In other words, the queer individual’s early isolation from others like themselves, their vulnerable affect or emotional landscape that develops as a result, and/or the innate animality or nonhumanness of queerness can often result in the individual turning to the nonhuman animal for companionship.

I also argue that the queer-animal relationship is a precursor to queer veganism. This is because veganism, at its roots, is an ethical movement that seeks to reduce harm done to nonhuman animals in modern food, clothing, and entertainment industries. Thus, developing close personal relationships with nonhuman animals inevitably leads some queer people to choose a lifestyle that avoids harming them unnecessarily. In my criticism of queer literature and film, it is less

significant to analyze what particular characters eat or wear, and more significant to analyze whether or not they are bonding with animals more closely than they are bonding with human beings, and whether or not this bond leads them to act on behalf of the animal's welfare.

This proto-vegan praxis can be observed in a number of works with queer characters: *The Silence of the Lambs*, *Kanarie*, Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness*, and others. I have chosen these works, not because they are linked by period, genre, author, or style, but because each of them depicts queer animality, and the proto-vegan praxis that each character adopts as a result. This "praxis" can take many forms, but essentially boils down to some type of advocacy for animals. Even in a queer "villain" like Buffalo Bill—a character that many critics have come to see as evidence of queer- or transphobic bias on the part of the film makers—one can clearly see his devotion to the animals he keeps in stark contrast to the blatant disregard (perhaps even disdain) he harbors for the human beings he kills. While no critic would call Buffalo Bill a vegan, one can see that his deep regard for animal life is something that motivates him to take certain actions on their behalf throughout the film.

Sometimes this praxis is simply a form of speaking up, as in the film *Kanarie*, in which the queer protagonist, Johan, hears a cow suffering in the distance, demands that his peers respect the animal's life by not joking about it, and then later appropriates this cow's suffering as a psychic stand-in for his own. His queerness, and the emotional disturbance he feels at the fact of his queerness, is experienced as animality and depicted in animal terms. Johan, in his hallucinations, attempts to kill the cow—to put it out of its misery—just as he wishes he could escape the misery rooted in his sexuality.

While analyzing these and other examples in Part II, I will also argue for the utility of queer veganism as a theoretical lens. Reading works through a queer vegan framework allows one to see

the intimate relationships between animals and queer characters in many works of queer film and literature.

In “Part III: Mukbang Micro-celebrities: Social Media and Oral Histories as Queer Vegan Assemblage,” I investigate queer vegan trends in online social media content, as well as in public places like restaurants, LGBTQ+ groups, and interviews with queer vegan individuals. In the process, I argue that these (casual) culture-making institutions function as a queer vegan assemblage. I examine many YouTube channels and Instagram accounts that are in some way navigating both queerness and veganism. Some content creators focus on lesbian culture and relationships but also happen to be vegan. Others focus their content on promoting veganism but identify as LGBTQ+ in some way themselves. Few of these accounts speak explicitly about the connections (if they feel there is any) between queerness and veganism or animal rights. These social media accounts contribute to what I am calling queer vegan “culture making,” and show how the phenomenon of queer veganism does not occur in a vacuum, but is part of a broader system of communities with established norms and guidelines, i.e. an assemblage.

Part III also explores many themes tangential or opposite to queer vegan culture making, such as the rise of an eco-fascist raw carnivore movement that employs appeals to human nature to justify the killing of animals, the eating of uncooked flesh and animal byproducts, and the assertion of white supremacy and compulsory heterosexuality. Interestingly these eco-fascist raw carnivores and a subset of eco-fascist raw vegans share many social and political beliefs due to the cultural logic (nature is king) underpinning each respective belief system. And while this logic leads each of these groups to reach similar conclusions about social systems and politics, it has led them to reach very different conclusions about the ideal human diet. Each group promotes raw eating, but one insists that raw plants are ideal for optimizing human health, and the other insists

that eating raw animal flesh is optimal. Cooking, though, both groups agree, is at best a frivolous man-made process, and at worst a toxic practice that makes food carcinogenic and disease-inducing. I interrogate these disturbing belief systems further in Part III, and ask what the psychic connection may be between extreme forms of eating and violent fascist belief systems.

Drag Cuisines constitutes an academic dive into understudied niche food and sexual cultures. This work elucidates the newer and nuanced cultural practices embedded into a centuries-old ethical philosophy, and begins to answer the following questions: Who are vegans in the 21st century? In what ways is veganism parallel to or influencing adjacent social justice movements? What is the innate connection between queerness and animality that leads some to a vegan philosophy? And, is veganism now the predominant “queer food” culture? This project also threads the new and seemingly disparate fields of animal studies, queer theory, and food studies, linking new scholarship with established critical theory and literature to show how new cultures are birthed online, under late capitalism, and/or among different groups with uncovered historical relationships.

PART I: FOOD IN DRAG: VEGAN FOOD AND THE POLITICS OF PERFORMANCE

Popular publications like *Eater Magazine*, *Huffington Post*, and *Slate* have attempted to answer the question, “What is queer food?” In 2002, *Slate*’s David Mehnert argued that queer food is essentially flamboyant food. “All the highballs of the 1940s and 1950s are now queer,” Mehnert writes, “especially anything served with tiny umbrellas or in hollowed-out coconuts. Queer, too, is everything that grew out of the luau or “Tiki” aesthetic, with all those glorious maraschino colors not found in nature.”^{xxxv} For Mehnert, raw food or “natural” food cannot be queer because it lacks excessive décor—it isn’t ostentatious enough to be queer. Foods with effeminate names such as “Pineapple Betty,” or “Green Goddess” are queer by virtue of this alone. And all foods that are literally flaming—Cherries Jubilee, Bananas Foster—are also metaphorically flaming.^{xxxvi} Mehnert’s “nine principles of queer food” are not so much a list of criteria that certain foods must meet in order to be considered queer, but rather a list of nine or so types of food that look or sound a little gay. Mehnert’s piece reads like a long joke, in which queerness—in food or in people—is the punch line.

Mehnert’s use of queerness is rooted in the subversion of masculine norms. Therefore, steak, which everyone knows is the most masculine of foods, is not queer unless it is altered into a more effeminate version of itself. “Steak Diane” is queer. Skirt steak is queer.^{xxxvii} Does it follow, then, that foods traditionally associated with femininity—salads, smoothies, and “diet foods” like yogurt—are also queer? It appears that, by this criteria, foods meant for women are not queer. It is only when foods meant for men are made feminine (read: silly, or “campy”) that they can be called queer.

Last year, *Eater*'s Kyle Fitzpatrick dug a bit deeper into this question when he acknowledged the “radical roots” of the word “queer” to mean “a subversion and redefinition of all aspects of society—including restaurant dining”^{xxxviii} For Fitzpatrick, queer food should change how a patron at a restaurant experiences eating. Queer food is made by queer people, but is also made from unlikely ingredients that shouldn't work together but do.^{xxxix} Queer food is about building community and exploring identity in the act of forging new cooking and dining practices. Queer food is, in part, the experimental aspect of American cuisine that has always been a feature, but rarely been acknowledged in western food cultures. Thus, queer food isn't simply about using rainbow icing for cupcakes or sprinkling edible glitter on the plate (or any other act of flamboyance in cooking); queer food is food that conveys a politics of struggle in its reinvention of ordinary American cuisine.^{xl}

Below, I will propose my own criteria for queer food so as to shape a cohesive understanding of which foods are queer and why, and how these foods are shaping a unique culinary culture. My criteria for queer food follows the myriad theoretical meanings of the word queer (detailed in the introduction and revisited later in this chapter). These criteria are:

First, queer food troubles established food ontologies. Just as the word “queer” as prefix or qualifier implies a newness, strangeness, or deviance in gender or sexuality—for example, “queer woman” connotes a difference in womanhood or deviation from expected womanhood—so too does queer food challenge expected food norms and/or what qualifies as food. Queer food also challenges food categories. One can think of *ontology*, not only as the *nature of being*, but also as a set of properties by which types and categories are constructed^{xli}. Queer food breaks down and breaks the rules of existing food categories such as “meat,” “dairy,” “vegetable,” “grain,” “fruit,” and so forth. Queer food challenges what qualifies as meat, or vegetable, or fruit (or, what

qualifies as breakfast, lunch, or dinner), by changing the properties—or the ingredients—with which cuisine is constructed.

Second, queer food must assert its authenticity and/or counter attacks on its authenticity. One hallmark of the queer individual's experience is the need to assert one's identity, gender, and sexual practices as “real” and “natural” in the face of innumerable cultural claims to the contrary. This criteria follows from the first criteria. Because queerness—whether in food, sex, or gender—challenges established ontologies, categories, and norms, queerness must face resistance to its (perceived) new or deviant way of being. It is the subaltern or the marginal within a pervasive hegemonic food culture and must claim that it has a right to exist by way of asserting its legitimacy as food. Further, queer food's struggle for authenticity is a political endeavor with high stakes. In the cultural logic of western hegemonic food nationalism, that which is normal is authentic, and that which is authentic is superior and right. Far from simply being defined as silly, campy, or flamboyant (though it can be that too), there are devastating and violent consequences for queer food's failure to be viewed as authentic or legitimate.

And third, queer food is part of a subversive politics. It is food that challenges hegemonic food practices in its performativity as food, in how it is named, branded, produced, or marketed, and often simply by existing. This subversion is not accidental but deliberate. The people who make queer food are aware of how normative culinary practices are destructive and violent, particularly in the production of animal-based foods that require violence and exploitation in the process of production. According to the United States Department of Agriculture, over 9 billion animals were killed for food production in 2020 in the United States alone.^{xlii} But worse than the extraordinary number of animals killed for meat, dairy, and other animal-derived foods is how animals are treated on industrial farms. Animals raised in CAFOs (Confined Animal Feeding

Operations) are kept in crowded, inhumane, and unsanitary conditions. Many poultry raised in CAFOs, for instance, live their entire lives in their own excrement, crowded among other birds, and may never see sunlight or walk freely on grass as long as they are alive.^{xliii} The human beings working in industrial farms and slaughterhouses are also treated cruelly—many are undocumented immigrant workers who make less than the national minimum wage, and are routinely exposed to dangerous, fast-paced slaughter practices with no possibility for workers’ compensation, disability leave, or access to healthcare.^{xliv} It is these types of widespread inhumane food production practices that queer food purveyors oppose and attempt to counteract. Queer food production, by contrast, may include sourcing foods locally, from family-run farms, opposing animal-based foods that require violence, and making sure that ingredients are organic and fair trade, to name a few. Queer food can be seen as one way of striving to restore parity in a vast power imbalance in American culinary consumerism.

So, what types of foods meet all of the above criteria? In this chapter, I will argue that vegan cuisine can be considered queer food because it troubles established food ontologies, must successfully counter frequent attacks on its authenticity, and is part of a subversive political movement invested in human and nonhuman animal rights. Further, vegan food not only conveys a politics of struggle—these foods *themselves* struggle. Vegan food struggles against normative notions of what constitutes a proper diet, it struggles against classist notions of taste and distinction, it struggles to “pass” in taste and name, and it struggles to be taken seriously as food at all. Furthermore, the people who make vegan food struggle to prove that vegan cuisine deserves a place at the table and should be a hallmark of the culinary world. That animal products, particularly animal flesh, are centered and privileged on the American plate, means that vegan foods begin at a disadvantage—in restaurants, on menus, and at family picnics—because they omit

flesh. I will end this chapter with a discussion of American “food nationalism,” and outline why vegans and vegan chefs are invested in resisting this food nationalism by promoting plant-based options.

How can food be queer?

“Queer,” as many scholars, activists, and members of the LGBTQ community would have it, is a word that resist simple definition. Queer theorist Sara Ahmed loosely defines queer as “what is ‘oblique’ or ‘off line.’”^{xlv} The first dictionary definition of queer says “strange or odd”^{xlvi} Michael O’Rourke has written that queerness is characterized by its “undefinability,” “provisionality,” and “openness.”^{xlvii} One activist leaflet distributed at NYC Pride in 1990 (the year of the founding of queer theory, some argue)^{xlviii} posits that all queer people, by their very existence, are “rebellious”: “[Being queer] means everyday fighting oppression; homophobia, racism, misogyny, the bigotry of religious hypocrites and our own self-hatred. (We have been carefully taught to hate ourselves.)”^{xlix} As many scholars of queer theory have pointed out, “queer” was once a derogatory term used to dehumanize lesbian, gay, intersex, and transgender people, but has since been reclaimed by these groups to empower and promote equal rights for gender and sexual minorities.¹ “Queer” is a word that is nothing if not contested and contentious. Today, in the academy, in activist circles, and in LGBTQ+ organizations, “queer” is a term used affirmatively. Those who consider themselves to be queer are often proud of this fact and build community with others around their shared queerness.

My intention is not to provide a rigid definition of the word “queer,” nor to gate-keep who or what can be called queer. I am choosing to focus on ontology, authenticity, and subversion, not because these three concepts exclusively operate in the realm of queerness, nor because queerness can be defined or grappled with solely in relationship to these three concepts; I’ve chosen these

concepts to guide my criteria of queer food (and queerness generally) because they are each expansive enough to apply in theory, activism, and in the lived daily realities of queer people. Nearly every queer person or group struggles with, to varying degrees, their ontology (or their identity, or way of being), the authenticity of their gender and/or sexuality (or whether or not, their gender and/or sexuality are accepted as “real” by their community or those around them), and with cultural norms repeatedly bearing the message that to be queer is to be wrong, immoral, or inauthentic (thus, queer people, consciously or not, engage in acts of subversion). Vegan food, I argue, can be characterized in some of the same key ways that queerness is characterized.

Lest any reader argue that I am too readily paralleling the disparate categories of food with sex and gender, I will note here that I am not arguing that food—as it arrives, inert and prepared, on the plate—perceives, lives, or suffers as queer human beings do. But I am certainly arguing that the animals abused and slaughtered to procure nonvegan foods (that is, hegemonic foods) perceive, live, and suffer, and they are partly why this project is important to consider. (I will expound upon how nonhuman animals are categorically queer in Part II). Secondly, as many food critics and feminist scholars have noted, food, cooking, and eating are highly gendered, sexualized, and sensualized aspects of human life. Feminist food critic Elspeth Probyn, for instance, elaborates on Pierre Bourdieu’s discussion of gendered eating: “The body as *habitus* is the demonstration of the position that the individual occupies within social structures. The ways we eat, act, perceive, feel, and think are then incorporations, leading Bourdieu to argue that ‘one can begin to map out a universe of class bodies, which...tends to reproduce in its specific logic the universe of social structure.’ The body that eats is in the end eaten by the overdeterminations of culture.”^{li} In other words, eating and cooking practices, like all cultural practices incorporated into a *habitus*, are informed and structured by the individual’s social positionality defined by class, gender, sexuality,

and/or racial distinctions. People consume and eat in gendered ways. And the ways in which people eat and consume also work to reify a gendered habitus.

Vegetarian food critic Carol Adams provides an apt example of how eating is gendered in her discussion of the cultural truism “real men eat meat.” She writes,

“It has traditionally been felt that the working man needs meat for strength. A superstition operates in this belief: in eating the muscle of strong animals, we will become strong. According to the mythology of patriarchal culture, meat promotes strength; the attributes of masculinity are achieved through eating these masculine foods. Visions of meat-eating football players, wrestlers, and boxers lumber in our brains in this equation. Though vegetarian weight lifters and athletes in other fields have demonstrated the equation to be fallacious, the myth remains: men are strong, men need to be strong, thus men need meat. The literal evocation of male power is found in the concept of meat.”^{lii}

As Adams notes, meat-eating is associated with winning. Whether men are winning a ball game, or conquering a race of people, meat will be given some of the credit. The image below is one iteration of the popular notion that meat enables men to win and thus structure our society. In one pithy bumper sticker, messages about masculinity, imperialism, manifest destiny, and meat-eating are all conflated.



Conversely, many plant-based foods are associated with femininity and failure, perhaps because plant foods are thought of as slimming (or, lacking sufficient nourishment), and also

because in times of scarcity, animal foods were reserved for men who were thought to need animal protein to build muscle.^{liii} Some animal-based foods are also associated with femininity, like dairy, perhaps because of its association with nursing and mothering.

Vegan food, in an American cultural context, degenders and regenders food and the individuals who eat vegan food. For example, the term “soy boy” has recently entered the online alt-right lexicon. *Urban Dictionary* defines “soy boy” as, “a male who completely lacks all necessary masculine qualities. This pathetic state is usually achieved by an over-indulgence of emasculating products and/or ideologies.” This term is born out of the false misconception that an over-consumption of soy (found in some vegan staples like tofu, soy milk, and tempeh) causes an increase in estrogen in the male body, resulting in gynecomastia (or “man-boobs”), decreased musculature, lower sperm counts, and decreased libido. Despite ample scientific evidence showing that the phytoestrogens in soy do not translate into mammalian estrogens in the human body (and the fact that hundreds of world-renowned, physically fit athletes follow different versions of a plant-based diet),^{liv lv} members of the alt-right and online conservatives continue to use the term “soy boy” to imply that all male vegans are effeminate and therefore must be “faggots” (or the reverse, that all effeminate men developed that way from eating too many plant-based foods).

Vegan cuisine has a unique disorienting and reorienting ability. To eat a standard American diet is to allow oneself to be oriented to a hegemonic culture rife with mythologies about the hierarchical nature of food categories, ideas about food’s role in conquest and dominance, and ideologies that promote violence against animals and violence against those paid to kill animals in our food systems. In order to adopt a vegan lifestyle, one must reorient themselves to a new way of eating that brings with it new messages about gender, sexuality, violence, compassion, and subversion—new ways of being.

Troubling Food Ontologies

As theorists of classification systems have noted, “To classify is human.”^{lvi} Classification can be defined as “a spatial, temporal, or spatio-temporal segmentation of the world,” and a “classification system” is a set of literal or metaphorical boxes “into which things can be put to then do some kind of work—bureaucratic or knowledge production.”^{lvii} The categories making up classification systems should be “mutually exclusive,”—that is, clearly demarcated and separated—as well as complete and thorough.^{lviii} But rarely do real-world classification systems live up to these standards. People routinely ignore and bend the rules of systems of categorization, but the systems themselves remain as a prescriptive for world-ordering and power production—that is, power is imparted and produced, in part, through systems of classification that reify normative hierarchies.

Here, I am interested in the ways in which gender and food, respectively, are classified and categorized, and how Queerness—or that which is slant, oblique, a reversal of, or outside of a categorical demarcation—disrupts the ontological project of classification and undermines the structures of power enacted (separately but parallel) in food and gender. Judith Butler (among many others) has written extensively about how the queer subject—the person or body that steps outside of normative sexual and gender categories—exposes these categories to be purely superficial, a lie. She writes, “What happens to the subject and to the stability of gender categories when the epistemic regime of presumptive heterosexuality is unmasked as that which produces and reifies these ostensible categories of ontology?”^{lix} Food categories, too, are ostensible. And part of this project involves “unmasking” carnism, or the violent ideology that normalizes meat-eating and empowers the meat-eater.

This task requires me to use the word “queer,” not just in relationship to marginalized individuals and groups, but in relationship to food, a move which could be construed as

problematic. But if one considers the ways in which “queer” has been used historically to describe wide arrays of difference (such as racial difference),^{lx} is being used in recent theory to discuss ecology and animality,^{lxi} and if one considers the ways in which food and eating have been and are gendered and sexualized,^{lxii} then it is not such a theoretical leap to apply “queer” to food or to describe food as queer.

Food, like all else, is subject to classificatory regimes. Food is classified, typed, and organized in myriad ways, including but not limited to: By ingredient (e.g. meat, fish, vegetable, fruit, grain, dairy, spice—each of which contains countless subtypes); By region (e.g. Southern food, East Coast food, Caribbean food); By ethnicity (e.g. soul food, Thai food, Indo-Chinese food); By means of preparation (e.g. fried, baked, braised, boiled); By nutritional composition (e.g. low-fat, high-protein, junk food, low-carb); The list goes on. The need to classify food or anything else is rooted in the need to understand the object or individual’s *nature of being*.^{lxiii} To even begin to understand what food is we must first “sort it out,”^{lxiv} label it, and distinguish it by type and kind. This categorization also helps us understand what is not edible or not considered to be food.

This categorization of food is a type of ontological project. In order to understand the *nature of food’s being* we must first classify it, that is, catalog it according to all of its minute details. And, as Susan Leigh Star and Geoffrey Bowker note, the project of classification (and also of deconstructing classifications) necessarily involves privileging or valorizing one point of view while diminishing or silencing another.^{lxv} That all expressly plant-based foods, by their very existence, destabilize the classificatory rigidity of food exposes the ways in which Western food classification is an invisible exertion of power meant to maintain separate categories such as “meat” and “vegetable” in order to privilege one over another. “Meat,” by its very rigid (though often implicit) classification as “of an animal” or “of flesh” (at least in an American context) sits

at the top of a food hierarchy marked by tradition, taste, distinction, and nutrition. That nothing from the plant kingdom may enter into the category of “meat,” means that plant-based foods, even when performing as meat, do not receive the levels of taste and distinction reserved for meat that is of an animal.

This unquestioned project of American food classification, as with any project of classification, has consequences. That meat (classified and categorized as being derived from animal flesh) has for centuries sat at the privileged center of the American diet means that Americans feel entitled to having animal flesh at most if not every meal. Food historian Maureen Ogle writes of these consequences,

“That sense of entitlement is a crucial element of the history of meat in America. Price hikes as small as a penny a pound have inspired Americans to riot, trash butcher shops, and launch national meat boycotts. We Americans want what we want, but we rarely ponder the actual price or the irrationality of our desires. We demand cheap hamburger, but we don’t want the factory farms that make it possible. We want four-bedroom McMansions out in the semirural suburban fringe, but we raise hell when we sniff the presence of the nearby hog farm that provides affordable bacon. We want packages of precooked chicken and microwaveable sausages—and family farms, too.”^{lxvi}

Meat’s animal-derived classification combined with its privileged status at the center of the American plate means that American food systems have been structured to fulfill the pervasive entitlement to animal flesh; and as countless scientists and food scholars have noted, the meat-centered structuring of our food institutions has devastating consequences for our planet, the individual animals killed to make meat, the workers involved in the slaughter of animals, and on our own health and longevity.^{lxvii} Animal agriculture is responsible for more greenhouse gas emissions than the entire global transportation sector,^{lxviii} it is the leading cause of water and land use,^{lxix lxx} and it contributes more than any other industry to species loss, loss of biodiversity, and deforestation.^{lxxi}

Vegan food intervenes in this ontological project of categorization (and its consequences) and troubles what we understand meat to be (or accept as meat), which, in part, makes it queer. Further, this queer intervention in food classification comes with its own set of outcomes and consequences that comprise one aspect of a moral and ethical agenda—namely, offsetting the dire environmental consequences of a meatcentric culture, as well as reducing violence committed against animals and human beings in our current meat production systems. At the same time that vegan food disrupts normative notions about how we name and categorize food, it also disrupts the violent status quo of food production in Western nations.

Take, for instance, the popular vegan protein seitan, or “wheat meat.” This meat is made from vital wheat gluten, the resulting flour left when whole wheat is ground finely and its protein is isolated from its fiber, starch, and carbohydrate.^{lxxii} The protein flour can be seasoned to resemble the flavors in meat and kneaded into a chewy dough reminiscent of meaty textures. After kneading, the dough can be prepared in any number of ways that animal flesh would be prepared—breaded and fried, braised, grilled, slow-cooked and pulled, and so forth. Seitan can be used to make vegan versions of chicken wings, bacon, steaks, deli-type sandwich slices, burgers—most any meat except fish, for which textures seitan is not well-suited. In many Asian cultures, seitan is not a new or expressly vegan food. The earliest uses of wheat gluten can be traced back to 6th century China, during which time it was mostly consumed by strict adherents of Buddhism.^{lxxiii} Historically, the food was sometimes used as a meat substitute, but also prepared alongside meat in soups, stews, and stir fry. It is only in an American context that seitan is primarily viewed as a vegan ingredient.

And in this American context seitan is queer. This is because, for Americans, “meat” is constituted by animal flesh or that which comes from an animal (e.g. bologna is not largely

composed of “flesh,” or muscle, but is of an animal and thus called meat). Seitan intervenes in traditional American food ontologies because it is a food categorized as X but performing as Y. Wheat is a grain, and wheat gluten is *of* a grain, and seitan—in the U.S. at least—is a meat that is of a grain. Seitan, in other words, performs a categorical leap. And categorical leaps, of many types, are a hallmark of queer performativity. Even Mehnert, for whom queerness in food is a matter of spectacle, wrote, “All food pretending to be something else is food in drag. The “tofuburger,” for example. Tofu is a fascinating substance because it takes on the qualities of whatever it is put with, whether in soup, sauces, or stir-fry. Tofu is a food that ‘passes.’”^{lxxiv} Foods like tofu and seitan—plant foods that dare to step across the meat-as-flesh line—have sparked an identity crisis in American cuisine, in which foods that can “pass” as something other than what they are begin to dismantle normative ideas of which foods are categorized as what and why.^{lxxv} And the breakdown of foods’ categorical cohesions has interesting consequences for sex and gender. How is it, for instance, that “real men eat meat” if “real men” are among those fooled by plant foods acting as meat. If one can no longer distinguish meat from vegetable then what effect does this have on our highly gendered approaches to eating and cooking?

Applying the theory of drag, passing, and impersonation to food warrants a deeper discussion of these terms. After all, these terms (and the practices and performances they elicit) are sites of political and theoretical contestation—in the places where one “does” drag, in our political arenas, and in academia. Judith Butler writes,

Drag is not an imitation or a copy of some prior and true gender...Drag is not the putting on of a gender that belongs properly to some other group, i.e. an act of expropriation or appropriation that assumes that gender is the rightful property of sex, that “masculine” belongs to “male” and “feminine” belongs to “female.” There is no “proper” gender, a gender proper to one sex rather than another, which is in some sense that sex’s cultural property. Where that notion of the “proper” operates, it is always and only *improperly* installed as the effect of a compulsory system. Drag constitutes the mundane way in which genders are appropriated,

theatricalized, worn, and done; it implies that all gendering is a kind of impersonation and approximation. If this is true, it seems, there is no original or primary that drag imitates, but gender is a kind of imitation for which there is no original.^{lxxvi}

So, when one refers to a tofu burger as a “food in drag” as Mehnert does, could one (or should one) apply Butler’s notions of mundane and proper categories to food? Does “food in drag” call attention to the flimsiness and artificiality of “proper” (i.e. non-vegan, for my purposes here) food categories? I argue, yes, because plant-based burgers (and other such “analogues” to foods traditionally made with meat) are no less a burger than one made with flesh. Plant-based burgers are “food in drag” because they complicate long-held and seemingly rigid categories of food, just as female impersonators reveal the artifice and assumptions inherent in the idea that gender is “real” and “immutable.” In the case of food, words like “burger” act as euphemism and further remove the eater from recognizing the origins of the object—that is, the flesh’s origins in the sentient, individual animal. Tofu burgers and other such foods reveal that meat-based burgers are simply the “effect of a compulsory system,” a system that commodifies the animal and imbues the meat-based food with power and status so as to protect that commodity.

Butler has also argued that “gender is performative insofar as it is the effect of a regulatory regime of gender differences in which genders are divided and hierarchized *under constraint*.”^{lxxvii} The practice of drag—its performance—calls attention to and calls out the (constrained) performativity innate to gender and gender stability. Vegan food does similar things to (and for) taken-for-granted, meat-based dishes, which is why I, and others, are comfortable referring to it as “food in drag.” It disrupts, by its mere presence, the innate constraints placed on food categories by powerful and longstanding Western food institutions.

The investment in maintaining established food categories is so strong that in many countries animal-based meat and dairy corporations are suing plant-based food companies to gain

legal ownership of words like “meat,” “milk,” “cheese,” “dairy,” and “egg.”^{lxxviii} In October of 2014, for instance, Unilever (the parent company for Hellman’s Mayonnaise) sued the plant-based food company Hampton Creek for their mayonnaise alternative Just Mayo’s “false advertising and unfair competition.”^{lxxix} Unilever argued that “mayo” is a “literally-false name” for Hampton Creek’s product and that their mayonnaise-like alternative “caused consumer deception and serious, irreparable harm to Unilever and to the product category the industry has taken great care to define in a way consistent with consumer expectations.”^{lxxx} In this instance, the plant-based alternative poses a threat to the ontological order of food. At stake here is Unilever’s profits, tradition, and cultural dominance on the one hand, and on the other hand Hampton Creek’s profits, the reduction of animal suffering, fewer CO2 emissions, less water and ground pollution, and a no-cholesterol alternative to mayo. Who could have ever predicted that questions about which foods could be called mayonnaise would involve such a contentious legal and cultural battle? But because animal-based foods’ legitimacy is dependent on a hierarchical taxonomy of food, the naming and marketing of particular foods becomes highly political. If Unilever and other massive food corporations no longer control the specific meaning of the word “mayonnaise,” for instance, they risk being bumped from their position of privilege and power in the broader food taxonomy—and in the process, they give that power to their burgeoning plant-based counterpart.

The Impossible Burger represents another type of queer food, and one that is “passing” well enough to be widely accepted in the American foodscape. In the past three years, the soy-protein-based burger has been added to restaurant menus around the United States—at local restaurants, regional chains, and even in the international fast food chains White Castle and Burger King.^{lxxxi} Impossible Burgers are now sold at more than 30,000 restaurants around the world.^{lxxxii} According to GrubHub’s 2021 “Year in Review,” the Impossible Burger was the most ordered

item across the food delivery app, and increased its order rate by 442% over the course of that year.^{lxxxiii} Many vegans see the rise of the Impossible Burger as a breakthrough vegan intervention in American food nationalism (though they may not speak of it in those terms). That the Impossible Burger's sales have risen many times over^{lxxxiv} at popular restaurants in the United States means that the very category of “burger”—one imbued with many quintessentially American meanings—has been challenged, reinvented, and irreversibly changed. The burger, which used to be exclusively constituted by bread and ground beef, is now routinely constituted by any number of ingredients other than ground beef. A burger patty may now be comprised of soy, seitan, pea protein, quinoa, black beans, millet, a combination of vegetables, lentils, and many other plant-based ingredients. To be fair, this categorical troubling of the “burger” began long before the advent of Impossible Foods. The classic vegetarian Boca Burger hit the American food scene in 1992, and was a favorite of then-president Bill Clinton.^{lxxxv} Other vegan and vegetarian versions of the classic American burger can be traced back to early 20th century cookbooks and popular culture.^{lxxxvi} But the Impossible Burger represents a successful burger alternative—so successful that some predict that it and other products like it will replace beef's popularity in burgers of the future. The Impossible Burger has queered the concept of burger by redefining what the word “burger” can mean. More than changing the ingredients in a burger's recipe, the Impossible Burger has changed the established properties of what we know as “burger,”—that is, animal-derived meat is no longer implied in the name “burger,” and animal flesh is no longer implied in the word “meat.” Impossible Foods has developed and widely marketed uncanny, plant-derived meat, thus changing the properties (and categories of power) of “meat” and “burger.”

Vegan food's ability to trouble established food categories is queer because queerness is in part defined by a reconstitution, disidentification, or dis/orientation of or from a category

considered to be normative or hegemonic. Sara Ahmed asks her readers to think about how queer politics might involve disorientation. She writes, “The point is not whether we experience disorientation (for we will, and we do) but how such experiences can impact the orientation of bodies and spaces, which is after all about how things are ‘directed’ and how they are shaped by the lines they follow. The point is what we do with such moments of disorientation, as well as what such moments can do—whether they can offer us hope of new directions, and whether new directions are reason enough for hope.”^{lxxxvii} If, in a normative American context, the category of burger is oriented toward ground beef (and vice versa), then the [plant-based ingredient]’s orientation toward burger falls outside of established norms, thus not only creating a reconstituted burger, but also providing a new and hopeful vision of “burger,” a vision with a new set of ethics reoriented toward the reduction of harm done to animals in our food systems, more sustainable food systems, and healthier food options.

The Struggle for Authenticity

Many vegan foods—particularly those foods meant to replace or satisfy the craving of animal-based foods like meat, cheese, eggs, or honey—are referred to as fake, faux, or analogue. Examples of this type of rhetoric abound. From Tofurky (a brand of plant-based deli slices meant to call to mind turkey made from tofu), to chickpea salad (a chicken salad-like substitute made from chickpeas), vegan foods must routinely qualify their existence in relation to normative foods and products. In day-to-day life, nonvegans invested in hegemonic food culture attempt to undermine the legitimacy of vegan food by referring to these foods as “fake.” Take, for instance, chef, jetsetter, and Food Network star Andrew Zimmern’s attitude toward vegan cuisine. On the handful of occasions he has been filmed eating meat replacements he has referred to these foods as “fake food” and “repulsive” because of their fakeness.^{lxxxviii} Television personality Joe Rogan,

another outspoken anti-vegan, has criticized “fake meats” for being highly processed and thus unhealthy. On one episode of his popular podcast he said,

You know what they’re finding out from those fake meat burgers? They fed them to rats and they’re giving them liver cancer. Pull up what the study was. One of those—Beyond Meat or Impossible Meat or Not Really Meat, whatever the fuck it is. It’s weird shit. It’s mostly oils from vegetables. It’s very strange. It’s probably less healthy for you than a McDonald’s cheeseburger which is barely meat anyway.^{lxxxix}

That the Impossible Burger’s authenticity is subject to questions about its healthiness is evidence of the double standard that vegan foods face. Plenty of animal-based foods that are generally considered to be unhealthy are not called “fake,” “weird,” or “strange,” (all words that stand in for “inauthentic”). Foods like a meat-lovers pizza, or a double cheeseburger with bacon, or chili cheese fries are never considered to be strange on the basis that they are not good for you. In fact, these indulgent, meaty foods earn more credit precisely because they are bad for you. A cheeseburger with extra bacon is widely known to promote disease, yet people opt for it because it is indulgent, because it is a little over the top, and for some, this is a cool—maybe even sexy—way to eat. Meat-eaters face little to no backlash for throwing caution to the wind and eating purely for pleasure.

The “study” that Rogan is referencing is actually an article of information compiled by the site GMO Science.^{xc} The article, published in June 2019, is about Impossible Food’s struggle to get their key ingredient, soy leghemoglobin, approved by the FDA over several years. At the time of this writing, the ingredient was deemed safe by the FDA despite claims to the contrary. But it is not the Impossible Burger’s ingredient list or nutritional composition that has so upset Joe Rogan. Rather, Rogan is responding to his own vague feeling that the vegans of the world largely believe that vegan food is always superior to animal-based foods—whether in terms of nutrition, environmental impact, or animal ethics. Rogan, an avid hunter, wants to remind his listeners that vegan alternatives can be unhealthy, and therefore cannot always be superior to the standard

hegemonic American diet. Rogan, who has touted the health benefits of killing and eating wild game on numerous occasions, is staking his claim to authenticity as a hunter by attempting to delegitimize the ethical alternative.

News anchor and provocateur Piers Morgan has made similar comments in the past on Twitter and on the BBC. One of his tweets from 2019 reads, “I just ordered a sausage roll on room service. A meat one. Real meat. The [resistance to veganism] starts here.”^{xci} For Piers Morgan, bashing vegan foods is picking the low-hanging fruit. Morgan has assumed the antagonist position on the daytime talk show *Good Morning Britain*. Veganism has steadily gained in popularity in the UK over the last ten years, particularly among younger generations, but is far from displacing animal-based meats as the beloved fare. Morgan knows that a majority of his audience will back him purely on the grounds of British cultural authenticity; and everyone, vegans included, will relish in the cheap TV controversy.

People feeling defensive when confronted with the skyrocketing popularity of veganism and plant-based foods is hardly noteworthy. What is worth noting is how those who oppose veganism cite the authenticity of animal-based foods and products as a justification for continuing to consume them. In the cultural logic of western hegemonic food nationalism, that which is normal is authentic, and that which is authentic is superior and right. Implicit in the deployment of the term “fake” is the idea that whatever is fake is inferior to whatever is real. “Fake,” plant-based food is inferior (in taste, nutrition, texture, etc.) to “real” animal-based food. And “real” animal-based foods have a monopoly on authenticity by virtue of always having been a thing.

So, how do vegans and vegetarians get around this authenticity dilemma? This attitude that plant-based meat alternatives are “fake food” circulates ubiquitously and in various iterations in American culinary cultures. But the tides are changing. In order to bolster its legitimacy, vegans

often attempt to give the “fakeness” of vegan food a positive spin, using clever wordplay or advertising techniques. The name of the plant-based food company Beyond Meat™ is one example of this. Beyond Meat implies a progression past or above animal flesh. Their pea-protein-based meats may be “fake,” but in their marketing campaign these meats are beyond “real” meats, i.e. they are ethically, environmentally, and/or nutritionally superior. Or, take the popular vegan recipe for “nice cream,” or ice cream made out of frozen bananas and other fruit. Again, the change in the name implies the “fakeness” of the food but in a way that suggests moral superiority, i.e. this ice cream is “nice” or cruelty-free because it is taken from fruit instead of cows. One French vegan restaurant in New York City even serves “faux gras” on their menu. The “real” French foie gras has long been the subject of heated controversy due to the ways in which ducks are force-fed in order to produce a fatty liver, which is then fried and eaten after the animal’s slaughter. *Faux gras*, made from lentils and walnuts, again turns the inauthenticity into a positive with a clever name that is hardly different from the original.

Here, I propose that vegan food—by virtue of its “fakeness”—could be thought of as queer. Vegan communities are every day reclaiming the word “fake” in ways similar to how LGBTQ+ groups have reclaimed the word “queer.” Louisville Vegan Jerky, a small vegan meats company based in Kentucky, recently launched an ad campaign titled *The Future is Fake*. Bags of their soy-based jerky (in flavors like Sriracha Maple and Black Pepper) are featured on their ad posters in front of a futuristic outer-space backdrop. Accompanying their slogan is the hashtag “#FakeAF.” The bags of jerky are colorful, but inconspicuous; they look like bags of beef jerky, but with a bit more flare. Many who have tried the product remark on its “uncanny” similarity to meat. Others contend it isn’t meat but is delicious in its own right. Vegan meats *queer* the idea of meat by making consumers think twice (or think creatively) about what constitutes meat. Is “meat” defined

by a texture? Or is it the metallic, umami flavor that defines meat? Or is meat strictly “of a body?” Prior to widespread vegan movements of the 20th and 21st centuries, there is little documented evidence that consumers were thinking critically about what meat *was* or where it came from. It was a given: meat comes from dead animals, and there was no need for further discussion. In the same way that the presence of queer bodies, queer art, queer sex, and queer love may encourage on-lookers to call into question heterosexual institutions like marriage and the nuclear family, so too do vegan meats broaden the spectrum of what qualifies as meat, or as food more broadly.

Marino Benedetto is the transgender founder and owner of Brooklyn-based Yeah Dawg vegan hotdog company. In a February 2020 article in *Medium*, titled, “The Queer Politics of Vegan Hot Dogs,” Benedetto details the relationships between their queerness and veganism. It was early in their childhood, after a school trip to a local farm, that Benedetto began to feel kinship with the animals there. “I came home and I asked my mom, ‘When we eat chicken, this is what we’re actually eating?’ Because I finally saw a real life chicken,” explains Benedetto. “I just remember it hit me that what I was eating was a dead life. And that it was wrong.”^{xcii}

Benedetto’s plant-based version of a hot dog emphasizes the plants, unlike many corporate vegan meat companies. His “dawgs” are made primarily from root vegetables, legumes, and sunflower seeds, which give the hot dog fat and protein. The YeahDawg alternative brings, not only flavor and pleasure to the experience of hot dog eating, but also nutrition—partly to bring this healthy alternative to trans and nonbinary people who are so often excluded from healthcare and literature on best health practices. For Benedetto, there is a link between the queer need for health and nourishment and the nourishment provided by plant-based foods.

But Benedetto also acknowledges the politics of “realness,” “fakeness” and “authenticity” woven throughout queer and vegan realities. “This is a little joke that I always say, but as queer

people, all of our things are considered fake,” they explain. Queer people are often accused of trying to imitate straight people—in the bedroom, in their family structures, or in day-to-day life. Similarly, vegan food is thought to mimic animal-based foods. Even though vegan food is generally better for the animals, the planet, and human health, it is its perceived lack of authenticity that is responsible for the prejudice against it among many meat-eaters and food historians. As for Yeah Dawg Vegan, their slogan fittingly remains “Keeping Fake Real.” “We are fake,” says Benedetto, “but we’re realer than the real. If you’re queer you get it.”^{xciiii}

The article acknowledges that Benedetto’s queerness and veganism “ran parallel” for many years, implying that these two facets of Benedetto’s identity came about concurrently, though perhaps incidentally. But I will argue again here, as I have elsewhere, that the young queer mind is primed for a vegan-type politics—or, an intuitive understanding of the imagined boundaries and demarcations we apply to people or food, and an innate need to break down or trouble those boundaries. Benedetto’s natural way of seeing animals through and beyond the category of “food” is the same as their innate ability to see through and beyond the category of “gender” and into the realm of the trans and the nonbinary. That Benedetto (among many other queer people) could intuit that the category of “meat” is not just of an animal, but of an individual, reveals the ways in which the queer mind is conditioned by its heteronormative environment to already see most categories and classifications as superficial and arbitrary. This is not to say that prescriptive categories like “man,” “woman,” “child,” “trans,” “gay,” or “cis” are meaningless. On the contrary—these are meaningful categories, just as “meat,” “vegetable,” and “grain” have specific and consequential meanings. But these categories are not hard and fixed as American power structures would have us believe. These categories are changeable; they have changed over time and continue to

consistently change. These categories and classifications represent only an attempt to order a world that is constantly resisting its own ordering.

The false binary of the “real” and “fake” also plays out in the hegemonic, heteronormative sexual culture in the United States. Queer people often have their sexual authenticity called into question. For instance, this culture conceives of legitimate sex as penile penetration of the vagina. This means that lesbian sex, which usually involves no penis, may or may not involve the use of toys like dildos, strap-ons, and vibrators, all of which our heteronormative culture conceives of as “fake” penises. Almost every queer woman will confirm, ad nauseum, that she has been asked on numerous occasions to explain “how lesbians have sex.” And many have also been harassed or intimidated with the assertion by heterosexual men that “real sex” with a “real man” could turn them straight. Similarly, gay men are not thought of as “real men” by western heteronormative cultures because many have never had sexual intercourse with a woman. In this way, a broader hetero-patriarchy loosely links gay men and their sexualities to conceptions of the effeminate, straight male virgin.

Of course, some vegan dishes do not claim to be taking the place of any type of animal-based food. Pasta primavera, for instance, is a dish that is understood to be vegetarian, and does not claim to contain any overt “proteins,” animal or otherwise. But these types of plant-centered dishes face another type of authenticity dilemma. Because plant foods are the focus of these plates, those invested in normative American eating claim that these dishes are not satiating, not nutritionally complete, and/or do not promote strength and vitality. Disproving these claims is easy: every unprocessed plant food contains a complete amino acid profile,^{xciiv} satiety is often determined by fiber content, rather than protein content (think of how filling potatoes are),^{xcv} and countless vegan athletes of various cultural backgrounds and ages thrive in their respective

endeavors on plant-based foods.^{xcvi} But the idea that a plant-centered plate cannot fulfill the needs of American consumers points to a more insidious American food nationalism predicated on violence against nonhuman animals, and the exploitation of slaughterhouse workers and our planet's reserves of land and natural resources. In the next section, I will explore how food nationalism pervades American thought and imbues meat and animal-based foods with political power and cultural clout.

An Alternative to American Food Nationalism

Meat has been at the center of the American diet, and many other Western diets, for centuries. And the Western appetite for meat has only increased in recent decades. According to the Earth Policy Institute, as of 2012 the average American consumed 270.2 pounds of meat per year.^{xcvii} This means that the United States alone consumed 52.2 billion pounds of meat in the year 2012.^{xcviii} This is up from about 9 billion pounds in 1909.^{xcix} Americans, for the most part, lead the world in meat consumption, second to Luxembourg, and right in front of Australia.^c And this insatiable appetite for animal flesh is coming with a host of dire consequences.

Meat production is straining our planet on many different levels. Just one quarter-pound hamburger requires a vast amount of resources to produce: 6.7 pounds of grain, 600+ gallons of water, 74.5 square feet of grazing land and feed crops, and 1,036 btus of energy from fossil fuel, just to name a few.^{ci} The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the Worldwatch Institute have estimated that animal agriculture is responsible for anywhere from 13-51% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions, which is more than the entire transportation sector.^{cii} And these are just a couple of aspects of the environmental crisis imposed by animal agriculture. Animal ag has also been implicated in massive water pollution,^{ciii} local air pollution for those

living near and working in factory farms,^{civ} species extinction and ocean dead zones,^{cv} large-scale deforestation,^{cvi} massive waste,^{cvii} and food insecurity.^{cviii}

Many medical experts believe meat eating has also played a major role in the American obesity epidemic. The United States has the highest rate of obesity of any other industrialized country.^{cix} According to Eric Schlosser, author of *Fast Food Nation*, “more than half of all American Adults and about one-quarter of all American children are now obese or overweight.”^{cx} Through his research, Schlosser attributes this epidemic to eating “more meals outside the home, [consuming] more calories, less fiber, and more fat.”^{cxii} But the Standard American Diet is high in fat and low in fiber precisely because it privileges animal flesh as its cornerstone. Animal products contain no dietary fiber, and high amounts of saturated fat and cholesterol. And the nutritional make-up of animal products is worsened when these foods are processed. The leading causes of death in Americans—heart disease, diabetes, colon cancer, stroke, and breast cancer—can all be linked to the consumption of animal flesh.^{cxiii} Dr. Kim A Williams, president of the American College of Cardiology, recommends that all patients with heart problems cut meat, dairy, and eggs from their diets.^{cxiii} Dr. Caldwell Esselstyn, director of cardiology at the Cleveland Clinic, also includes no animal products in his dietary program for preventing and reversing heart disease.^{cxiv} And Dr. T. Colin Campbell, author of *The China Study*, has demonstrated that the consumption of animal products has a causal relationship with many types of cancers. His original research showed that animal protein ramped up cancer production in rodents and in humans.^{cxv}

In recent years, animal rights activists across social media and other Internet platforms have begun exposing the cruelty involved in procuring animal flesh for meat. Investigative works like PETA’s “Meet Your Meat,” Jonathan Safran Foer’s book *Eating Animals*, and countless other videos, articles, and books expose the abominable conditions that animals are subjected to on

modern industrialized farms. Chickens, ducks, and turkeys bred on industry farms are crammed so tightly into cages that they cannot open their wings. When these birds inevitably become frightened they turn their aggression on one another, often trampling or pecking other birds to death. This fact has led to the rise in “debeaking” practices, which is the painful process of snipping a bird’s beak at birth. This can often lead to infection, disease and death.^{cxvi} Cows on industry farms are forcibly impregnated. This involves farmers forcing their arms into cows’ anuses and then inserting bull semen into the animal’s vagina. Dairy cows have their babies stripped from them once they are born, an event that is emotionally distressing for mother cows. These calves are then sold into the veal industry where they are crated and nearly starved in order to keep their meat “tender.”^{cxvii} Pigs, some have argued, are treated most cruelly of all. Mother sows are confined to “gestation crates” during several months of their pregnancies, preventing them from moving or even turning around. Piglets who are viewed as defective or who don’t meet the industry weight standards in a certain amount of time are brutally “thumped” against concrete walls and floors and then thrown—sometimes still alive—into dumpsters.^{cxviii} Animals of all types on industry farms are subject to disease, abscess sores, fleas, lice, worms and other parasites, large amounts of excrement (which provides a breeding ground for deadly bacteria), and constant emotional distress caused by their stressful environments. Additionally, a plethora of well-documented human rights abuses have taken place across factory farms and slaughterhouses, including but not limited to, loss of limbs, loss of life, exposure to harmful gases and bacteria, disease, long work hours, low pay, and little to no worker compensation.

So why aren’t more people switching to plant-centered diets and acting to correct the problems posed by the meat industry? There are many reasons why Americans continue to opt for animal products. For one, continuing to consume animal products is a matter of convenience. At

every grocery store, at every gas station, every restaurant, at every friend’s dinner party a person will find an abundance of food options containing meat, dairy, or eggs, but may be hard-pressed to find an option that is fully plant-based. No one wants to be “that vegan” making a fuss about the menu selections, or constantly having to plan ahead to provide their own food in social situations. Many Americans won’t even entertain the idea of adopting such a drastic lifestyle change, even if most vegans find these inconveniences to be temporary awkward adjustments rather than long-term difficulties.

Additionally, because the production of animal products is subsidized by U.S. tax dollars, meat, dairy, and eggs are often cheaper than vegetables and plant-based analogues.^{cxix} Fresh produce, which must be bought at the store, taken home, chopped, and cooked, can hardly compete with ready-made 99-cent cheeseburgers plucked instantly from a McDonald’s drive-thru. The US government heavily subsidizes seven staple crops: corn, rice, sorghum, soy, wheat, milk, and meat. The latter two benefit doubly from government subsidies as the majority of plant-based crops mentioned above are fed to livestock on industrial farms.^{cxx} Only a very small percentage of corn, rice, sorghum, soy, and wheat are eaten by human beings in their whole, unprocessed form.^{cxxi} Most fast food and junk food companies use little to no unprocessed fruits and vegetables in their offerings, and instead rely heavily on the cheap, subsidized crops that allow for higher profit margins.^{cxxii}

There is also the matter of taste—that is, the actual sensation of experiencing the taste of meat, and preferring it over vegan alternatives or a plant-based option. It takes time for a person’s palate to change, especially when ideas about which foods taste good and which foods taste bad are deeply entrenched by a meat-dominant culture. Cultural imperatives ensure that average people prefer the taste of animal foods to plant foods such that one’s palate is never given the opportunity

to adjust or adapt to a plant-based diet. Many vegans testify to losing all taste for animal foods sometimes only a few weeks into a plant-based diet. For these vegans, ridding the body of all animal products allows them to taste and smell animal products anew, and rediscover the pungent, sour, fecal smell that animal flesh will often emit. While vegans reporting that animal products smell sour or rotten is mostly supported by anecdotes,^{cxxiii} multiple peer-reviewed studies have shown heightened taste sensitivities in vegans and vegetarians, particularly metallic, umami, and bitter tastes.^{cxxiv cxxv} (Interestingly, vegans have shown *less* sensitivity to sweet and sour tastes compared with omnivores.)^{cxxvi}

But there's also that Bourdieu-ian habitus of sophistication—"good taste" and cultural distinction—so often afforded to animal-based culinary experiences and not to their vegetable-based counterparts. Take foie gras, for instance. To make it, farmers must forcibly overfeed ducks so that they develop fatty liver disease. Once the duck is too sick to continue force-feeding, the duck is slaughtered and its liver harvested for the pate delicacy known as foie gras, French for "fat liver." The process of making foie gras is expensive—the ducks need extra feed and a longer time in confinement to ensure that they put on excess weight. The process is also blatantly cruel—restaurants who serve foie gras have often been subject to animal rights protests, petitions, and boycotts. Even some people who don't consider themselves to be animal activists oppose eating foie gras because of its unnecessary cruelty. And it is both the excess cost (and the resulting high price) of foie gras and the excess cruelty involved in its production that lends the pate its high levels of taste and distinction in the culinary world. To consume foie gras, one must be able and willing to pay both a financial and a moral premium. As Bordieu notes,

The dominate class constitutes a relatively autonomous space whose structure is defined by the distribution of economic and cultural capital among its members, each class fraction being characterized by a certain configuration of this distribution

to which there corresponds a certain lifestyle, through the mediation of the habitus...^{cxxvii}

In other words, money and affluence are not the only defining features of elite class status. By learning and adopting the practices of the affluent, one can attain cultural capital—that is, in-group knowledge of how to practice day-to-day affluence, regardless of how much money is in one’s bank account. One must not only be able to afford a twenty-year-old bottle of Dom Perignon (economic capital), but also must understand the notes of the wine well enough to pair it with steamed mussels (cultural capital). The high market price of foie gras is the economic capital paid for entry into this “habitus” or cultural practice, and the shirking of ethical responsibility—that is, putting aside one’s misgivings about the inherent cruelty of foie gras—is the cultural capital paid, in this case, for entry into the habitus of high taste. One must flaunt their willingness to accept cruelty and wrongdoing in order to reach a higher status in American cultural hegemony. And this is true broadly, across many elite social practices. Big game hunting and fur wearing are two similar practices—requiring moral premiums as cultural capital—that come to mind.

In the same section of *Distinction*, Bordieu notes that,

the distribution of these two types of capital among the fractions is symmetrically and inversely structured; and that, third, the different inherited asset structures, together with social trajectory, command the habitus and the systematic choices it produces in all areas of practice, of which the choices commonly regarded as aesthetic are one dimension—then these structures should be found in the space of lifestyles, i.e., in the different systems of properties in which the different systems of dispositions express themselves.^{cxxviii}

This is to say that the habitus (of animal consumption, in this case) is something that is “inherited” or reproduced continually, along the “normal” (that is, hegemonic) social trajectory, or the already established, constantly reproducing and reifying social “field.” This means that the habitus is, as its root word implies, an amalgamation of varying habits—it is a practice that is second nature, rather than one that is deeply considered or interrogated. The habitus takes over for conscious

thought, such that each choice or social practice is “systematic” and, therefore, often automatic, rather than individual, isolated, or intentional. The social practices making up a habitus never exist in a vacuum; they are constantly reified, reproduced, and *demand*ed by the social field. Thus, to eat foie gras means (in most cases) to have already inherited the social conditions and expectations needed to eat foie gras. Eating foie gras is never simply eating foie gras. And this is true of anything we eat, say, or do. The difference is that in this particular practice, as with many elite social practices, the eating of foie gras is a marker of power. In the United States, as in many Western nations, those eating and consumption practices that reify the consumer’s power usually involve the consumption and exploitation of nonhuman animals.

But this phenomenon is not only present in elite social circles. The so-called “middle class” also inhabits a habitus marked by animal consumption and other forms of violence against animals. Nearly every American is raised from an early age on a diet replete with animal flesh and by-products, and tradition is a difficult thing to change in people emotionally and socially invested in a particular culture. Meat-eating, in general, is an American cultural imperative. A nation’s cuisine is a cornerstone of its hegemonic culture and national identity. In her book *A Taste of Power*, Katharina Vester explores this idea at length. She writes, “The choice of dishes canonized in any cuisine reflects hegemonic tastes and beliefs.”^{cxix} This is because “eating, cooking, and providing certain foods [are] part of a citizen’s commitment to the nation, as they [are] associated with the moral fiber and material well-being of the country.”^{cxx} The average American understands their national belonging partly in terms of what they choose to eat on a daily basis. Hamburgers, hot dogs, and barbeque ribs are distinctly American foods that every American will eat at some point in their lives. Eating dishes like lentil dal, pasta primavera, and mapo tofu—popular plant-centric dishes in other parts of the world—will never earn someone American cultural capital. Indeed, it

is difficult to think of any staple American dish that is made entirely from plants, unless one looks regionally. Beans and cornbread with fried garden zucchini may be a common, plant-centric, poor man's meal in Appalachia, but is completely foreign to the average Californian. There are few if any plant-based dishes that unite all Americans under one cultural identity. And those that do (mashed potatoes, maybe?) are side dishes rather than a meal unto themselves.

These cultural connections make more sense when studying the long arc of American food history. In early America, the foods that became associated with material well-being were, on the one hand, corn, which, having been used by indigenous populations for centuries, gained popularity among European settlers in the Americas; and on the other hand, meat, especially meat from wild game like deer, squirrels, and rabbits, as wildlife was more abundant in America than it had been in Europe. Early Americans mostly ate British-inspired dishes that incorporated some indigenous ingredients.^{cxxxii} But the landscape itself, teeming with wild animals, provided a perfect context for American carnivory to flourish. As American Studies scholar Philip Deloria notes,

The intertwined meanings of American landscape, meaty carnivory abundance, and revolutionary egalitarianism came together especially clearly in the societies' treatment of hunting. America's profusion of wildlife stunned early seventeenth-century commentators, who were accustomed to the overhunted lands of the Old World.^{cxxxiii}

In the Revolutionary period of early America, the availability of wild game played a key role in colonists' diet. And there were more animals available to hunt in the New World than there had been in Europe, which leveled the field (to some degree) in terms of the colonists' class. Where meat-eating had been a luxury in Great Britain, it was accessible to all in early America. Deloria continues,

English constructions of social class dictated that hunting be a gentleman's sport, inaccessible to other classes. In the New World, however, the abundance of game made hunting democratic, allowing every man to imagine himself a patriarch in a gentry of egalitarianism.^{cxxxiii}

For many early Americans, the act of hunting became associated with an “ethos of equality” that was unique to the New World.^{cxxxiv} In this way, hunting became inextricably bound with American ideals like freedom, democracy, and individual autonomy, and thus became a defining characteristic of American nationalism.

It’s important to explain how I have come to understand the term nationalism since the word will be deployed throughout this project within a discussion of American meat-eating ideology, or carnism.^{cxxxv} Cultural theorist Alys Eve Weinbaum explains that early understandings of the word “nation” were based in racial formations around a population’s “common descent.”^{cxxxvi} She writes,

Beginning in the late eighteenth century, when ‘nation’ first accrued consistent political usage and ‘national’ became a routine noun used to designate individual subjects, the constitution of political units (nation-states) composed of so-called nationals began to center around identification of the factors that would ideally cohere large aggregates and bestow belonging on individual members of such groups^{cxxxvii}

The word *belonging*, here, is key. The idea of a nation was formulated in order to designate which groups of people were included and which groups of people were excluded from the collective identity and the benefits and privileges accompanying it.

During the nineteenth century, generally referred to as the century of modern nationalism, principles of inclusion and exclusion were hotly debated by political pundits favoring immigration restriction or curtailment and various population-control measures that, over time, profoundly shaped the racial, ethnic, and class composition of nations by designating those who could rightfully belong and by circumscribing that belonging through restriction on the reproductive pool and designation of the progeny of ‘mixed’ unions as ‘illegitimate’ or ‘foreign’.^{cxxxviii} National identity, and the chauvinistic advocating for that identity (or, nationalism) is formed along race, gender, and class lines. In the early United States, “Americans” were defined as White (non-Indian,

non-Asian, non-African), male (non-female), and straight (adhering to the cultural norm of the patriarchal nuclear family headed by a husband). It was these people who reaped the benefits and privileges of inclusion into the American national identity. These people were allowed to vote. These people could own property. These people headed the government and their individual households. Non-white, female, and/or sexually “deviant” groups could not attain these privileges. Thus, their respective cultures were overshadowed by the dominant national culture formed by and for straight, white, Christian men.

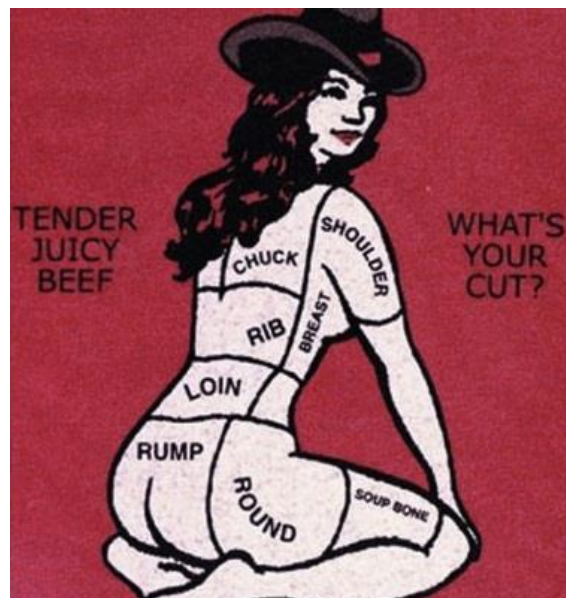
This means that a discussion of American meat-eating as a form of food nationalism necessarily involves a discussion of the eating practices of the historically dominant population. Meat-eating has in part become central to the American diet because it is associated with the virility and capability of white American men. This means that diets that are not centered around meat have been marginalized and relegated to the realm of “subaltern.” Many traditional African diets, for instance, have been marginalized in dominant American food cultures. This explains, too, why vegetarian diets have often been labeled “feminine” or “for women.” Those who choose not to eat animals and their by-products are not buying into the narrative that meat-eating is central to the collective American identity, and thus they must be non-male, non-white, or non-straight.

Meat-eating was historically linked to American masculinity via hunting and outdoor grilling. But today, while few men continue to hunt for their own meat, the notion that “real” American men eat meat, and that meat-eating is inherently manly is still perpetuated by broader American consumer culture. The image below is from a 2014 *Carl's Jr.* commercial co-sponsored by the *X-men* movie franchise. In the commercial, the shape-shifting character Mystique from Marvel's X-Men franchise is holding a *Carl's Jr.* burger, but must first morph into a white, male character in order to be able to presumably consume and enjoy the burger. Advertisements like

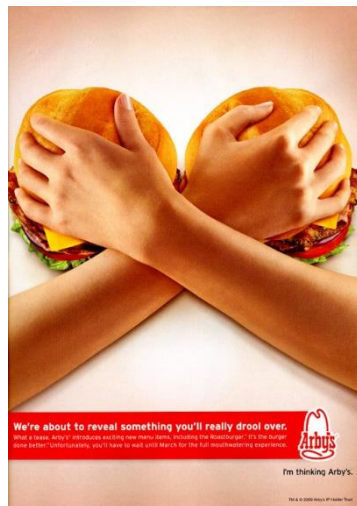
these abound. And they exist in order to sell a product on the basis that men are not masculine enough unless they eat copious amounts of meat. Women may consume meat, too, according to these ads, but they must first “man up” in order to handle the meaty abundance typically reserved for masculine American men.



Gender also plays a crucial role in transforming the animal (the sentient subject) into a product (a non-sentient object for consumption). This transformation of subject into product has been applied to women too. And in both cases, men are the ones carrying out or overseeing the transformation of human/animal into product.^{cxxxix}



The prior image^{cxl} adorns the cover of *The Sexual Politics of Meat* and is an excellent visual representative of the idea I'm discussing. According to Adams, in this image both the woman and the animal are the "absent referent."^{cxli} The woman is being depicted like an animal ready for slaughter and consumption. And it is implicitly the American male who will carry out the slaughtering and consuming of either woman or animal.



In the image above,^{cxlii} from the company *Arby's*, the animal flesh (the meat) literally replaces the female flesh (the breasts). But in this instance, instead of the woman being animalized, it is the animal flesh that is sexualized. The animal flesh is used here to bring to mind images of female breasts for the (presumably male) viewer. Again, the fact that meat-eating is associated with manliness, and that this depiction of animal flesh calls to mind a woman's flesh means that the target audience for this advertisement is likely the straight, American man.



The last image (above)^{exliii} is from a popular 4th of July campaign from *Carl's Jr.* Here, American nationalism is linked explicitly to meat-eating via appeals to masculine consumption. The message of the ad is not subtle. Fireworks go up in background while a conventionally sexy woman holds a meaty *Carl's Jr.* burger. These are the components, according to *Carl's Jr.*, of the ideal American masculinity: access to beautiful women, access to an abundance of meat, and allegiance to the United States. While the woman is the one consuming the burger in this ad, she does so only to titillate the appetites of the male consumer. Both woman and animal flesh are on display for patriotic consumption by the American man.

Meat became central to the American diet not only along gender lines, but along racial lines. This is because the status of many American foods were solidified in opposition to foods eaten by immigrants, a process that worked to create racial hierarchies at the same time that it created food hierarchies. Historian Erika Lee discusses this in her book on Chinese immigration and racial discrimination:

Chinese immigrants' purported diet of 'rice and rats' was also cited as a clear sign that they had a lower standard of living, one that white working families could not and should not degrade themselves by accepting. Samuel Gompers, president of the American Federation of Labor, framed this issue explicitly by asking, 'Meat vs. Rice—American Manhood vs. Asiatic Coolieism, Which Shall Survive?'.^{exliv}

The Chinese diet, which included rice as a staple food was viewed as inferior to the masculine, American cuisine that emphasized meat. Furthermore, American men were considered to be a higher class of people and more masculine than Chinese men, in part, because their diet contained more meat. Here, too, we see the inclusion/exclusion dynamic of American identity. While women are excluded on the basis of gender (and offered up for consumption alongside animals) Chinese people were excluded on the basis of race, and their cuisine, which included many more plant-based foods, was deemed inferior to the white, American male diet. Thus, the ontology of race as an American social and political category, brought with it implications for the ontology of American food nationalism.

American meat-eating came to be viewed as “civilized” in comparison to cultures that ate meat sparingly or that ate the flesh from animals considered to be “unclean” or vermin. Americans needed to establish their national identity as white, and thus in opposition to cultures deemed non-white like Asians, Native Americans, and African Americans. While Native Americans mostly hunted for meat, Americans began raising livestock in order to distinguish themselves as civilized in comparison to native “savages.”

Civilized people ate civilized food: beef, mutton, and pork. Civilized people exercised dominion over not just land but animals, especially cattle, sheep, and swine. To the men and women who settled North America, the idea of a world without livestock was as peculiar and dangerous as the notion of a world without God. Therein lay the road to savagery. Europeans had not traveled halfway around the world to emulate the natives they encountered in North America, wrote a chronicler of one settlement, for those ‘savages ran over the grass’ like ‘foxes and wild beasts’ leaving the ‘land untilled’ and ‘the cattle not settled.’^{cxlv}

So, while meat-eating was certainly a component of native diets (and other diets marginalized on racial grounds), a unique practice of meat-eating evolved in the Americas, a practice founded on abundance, entitlement, and dominion. According to Ogle, these attitudes gave way to the modern American meat industry founded on the domestication of “livestock” rather than the preservation and hunting of wild game.

Many vegans of color have written about the formation of America’s cuisine along racial lines, often in the context of slavery. The documentary film *The Post-Traumatic Slave Diet* addresses how many traditional African diets were high in plant foods—legumes, rice, bread, cabbage and other vegetables—and low in meat and dairy. But Africans lost their native diets along with their possessions, families, and freedom in the American slave trade. Subsequently, African slaves subsisted on the scraps that their white masters threw out—pigs’ and chickens’ feet, ham hocks, chitlins, organ meats, and the like. In the 21st century, adopting a standard American diet has become a way for African Americans to signal their success. After all, nothing says high-class American like a steak dinner. One medical doctor interviewed in the film commented on this: “The idea that we need to embrace this standard American diet as a marker for success is not only misleading, but it has a devastating impact on our health. That’s why we’re seeing higher rates of diabetes in our kids, obesity, and early heart disease.”^{cxlvi} The doctor goes on to describe how many cancer rates are much higher in the African American population than in the white population, and that studies show strong links between the meat- and junk food-heavy Standard American diet and these diseases.

These facts and others have led many Black vegans to “decolonize their diets,” so to speak. Veganism is a modern way for African Americans to return to traditional West African diets that

predated the trauma of slavery and its meat-based cuisine. Melissa Danielle, contributor to the collection *Sistah Vegan* writes,

Some Black people I encounter are surprised when they find out I don't consume animal products. Some are offended, and many proceed to 'educate' me on the traditional Black diet. I am reminded that I am not a true member of the race for not eating pork. When I suggest that traditional West African diets are plant-based, and that most of what Black Americans understand to be traditional is a blend of European and African food traditions, I am surprised that they have nothing more to say, and often walk away.^{cxlvii}

For Danielle, a vegan diet is a way for her to return to her West African roots, and adopt a diet and lifestyle free of Western influence. In doing this she is able to reclaim her health as well as her Black identity:

The Back to Africa and Black Nationalist movements have built a pedagogy based on a rejection of so-called whiteness, which scrutinizes everything from education and employment to hairstyles and dress, but there is very little critique on the authenticity of Black American culinary history. Fried chicken and potato salad is to Africa as blond hair is to Lil' Kim, but try hosting a function without one or the other and you may find yourself being asked to turn in your Black card.^{cxlviii}

Danielle sees current African-American cuisine, influenced by centuries of enslavement and subordination to white people, as incompatible with many Black activist movements. Thus, her rejection of meat and other animal products is also a rejection of colonial Whiteness, African American subjugation, and current American nationalism that is often coded "white."

What's interesting to me is that while African slaves quickly came to adopt the standard, meat-heavy, American diet, white Americans adopted close to nothing from traditional African diets rich in fruits, grains, and vegetables (other than a select few Southern side dishes like collard greens and pinto beans, and even these are prepared very differently in America than they would have been in African cultures). This fact points to the ways in which African slaves and their cultures were "Othered" in the process of American enslavement. The fact that white people

involved in the slave trade adopted little from African cuisines as their own may point to how adhering to the meat-heavy American diet was another way for whites to distance themselves from enslaved Africans, and exclude their traditions in the Americas. This idea would also reinforce Vester's notion that food cultures are decided and perpetuated by the hegemonic class.

Whiteness, maleness, and straightness have come to be the primary arbiters of American culture and cuisine. Meat-eating has come to dominate American cuisine due to the hegemonic group's exclusion of nearly all foods deemed feminine or non-white. This means that in order to challenge the disastrous effects of the current American meat industry, vegan activists must also challenge structural patriarchy and white supremacy. Likewise, feminists and anti-racists need to challenge the dominant American cuisine in order to reclaim their respective traditional diets (or healthier and more ethical alternative diets) and bring an end to violence against non-human animals and minority groups alike.

Rhetorics of Naming

Because vegan food is excluded from cuisine constituting American food nationalism, the purveyors of vegan cuisine must negotiate the politics of American authenticity when deciding how to promote, advertise, and serve their food. Vegan chefs, foodies, and restaurateurs must consider who their target consumers and audience will be, and how best to reach them. This means that the process of naming vegan food is a political one, and one with high stakes. One must name vegan food something that is recognizable to the average American meat-eater, and at the same time, convey information about what the food is made of, how it will taste, and what one can expect upon eating it.

One of the most interesting places where these politics of authenticity are contested is in vegan and vegan-friendly restaurants. The ways in which various establishments name, market, or

promote their vegan cuisine contains implicit messages about the restaurateur's or customer's perceived legitimacy of that cuisine. In the meat-centric United States, plant-based food is afforded only so much authenticity, and the perceived authenticity of these foods begins, in many cases, at the establishments where they are sold.

First, I will list several vegan or vegan-friendly restaurants that take different approaches to how they name and market their food. Strategies for naming vegan food involve making decisions about how best to (or whether or not one should) qualify the food. By “qualify the food” I mean explaining the terms of the food, or providing an explanation of what the food is made out of, how it was made, or how and why it is posturing as or mimicking a traditional American fare. As I describe above, because vegan food troubles previously established and long-held American food ontologies, vegan food must also counter attacks on its authenticity, answer questions about its legitimacy, and, generally speaking, explain itself.

The restaurants listed below are restaurants I have personally been to, and am thus familiar with. I chose them because each of them is popular and successful in their respective cities and because they are widely known among vegan people as good places to eat. This is not an exhaustive list of the ways that vegan restaurateurs name vegan food, but a sampling of the different ways of negotiating what I am calling “rhetorics of naming.”

(Vegan) Restaurant	Naming	Food
The Sinking Ship (Indy)	→	“Chicken” Facon Ranch Salad
Champs Diner (Bk)	→	Nashville Hot Chik’n Sandwich Lobster Roll (hearts of palm expl.)
Chicago Diner	→	Country Fried Steak (explained)
Doomies (Toronto)	→	Fried Chicken & Waffles (no expl.)
Vegandale Brewery		explicit mention of veganism’s moral superiority

The above chart shows how a few vegan-friendly establishments have chosen to name their vegan cuisine. From top to bottom, these establishments participate in a sliding scale of naming qualifiers. The Sinking Ship, a restaurant serving both vegan and non-vegan food in Indianapolis, has named one of its dishes the “‘Chicken’ Facon Ranch Salad.” This establishment chooses to use quotations around the word “chicken,” in order to suggest a meat-like substitute resembling or used in the way that real chicken would be used. Following “chicken” is the word “facon,” that, without context clues could be mispronounced in a number of ways. But the implication here is a mash-up of the words “fake” and “bacon,” to suggest that this salad has some type of vegetable substitute for bacon that calls to mind the “real thing.” Interestingly, “ranch,” which of course refers to a dairy-based salad dressing, is not given quotations or an alternate spelling, despite being made from plant-based ingredients, which is not traditional. This method of naming uses punctuation and neologisms to clue the customer in to what they are about to consume. The purpose of this is to make sure the customer is not surprised when they order a chicken-based meal

and receive a breaded, fried soy patty in its place. The vegan items at The Sinking Ship are also denoted with the characteristic V enclosed in a circle, which in many places has come to mean vegan.

At Champs Diner, an American-style, all-vegan spot in Brooklyn, many menu items are listed just as their meat counterparts would be: e.g. Lobster Roll. But underneath each menu item is an explanation of what the vegan alternative is made out of or how it is made. Champs lets the customer know that the lobster roll is made, not from tofu or seitan, but from hearts of palm. There are a few exceptions to this rule on the Champs menu, like the Nashville Hot Chik'n sandwich, in which the alternate spelling stands in for a more detailed explanation of ingredients. Chicago Diner, a famous vegan restaurant in Chicago's Logan Square, also takes this approach to naming their foods. Both Champs and the Chicago Diner advertise their all-vegan status on their storefront and menus; thus, it is unnecessary to differentiate vegan items from non-vegan items. These locations trust that those walking in to eat at their establishments already know they are at an all-vegan restaurant, and thus do not need to know extra information about the nature of the food.

Third, there is the approach taken by Doomies, a well-known, all-vegan restaurant in Toronto, in which the food offered is stated just as the animal-based counterpart would be, and no explanation of ingredients or method of preparation is given. Doomies is a popular vegan restaurant, and at this restaurant a customer may order Fried Chicken & Waffles, and it is up to the customer to ask any further clarifying questions that they may need about that dish. A patron can expect to receive Doomies' vegan version of Fried Chicken & Waffles, and that is all they will know upon ordering. In theory, an unsuspecting customer could be "fooled" by the chicken and waffles and think that they are eating the real thing. After all, Doomies does peddle heavily in realistic meat substitutes. But Doomie's advertises its vegan status elsewhere, like on the

storefront, on their cups and décor, in their restrooms, and other places in the restaurant. This move imparts a couple of messages: first, Doomies is claiming implicitly that just because a food is vegan does not mean it cannot also be chicken, or waffle, or burger. The food “chicken,” does not have to come from the animal “chicken,” argues Doomies. Vegan chicken is just as much chicken as animal-based chicken. Secondly, the decision not to explain that a food is vegan or what ingredients it is made of mirrors the privileged status of meat and animal-based foods and how it is marketed and communicated to consumers. Most non-vegan restaurants do not overly explain their meat dishes. Chicken and waffles is fried chicken atop sweet waffles with syrup and butter on top. The menu would not by default explain that the chicken is from an animal or that the butter is dairy-based. The restaurant assumes that this is common knowledge. Doomies attempts to bring vegan cuisine (and its various components) into the realm of common knowledge. If meat-eaters do not have to explain what their food is made of then neither do vegans. And perhaps the less that vegans take time to explain their food the more normal vegan food will become.

The former rhetoric of naming (vegan chicken is chicken) calls to mind recent rhetoric popularized by the transgender community (trans women are women). Both of these slogans attempt to insert the marginal (trans / vegan) into the hegemonic by broadening the default category (women / chicken). The category of “woman” can be expanded to include those who were assigned “male” at birth but have come to identify as women later in life. Similarly, the category of food “chicken” can be expanded to include tofu, soy, seitan, mushrooms, or other vegan ingredients that have been seasoned and prepared to taste (in many cases) identical to animal-based chicken. In this case a plant becomes so indistinguishable from meat that it is meat for all intents and purposes. I draw this parallel not to imply that the rhetoric around alternative food and eating is or should be the same as rhetoric deployed by marginalized individuals. Rather, I draw this parallel to point out

the similar shifts in *categories* and the necessary claims of authenticity deployed by both groups. Vegans may or may not be aware that “vegan chicken is chicken” sounds like pro-trans rhetoric when they say it. But both groups’ need to assert authenticity and legitimacy in the face of opposing hegemonic power structures reveals how each group must qualify their presence in order to be considered “real.”

Lastly, there is the tack that Vegandale Brewery and many other vegan restaurants like it take, which is to appeal to veganism’s moral superiority on their menu and in their restaurant space. Their food items are listed on their menu similarly to Doomie’s—without much explanation. But there are references on their menu and throughout the restaurant to remind their customers how many gallons of water they are saving by choosing vegan, how many animals’ lives have been spared, and that the burger they consume is free of cholesterol and trans fatty acids. Vegandale’s appeal-to-ethics rhetorical style is targeted toward those vegans who may already feel sanctimonious about their lifestyle, as well as to conscientious omnivores who may be inclined to make dietary changes toward veganism if they believe it makes their lifestyle more sustainable and less cruel.

The different implicit rhetorics employed in the naming of vegan food speaks to a lack of cohesion and understanding around what vegan food is and how it is made. Some restaurants attempt to assimilate vegan food into established foodscapes by calling vegan dishes by the exact same name as their animal-based counterparts, e.g. “chicken and waffles.” Others choose to differentiate vegan food from non-vegan food by calling dishes exactly what they are, e.g. “seitan and waffles.” And still others choose to take one or the other route (or a combination of each rhetorical style) while explicitly addressing vegan politics in their restaurants in order to raise public awareness. While veganism has become more mainstream in the last ten years or so, these

varied approaches to naming suggest that the general public still struggles to fit vegan cuisine into established American foodscapes. The struggle to appropriately name and promote vegan cuisine is a political project with much at stake for the bottom-line of participating restaurants and for the American public as they become increasingly aware of how their food choices affect the planet, animals, and their own health.

Subversive Food

Queer theory provides a critical framework for understanding how sexuality and the performance of sexual politics can subvert heteronormative Western hegemony. According to Cathy J. Cohen, “queer theory stands in direct contrast to the normalizing tendencies of hegemonic sexuality rooted in ideas of static, stable sexual identities and behaviors.”^{cxlix} Queer theory teaches its readers how to interrogate seemingly fixed norms and notions about sex, gender, and sexuality, such that readers come to understand how these sexual norms and ideas are implicitly imbued with power and privilege. Heterosexual, cisgender privilege or power may look like never having to worry about being subject to violence on the basis of sex or gender, being able to confidently display affection in public, or having access to a romantic partner at the end of life or in a time of crisis. And heterosexual privilege means not being ostracized by friends and family because of a sexual “lifestyle.” These are just a few of the ways in which heteronormative sex and sexuality are imbued with power. Thus, to lend validity and authenticity to marginalized sex and gender identities or to sexual and gender behaviors historically deemed “deviant,” is an act of subversion in the established hegemonic order. To be queer, or to perform queerness, is a political act that seeks to disrupt and change established discriminatory power dynamics.

Queer theory can bring the same framework to bear on the study of food. Following the line of inquiry above, some guiding questions are: What is hegemonic food in Western culture?

What types of problems are created by the status quo of foodways? What type of food subverts the hegemonic order of food? What kind of food constitutes a political act by its mere presence? Some food may look queer in its flamboyance and attention to detail. But artful, ostentatious food does not fundamentally alter the power structure inherent in what we choose (or what is available to us) to eat. Certain kinds of foods are given privilege and importance in Western culture, in that they are available everywhere, it is considered normal to eat them, and abnormal not to eat them. These normative foods are most often animal-based. Bacon, ribs, eggs, steak, burgers, fried chicken, shrimp, hot dogs—all of these are widely available in the United States, and offer the eater inclusivity in American culture. To refuse to eat these foods—or further, to recreate or mimic these foods with plant-based alternatives—is an act of resistance in the face of American food hegemony.

Vegan food is food that refuses. It is food that resists. It resists easy classification. It refuses complacency. It refuses (as far as is possible) to be complicit in violent systems and ideologies. Vegan food, by its presence, forces those who encounter it to ask questions and rethink the ways in which they have taken normative food and eating for granted. There are many different foods and styles of eating that break away from the so-called “standard American diet.” But vegan food’s breaking away from the norm is rooted in subversive politics. To eat vegan food—regardless of how the eater identifies his or her eating habits—is an act of subversion.

The concept of “performativity” is one hallmark of queer theory, first introduced by Judith Butler in the early 1990s and since extensively built upon, challenged, questioned, and debated in the field. Jose’ Esteban Munoz reframes performativity as a “performance of politics” involved in practices of “disidentification” with American hegemonic norms of various kinds. He writes, “Although Butler’s essay is concerned specifically with the performative charge of queerness, its

ability to redo and challenge conventions of heterosexual normativity, it can also explicate the workings of various ‘minority’ identifications... This theory is also applicable to the workings of various minority groups.”^{cl} Performativity, or the performance of politics is not only one method by which the queer subject subverts heteronormativity, but is also a mode by which Latinx communities, Asian men, drag queens of color, and many others subvert other kinds of white, affluent, Western, and straight normativities.

Queer performativity can take many forms, as Munoz argues. While Munoz is primarily analyzing actual artistic performances by queer people of color in film, drag, photography, and the like, Butler’s site of performativity is the self. And performativity is partly what constitutes the subject. She writes,

The construction of stable bodily contours relies upon fixed sites of corporeal permeability or impermeability. Those sexual practices in both homosexual and heterosexual contexts that open surfaces and orifices to erotic signification or close down others effectively reinscribe the boundaries of the body along new cultural lines. Anal sex among men is an example, as is the radical re-remembering of the body in Wittig’s *The Lesbian Body*. Douglas alludes to a “kind of sex pollution which expresses a desire to keep the body (physical and social) intact,” suggesting that the naturalized notion of “the” body is itself a consequence of taboos that render that body discrete by virtue of its stable boundaries. Further, the rites of passage that govern various bodily orifices presuppose a heterosexual construction of gendered exchange, positions, and erotic possibilities. The deregulation of such exchanges accordingly disrupts the very boundaries that determine what it is to be a body at all.^{cli}

What’s significant here is the disruption of stable boundaries by bodies and their taboo (or illegitimate, deviant, unsanctioned) practices. Like the established sex and gender practices that govern our bodies (and make them discrete), food and eating, too, are governed by established norms and practices, such that we fail to see its many possibilities. To intervene in these practices or cross these boundaries (either in sex or in eating) is in and of itself a radical political performance.

When vegan food intervenes in US food hegemony, the backlash to its presence can be severe. Take the recent case of Cracker Barrel, the famous Tennessee-based Southern restaurant chain, deciding to include a vegan sausage option on its menu. In August 2022, Cracker Barrel announced in a Facebook post its decision to offer Impossible Foods’s vegan breakfast sausage alongside its regular meat-based sausage options. The post quickly went viral, attracting more than 22,000 comments, many of them by regular customers expressing outrage at the menu changes—outrage despite Cracker Barrel retaining all of its normal menu items with no changes in recipe or ingredients.^{clii} This means that no one who expressed outrage at the addition of vegan sausage to the Cracker Barrel menu did so because their favorite menu item had been replaced or made unavailable. Their outrage, then, was for some other less tangible, more symbolic reason, like *what it means* that Cracker Barrel now offers vegan sausage. So, what does it mean?

Clearly, the presence of vegan sausage at traditionally non-vegan, chain restaurants constitutes a (perceived) threat—to tradition, to rigid notions of “Southern” cuisine, in this case, and to food’s pre-established and long-held pecking order. Vegan food, as discussed previously, brings with it a whole host of questions and politics—about its make-up, about its authenticity or right to be, and about its threat to the social order—and in this case, it brings these politics to an unwelcome, strictly non-vegan establishment. Recently, veganism has begun to be associated with a “woke left” movement that is unwelcome at an establishment like Cracker Barrel that espouses traditional values. One writer for Salon noted,

The idea that "health food," including plant-based food, is for left-leaning hippies has managed to stick. Meanwhile, as the Wall Street Journal reported in 2014, demographic research shows that Cracker Barrel's average customer is more likely to be politically conservative. ‘Experian Marketing Services does a rolling survey of thousands of people who patronize restaurants and retail establishments to determine, among other things, the politics of stores' customers... Chain restaurants that score the highest on the conservative index are O'Charley's and Cracker Barrel. The most liberal: California Pizza Kitchen.’^{cliii}

Even in the US's most corporate food institutions, the battle of left vs. right has firmly taken hold, with veganism and vegan food options providing fertile ground for culture-war sparring.

The problem, for Cracker Barrel's predominantly conservative customer base, is that a vegan option subverts the traditional American food order. The vegan sausage carries with it contentious politics despite Cracker Barrel's jovial attempts at linking plant-based options to their meat-based counterparts. After the controversy went viral across social media platforms, Cracker Barrel posted an image on Instagram of an Impossible sausage patty and a pork sausage patty shaking cartoon hands. The caption read: "Cracker Barrel: where pork-based and plant-based sausage lovers can breakfast all day in harmony."^{cliv} This, unfortunately, was not enough to smooth things over. Many self-proclaimed regular customers of Cracker Barrel have sworn off of the establishment due to its supposed peddling of "woke" plant-based fare.

Vegan food and the people who make or promote it perform a politics of subversion, in how vegan food changes what can count as meat, milk, cheese, or egg; in how the production of this food helps to radically restructure where our food comes from; in the volume and types of resources it takes to make it; in reshaping American food nationalism; and in how vegan chefs and entrepreneurs are challenging established culinary practices and vying for places in meat-centric food industries. In other words, vegan food not only performs subversion, but its production helps to restructure certain aspects of existing food systems and the corporate conglomerates leading them. Regardless of why one chooses a vegan option, to do so means not choosing a non-vegan option. Vegan eating and cooking is a boycott of industries perpetuating violence and the destruction of the planet; and therefore, to choose vegan food is increasingly revolutionary.

In closing, inequality and disenfranchisement are inherent in all capitalist systems of production, food not excepted. But making American food queer and investing in queer food

movements—that is, drastically altering established food categories by insisting upon plant-based alternatives—is one step toward lessening the violent impacts of our current food systems. When we begin to creatively reimagine what food looks like or can be, and when we begin to assign taste and distinction to more sustainable plant-based alternatives, then we can begin to lessen the negative impact our global food systems have on our planet. Queering food allows the average consumer to think more deeply about what food is, and who or what must produce it. Think again about the discourse around the Impossible burger. What is this made of? Was this grown in a lab? Why is it bleeding? Why does it smell like real meat? Is this soy? Who made this? Where did it come from? While for vegans these questions can be a bit intrusive and annoying at meal times, they are good questions to ask. I would suggest also asking these questions about animal-based meats: How many cows went into this one burger? Were they fed antibiotics? How were they slaughtered? Was this cooked thoroughly enough to kill dangerous bacteria? Who made this? Where did it come from? The questions that we naturally ask of vegan food (because it is obviously different, illegitimate, or subversive) should also be brought to bear on established cuisines and systems of food production.

Vegan food, by its mere presence, invites—and sometimes demands—an interrogation of the nature of food, and this interrogation marks the beginning of the creation of more ethical food systems. Viewing vegan food through a queer lens can help us understand how vegan food participates in what Munoz calls a “performance of politics.” Vegan food performs subversive politics in how it disrupts normative food categories, must defend its authenticity, and in how it resists the status quo of violent food production.

PART II: “THE HOMOSEXUAL WAS NOW A SPECIES”: VEGANISM AND ANIMALITY IN QUEER LITERATURE AND FILM

At the supreme hour of his institution, with neither ethics nor logos, the dog will attest to the dignity of its person. This is what the friend of man means. There is a transcendence in the animal! And the clear verse [Exodus 22:31] with which we began is given a new meaning. It reminds us of the debt that is always open.

-Emmanuel Levinas, “The Name of a Dog, or Natural Rights”

In their book *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect*, Mel Y. Chen asks readers to consider whether or not we currently have a way to “think about queer animality as a genre of queer animacy, as a modulation of life force.”^{clv} Chen argues that there are ontological links between queerness and animality—a thread that pulls on the very idea of “human being” and threatens to unravel it.^{clvi} They ask readers to consider “how animality, the ‘stuff’ of animal nature sometimes sticks to animals [and] sometimes bleeds back onto textures of humanness” particularly for queer and racialized “Others.”^{clvii} But do these abstract, ontological links between queerness and animality have any lived, concrete consequences for queer individuals in their daily lives? Where can one see the fluidity of queerness and animality represented?

I will begin by tracing the unraveling of “human cohesion” and elucidating the phenomenon of queer animality in the film *Kanarie* (2018). I will show how the main character’s struggle with his sexuality and gender nonconformity leads him to identify significantly with a nonhuman animal in his time of crisis, as well as act on that animal’s behalf. This action demonstrates how animal nature “bleeds back onto” queer nature and instills in many queer individuals a feeling of kinship with and responsibility for nonhuman animals—a responsibility that I will argue constitutes an implicit and inherent vegan politics that is common in queer representations and realities. Further, I will detail how this phenomenon, in which the queer

protagonist and the animal connect in significant identificatory ways resulting in a system of vegan ethics and actions, is represented in many other works of queer cinema and literature, such as in *Silence of the Lambs*, Radclyffe Hall's novel *The Well of Loneliness*, *Paul Takes the Form of a Mortal Girl* and others.

As discussed in the introduction to this project, the word “veganism,” is inextricable with the philosophies of “animal rights” and “animal liberation.” Veganism is the ethical practice demanded by the adoption of these philosophies, just as “feminism” is the philosophy undergirding the #MeToo movement. The core problem recognized by vegans and resisted by the practice of veganism is “speciesism,” which philosopher Peter Singer defines as, “a prejudice or attitude of bias in favor of the interests of members of one’s own species and against those of members of other species.”^{clviii} Speciesism is analogous to other “-isms” like sexism and racism in the sense that it is a type of violence and inequality perpetuated by a group that perceives its superiority over an inferior “other”—in this case, the human perception that human beings are superior to nonhuman animals. And veganism, as ethical practice, is constituted by a wide array of actions taken to mitigate the effects of this hegemonic attitude of human superiority—actions that may involve eating beans instead of meat, purchasing cotton instead of silk, refusing to attend a circus where animals are abused for entertainment, or even simply speaking up in defense of animals in the presence of those who perpetuate speciesist ideas in their daily lives.

Thus, when I use the term vegan in this analysis, I am identifying particular actions as vegan. And in identifying the ways in which queer characters act on behalf of other species I will argue that, in many literary or cinematic representations of queer people, the care and concern for the nonhuman is present, whether or not they extrapolate from that philosophy an exclusively vegan lifestyle. “Vegan,” in this context, will be applied critically to analyze a particular work,

much in the way a term like “Marxist” may be used to analyze anti-capitalist themes in a work that is perhaps not overtly anti-capitalist (e.g., one could critique *Atlas Shrugged*, a novel overtly about the superiority of free-market capitalism, through a Marxist lens). Similarly, I will analyze *Kanarie* through a queer vegan lens to understand what motivates the protagonist to act on behalf of an animal, and to explicate implicit connections between queerness and animality.

In *Kanarie*, the blurring of queerness and animality is at points explicit and implicit. Most prevalent in the film is the protagonist’s—Johan’s—disidentification with the human and subsequent identification with the animal on the basis of his queerness and his suffering as a result of that queerness. Jose’ Esteban Munoz writes, “Like melancholia, disidentification is an ambivalent structure of feeling that works to retain the problematic object and tap into the energies that are produced by contradictions and ambivalences.”^{clix} Johan’s emotional turmoil, and particularly his melancholia, is the primary subject of *Kanarie*. The film ostensibly depicts the gay struggle within a broader political struggle (genocide and apartheid in South Africa), but underneath these topics is an implicit but powerful commentary on queer affect, gender and sexual ambivalence, and the disidentifications brought about by these “structures of feeling.”

Aside from the protagonist’s disidentification with the human and identification with the animal, the film’s title alone points toward its portrayal of the animal *in* the human, or animality within humanity. The image of the canary carries with it various symbolic meanings throughout literature and history. The fragile “canary in the coal mine,” for instance, would drop dead in its cage, warning human beings of carbon monoxide poisoning in the area. (And now we appropriate this phrase—“canary in the coal mine”—to mean all different types of warnings or first signs of danger). Conversely, the canary that sings and flies about freely on a sunny day can signify the exact opposite of imminent danger. This animal signifies joy, happiness, and liberation. Birds in

general, as with many animal tropes in film and literature, are symbolically malleable. The birds in Alfred Hitchcock's famous film represent obvious terror, treachery, and fear, while the bird that alights on Snow White's finger in the Disney forest scene brings her laughter and lightheartedness in her time of fear. The Canaries in this film—the name given to the men's choir—represent classical beauty as well as peace and comfort that music can provide in a time of war. On the other hand, the Canaries are portrayed in contrast to the general infantry. They are soft, dainty, and feminine by comparison. The naming is a nod to the presumed queerness of choir service, and to the choir's many queer members.

The appropriation of animality in service of imbuing the human experience with meaning is nothing new, and is not that interesting on its own. But it is *Kanarie*'s juxtaposition of animality with queer angst that makes it worth a closer analysis. The film explores, in a number of ways, the turmoil in deciding to either bury animality psychically and internally, or express it physically, artistically, and openly. And this psychic animality is inextricable from the protagonist's queer sexuality. More specifically, Johan's internal battle with his queerness (and whether or not to suppress it or celebrate it) is depicted, partly, in animal terms.

Johan has entered the South African army as a singer in the men's choir, The Canaries. The film takes viewers through Johan's journey to understand his homosexuality (in tension with the army's strict heteronormativity), his love of 1980s queer pop music like Boy George (against the backdrop of the choir's somber and traditional hymns), and ultimately his cognitive dissonance at participating in a racist and unjust war. In the opening scene viewers see Johan dressed in a wedding gown with feminine make-up, walking through a suburban neighborhood, lip-syncing to the openly-gay band, Bronski Beat's "Smalltown Boy," the lyrics of which foreshadow Johan's

journey away from the home (away from suburbia) and into an unknown life and identity in the army:

Mother will never understand why you had to leave
But the answers you seek will never be found at home
The love that you need will never be found at home
Pushed around and kicked around, always a lonely boy
You were the one that they'd talk about around town as they put you down
And as hard as they would try they'd hurt to make you cry
But you never cried to them, just to your soul.
No, you never cried to them, just to your soul^{clx}

Johan's psychic turmoil is evident in these lyrics. He must leave his home in order to discover his authentic self. It is his inner emotional life—the life of his (animal) desires that creates conflict between him and the world outside.^{clxi}

Viewers learn that Johan's identity and artistic tendencies are in direct tension with South Africa's cultural norms when the drag scene is interrupted by Johan's reverend who sees Johan performing from his car and stops to reprimand him. As Johan walks home to change out of his wedding gown, he is greeted by a friend who presents him with his call-up papers for the South African military. He has been drafted.

This scene coupled with these lyrics demonstrates a couple of important facts about Johan: first, that Johan has a natural inclination for the avant garde, the unorthodox, drag and ball culture, pop music, and art that speaks to those who are in some way on the outside of established cultural norms—in Johan's case, art that speaks to vulnerable and downtrodden young men. And second, that Johan has negatively internalized his own battle with masculine cultural norms (*you never*

cried to them, just to your soul.) Johan's personal conflict with hegemonic masculinity (and the structures that keep it in place, i.e., the military) and his internalization of that conflict are key factors leading to his identification with the nonhuman later in the film.

The tension between hegemonic masculinity and Johan's disidentification with it is threaded throughout *Kanarie*, but is best depicted in a few key scenes. Once, after performing for troops at the border, Johan is confronted by a soldier who thinks the Canaries are shirking their more dangerous military duties. The soldier says to Johan,

"Must be fun to play hooky while the rest of us do army. Are you all a bunch of faggots or just some of you?"

Johan replies, "Why do you say that?" to which the soldier says, "Check out that fat fuck over there. He won't last a day on the border but... Is he a faggot?"

"I don't know."

"How about you? You a faggot?"

"Fuck. No!" says Johan.

"Sorry! I had to ask. Nowadays they're fucking everywhere."

From here the soldier offers Johan a cigarette (which Johan attempts to smoke in order to avoid offending the soldier) and asks him to detail his sexual exploits with women in the area. Johan lies to the soldier and tells him he has had sexual relationships with many women, when in reality he is sleeping with another young man in the Canaries. Before they part ways, the soldier says to Johan, "Pleasure, Canary. Don't worry, your secret's safe with me," intimating that he knows Johan is queer despite his posturing. Johan looks back at him worried. If this soldier can tell that Johan is gay, who else in the ranks may know, and is he truly safe?

This tense scene between Johan and the macho soldier leads viewers directly into the next scene in which Johan experiences a psychic identification with the nonhuman. The juxtaposition

of the two scenes is critical, because the first scene depicts Johan's deep sexual anxiety and his fear of his peers imposing gender and sexual norms on him, which he cannot uphold. And the second scene depicts this anxiety spilling over, as Johan displaces his own fears about his safety and social belonging, and projects them onto the nonhuman.

During the Canaries' time at the border, a cow is shot late one night outside of the campground where everyone is sleeping in tents. The cow does not die right away, but instead wanders off out of sight where it continues to moan loudly in pain keeping the entire camp awake. The other choir boys complain in unison about being kept up all night by the screaming cow until finally Johan exclaims, "Could you stop making fucking jokes, please? There's a living thing dying out there." His choir mates tell him to relax, "We didn't shoot the damn thing." Johan then storms out of the tent to the restroom area where he attempts to plug his ears and find solace alone. When his lover, Wolfgang, follows him to the restroom, Johan, clearly bothered by the animal's suffering says coldly, "I wish someone would slit that fucking thing's throat." His lover asks, "What's going on, Johan?" and Johan replies, "Nothing."

These exchanges depict Johan's isolation from his peers (he is the only one upset by the cow, and the only one to remove himself from the situation), reflected in the cow's isolation from humanity as it cries out alone in the dark. Additionally, viewers see that Johan has again internalized his empathy, as he cannot express what he is feeling for the cow and instead shrugs it off as "nothing." He even hopes for the cow to die so he can cease empathizing so deeply with the cow's suffering. Because Johan is isolated from his peers by a negative internalization of his gender and sexuality, Johan subconsciously looks for his experiences elsewhere, and finds them in the nonhuman animal—in the straight-forward, uncomplicated suffering of a dying cow. It is Johan's queerness coupled with a violent culture that forces Johan to suppress his gender and

sexuality that leads Johan to a subconscious disidentification with the human and a subsequent identification with the nonhuman. Johan's desire to kill the cow is representative of Johan's desire to kill the part of himself that he sees as incompatible with the world around him. If he cannot kill his own internal self, then he would at least like to kill any living being reminding him of that queerness and the suffering it has caused him.

In his explorations of queer and brown affect, Munoz adjusts Gayatri Spivak's famous question "Can the subaltern speak?" to "How does the subaltern feel?" and "How might subalterns feel each other?"^{clxii} He argues that, "minoritarian affect is always, no matter what its register, partially illegible in relation to the normative affect performed by normative citizen subjects," and that,

antinormative feelings...correspond to minoritarian becoming. In some cases, aesthetic practices and performances offer a particular theoretical lens to understand the ways in which different circuits of belonging connect, which is to say that recognition flickers between minoritarian subjects.^{clxiii}

Johan's aesthetic practices and performances—his drag, his singing, his fashion and art, even his dark humor—are certainly a key aspect of his "minoritarian becoming." But so too is his emotional relationship to the nonhuman, to the cow. For Johan, recognition flickers in the cow. And this connection between Johan and the cow, and its subsequent blurring of the human-animal divide (in Johan's psyche, at least) begins to constitute a political responsibility in Johan, though he never recognizes it as such. His identification with the nonhuman sparks a glimmer of what I will call queer veganism, that is, a subconscious or unconscious understanding of vegan ethics (that is, a deeply felt care and concern for animals) inherent in many queer becomings. Thus, I will further adjust Spivak's famous question to "What are the political consequences of the subaltern's feelings?" or "What are the consequences of the subaltern's becoming?"

In the span of *Kanarie*, Johan's subconscious experience of queer veganism never evolves beyond an urge to tell his peers to stop laughing at the animal's suffering, and his later desire to put the animal out of its misery (and vicariously put himself out of his own misery). However, a vegan spark was ignited in Johan's mind that made him consider the animal as an individual, and further, as an individual who suffers in much the same way that Johan himself suffers. And in many queer individuals, such an experience—a subconscious connection with a nonhuman subject—does eventually evolve into a conscious connection, leading them to a broader set of vegan politics and practices that constitute a holistic vegan lifestyle.

According to Munoz, the subaltern, generally speaking, feels antinormatively, and this antinormativity can take many forms. One particular way in which the queer subject experiences antinormative feelings, I argue, is in their psychic leap away from the animal as abstraction and into a conception of the animal as individual. An empathy for animal suffering is its own type of queer affect. Derrida describes this queer intuition in *The Animal That Therefore I Am*:

My cat, the cat that looks at me in my bedroom or bathroom, this cat that is perhaps not “my cat” or “my pussycat,” does not appear here to represent, like an ambassador, the immense symbolic responsibility with which our culture has always charged the feline race. If I say “it is a real cat” that sees me naked, this is in order to mark its unsubstitutable singularity. When it responds in its name...it doesn't do so as the exemplar of a species called “cat,” or even less so of an “animal” genus or kingdom. Nothing can ever rob me of the certainty that what we have here is an existence that refuses to be conceptualized. And a mortal existence, for from the moment that it has a name, its names survives it.^{clxiv}

The individual animal, in other words, is just that—an individual who defies archetype and generic conceptualizations. Just as this individual is not representative of its own broader species, it also cannot serve as representative of all “animality,” or the myriad inner lives experienced by nonhuman animals.

For Derrida (though he never frames the phenomenon in these terms) the cat who “looks back” at him as he stands naked in his bathroom, is a type of subaltern who “speaks” to him with a knowing gaze. While Spivak was originally referring to colonial subjects as “the subaltern,” Munoz extends this category to other marginalized human beings systematically “Othered” by cultural and political hegemony. And animal rights scholars and activists (e.g. Melanie Joy, Gary Francione, Peter Singer, and others) extend again the category of “Other” to the nonhuman animal. Spivak writes,

Let us now move to consider the margins (one can just as well say the silent, silenced center) of the circuit marked by this epistemic violence, men and women among the illiterate peasantry, Aborigines, and the lowest strata of the urban subproletariat. According to Foucault and Deleuze...and mutatis mutandis the metropolitan “third world feminist” only interested in resistance within capital logic, the oppressed, if given the chance (the problem of representation cannot be bypassed here), and on the way to solidarity through alliance politics (a Marxist thematic is at work here) *can speak and know their conditions*. We must now confront the following question: On the other side of the international division of labor from socialized capital, inside and outside the circuit of the epistemic violence of imperialist law and education supplementing an earlier economic text, can the subaltern speak?^{clxv}

While Spivak’s writing on labor, the urban proletariat, and imperial law seem to have little if anything to do with nonhuman animals at first glance, it does raise important questions about where animals are relegated in capital’s global empire. Some questions to consider after reading this include: Do animals labor until capitalism? Do animals *know* that they labor? Are animals exploited and oppressed? On the other hand, what does it mean for an animal to be “free?” Are animals subject to epistemic violence? And perhaps most importantly: Can animals know their conditions or speak as a result of knowing their conditions? It is my opinion, and the opinion of many animal scientists and animal studies scholars, that animals do know things about their

individual and social situations, and they can “speak” about their own exploitation, albeit in ways not always immediately familiar to human beings.

Take, for example, pigs living in industrial CAFOs (concentrated animal feeding operations). Pigs confined in CAFOs are routinely subject to horrific abuse. Undercover videos of pigs raised in factory farms taken by activist groups and animal welfare nonprofits have shown workers regularly beating pigs and pregnant sows, even sexually abusing these animals.^{clxvi}

Jonathan Safran Foer details these abuses in his famous text *Eating Animals*:

At another facility operated by one of the largest pork producers in the United States, some employees were videotaped throwing, beating, and kicking pigs; slamming them against concrete floors and bludgeoning them with metal gate rods and hammers. The investigation documented workers extinguishing cigarettes on the animals’ bodies, beating them with rakes and shovels, strangling them, and throwing them into manure pits to drown. Workers stuck electric prods in pigs’ ears, mouths, and anuses.^{clxvii}

The abuses listed above are only a few of the horrors pigs routinely endure on industrial farms. Pregnant sows are held in “gestation crates” too small to even turn around in for the duration of their pregnancies (about four months).^{clxviii} This lack of movement causes her bone density to decrease. Because she is not given bedding in her gestation crate, she will develop large, pus-filled sores on her face, legs, back, neck, and belly. Sows are forced (via breeding practices) to birth up to nine piglets at a time. Sows naturally give birth to only one at a time. Sows are injected with hormones after every delivery which allows them to “rapidly cycle” back into fertility. This ensures that sows can be kept pregnant for the duration of their lives.

Can we call these types of abuses “exploitation?” We certainly would call them that if they were committed against human beings. What is it that categorically separates a human being from a pig, such that violence sparks outrage against one, but is shrugged off or overlooked against the other? Is it intelligence? Pigs have shown the ability to develop language, come when called, play

with toys, aid other pigs in distress, and they can even be taught to “play a video game with a joystick modified for snouts.”^{clxix} Their ability to learn these games rivaled the abilities of chimpanzees. All of these social behaviors allow us to understand animal intelligence in human terms. Children under the age of four cannot master video games, and yet their classification as human affords them relative freedom from systematic abuse. And when children are abused it sparks widespread outrage.

So, can animals be considered “subaltern?” In a political sense, pigs perhaps cannot understand the ways in which violence committed against them is systemic. Nor can they “fight back,” make political art, organize direct action, vote, or show solidarity with one another. But pigs can and do suffer. And pigs can and do “speak” about their suffering—to each other and to the human beings around them. The “grunts” that pigs use to speak with humans and other pigs can vary widely according to pigs’ individual personalities.^{clxx} Additionally, in a study out of the University of Lincoln, researchers observed how different living environments affected pigs’ vocalizations. The study found that male pigs kept in lower quality conditions (such as a small pen with a barren concrete floor as opposed to a large pen with a straw floor) produced fewer grunts than those kept in nicer conditions.^{clxxi} This is but one example of how pigs speak to people and to each other about their conditions.

And pigs aren’t the only ones. Cows forced to give milk cry out when their calves are taken from them. They even chase after them to try to protect them from farmers. Animals of all kinds form deep emotional bonds to their young, and to adults of their species and other species. And in many ways, their way of “speaking” about their pain and suffering is more straightforward than human beings’; after all, animals can not rationalize their suffering to themselves, which means they may feel it even more keenly.^{clxxii}

The psychic leap from conceiving of the nonhuman as *animal* to *cat* to individual *being* resistant to generic conceptualization is one that comes naturally to many queer people precisely because of a breakdown in how queer people perceive their own individuality mediated by queerness. Johan's positionality as a gay, gender-nonconforming man already sets him up for antinormative understandings of individuality, affect, belonging, and becoming. His positionality sets him up to understand other antinormative positionalities, at least relationally. From the queer subject position—or, more broadly, from the vantage point of the Other—the leap from human to animal and back again is a much shorter one.

This psychic connection between the animal and human (each as the Other) is seen in Levinas's meditations on internment in a Nazi prison camp in France. He writes,

There were seventy of us in a forestry commando unit for Jewish prisoners of war in Nazi Germany. The French uniform still protected us from Hitlerian violence. But the other men, called free, who had dealings with us or gave us work or orders or even a smile—and the children and women who passed by and sometimes raised their eyes—stripped us of our human skin. We were subhuman, a gang of apes. A small inner murmur, the strength and wretchedness of persecuted people, reminded us of our essence as thinking creatures, but we were no longer part of the world.^{clxxiii}

Having been reduced, by free men and women, to the status of the animal Other—a “gang of apes”—Levinas and the other prisoners have lost their sense of their own humanity, such that only a “small inner murmur” remains. They were cut off from the world and held in captivity as animals are. This status and social position (or lack thereof) primes the men for heightened responses and communication with the animal that then happened upon them:

And then, about halfway through our long captivity, for a few short weeks, before the sentinels chased him away, a wandering dog entered our lives. One day he came to meet this rabble as we returned under guard from work. He survived in some wild patch in the region of the camp. But we called him Bobby, an exotic name, as one does with a cherished dog. He would appear at morning assembly and was waiting for us as we returned, jumping up and down and barking in delight. For him, there was no doubt that we were men.^{clxxiv}

The prisoners valued and cherished the presence of the dog because of their social proximity to the dog. The prisoners could see the dog recognizing them as human, and thus affording them their humanity beyond just the small inner murmur that survives imprisonment and dehumanization. The dog engaged with prisoners as human beings, while their captors engaged with both the dog and the prisoners as subhuman, perhaps even as things. The deep connection with the nonhuman animal is born out of a necessity to see and be seen. It is the animal's "looking back," as Derrida says, that allows them to again see their own humanity.

It is worth noting that occupying analogous antinormative positionalities is not enough to explain the queer affinity for the animal. If simply having antinormative feelings or occupying any subaltern positionality resulted in an inherent vegan politics, then all types of marginalized people (racial minorities, women, those with disabilities, the poor and politically disenfranchised) would adopt vegan ethics and lifestyles in droves. No, this is an over-simplification of the queer vegan phenomenon. The queer relationship to the nonhuman is psycho-sexual. It is precisely because their antinormativity is rooted in sexuality and expressions of sex and gender—and the social isolation brought about by this fact—that the queer subject seeks to disidentify, in part, with the human, and look beyond the human for clarity and identity.

The idea that human animality is rooted in sexuality is not a new one. As Foucault notes,

The nineteenth century homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a life form, and a morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy and possibly a mysterious physiology... Homosexuality appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphroditism of the soul. The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species.^{clxxv}

Foucault understood that it is the sexual nature of this antinormative positionality in combination with how the broader hegemonic culture conceives of and further isolates alternatively sexed or

gendered individuals that results in a closer connection between the queer and the animal. Indeed, he describes how the psychiatric establishment conflates all types of sexual “heresies”:

The machinery of power that focused on this whole alien strain did not aim to suppress it, but rather to give it an analytical, visible, and permanent reality: it was implanted in bodies, slipped in beneath modes of conduct, made into a principle of classification and intelligibility, established as a *raison d’être* and a natural order of disorder. Not the exclusion of these thousand aberrant sexualities, but the specification, the regional solidification of each one of them. The strategy behind this dissemination was to strew reality with them and incorporate them into the individual.^{clxxvi}

In early psychiatry, queer individuals—those consensually loving the same sex, those with an ambiguous sex, and/or those with nonconformist gender expressions (transgender individuals)—were categorically aligned with other “deviants,” such as those practicing animal rape, or those engaging in the rape or molestation of children. This resulted in extreme social isolation for queer individuals. Prior to the development of modern psychiatry, queer people, in a wide range of cultures and societies, were treated as an aberration from “normal” sexuality, but one that could be taken in stride.^{clxxvii} Prior to psychiatric institutions homosexuals and gender inverts were not classified as disordered in medical literature, and therefore did not pose a threat to heteronormative hegemony.^{clxxviii} This is because cultural hegemony, prior to psychiatry, could not be described as heteronormative so long as heterosexuality, homosexuality, and gender inversion did not exist as categories of identity. When discourses around gender expression and sexual identity are centered around behavior rather than identity, ideology, or politics, then the aberrant behavior, however deviant, is not codified in opposition to normality or cultural hegemony. Psychiatry, and modern medicine in general, ushered in new categories of being for sexual persons—categories defined in opposition to one another as well as pitted against each other culturally and politically.

Further, early psychiatry more closely aligned homosexuality and gender inversion with animality by categorizing consensual adult homosexuality alongside bestiality as equally “deviant”

from the hegemonic norm. Homosexuality, therefore, becomes associated with animal urges or animal nature, rather than a “civilized” human nature of learned and respectable heterosexuality replete with clear, culturally prescribed gender roles, sexual norms, and expectations. The queer subject, in other words, is further delegitimized in their alignment with the nonhuman animal. And the cultural discourse at the time reflects this queer/animal illegitimacy. One Charles Nesbitt, a physician in the late 19th century referred to homosexuals and inverts as “queer creatures,” whose desires are more bestial than human.^{clxxix} And many oppressed groups have been culturally linked to nonhuman animals in order to further dehumanize them:

From a humanocentric perspective of oppressed peoples who have been, if not equated with animals, treated like animals, the introduction of animals to resistance politics suggests that, once again, even in resistance humans are being equated with animals. But again, this is a result of thinking analogically, of seeing oppression as additive, rather than comprehending the interlocking systems of domination.^{clxxx}

This is all to say that early medical treatment for queer “disorders” is what led to the further demonization and isolation of the queer subject in the western world.

This long and troubling history of the medicalization of queerness provides some backdrop to the setting of the film *Kanarie*, as queerness in the South African infantry is broadly treated as defect, disorder, and/or moral failing. While few if any of the men in the film seem to understand how their opinions about gay people and cross-dressing have been formulated, all of them agree that to be gay or to cross-dress is disgusting; and in Johan’s case, even though he is a gay man who enjoys cross-dressing, he has also internalized these homophobic messages.

That Johan empathizes with the wounded animal is only the beginning. Later, as Johan cracks under the army’s pressure, and struggles in his romantic relationship with Wolfgang he violently unravels and hallucinates one night alone in his dorm. During this, he sees a vision of the cow returned to haunt him. His dorm morphs into a warehouse, where the cow is standing and

staring at him. He loads a gun and points it at the cow, contemplating whether or not he should shoot.

Johan struggling with whether or not to shoot the animal is significant, because Johan loves the cow and empathizes with her, but he is also tormented by her screams. Johan loves queer music, drag, art, and sex and romance with his boyfriend, but he is tormented by the thought of potentially being kicked out of the army and ostracized from his family for being gay. It is as if the vision of the cow represents Johan's inner self. The cow's screams become Johan's own screams. The cow's pain mirrors Johan's pain. Thus again, the positionality of the animal mirrors the positionality of the queer individual.

Rodolfo Piskorski's analysis of the movie *Black Swan* (a psychological, body-horror rendition of the Tchaikovsky ballet *Swan Lake*) is pertinent here, as *Kanarie*, like *Black Swan*, involves the Deleuzian psychosexual process of "becoming-animal."^{clxxxix} Though Johan is never depicted as literally (or even metaphorically) transfiguring into a cow (whereas Nina transforms into the Swan before our eyes in *Black Swan*), Johan's identification with the cow is evidence of his internal psychosexual conflict. The cow, more than a simple stand-in for hopelessness or a receptacle for senseless violence, represents two philosophies of animality: the material and the transcendental. As Piskorki puts it:

A materialist account of animal being emphasizes that animal embodiment completely escapes conceptuality in a way that places animals beyond the grasp of signification. On the other hand, a Cartesian transcendentalist approach would stress the fact that not only are animals like us since they too have minds encased in bodies, but that their bodies—and the meaning of their bodies—are subordinate to (human) consciousness.^{clxxxii}

This is to say that the animal (or the cow in this case) is a general concept beyond all understanding; and at the same time, the cow is subject to human understanding, and thus only "becomes" "real" inasmuch as we enter them into our concept of reality. Johan's queerness, too, I argue, functions

in similar ways. His sense of self is something ambiguous that exists outside of his understanding. At the same time, it is his own understanding of himself that brings him into existence as a queer being and a queer body. Johan is at odds with his own self (his queer self) which causes considerable tension and distress internally. The animal, like Johan, is incomprehensible, but also essential. Johan's queer-becoming is also a type of animal-becoming.

What sparks Johan's involuntary identification with the animal (and to some degree his disidentification with the human as it exists in his vicinity) is his capacity for, first, hearing and, second, comprehending the animal's cries—a communiqué that goes only one way, as Johan never "speaks back" to the animal. Thus what is significant is both Johan's ability and inability to communicate with the animal he has identified with. The cow is able to impart a primordial message of suffering that Johan is primed, in his position as a marginalized enlisted queer man, to hear and understand. Yet, any hope of resolving the problem posed by the cow's cries is dashed, as Johan's surroundings are unsafe to enter or explore. Johan has understood the cow and its plight, yet is unable to speak back to or console the animal, and is also unable to relay his feelings to his fellow human beings, as they view the animal as less-than-human, a thing. Johan wishes to go to the cow and have a kind of conversation with her, or to console her if he cannot save her. But because he cannot do that, he is unable to form a connection with the cow due to this breakdown in communication. His relationship with the cow is formed in his mind only, which only adds to his perception of her suffering and his own.

This scene calls to mind fundamental questions about the nature of human-animal lines of communication and the development of language. In her book, *When Species Meet*, (post)humanities scholar Donna Haraway responds to Noam Chomsky and colleagues' null "continuity" hypothesis that animals share with humans (more specifically human children) similar

neural pathways for language acquisition and the syntactical structuring of language and language sequencing. At the time they argued that “the available data suggest a much stronger continuity between animals and humans with respect to speech than previously believed,” and thus, more research was needed to determine how or if mechanisms of animal speech were unique or different from that of human beings. Chomsky’s colleague and co-author W. Tecumseh Fitch later wrote in his own article,

Human and animal capabilities in the sequencing and simple grouping domain are closely related, and rely on homologous neural circuitry. This is consistent with well-documented behavioral facts: animals are able to process sequences, understand serial concatenation, and master various regular-level grammars. I thus propose the phonological continuity hypothesis (PCH): ‘humans share the processing capabilities required to deal with regular-level sequential processing, and thus phonology, with other animals, and these shared capabilities are implemented in homologous neural processing algorithms and circuitry’. This strong phrasing implies that some nonhuman animals should possess the processing capabilities underlying any known phonological phenomenon (say, Chumash sibilant harmony, or stress phenomena in metrical phonology), and that these are implemented using homologous neural mechanisms. The argument that our ‘sequential brain’ is shared with other species is of course a strong claim: its purpose is to focus the attention of phonologists and animal-cognition researchers on this important but almost completely neglected research topic.^{clxxxiii}

Haraway responds to this and other scientific inquiry like it by redirecting the conversation away from a mechanistic and hierarchical understanding of language between human and nonhuman animals (i.e. the field of Western linguistics as she understands it) and toward a theoretical reworking of the basic premise of human and animal interspecies communication. Haraway appreciates the comparative work of linguistics, but wishes to complicate it further. She writes:

Because the odd singular words human and animal are so lamentably common in scientific and popular idioms and so rooted in Western philosophical premises and hierarchical chains of being, continuity easily implies that just one continuum is replacing one chasm of difference. [Chomsky, Hauser, and Fitch] disaggregate singulars into fields of rich difference, with many geometries of system and subsystem architecture and junctions and disjunctions of properties and capacities, whether at scales of different species or of brain organization in a particular critter. It is no longer possible scientifically to compare something like “consciousness” or “language” among human and nonhuman animals as if there were a singular axis

of calibration. Part of the radicalism of these powerful recent scientific comparative evolutionary interdisciplines is that they do not invalidate asking about consciousness and language. Rather, inquiry becomes inextricably rich and detailed in the flesh of complexity and nonlinear difference and its required semiotic figures. Encounters among human beings and other animals change in this web. Not least, people can stop looking for some single defining difference between them and everybody else and understand that they are in rich and largely uncharted, material-semiotic, flesh-to-flesh, and face-to-face connection with a host of significant others. That requires retraining in the contact zone.^{clxxxiv}

Haraway takes issue with the fundamental premise that studying animal language and animal language acquisition may lead to some understanding of how humans acquire language, because implied in this premise is the idea that animal language may not or should not qualify as language (“language” by human standards and in human terms). The scientific study of animals for the sake of humans’ own understanding of themselves reinforces dangerous (and flawed) Western hierarchies of humanity and personhood.

I add here that studying the animal (if not scientifically then at least philosophically) as being and as person, allows for the breakdown of this personhood hierarchy and can lead us to deeper understandings of how human beings and animals understand each other. I wish to complicate Haraway further by, in a sense, queering her “contact zones,” or “the flesh of mortal world-making entanglements... figures where the biological and literary or artistic come together with all of the force of lived reality.”^{clxxxv} When the contact zone becomes so entangled and intimate as to blur the lines of human and animal and beckon a primordial dialogue between the two, then that becomes a queer point of contact in which human beings’ (mis)understanding and (in)comprehension of themselves and animals—fundamental contradictions—become the defining features of human-animal relationships. In other words, the very incomprehensibility of both animals and ourselves leads us to seek out animals with whom we can form companionship.

There is an emotional landscape required for forming these intimate and fundamentally incomprehensible human-animal bonds. And that “affectivity” is queer in and of itself, regardless

of how the person forming these bonds identifies sexually. Some have referred to this queer emotional landscape as a type of “assemblage,” or a mosaic of social world ordering.^{clxxxvi} If our social world is ordered in a type of patchwork of psychic and physical singularities that “self-organize” our material systems and institutions, then (especially for the queer subject and for queer groups) the internal emotional landscape informed (some may say damaged) by internalized homophobia certainly serves as a primary singularity in the queer social assemblage. Others perceive that affect is a feature of queer performativity,^{clxxxvii} but I see no reason why both could not be true simultaneously. Regardless of the angle from which one is looking, queer affect constitutes a contact zone for human and animal, both for the symbolic weight that the animal holds for the queer individual navigating troubling emotional landscapes, and because actual, individual animals can provide interpersonal relationships that serve as a respite from a hostile social landscape.

Additionally, there is a queer postcolonial reading of *Kanarie* that may help explain why the film so explicitly links queerness with animality. *Kanarie*, which is set in wartime South Africa during the struggle to end apartheid, is fraught with decolonial anxieties. And Johan, an average enlisted young man, is forced to fight for an unjust cause that he doesn’t believe in. While the issue of apartheid is sparsely mentioned in the film, there is one instance in which it is addressed explicitly. In the reception after a choir performance, an audience member approaches Johan and two of his choir mates to ask them about their time in the army.

“Have you been into the townships?” she asks.

The group falls silent for a moment. “What do you mean, ma’am?”

“I’m asking if you’ve been into the townships,” she repeats.

“Of course not,” one answers.

“Why ‘of course not’?”

“Ma’am, we don’t quite understand the question,” says a second Canary.

“Well, you represent the army, right?”

“Yes,” the young men say in unison.

“Botha sends troops into the townships.”

“Yes,” they say.

“The question is simple: Have you been into the townships? Yes or no?”

“Ma’am, that’s not really the purpose of the Canaries,” says Johan, confused.

“Oh, what’s the purpose?” she asks.

“We deliver a purpose of hope to those who have loved ones in the army.”

“By spreading propaganda?” she shoots back.

“No, by proclaiming the word of God,” says the first Canary.

“Oh, so do you represent the army or the church?”

“Both,” he says.

“That’s a bit schizophrenic.”

The scene picks up in intensity as the lady interrogates Johan and his choir mates about the purpose of the war in general. She asserts that the war is white supremacist in nature, while Johan and the other Canaries mumble something vague about the war being a campaign against domestic terrorism. While neither party resolves or amends their viewpoint as a result of this conversation, it is clear that a seed of doubt has been planted in Johan’s mind. He now doubts, not only himself and his identity, but also his place as “propagandist” in a war against other groups of marginalized people like himself. It is clear that the South African state has a rigid and narrow view of what constitutes a good, moral, and worthy citizen. Queer men like Johan, black and brown people like those subject to apartheid, and no doubt countless other marginalized people constitute an out-group whom the state does not serve, and instead actively demonizes and dehumanizes.

Animals are arguably even lower in the state's hierarchy than an enlisted queer man like Johan. Johan intuitively understands this and that is why he experiences a (dis)identificatory transformation when he hears the cow. He cannot verbalize how he and the cow are alike, but he understands it emotionally. Thus, *Kanarie* is not just a war film about South African apartheid, nor is it simply another queer struggle narrative in the midst of war. It is also a film about inclusion and exclusion in a state-building project. There are many types of apartheid apparent in the film. The one Johan experiences is a queer psychic apartheid with animals and animality playing a key symbolic role. It takes a queer struggle—the self's separation from the self and others—to understand the depth of raw suffering experienced by the cow. *Kanarie* shows viewers the queer fission of the psyche and the gradual restructuring of the self as animal.

The Well of Loneliness

J. Halberstam writes, "Queer cinema, with its invitations to play through numerous identifications within a single sitting, creates one site for creative reinvention of ways of seeing."^{clxxxviii} *Kanarie*, as with much queer film and literature, provides a site for witnessing the creative depiction of an invisible phenomenon in the queer experience—art imitating an often unseen aspect of queer life and becoming. And this particular representation of queer becoming can be found in many other works with a queer protagonist. Another of these protagonists is Stephen in Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness*. And Stephen's disidentification with the human and subsequent identification with the nonhuman goes even further than Johan's in that she drastically changes her habits and lifestyle in response to it—actions further in line with a vegan philosophy.

The Well of Loneliness depicts the lives of an affluent couple that have a young girl exhibiting masculine traits and tendencies within the very gender conformist social stratum of

upper class England. The father, who was expecting a boy prior to birth, names the child Stephen, despite her sex, which is a kind of foreshadowing of the child's "inversion," or masculine proclivities and fondness of women. As with Johan in *Kanarie*, it is Stephen's natural inclination to buck the normative gender standards set for her that drives the novel's tension.

As a child, Stephen participates in all types of boyish activities: she prefers playing outside to playing with dolls; she wears boys' clothing and despises dresses; she is closest to her father, and takes an interest in his intellectual pursuits; and she becomes the best fox hunter out of all the boys in her town. Most of the people in Stephen's life—her mother, her maid, the children she plays with, and the other children's parents—try to police Stephen's gender; they often put her down for being too boyish and un-lady-like. Her father is the one exception:

[Stephen] would say: 'Do you think that I could be a man, supposing I thought very hard—or prayed, Father?' Then Sir Philip would smile and tease her a little, and would tell her that one day she would want pretty frocks, and his teasing was always excessively gentle, so that it hurt not at all.^{clxxxix}

While Stephen's father understands that Stephen's femininity is critical to her survival in this society, he does not force the issue or make her feel ashamed of her boyishness.

Perhaps it is the affection between Stephen and Sir Philip (and her mother's resentment of the child's "queer," unfeminine nature) that led Stephen to join her father in one of his favorite pastimes: fox hunting. In service of the sport, Stephen is given her first horse, whom she names Collins after the housemaid for whom she developed an intense affection as a child. Stephen and Philip are the only father-daughter pair hunting together with several other father-son pairs from their village, Malvern. For many years, Stephen loves the sport, and becomes skilled at it, rivaling all of the town boys. Philip and the other hunting fathers of Malvern could not help but praise Stephen when she so obviously excelled above the boys. It is Stephen's pride in herself at having

won the admiration of the men of Malvern that keeps the girl locked into a sport that harms animals despite her love for them:

If Colonel Antrim had offered Stephen the crown of England on a red velvet cushion, it is doubtful whether her pride would have equaled the pride that she felt when the huntsmen came forward and presented her with her first hunting trophy—the rather pathetic, bedraggled little brush, that had weathered so many hard miles. Just for an instant the child’s heart misgave her, as she looked at the soft, furry thing in her hand; but the joy of attainment was still hot upon her, and that incomparable feeling of elation that comes from the knowledge of personal courage, so that she forgot the woes of the fox in remembering the prowess of Stephen.^{cxc}

Stephen’s tenderness for the animal is lying just under the surface as she celebrates her hunting trophies. Her affection for animals is primarily reserved for her horse Collins during this early period of her life. But this moment foreshadows Stephen’s change of heart regarding fox hunting later in the novel.

In her early 20s, Stephen comes to view the animals she is killing as sentient beings deserving of her compassion. This revolution in her thinking is sparked by the death of her father. For a long while after the accident that killed Philip, Stephen loses interest in all of her prior hobbies and interests, including fox hunting. But, at the insistence of the stable hand, Williams, that Stephen is letting the horses “go stale,” Stephen eventually gives hunting another try. It is on her first morning back at it that she becomes aware of the violence inherent in fox hunting:

Because this day was so vibrant with living it was difficult for Stephen to tolerate the idea of death, even for a little red fox, and she caught herself thinking: ‘If we find, this morning, there’ll be two of us who are utterly alone, with every man’s hand against us’.^{cxc}

This phrase—“two of us alone with every man’s hand against us”—is repeated again as Stephen approaches the other hunters for the first time without her father. Because Stephen’s position in the world has changed,—she no longer has her father to advocate on her behalf in all of her “queer” affairs—she now identifies with the lonely fox being pursued by powerful, violent human beings:

She fancied that she was being pursued, that the hounds were behind her instead of ahead, that the flushed, bright-eyed people were hunting her down, ruthless, implacable, untiring people... The whole world was hunting her down with hatred, with a fierce, remorseless will to destruction—the world against one insignificant creature who had nowhere to turn for pity or protection.^{cxcii}

This time, when Stephen witnesses the violence being carried out against the fox, pride is not there to cloud her pity:

Checking [her horse] Raftery sharply she stared at the thing. A crawling, bedraggled streak of red fur, with tongue lolling, with agonized lungs filled to bursting, with the desperate eyes of the hopelessly pursued, bright with terror and glancing this way now that, as though looking for something; and the thought came to Stephen: 'It's looking for God Who made it.'... With a sudden illumination of vision, she perceived that all life is only one life, that all joy and sorrow are indeed only one, that all death is only one dying... She could never again inflict wanton destruction or pain upon any poor, hapless creature...and she said to Raftery: 'We'll never hunt any more we two, Raftery'.^{cxci}

Stephen links the fox's despair to her own despair at the death of her father. In that moment Stephen decides to advocate for the fox and end the cruelty she is committing against it, in the same way that her father advocated for her and prevented likely violence or cruelty toward Stephen. Though Stephen's eating and other consumption habits are sparsely mentioned in the novel, in this moment Stephen is engaging in a vegan action. She is advocating and acting on behalf of the nonhuman fox who is a victim of a hegemonic, carnistic culture. The fox "speaks" to her with its desperate eyes, perhaps even pleads with her in its way, and as a result, Stephen, the queer heroine, steps between the fox and the men on horseback pursuing it. In this moment, Stephen herself is the bridge between human and animal. By way of her non-normative gender and sexuality, she has stepped out of violent human hegemony, and stepped into the desperate world of the nonhuman as the subaltern "speaks" to her. This is queer veganism in action. The hunted and exploited fox communicates its plight to the only human being capable of hearing it. Stephen hears the fox's cries because, relative to the general population of upper class England, she shares her positionality and queerness with the fox.

Radclyffe Hall, who most scholars and historians have called a lesbian, often went by the name “John,” but was still referred to with feminine pronouns^{cxciiv} by her lover and biographer, Una Troubridge, and others. Troubridge writes about Hall’s love and compassion for animals in many places in her biography, *The Life and Death of Radclyffe Hall*:

If... her complex nature lay hidden in the future, there were many characteristics that were obvious and that she had shown since childhood and one of these was her passionate devotion to animals, and her indignant championship of them in suffering or neglect. This was a fundamental instinct that was later to appear in almost everything she wrote.^{cxciiv}

That Troubridge refers to Hall’s love of animals as a “fundamental instinct” is significant because it shows that Hall did not gradually learn to love animals, nor did she care for them out of some queer-lesbian socio-cultural obligation. Her deeply-felt kinship with animals (which Troubridge details at some length) was a part of her most fundamental self, her nature of being, her *ontology*. Hall kept horses and dogs of various breeds as her closest companions, and she and Troubridge were some of the few people to treat their dogs as “sentient creatures” at dog shows. Radclyffe Hall even had visions of her long-dead Welsh collie, Rufus, as she lay on her own death bed, telling Troubridge, “Rufus is standing beside me with his head on my arm.”^{cxciiv} It is clear that Hall’s relationship to animals went far beyond feelings of fondness or responsibility to them that could be called “love.” She connected with them on a deeper, more “fundamental” level such that their happiness and well-being occupied most of her thoughts in waking life. Troubridge writes about lamenting this fact early in their relationship, but eventually coming to see animals in similar ways as a result of Hall’s deep concern and care:

It was John, and John alone who, without any conscious intention, taught me to appreciate the rights of animals and conferred on me the painful privilege of the ‘seeing eye,’ until in the end I also could not fail the underfed or overloaded horse or ass, the chained or neglected dog, the untamed bird in the dirty or cruelly tiny cage. But before my eyes were cleansed, I remember once to my shame saying angrily; ‘You spoil everything! We can never go anywhere that you don’t see some animal that makes you unhappy...’ And it is to the credit of her influence alone that

I became in time as earnest as she was in the cause of the weaker brethren, willingly toiled half across Europe burdened with cages of rescued victims and on one occasion walked around Lisieux like a caricature of a Greuze maiden, clasping to my breast a dove that she had spotted on the fourth floor of a slum house. Having extracted it from a cage resembling a rat-trap we were hunting the town for an ironmonger who could supply more suitable accommodation.^{cxcvii}

That Hall's most notable protagonist, Stephen, came to act on behalf of animals in distress is no surprise given the author's deep dedication to providing for animals—even strange, wild animals—in need.

At the same time that Hall wrote characters who were unambiguously devoted to the cause of animal welfare, she wrote with much ambivalence about food and the eating of animals. In most cases, she would shift meditations on food to characters other than her sympathetic protagonist, such as the playwright Jonathan Brockett, who, despite forming a close friendship with Stephen, is portrayed as crass, ostentatiously rich and flamboyant, and one whom Stephen regarded as “brilliant” at times, “yet curiously foolish and puerile at others.”^{cxcviii} In one section of the book, Brockett brings an odd, but ornate dinner to Stephen's house consisting of foie gras, caramels, lobster, olives, and expensive cheeses. Brockett eats most of the meal as Stephen is not feeling hungry, and afterward remarks,

Clever of me to have discovered this pate—I'm so sorry for the geese though, aren't you, Stephen? The awful thing is that it's simply delicious—I wish I knew the esoteric meaning of these mixed emotions!^{cxcix}

That the mouthy, ostentatious, and seemingly gay character of Jonathan Brockett should be the one to passively muse on the ethics of eating animals is an interesting narrative decision by Radclyffe Hall. Hall clearly wants these questions to be injected into the narrative, but may have still felt ambivalent about them herself to have her protagonist—a character whose life and sexuality closely mirrors her own—decline to respond to Brockett's curious comment as well as sit out of the decadent, meat-rich dinner altogether

I am far from the first person to examine Hall's writing of intimate and identificatory human-animal connections in *The Well of Loneliness*. Feminist scholar Sarah D'Stair has written about the "many ways that [Hall] challenges the human-animal binary" in the novel. She writes,

In her exploration of sensuality as a harmonizing force, Hall writes scenes of playful intimacy between characters from across social divides, including, I argue, the species divide, to suggest that perhaps only eroticism has the power to dissolve deeply-ingrained trait-based hierarchies that sever possibilities for communion. Indeed, in her attempts to challenge what constitutes a "natural" intimate union, Hall might be one of the earliest twentieth-century queer ecologists... Both queer ecology and animal studies deconstruct paradigms that define nonhuman animals as devoid of individual consciousness and argue against the objectification of animals into beings valued only for human use and pleasure.^{cc}

D'Stair links the queer affinity for animals—a topic taken up by Hall and many queer ecologists—to feminine power inherent in the erotic. She argues that intimate nonverbal language and gestures between human and nonhuman animals has the power to dissolve social hierarchies engendered by normative human language. The human-animal nonverbal language often stands in for Stephen's sexual desire for women, which she cannot readily express in her social sphere. Thus, Stephen seeks out intimate (of another kind) relationships with the nonhuman animals in her life—her horses, Collins and Raftery, and her spaniel, David.^{cci}

D'Stair's work speaks again to the issue of queer social isolation and how this isolation engenders intimate (and sometimes identificatory) interspecies connections. That Stephen cannot always act on her desire for women means that she turns to animals for companionship, communication, understanding, and empathy. And, as Troubridge's biography indicates, this may well have been the case in Radclyffe Hall's own life as well, at least at times.

D'Stair is identifying ontological links between human and animal in queer erotic ecology, much like I am. But where my argument diverges from D'Stair's is in conceptualizing these ontological links as existing on a vegan spectrum of philosophies, actions, and attitudes. That both Radclyffe Hall and her protagonist consistently *act on behalf of* animals is significant, as this action

is in step with animal rights activism and veganism. As I have noted elsewhere, veganism is not simply choosing to eat beans instead of beef; it is a broader system of ethics that centers animal welfare and well-being. Hall may have felt ambivalent about the eating of animals, and this is understandable considering the year and place that she lived in. She likely did not have access to the wide variety of plant-based foods that many have access to today. Nevertheless, she did act on behalf of animals in other ways—rescuing them from dire living situations, asserting their individuality as sentient creatures, and even convincing others of their sentience and value. In these ways, Radclyffe Hall could be considered a queer proto-vegan, and her novel, *The Well of Loneliness*, I argue, is a queer vegan text.

Paul Takes the Form of a Mortal Girl

Andrea Lawlor’s 2018 novel, *Paul Takes the Form of a Mortal Girl*, is, as one reviewer wrote, “a new benchmark for gender non-conforming literature” that showcases, “undeniable skill, talent, and originality,” in fiction.^{ccii} Paul, the novel’s protagonist, gives “gender fluidity” a literal, corporeal meaning, as he physically shape-shifts from man to woman to anything-in-between, and back again on a whim. This shape-shifting allows him to experience a multiplicity of queer realities on his drunken sexcapades across the Midwest. Paul can be a leather-clad dyke on the same night that he is a gay man cruising for men at college parties. Paul’s queerness, gender, and sexual prowess knows no physical, mental, or emotional limits. This shape-shifting trait makes Paul the perfect vehicle to explore, in fiction, the vast diversity of LGBTQ+ experiences, perspectives, sexual practices, and gender presentations. But perhaps more significant than Paul’s trans—transgender, transformative, transsexual, transhuman—intervention in the literary canon, is the fact that the novel is often just pure joy and fun to read—a feeling not often present in canonical

queer literature that relies heavily on “struggle narratives” (such as the two works here aforementioned).

Lawlor stops short of gifting Paul the ability to shape-shift from human to animal and back again; or perhaps we could infer that Paul does have this ability but is uninterested in non-human experiences. But the novel does nonetheless explore, in a few different ways, queer relationships to animals. The first of these meditations occurs when Paul attends the now-infamous Michigan Womyn’s Festival—a real life music festival held in Oceana County, Michigan annually from 1976 to 2015.^{cciii} The festival was billed as a three-day, all-women’s, summer utopia, and featured musical performances across a variety of genres by artists like Bitch, Tracy Chapman, Indigo Girls, Carole Pope, Marga Gomez, and many others. Festival founders Lisa Vogel, Kristie Vogel, and Mary Kindig touted the Womyn’s Fest’s by-women and for-women operations and services. The festival was a cooperative project run entirely by women—women took the festival work in shifts, cooking meals, building stages, running sound equipment, collecting trash, and even providing security for the grounds. Women also provided childcare, disability services, first aid, ASL interpreters, and exclusive tents and services for women of color.

Perhaps it’s needless to say, but men of all types were excluded from attending the Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival, although male children under the age of four were permitted to attend with their mothers. And in 1991, the festival took their male-exclusion policy a step further when they instituted a “womyn-born womyn” rule, officially banning trans women assigned male at birth from attending.^{cciv} This move drew criticism from transgender rights groups like Camp Trans who picketed the festival in the early 90s for its trans-exclusionary policy. The festival continued for many years but eventually drew criticism from other LGBTQ+ rights groups like the Human Rights Campaign, GLAAD, the National LGBTQ Task Force, and others, and,

amid this mounting pressure, finally ended its 39-year run in 2015.^{ccv}

In the novel, Paul attends the Womyn's Fest in the early years of this controversy (approximately 1993). Though the novel makes no mention of the "womyn-born womyn" policy, the fear that Paul feels as he shape-shifts and poses as a woman named Polly for the entire festival is clearly relayed:

Paul set himself to gathering kindling so he wouldn't have to admit he didn't know how to pitch a tent. He hadn't been a Boy Scout. He rested a stack of twigs next to their duffels as Jane expertly erected the borrowed four-man tent. "Wow," said Paul. "It's palatial." "I love camping," said Jane, with alienating sincerity. She was sort of outdoorsy, Paul realized, as perhaps were all lesbians at heart. How was he going to pass for two entire weeks in the woods?^{ccvi}

In this instance it is Paul's effeminacy that could result in his cover being blown. But in later passages it is purely the physical strain of maintaining the woman form that threatens to out him to the other festival goers. While working in the kitchen, Paul must remain conscious of his shape shifting:

Paul did a quick nervous body check, under cover of patting down his apron; he hadn't been paying attention, and everything had stayed in place. He was getting good at this.^{ccvii}

Paul gradually becomes more comfortable with posing as woman, to the degree that he starts to think of himself as a woman and take on what he perceives to be womanly emotions. In a conversation with his festival fling, and later girlfriend, Diane, he says,

'I'm pretty sure my friend ditched me,' Paul said. "Then we'll just have to hang out," said Diane, and Paul felt a flutter of shyness, a shy girl flutter, the flutter of not knowing if he was making a friend or something else. This was a strange experience for him, for whom all were prey, and he located the feeling in his new body. He was now having girl-feelings. Weird.

Paul's performance of womanhood (or lesbianhood as the case may be) eventually begins to replace his secret internal identity as a gay, effeminate man. As he continues to explore his attraction to and feelings for Diane he discovers aspects of lesbianism that he enjoys. He discovers

the softness of his own lips as he kisses another woman, the keenly-felt fear accompanying his attraction, and the “buzzing,” “electric” quality of his new body.^{ccviii}

It is in this newfound comfort in himself as a woman that Paul is reintroduced to the nonhuman animal as sentient being, and to the natural world in general. Diane leads Paul into the forest, presumably for a “hook-up,” and there, Paul is reminded of an innate human connection to nature:

“Look,” breathed Diane, and bridged two fingers to Paul’s wrist. He followed her eyes to a doe. He had forgotten about animals. She pressed his wrist again and he looked to the left, saw another doe, and tried to exhale his pent-up air noiselessly but failed. Both animals shot through the trees. Diane ran after, and Paul followed, into the open, out to a dark purple meadow. The deer were gone to wherever deer go. Paul flopped down in the high grass next to Diane, who was looking up at the darkening sky... Diane moved her head to look at him, and he looked away. He just wanted a lark, to pass, to pass among all these women, to sleep with a bunch of people. And now this girl was looking at him, and seeing something that he either was or wasn’t.^{ccix}

Some aspect of Paul’s reconnection with animals and the forest appears to usher in feelings of queer romance—a feeling that, up to this point is entirely absent in the novel.

Many readers may see the above passage as nothing more than a romantic setting at an isolated summer music “utopia” that would naturally engender such feelings. The “summer romance” is not a cliché for no reason, after all. But the queer intimacy with animals and the politics that follow, (i.e. veganism and vegetarianism) are omnipresent in almost all sections of the text describing this type of 1990s alt-dyke music culture. The chapter describing Paul and Diane’s time at the Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival is dotted with references to vegetarian eating. At first, Paul bemoans the ubiquitous vegetarianism at the festival, even begging his friend Jane to accompany him to their first vegetarian meal, as he nervously navigates this new cultural territory.^{ccx} But later, when Paul visits Diane in her college town in Massachusetts, he is forced to adopt a fully vegan diet—at least when he is in the company of Diane and her friends.

At first, readers may think that Diane's character arc veers into the radical, in-your-face, vegan cliché, as she proselytizes and nags Paul for his food choices. Diane and her roommates—all of whom are also vegan lesbians—take Paul out to brunch at a local diner while he is in town visiting. There, Paul orders the “Hungry Woman’s Breakfast” consisting of pancakes, eggs, bacon, and sausage, triggering the disgust and outrage of the vegans at the table:

Diane frowned and ordered the tofu scramble. She regarded Paul icily... “Meat comes from animals, Polly,” Diane said, “You should hear how they talk about us. We’re like Nazis to them. If you could hear what cows say, you wouldn’t eat a cheeseburger ever again.”

Paul counters weakly to ask about the natural order of animals eating other animals, but is quickly shut down by Diane who accuses Paul of attempting to invalidate her feelings. Paul resigns to eat only the eggs, but Diane protests again: “Sure [you can eat eggs], if you like eating chickens’ periods,” she says. At this, Paul changes his order to the tofu scramble, not because he feels differently about animal welfare or is disgusted by the idea of eating “chickens’ periods,” but because he has decided to choose the path of least resistance. He doesn’t want to upset Diane and risk losing his girlfriend, so he does what she says.

This dramatic anthropomorphizing of cows constitutes part of the radical vegan stereotype, and it licenses non-vegans to dismiss most of what vegans say as hysterical—such as when vegans refuse to “eat anything with a face,” or refuse to turn their “bodies into graveyards,” and other such imagery not rooted in appeals to evidence or science, but in weak appeals to emotion. But as readers gradually uncover over the course of Diane’s storyline, Diane actually *can* speak to animals and can hear them speaking to her. Thus, when she references hearing how cows talk about humans, she means she can literally hear cows having conversations with other cows about the abuse that they suffer at the hands of human beings.

Later in the novel, Diane employs this gift of human-animal communication to rescue a dog who is being left on a chain outside in the cold and rain:

Paul said, “I really don’t want to get arrested for stealing a dog.” “No,” said Diane. “Forget that. I took care of that.” “What?” said Paul. “Without me? When?” “You were there,” she said. “I just did it. You were great, actually.” “How did you—” Diane patted her army pants’ pocket. “Bolt cutters,” she whispered. “Then I told him to hide out in the dunes and I’ll bring him food tomorrow.” “Oh,” said Paul. He finished his hot chocolate, now cold.

Diane is apparently so adept at communicating with animals that she was able to rescue an abused dog in Paul’s presence without him noticing. She simply tells the dog what to do and the dog listens and obeys. Diane’s character is a modern take on the Roman goddess, Diana, after all, the unmarried (some scholars have read lesbian), mistress of wild and domestic animals, maiden of adventure, advocate for the downtrodden, and lesbian-feminist icon.^{ccxi} Like Diana, Diane is not just an advocate for animals, she is obsessed with them and their perspectives. She has dedicated much of her activism to their cause—constantly reading animal rights texts like Peter Singer’s *Animal Liberation*, and speaking on behalf of animals in the presence of those who cannot hear or understand them. And Paul, too, views her as a modern goddess and feels he is unworthy of her love, affection, and intellectual depth. More than simply being the main lesbian character, Diane represents the lesbian archetype. Those attributes that flow from Diane—her androgyny, communing with large groups of women, her aggressive politics, her activism, and not least of all, her veganism—are attributes that are quintessentially lesbian.

Aside from Lawlor’s likening of Diane to her Roman counterpart, their depiction of lesbian-veganism is significant for a few reasons. First, where veganism is depicted, Paul is usually the lone queer going against the cultural grain by eating meat (or secretly wishing he could eat meat). Paul is not thrilled by having to eat an entirely vegan diet around Diane and her friends, but he also doesn’t protest very much. This is likely because, at this point in the novel, he is still trying

to win Diane's affection and keep her as a girlfriend, and he doesn't want to contradict her core beliefs or extra-sensory powers (after all, she has accepted, if reluctantly, his ability to shape-shift). But the novel also suggests that Paul intuitively understands that veganism is a cultural cornerstone of lesbianism. Therefore to refuse to eat a vegan diet would be to go against long-standing lesbian tradition, such as that observed at the Womyn's Festival—and Paul is a man posing as a woman at a famously anti-trans festival. He could have his cover blown and be thrown out if he doesn't go with the flow.

Second, the narrator's feelings about the Womyn's Festival and the often rigid boundaries of 1990s lesbian culture are revealed in how veganism and vegan activism are portrayed, which is to say not favorably. The novel does not explicitly comment on the anti-transgender policies of the Michigan Womyn's Festival, but does depict in great detail the tendency of festival goers to gate-keep various other lesbian norms—from food and clothing choices to the festival's zero-tolerance policy on men. And readers see this gate-keeping up close when Paul moves into a house with Diane and many other festival attendees. Diane immediately sets about controlling what "Polly" can and cannot eat, and occasionally policing Paul on other lesbian norms. Readers may see this as a simultaneous critique of veganism and lesbianism as cultural institutions. In other sections of the novel, individual vegans and lesbians are portrayed favorably. Paul's best friend in the novel, Jane, is a lesbian, and she is depicted as cool, interesting, smart, complex, and fun despite being more reserved and level-headed than Paul. Jane is written positively and with complexity, whereas the groups of lesbians—read: the arbiters of Lesbian Culture—are written with broad strokes and clichés. They are controlling, nagging, predictable, humorless, and seemingly on edge. Similarly, another vegan in the novel—a queer man named Ruffles, who takes Paul in as a roommate in San Francisco—is depicted as laid back, a bit eccentric, considerate, and friendly to Paul. Paul admires Ruffles's houseplants, home décor, and overall aesthetic, and decides to make his home in San

Francisco in part because he enjoys his living situation (even though Ruffles politely asked him to only eat vegan in the house). This depiction of Ruffles is a sharp contrast from Diane and her friends who dramatically anthropomorphize animals and verbally combat anyone who dares to eat an egg in their presence. In short, lesbians and vegans as individuals are given the benefit of the doubt and depicted with complexity. But lesbianism and veganism as cultural institutions are sharply critiqued as exclusionary and alienating. Vegans and lesbians as groups demand conformity to particular ideologies—something to which Paul is fiercely opposed, even if he is content to try it on for a time.

Throughout the novel, Paul opposes the strictures and norms imposed by the hegemonic institutions around him. He is adverse to all types of moralizing and bigotry found in the Christian churches of his Iowa college town. He shirks the responsibilities required of him by his university—routinely skipping class, putting off homework, and earning low grades that are not an accurate representation of his high level of intelligence. And he feels most unlike himself (in his myriad forms and conditions) when he must return home to visit his parents, thus playing a part in the heteronormative institution of the nuclear family. Each of these institutions (and many others) represents a type of ideological apparatus of the state, or ISAs. ISAs produce and reproduce ideologies, which Althusser defines as “systems of ideas which dominate the mind of a person or social group.”^{ccxii} And for Althusser, these ideologies become “the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence.”^{ccxiii} In *Paul*, veganism and lesbianism (as practiced by groups) are written as ISAs—two ideological apparatuses dominating the mind of a social group, and each working to uphold the norms of the other. While it would be a far stretch to call either lesbianism or veganism hegemonic (as one could call the Christian church or the American university system), in the context of the Michigan Womyn’s Festival, veganism and

trans-exclusionary lesbianism are the dominant ideologies—so dominant that they hold power over and, thus, threaten (with exclusion and expulsion) those who do not or cannot conform.

Paul never explicitly critiques veganism or TERF lesbianism as ideological institutions, but he doesn't have to. His discomfort with each (and with the two ideologies entwined together) is apparent, and eventually leads to his departure away from these groups. And when Paul encounters veganism again outside of its institutional context, he is much more comfortable negotiating plant-based eating in his living situation—perhaps because it is not treated (by his roommate) as over-arching ideology, but as a personal preference—even if it is still one deeply-felt as religion or politics may be.

In the end, Paul is a (trans- and/or post-) human being uncontrolled and largely unbothered by the ideological state apparatuses that impose moral imperatives around sex, sexuality, gender, eating, and any other type of consumption or social behavior. As Diane says to Paul over their diner breakfast, “If you're vegetarian, you could even maybe move in officially. If you wanted. The only house rules are you have to be vegetarian and a woman.

‘Hmm,’ said Paul, licking his fork. As soon as he could, he'd sneak off and get a burger somewhere.”^{ccxiv}

The Silence of the Lambs

As many queer film critics rightly note, queer characters, particularly in the latter half of the 20th century, often serve as a villain or antagonist in popular storylines. Nowhere is this more the case than in Jonathan Demme's film adaptation of *The Silence of the Lambs*, in which the story's villain, a gender-bending (some would say transgender) character called “Buffalo Bill,” by the film's main characters, is understood as evil, not just because he enslaves and murders human

beings, but also because his gender and sexuality are portrayed as deviant aspects of his personality which aid and abet his crimes:

Can we argue that the character of Buffalo Bill functions like Norman [Bates] as a warning? Homosexuality is certainly dangerous to Bill's lover, whose head Starling discovers in Lecter's old car. Bill's transvestism is not healthy for the women he skins either. At the very least, Bill's character exploits contemporary anxiety over gender and sexuality. His confusion and dissatisfaction with his own nature are expressed, as most dilemmas seem to be in America, in violent terms.^{ccxv}

As discussed above, queer affect in film and literature can take many forms. While Buffalo Bill's "confusion and dissatisfaction" are a form of queer affect depicted mainly in violent terms in *The Silence of the Lambs*, there are other secondary feelings and emotional textures in Bill that many queer critics of the film overlook (and to be fair, it is easy to overlook what little complexity exists in Bill when faced with the archetypal and overly simplistic depiction of the queer villain).

While the film links Buffalo Bill's gender and sexuality to his monstrosity, it is his relationship to animals—the moths that he keeps, his beloved poodle—that represents the small glimpse we have of his compassion and humanity. But what critics have not yet pieced together is that *both* Buffalo Bill's monstrosity *and* his kinship with animals are a result of the severe social isolation that he suffers because of his queerness. One of these (kinship with animals) can be, in reality, a natural outcome of the social isolation of queer individuals, while the other trope (murderous tendencies) is a fiction designed to stoke fear about transvestism and homosexuality. But in *The Silence of the Lambs*, these tropes are mashed together so that queerness and animality (and the disturbing depiction of the relationship between the two) become two sides of the same monstrous coin. The film wants viewers to see Bill's relationship to animals as obsessive and without boundaries. He has turned his home into a dark breeding tank for exotic moths—something that no "sane" or "normal" person would ever do. And his fondness for his poodle borders on

erotic, which calls to mind one of the greatest of all human taboos: bestiality. But if viewers knew nothing of Buffalo Bill's violent tendencies—his kidnapping, starving, and skinning young women—then his relationship to animals, however obsessive, might appear to be a natural outcome of his loneliness, isolation, and inability to relate to other human beings in his vicinity.

Vegan readers may become outraged at the suggestion that a murderous sociopath like Buffalo Bill could harbor even a modicum of vegan ethics or morality. After all, human beings are animals too, and Bill certainly exhibits no empathy for them. Far from suggesting that Buffalo Bill is a proto-vegan, I am speaking here only in terms of cause and effect. Bill is yet another example in popular culture of the inextricability of queerness and animality. Bill's kinship with animals, even in its strange and disturbing dimensions, is born of his positionality—the suppression of the queer in the world abroad, the antinormative cordoned off from the normative, and the repression of queer feelings, affect, and intimacy. Animals no more judge transvestism than they do serial homicide. Thus, his intimate relationships (or obsession) with animals is understandable from a number of angles.

Buffalo Bill's deep regard for nonhuman life (and breeding, housing, and protecting it) is contrasted with his blatant disregard for human life. His moral priorities are inverse that of American hegemony: animals are beautiful beings, individuals to be admired and protected; and humans are objects, mere skins to be sewn and worn. While he thinks women are beautiful and “covets” them as the film reminds us repeatedly, he has no respect for them as individuals with rights to life and freedom. The film, which many have called trans- and homophobic wants viewers to see this inversion of morality as queer, and to see queerness as an act of the inversion of morality. That Bill wants to be (or at least look like) a woman means that his values were already topsy-turvy in the eyes of the American majority.

Bill's relationships to his animals appear to cross the unspoken boundaries and social norms of human-pet relationships. The outrage he displays when his hostage threatens his poodle mirrors that of an unhinged father protecting his child. While it is clear that he would act out violently against the one threatening his dog, the fear he feels in that moment is one rooted in a fear of the loss of companionate love. "Precious" the poodle is his closest and seemingly only companion.

His relationship to the moths he houses takes on other identificatory qualities. First, he turns over his entire home to allow the moths to fly free within it. A loose moth in the dining room is what reveals Bill's true identity—Jame Gumb—to Clarice Starling. Bill's living space as much belongs to the moths as it does to him, and he coexists with them in his home. Second, the detectives and forensic pathologist discover the moths in pupa form lodged in the windpipes of Buffalo Bill's murder victims. It is Hannibal who elucidates Bill's queer connection to the moths for Agent Starling when he says, "The significance of the moth is change—caterpillar into chrysalis, or pupa, and from thence into beauty."^{ccxvi} Bill wants to raise the moths from larva so that he can witness them transform into something more beautiful. Starling links this obsession with transformation to Bill's transvestism and desire to be or be like a woman. Indeed, viewers see Bill transform himself into a woman in one of the film's most iconic scenes, as he puts on a wig and woman's robe, and tucks his penis between his legs while he watches himself dancing effeminately in front of a mirror. Viewers see the only instance of Bill exhibiting pleasure and satisfaction at the image of himself in this moment.

Bill nurtures and develops an obsession with moths because he relates to them. As one film reviewer spells it out,

Transformation of pupa (not beautiful) into moth (beautiful) is the analogue of Buffalo Bill's/Jame Gumb's view of change from man (unbeautiful) to "woman"

(beautiful). Along with an association between women and birds, a link between moths and birds has everything to do with heavenly beauty. Jame's raising of his caped arms before his videocam, as if they were wings, links him to the bird he would become and the moths he raises.^{ccxvii}

Bill identifies with the moths because nowhere around him does he see his fellow human beings exhibiting the types of transformations he desires for himself. Of course, there *are* other human beings who seek to transform their bodies and identities to fit something more in line with their psyche; but Bill lives in a small, rural town in a time before Internet access became commonplace. The film would have its viewers believe that Bill is one of a few individuals who wishes to be the opposite gender, and that to wish such a thing will result in a tragic, violent, and lonely life in which one's only companions are the likes of moths.

If one can look past the horror-film cinematography one can see that it is Bill's love and care for his pets that gives us a glimpse of his humanity. Animal studies scholar Heidi J. Nast calls for the formation of "critical pet studies" to investigate the ethics, philosophies, cultural norms bound up in "pet love," or human relationships to pets. She asks, "Why, for example, are women and queers such central purveyors of the language and institutions of pet love?"^{ccxviii} As I discuss in Part III, for queer people, it may have something to do with, first, the fact that pets are a safe form of companionship and friendship free of judgment, and without any need for the navigation of social norms as in human-to-human companionship. And second, a queer love of pets may be due to the queer experience being absent any cultural imperative to reproduce. Heteronormativity promises—demands, even—reproduction. Those that reproduce are lauded for the continuation of the human species and imbued with a morality reserved only for the heterosexual. (Conversely, homosexuality is often condemned on the grounds that two lovers of the same sex cannot procreate). As Lee Edelman notes, the child, the product of the heterosexual duty (expectation) to procreate, "suffices to spirit away the naked truth of heterosexual sex, seeming to impregnate

heterosexuality itself with the future of signification by bestowing upon it the cultural burden of signifying the future.”^{ccxix} That queer individuals are shut out of this future-making, heteronormative, American project means that there exist many other possibilities for love and companionship outside of a male/female moral duty to perpetuate the species.

The queer subject is relieved of the burden to procreate, and therefore relieved of the obligation to seek companionship *only* in a member of the opposite sex (of the same species), and therefore is free to imagine alternative forms of companionship, friendship, and love. In the case of Buffalo Bill, his transvestism, gender ambiguity, and creepy love of moths adds a greater dimension to his isolation; he is not only isolated from the heteronormative majority, but also from whatever small trans/gay community may exist in his vicinity. He is so far outside of any type of assimilationist lifestyle, that he can no longer relate to people whose gender and sexuality are more closely aligned with his own. In other words, he has formed an intimate connection to the nonhuman because he is isolated, and he is isolated because he has formed an intimate connection to the nonhuman. Each reinforces the other. And both his bizarre relationships to animals and his extreme isolation from other people enhance the film’s depiction of his monstrosity.

In their book *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory*, Cary Wolfe and W.J.T. Mitchell argue that cross-species identification (not cross-gender or cross-class identification) is the primary site for trauma in *The Silence of the Lambs*.^{ccxx} The film’s title and publicity poster alone reinforce this idea. The “silence” of the lambs refers to the end of their screaming during slaughter. Starling’s memory of her uncle slaughtering lambs is her most keenly-felt trauma, and one that she relays to Hannibal Lecter at his beckoning. Later, Lecter uses this trauma to taunt Starling when he asks her, “Have the lambs stopped screaming?” Likewise, the publicity poster—a black and white image of Jodie Foster’s face with a brighter rendering of

one of Bill's death's-head moths covering her mouth—foreshadows how multiple animal archetypes stand in for human fragility, entrapment, trauma, and violence. Starling, Wolfe and Mitchell note, is a masculinized woman in the film, just as Buffalo Bill is a feminized man. And the inversion of gender norms in these two characters in part facilitates the film's explorations of cross-species identifications.^{ccxxi} Starling identifies with the frightened lamb, which drives her to rescue it and run away from home, just as Bill becomes unhinged at the thought that his poodle may be harmed and this drives him to action. While the former character is the sympathetic protagonist of the film, and the latter is the monstrous villain, each of these characters contains queer dimensions in their gender and sexuality, and each sees themselves in the plight of the individual animal or in the animal-as-archetype.

Thus, depictions of queer traits in film lend themselves to explorations of animality, and depictions of animality elucidate textures of human "otherness" that are otherwise difficult to conceptualize or grasp. That depictions of animals of myriad species and forms coincide with depictions of queer-becoming in *The Silence of the Lambs* speaks to the ontological cohesion inherent in these paradigms.

Conclusion

Michael Lundblad, a leading scholar in animal studies, seeks to differentiate animal studies from the philosophy of animality on the grounds that the former could be more closely linked to advocacy work on the part of nonhuman animals in an attempt to improve their conditions and treatment, while the latter serves as a framework for better understanding human beings and our sociopolitical conditions in relation to animals. He writes,

The phrase "animal studies" strikes me as too limiting, too easily mistaken for a unified call for universal advocacy for actual animals. I want to associate animal studies even further with that advocacy, with work explicitly concerned about the living conditions of nonhuman animals. Conversely, I want to argue for "animality studies" as a way to describe work that expresses no explicit interest in advocacy

for various nonhuman animals, even though it shares an interest in how we think about “real” animals. Animality studies can prioritize questions of human politics, for example, in relation to how we have thought about human and nonhuman animality at various historical and cultural moments. Increased attention to the history of animality and related discourses can lead to new insights in fields such as the history of sexuality.^{ccxxii}

In other words, in Lundblad’s opinion, animal studies should do justice-oriented work, while animality—a theory, a philosophy—provides discourse on human and/or animal nature, or our connected ontologies.

The queer vegan lens I have developed here should be thought of as a literary tool that can do both of these things in relation to queer alterity and disidentification with the normative, hegemonic “human” and culturally prescribed human ways of being. This framework allows for a discussion of how queer people and representations of queer people are connected to and invested in the welfare of nonhuman animals at the same time that it links queer-becoming to animal-becoming along identificatory lines. That the “queer” is so often relationally linked to the “animal” in film and literature speaks to the ways in which both queerness and animality trouble the fundamental concepts of human, species, identity, and becoming. This framework, which falls under a broader animal studies umbrella, could be applied to numerous works of film and literature going forward.

PART III: MUKBANG MICRO-CELEBRITIES: SOCIAL MEDIA AND ORAL HISTORIES AS QUEER VEGAN ASSEMBLAGE

Part III of this text is an ethnography of queer vegan social assemblages—or more specifically, social media content, oral histories, and physical gathering spaces. I aim to elucidate how these seemingly disparate facets of queer vegan life intertwine to create a cohesive social patchwork in which implicit ideologies—about the nature of human consumption, evolution, and optimization—abound. Each of these spaces is a *casual* site of ideological production, unlike American schools, churches, military, and corporations, which we broadly consider to be the official arbiters of culture (and thus confer upon them power and political sway), as Foucault, Bordieu, Althusser, and countless others have noted. Because oral histories, places of leisure, and social media content are considered to be casual it is sometimes more difficult to assert them as serious sites of scholarly inquiry. But because veganism (and especially the queer vegan culture that I speak of here) has still not firmly rooted itself in long-standing American institutions, it is crucial to examine these spaces to understand how queerness and veganism align within them.

In this section, I treat social media content, public spaces, and interviews as “texts” for cultural analysis. In the social media section, I focus primarily on YouTube where vegan politics have become popularized, vegan and/or queer-owned restaurants and food-related businesses, and interviews with self-identified queer people who also adhere to some form of plant-based or plant-focused eating and lifestyle. While some of these topics may appear to be disparate, each of these arenas of queer-vegan life speaks to, informs, and influences the other. Many queer and vegan people began their foray into veganism by consuming the vast array of vegan content on social media. They then carry these politics out into the world when they search for like-minded people or for restaurants that are friendly to both queer people and vegans. As a result, the queer vegan

people interviewed for this project had much to say about how to navigate a queer childhood, how to “come out” as either queer or vegan, what leads one to adopt a plant-based lifestyle, and whether or not being queer and being vegan have anything to do with each other.

Assemblage theory is useful here because of how assemblages allow us to “mash up,” for comparative analysis, these seemingly discrete sections of social and cultural life.

Assemblage theory, first theorized by Deleuze and Gattari,^{ccxxiii} is a mode of analysis that seeks to reconnect disconnected or disparate social realms and social phenomena. Assemblages are interplaying social practices that are composed of material, technological, discursive, and relational elements. Another way to put it is that assemblages “offer a critical vocabulary and methodology for understanding how diverse social phenomena are contingently composed across time and space.”^{ccxxiv} Assemblage theory offers a useful conceptual framework for analyzing social media, the topic making up the majority of this chapter. Because social media consists of content “composed across time and space,” but gathered together in the same virtual space, assemblage theory can help readers understand how these disparate phenomena interplay on social media platforms over time, and work to create or promote new ideologies, lifestyles, and social realities. Social media also has the power to extend the lifespan of ideas, philosophies, and cultural images. Below, one author discusses how photographs are circulated unexpectedly and ad infinitum on social media, a point that could be extrapolated to many other types of social media content:

A photograph’s afterlives are multiplied and amplified as it spreads digitally, extending its mnemonic assemblage. As Jose van Dijck notes, photographs now have an ‘extended life on the internet, turning up in unexpected contexts’ and at unanticipated times. In turn, the rapid digital redistribution, repurposing and reframing of photographs can result in instances of context collapse. The concept of context collapse was originally coined in order to explain how digital technologies, platforms and media can flatten multiple contemporaneous but spatially distant social settings and audiences into one, blurring and confusing public and private forms of communication and self-presentation.^{ccxxv}

While this scholar is speaking specifically about the digital life of the photograph, this idea can also be applied to social media content on philosophical discourse, vlogs, political messages, and lifestyle trends. Taking into consideration the “context collapse” that happens when disparate ideas are spread on social media, it can be difficult to discern exactly how various philosophies become popular in these spaces. Later in this chapter, I aim to draw connections between niche social media content pertaining to veganism and other political ideologies to call attention to these interrelated assemblages.

Jasbir Puar puts the theoretical utility of assemblages to work on transnational queer studies in her work on queer terrorist assemblages. Assemblage theory is also useful for understanding slippery terms with many social applications like the word “queer.” As she succinctly puts it,

Queerness as an assemblage moves away from excavation work, deprivileges a binary opposition between queer and not-queer subjects, and, instead of retaining queerness exclusively as dissenting, resistant, and alternative (all of which queerness importantly is and does), it underscores contingency and complicity with dominant formations. A focus on queerness as assemblage enables attention to ontology in tandem with epistemology, affect in conjunction with representational economies, within which bodies...interpenetrate, swirl together, and transmit affects to each other.^{ccxxvi}

This “swirling together” that Puar alludes to is a useful way to think about the relationship between queerness and veganism. Queerness and veganism are linked in various places, by many people and their cultural practices, and in numerous texts and cultural artifacts, but the link is almost always implicit. For this project, assemblage theory will allow readers to more clearly see these tenuous relationships between queerness and veganism and bring them forward into conscious thought and consideration—both ontologically and epistemologically.

I came across interesting examples of the implicit ontological and epistemological connections between veganism and queerness in gathering oral histories from queer and vegan

people. Many of my interviewees spoke about how many queer people they knew were also vegan or vegetarian, and how it seemed that the two concepts/lifestyles/belief systems were inherently linked—but they couldn't quite say how. This presents an epistemological issue. How can one know something without knowing how they know it? What messages are people receiving about queerness and veganism, and where are they receiving them? Before positing my theories about how and why queerness and veganism are linked I will first relay pertinent sections of the oral histories told by my interviewees.

In conducting these interviews, my methods consisted of putting out calls on vegan or LGBTQ-related social media groups asking to speak with people who identified as both LGBTQ and vegan, vegetarian, or plant-based in some way. Because I made it clear that I wanted to speak with people in the queer/vegan intersection, it is possible that this could have primed some of my interviewees' answers. However, in the interviews themselves, I asked my questions in order from most vague to most specific. I began with some basic demographics questions (about race, sexual identity, religion, occupation, age, and so forth), and gradually moved into asking people to describe their dietary practices (both now and while growing up) and their relationships to animals (pets and non-pets). Then, near the end of the interview, I would ask each interviewee outright if they felt any of these identities, behaviors, or social practices were related. I wanted interviewees to know that they were not expected to respond affirmatively, or in ways that they might assume I wanted them to respond. While it is a tricky process getting people to think and open up about the relationship (if they feel there is any) between their own sex and gender and eating practices (and would require necessary adjustments for larger studies and quantitative analysis), for this project's qualitative research purposes, I was able to glean some valuable insights from the participants' responses.

Because of the sensitive nature of the topics discussed in interviews I have chosen to keep all of my interviewees anonymous. I will list them as such: “35-year-old interviewee who identifies as a lesbian and a vegetarian,” for instance. My reason for doing this is that I didn’t want to inadvertently “out” anyone as a member of the LGBTQ+ community, and I wanted my interviewees to know that they could speak freely about their sexual and gender identities without being identified in writing. I hoped that this would help establish trust between interviewer and interviewee as we talk about personal and sensitive subjects. I transcribed all interviews while speaking with interviewees on the phone or via Zoom. In a few cases, I contacted interviewees a second time to ask follow-up questions about their responses.

Lastly, I decided only to interview queer vegan people in Indianapolis where I live, not only because I am local to the city, but because it would allow me to connect with my interviewees over our shared locale. For instance, if in their interviews they discuss being a part of a queer or vegan social group, chances are I am also familiar with that group. If they talk about frequenting particular restaurants or social spaces I will know what those are and whether or not I may be able to extrapolate information from their responses. Keeping all of my interviews local allowed me to paint a sociocultural snapshot of queer veganism in a mid-sized, but fast-growing, Midwestern city with an increasing number of vegan- and vegetarian-friendly businesses, as well as gay bars and other queer social spaces. Indianapolis is similar to other Midwestern cities in these key ways.

I will begin this part by outlining some of the key themes that emerged from my interviews with queer vegans in the Indianapolis area, and I will continue to refer back to this throughout Part III.

“What does being queer have to do with being vegan?”

The heading to this section is a question that I asked all of my interviewees. And, in every case, the interviewees met this question with a pause. It was clear that this was not something that any of them had pondered at length. One of the interviewees, a 24-year-old bisexual woman living in Broad Ripple, answered with,

I don't think one has anything to do with the other. I know it's a stereotype that queer people are vegan or whatever. I think it just so happens that people are doing this. Gender is not influencing eating and consumption. I think it's just that people who put more effort into figuring themselves out as far as their sexuality are also going to put more effort into [learning about] more ethical ways to eat.^{ccxxvii}

Despite every interviewee claiming that they knew many queer people who were also vegan or vegetarian, most of them responded with a similar answer when asked outright if there is any connection between being queer and being vegan.

But when asked similar questions in more oblique ways, the answers were more interesting. I asked this same interviewee, “Do you think your gender or sexuality has anything to do with your eating patterns?” She responded,

I was vegan before I came out as bisexual. So I feel like deciding to be vegan influenced me to make decisions elsewhere in my life, and come out and be bisexual and make that a part of me as well. Reflecting on it now, being vegan was already straying from the norm. People are always like, ‘wow you're vegan that's so crazy.’ And I'm just like, ‘yeah I'm vegan it's not anything special.’ I feel the same way about my sexuality. It doesn't really matter.^{ccxxviii}

While this interviewee didn't feel that being bisexual and being vegan were directly related, she did feel that living each lifestyle involved navigating similarly tricky social norms. Being bisexual and being vegan both involve a declaration of sorts. Whether it's going out on dates or hanging out with friends, there are practical reasons why the people around a person may need to know about the person's sexuality or dietary needs. Thus, knowing when and how to impart such

information to others in social situations is an issue linking queerness and veganism for this respondent.

Another interviewee, a 30-year-old non-binary person, acknowledged that my call for interviews had made them think more deeply about the relationship between queerness and veganism ahead of time. When asked about this relationship, they said,

Before you brought it up, I would have said [there is no connection]. But thinking back to my reasons for stopping meat, I think there is almost something queer in that. I see the similarities in going outside of the status quo and traditional ways of living. Both are about questioning traditional ways of expression and living.^{ccxxxix}

For this interviewee, being queer and being vegan are both about having the freedom to live life outside of the norm. If “normal” or socially acceptable modes of romance or consumption are not working for a particular person, they should be able to live an alternative lifestyle. This person believed that veganism and LGBTQ+ rights were both fundamentally about normalizing less-established ways of living.

Several interviewees linked the high rates of veganism and vegetarianism in the LGBTQ+ community to the ability of queer people to recognize systemic oppression. Some posited that because many LGBTQ+ people have faced discrimination and oppression themselves, they may become concerned with other types of oppression elsewhere. A 24-year-old, gay interviewee said,

I feel like if you’ve been bullied and mistreated then you will empathize with animals more. It goes along with other types of social justice that queer people also involve themselves with, like Black Lives Matter. When you’re in the queer community you’re aware of human rights and you know what it feels like to not have them. I have more in common with animals than someone who is a top dog in life.^{ccxxx}

That queer people are not usually able to achieve “top dog” status in life—a phrase I take to mean privileges afforded to non-queer people that queer people would not have access to—means that queer people will naturally empathize with other vulnerable populations, including animals.

The “oppressed groups stand up for other oppressed groups” theory is something I’ve heard, both in and outside of these interviews, to explain why so many LGBTQ+ people are vegan or vegetarian. But this explanation is lacking in a couple of ways. First, it doesn’t account for why other oppressed groups—racial and religious minorities, for instance—do not appear to have a disproportionate number of vegans and vegetarians. If facing oppression is all it takes to make a person vegan, then there would be a lot more vegans in the world than there are currently. Oppression can take many forms and affect a wide variety of people—even those people who appear to be privileged “top dogs.” Yet veganism is still a marginal social movement despite many gains in fast food chains, restaurants, grocery stores, and in media coverage over the last ten years. Second, this theory doesn’t explain why queer people focus their time, attention, and activism on animals in particular, rather than oppressed groups of human beings (though a person can do both, of course). There are certainly many strains of social justice activism running through queer communities, particularly online. But veganism and animal rights appear to be of unique interest to LGBTQ+ groups.

Another interviewee began to link her love of animals in early childhood to trauma she experienced when her cat was hit by a car. Because she didn’t have a lot of friends as a child, she took her pet’s death particularly hard and formed close attachments to subsequent animals as a result:

I got a dachshund when I was five or six years old and he lived a long time. I also had parakeets and fish. Then there were neighborhood cats and dogs. Dogs and cats would just roam around on the streets. They didn’t have the [animal control] laws that they have now. Today, I see my cats as just as important as good friends and family. I have five of them and I love them all dearly.^{ccxxxi}

This 52-year old, queer vegetarian linked her choice to become vegetarian to her love of cats. In her childhood, this interviewee explains, animals often stood in for a lack of human friendships:

I've been a big animal lover since I was a little kid. We ran around the neighborhood, and I had lots of little animal friends. I would visit a rabbit in my neighbor's back yard. When I was a kid I didn't know that veganism was a thing. My parents were religious and believed that animals were put here by God to eat. It just seemed wrong to me even when I was little. Pigs and cows have the same emotions that cats and dogs do, and I thought it was sad that we ate them.^{ccxxxii}

She went on to say that she notices a large number of self-described animal lovers in the LGBTQ+ community. Indianapolis Pride now has a "pet pride" event in which LGBTQ+ animal lovers bring their pets to the park to hang out and have play-dates with each other during Pride weekend. The close relationship that queer people form with their pets, she said, may explain why many queer people choose to become vegan or vegetarian.

The next logical question is, Why do queer people have such close, familial relationships with their pets? One theme in every interview may help explain this phenomenon. Every interviewee reported a lack of close friendships with and knowledge of other LGBTQ+ people early in their lives, and sometimes even into young adulthood. Some interviewees reported a lack of close friendships of any kind except with animals. This may mean that queer children, absent close connections with people similar to them (which is usually the case for the queer child) will seek out the relatively simple and non-stressful relationships human beings form with animals. One lesbian interviewee said, "I didn't have a single LGBTQ+ friend growing up, and I felt really isolated until college." When I asked if she had been aware that other queer people existed as a child she said, "I remember hearing about Don't Ask, Don't Tell when I was in the fifth grade, but I probably never saw another queer person in real life or on TV until I was in high school and started watching the show *Glee*." Unlike members of other marginalized communities, queer people often do not grow up in queer communities or in the presence of other queer people. And because much of the United States is still socially conservative, queer people and issues pertaining to them are not discussed openly or affirmatively in many families or in American institutions.

This means that a young queer person may not meet people like themselves until they leave home, go off to college, or start work. Further, queer children are often bullied, criticized, subjected to violence, or rejected by their families because they are queer. Under those circumstances it is easy to see why queer children and even queer adults may choose the company of animals over or in addition to the company of human beings.

The concept of human beings developing comforting relationships with pets and animals in difficult or emotional times is not a new one. Dogs and cats in particular are used in many institutional settings (detention facilities and college campuses, for instance) to provide emotional support for people in stressful situations. Airlines and landlords are legally required to allow the presence of therapy or service animals in the places where they operate. And the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the ways in which animal companionship is often necessary in times when human beings are isolated from each other. One study on the effects of human-animal bonds on mental health during the pandemic lockdowns found that,

Results from this survey suggest that companion animals constituted an important source of emotional support to owners in the Covid-19 lockdown, with no statistically significant differences in the emotional/intimacy dimension of the human-animal bond identified between animal species in the fully adjusted model. Interestingly, stronger reported human-animal bonds were associated with poorer mental health pre-lock down, highlighting that close bonds with animals may indicate psychological vulnerability in owners. However, having a companion animal, but not strength of the human-animal bond, was associated with less deterioration in mental health and smaller increases in loneliness since lockdown. This suggests that aspects of non-specific social support associated with ownership may make owners more resilient in the context of the lockdown.^{ccxxxiii}

Animal companionship improved the mental health and feelings of loneliness in this study's subjects. Interestingly, those who owned companion animals (and felt very close in their bond with them) prior to the pandemic lockdown reported having a poorer starting mental health status than those who did not already own animals or feel particularly close to them. This may be because those who were already emotionally vulnerable or struggling with their mental health for other

reasons had already sought out the comfort of animal companionship prior to the pandemic. Those who did not already own companion animals subsequently sought them out once they began to feel lonely and isolated as a result of the pandemic.

A similar isolation and loneliness may compel queer people (particularly young queer people with fewer options) to seek out relationships with animals as a safe way to cope with emotional distress. Other forms of coping may not be available or feel safe to queer children, such as confiding in a therapist (appointed by a parent or guardian) that they are having homosexual attraction or gender dysphoria. Absent this and other institutional outlets, confiding in and forming relationships with animals is a safe option that does not arouse the suspicion of parents, guardians, teachers, or others in the child's life.

As the 52-year-old interviewee put it:

It is about acceptance. Animals are accepting of us. They don't care if you're queer. In the human world, your own family may or may not accept you. A lot of people will be shunned by their families. With companion animals they don't give a shit what your sexuality or gender is. They love you for who you are.^{ccxxxiv}

For queer children and adults alike the presence of a loving companion animal diminishes feelings of difference, loneliness, and isolation that are often instilled in queer people from a young age. The early formation of intimate bonds with animals may be one factor that leads many queer people to adopt a vegan lifestyle later in life. When one realizes that the animals people consume have rich emotional lives just like the animals in our homes, choosing vegan food becomes much easier. Queer people are primed, sooner in life than most, to recognize animals as thinking, feeling, suffering individuals.

The Institutionalization of Food

“Institutionalization,”—of food or anything else—“occurs whenever there is a reciprocal typification of habitualized actions by types of actors.”^{ccxxxv} Institutions imply—meaning they almost never explicitly state or make known—historicity and control.^{ccxxxvi} In other words, the types of power conferred upon established institutions—the inherent political power of the Catholic Church, or of Harvard University, or of the Cleveland Clinic, for instance—never occurs instantaneously, but instead, develops slowly over time as a result of the repeated, habitualized, common actions taken by common actors. The institution, once culturally and historically established, continues to “control human conduct by setting up predefined patterns of conduct, which channel it one direction as against the many other directions that would theoretically be possible.”^{ccxxxvii}

Food institutions in the United States have varying degrees of power. When it comes to nutrition, industry “science” muddies the waters of truth by setting up studies designed to produce favorable outcomes for their respective products. For instance, Skittles™ appear to promote human health and longevity when studied alongside French fries and Oreos™.^{ccxxxviii} The proliferation of “junk science” in peer-reviewed journals (and the ways in which this “science” trickles down and is reported on as fact in much popular news media) results in an American public that is confused about what constitutes “healthy food” to say the least. The average American, lacking much guidance from the government (and putting little trust in government institutions anyway) must discern for themselves what a healthy diet looks and tastes like.

But the most compelling and influential food institutions are those that center food visually and remake food and cooking into a hobby or leisure activity. The rise of food television and food content on social media are perhaps those food institutions garnering the most power and influence today. Food scholar Casey Ryan Kelly writes,

Once contained within the glossy-coated pages of elite culinary magazines, taste is a concept that has become democratized and made accessible to mass audiences through the proliferation of food media. Since its launch in 1993, the Scripps-owned Food Network has transformed culinary television from the instructional demonstrations of PBS's *The French Chef* with Julia Child to interactive programming about the relationship between food and culture, featuring international travel, adventure, Americana, consumer kitsch, food ecologies, homemaking, entertainment, games, and competition. The notion that cooking is hip and that an active interest in food is a signifier of cosmopolitan values are the byproduct of contemporary media culture.^{ccxxxix}

But Food Network, as Kelly details at length, continues to reify existing power structures around food—namely, the network normalizes and familiarizes high-calorie, meat- and cheese-heavy American indulgence (think burgers, fries, pizza, wings, etc.), while continuing to “other” or marginalize international food, treating foods deemed outside of established American foodways with suspicion or exoticization. In the already-established Food Network institution—an institution continuously upheld by common actors with common attitudes, behaviors, and practices—American food is lent power because it continues to be the standard by which all other food is measured.

While Kelly is primarily calling attention to how American travel and food television exoticizes and marginalizes working class, indigenous, and transnational foodways abroad, I add that Food Network also marginalizes foods along type and category lines, namely the meat-vegetable divide. Because American food is heavy in animal protein, animal-based foods and dishes are lent power and distinction over vegetable-based dishes. And plant-based foods are so disdained that they rarely receive airtime at all in the broader Food Network programming. The number of vegan or vegetarian contestants on *Chopped*, one of Food Network's most popular shows, can be counted on one hand, for instance. And as of this writing, there are zero educational or instructional cooking shows (a la *Barefoot Contessa* or *Giada at Home*) consistently featuring plant-based cuisine (though, to be fair, this style of programming appears to be losing airtime to

more competition-based programming like *Worst Cooks in America*). While dishes from West Africa or Southeast Asia are depicted as exotic spectacle, vegetable-forward dishes (of which there is much overlap with Eastern cuisine), and especially vegan protein alternatives, are treated with sneering disdain. And while vegan meat, cheese, and milk alternatives constitute an expanding billion-dollar food industry, one would never know it from tuning in to Tuesday night's episode of *Beat Bobby Flay*.

Thankfully, the Food Network is not the only institution teaching Americans about alternative foodways. Foodie content on social media continues to compete with cable programming for viewership each year, and especially foodie content that highlights vegan and plant-based cuisine. And while social media platforms struggle to be viewed as serious institutions themselves, established, official institutions (schools, government, churches, and others) now increasingly rely on social media for official communications between the institution and the broader public. When I refer to social media as a “casual site of ideological production” above, what I mean is that, despite our government officials, celebrities, and cultural leaders using social media for official communications, the average user uses these platforms casually and personally, i.e. not as a representative of a larger institution, not to make money, and not to sway public opinion or culture. The average user follows the activity published by their friends and family, activity related to their interests, and news and goings-on in the world. Social media, for the average user, is optional and recreational rather than mandated like schools or prisons, and used for fun and information rather than to make a living, unlike the corporate workplace.

Additionally, barriers to access are lower for social media users than they are for, say, journalists at the New York Times, or other kinds of institutional communicators. A professional journalist likely needs a college degree, work experience, occupational training, and a strong work

ethic in order to be allowed to regularly communicate with the public in an official capacity. But there is no barrier (other than reliable Internet access and a mobile device) to anyone publishing their opinions, ideas, and relevant real-world information to an audience on social media. Of course, social media users are influenced by official arbiters of culture, and vice versa—neither exists in a vacuum. But the fact that anyone can publish food-related social media content and garner a massive following as a result, means that food movements that were once niche have now begun to enter mainstream thought.

Below, I will explicate significant and niche cultural trends influencing the spread of vegan content on social media.

Social Media

The linking of queer and vegan cultures can be seen, not just in oral histories, literature, film, and restaurants, but also across social media platforms, where much vegan and LGBTQ+ “influencing” takes place. Instagram and YouTube, in particular, are teeming with both vegan and queer content that often overlap and interact. Many content creators centered on LGBTQ+ life and queer issues also happen to be vegan, and vice versa, but not many queer or vegan content creators are talking about why these connections occur.

It is clear, however, that social media—in particular YouTube—often functions similarly to an open forum in which moral and ethical discussions are centered.^{ccxl} YouTube facilitates the expansion and distribution of ethical philosophies including but not limited to many social justice movements, atheism, politics, and food movements like veganism. As one researcher writes, “How YouTubers talk about veganism [shows] how philosophical ethical beliefs are performatively formed in part by watching other YouTubers, as well as user-generated content about veganism on other social media platforms. The way YouTubers talk about self-education and ‘making the

connection' is crucial to how these vloggers become vegan; thus, the formation of an ethical belief is shown to be a mediatized, transformative, performative and relational practice."^{ccxli} I argue that YouTube and other social media not only reproduce the performativity of ethical practice, but also complicate—with mediatization, networking and idea confluence, and the promise of money and stability—the individual lives of those promoting and performing vegan ethics.

Social media is not only a 21st century “town hall,” (as some have called it),^{ccxlii} or a “marketplace of ideas,” though it can function in these capacities. Often, shared philosophies or systems of ethics by groups on social media result in individual and personal outcomes. A content creator with a vegan ethics YouTube channel will inevitably connect with users making similar content on the platform. This not only produces an online community and builds upon the coalition of a broader movement, but can also result in personal friendships, professional relationships, and love connections. The “RawTil4” vegan community on YouTube—popular from about 2013 to 2015—consisted of dozens of vegan channels operated by users who were also friends in “real life,” and would host meet-ups and festivals where they could all get together in person. This community also resulted in multiple leaders of the group becoming romantically involved.

One popular queer/vegan YouTube couple involved in this community, Kate and Mae Flowers (who ended up going their separate ways a few years ago), discussed on their channels the links between veganism, eating disorders, and beauty standards in the LGBTQ+ community. Since their break-up, Mae continues to produce this kind of content with her new partner, Stella. In a video titled, “From Disordered Eating to a Plant-Based Lifestyle | Stella’s Health and Weight Loss Journey” the two discuss this at length:

Stella: When we first started dating, I kind of mentioned, yeah I’ve struggled with some eating stuff. At first, Kate and Mae were finishing up their Freedom in Food 2.0 book, and they were like, why don’t you try out this three-week eating plan?

Mae: You were our guinea pig. We didn’t know that you had a past eating disorder.

Stella: Yeah, it really struck fear in me. That was a little bit of an internal struggle. But it ended up being such a positive experience. It was amazing because I was back to eating whole foods, and I wasn't ordering UberEats and I stopped drinking my glass of wine while doing my homework.

It appears that Stella's eating disorder was improved by testing out Kate and Mae's recipe project at the end of the couple's relationship. And several months later, after Kate and Mae's split, Stella began dating Mae. The story played out like a salacious lesbian affair with vegan entrepreneurship driving the action.

Like Kate and Mae, many queer social media couples must navigate the politics of veganism in their public break-ups. One popular Instagram account called "traveltherainbow" was run by a lesbian couple who featured their vegan lifestyle while living in Southeast Asia (they were originally from Sweden). The two fit, blonde, model-esque influencers provided reliable beachside photos, Yoga poses, and colorful Thai salads and curries. Then, in Fall 2020, the account suddenly stopped producing daily content. And in early 2021, the account reemerged as "elinb.jpg." Its operator, Elin, revealed that she and her partner had split, and that she would be taking over the account full-time. With the end of the "traveltherainbow" relationship also came the end of veganism on that particular IG account. Elin moved back to Sweden, and is now mostly posting gym selfies. Since the split, Elin is no longer vegan, and now routinely posts foodie content featuring animal-based cuisine.

Two examples of vegan lesbians beginning and ending their relationships publicly on social media is hardly newsworthy on its own, even if there are many more stories like it. After all, many social relationships of all types play out on social media in some way in the present day. But the idea that all lesbians are vegan (or the reverse—that all vegans are lesbians) continues to proliferate in American culture. And now, while social media provides a platform where this stereotype often plays out, it can also be a space where users interrogate this idea at greater length.

One lesbian channel, called LacieandRobin, posed a question about the connection between queer culture and veganism in a video titled, “Are All Lesbians Vegan?” Lacie and Robin discuss with each other:

Have you ever noticed that all lesbians are vegan? Maybe it’s a stereotype that lesbians tend to be vegetarians or vegans, but we’ve decided to plunge headlong into that stereotype. Here’s why I think lesbians tend to be vegans: We prefer fake meat! This one’s a thinker. You’ll get there.^{ccxliii}

The LacieandRobin video is meant to be humorous, but they may be onto something. As discussed in Chapter 1, the boundaries of queerness are in part defined and enforced by claims of authenticity—or, “realness” and “fakeness.”^{ccxliv} Navigating new cultural norms—or navigating perceived artifice—is a common exercise for queer couples who are routinely fielding questions such as, “Who is the man?” To field similar questions about one’s food choices is not a huge conceptual leap (“What is that *made* of?”) And the creation of social media content about these very issues helps queer individuals (or vegans) get out ahead of these persistent and annoying questions. By placing their queerness and/or veganism in the midst of an online community, content creators can show onlookers that to be gay, trans, or vegan is not so scary or strange.

But some queer vegan influencers do not appear to be thinking about these connections as explicitly as LacieandRobin. Many consider themselves to be vegans who just so happen to be gay or queer. And some consider themselves to be lesbians who also happen to live a vegan lifestyle. Usually one or the other identity is emphasized, while the other plays second fiddle. Dustin Harder, or theveganroadie, a popular Instagram and YouTube influencer whose content emphasizes traveling across the United States in search of good vegan food, is a trained chef, cookbook author, and incidentally, an openly gay man. Veganism is the primary subject of all of his work, yet his sexuality does come into focus at various points in his public persona. Dustin recruits his husband David to taste test a lot of his recipes prior to their inclusion in his cookbooks. David has also been

featured in much cookbook photography, as the two share vegan meals as a happy couple. In their guest appearance in another popular vegan YouTube account, the couple describes their first date, and how they navigated the issue of veganism early on:

David: It was our first date. He came out to me as vegan. My first thought was, well, I'm Italian, so that could be a problem—

Dustin: And he told me he was from Florida, so you tell me which one's scarier!

David: Truth, truth. It was something that I had never known about, or knew about, but, I mean, again. [The Italian world] was the world of processed meats. We would put deli meats out and that would be how you would come into an Italian household. Rolled-up salami, Genoa salami, used to be my favorite thing in the world. But I liked him enough on that first date to be like, Well let's see where this goes.^{ccxlv}

Many vegan people must navigate these differences in eating when entering into a relationship with a non-vegan partner. But for queer people, the issue of veganism is now a common theme in dating and a fixture of the community. It would be more unusual to be a queer person on the dating scene having not had to navigate veganism or vegetarianism in some way. Stories about the navigation of vegan politics are ubiquitous in LGBTQ+ dating life. Many members of the queer community have dated someone who is vegan or vegetarian if they are not vegan or vegetarian themselves.

The Story of Nikocado Avocado

As Internet content has become more participatory—with lines between user and consumer becoming increasingly blurred—social media sites, in the last 10-15 years have seen the rise of “vlogs” and personal content creation centered around individual and collective “lifestyles.” Food, cooking, and eating content have often been at the forefront of this trend, and vegan content in particular has skyrocketed. This individual-oriented content creation has led to many creators

achieving small-time fame in their niche foodie in-groups. As one scholar of digital food cultures writes,

Central to this ‘participatory’ culture is a ‘sharing ethos,’ where the ease of content sharing has produced an interactive and communicative realm between users. In this space, ‘ordinary’ persons become entrepreneurial subjects, ‘micro-celebrities’ telling a particular story of or from their life, in a way that is often promoted as authentic, real, or unmediated.^{ccxlvii}

Examples of YouTube channels (both vegan and non-vegan) that produce this type of lifestyle-centered personal content are at this point far too many to tally. But below, I highlight one such channel that began as a queer vegan lifestyle channel full of vlogs, recipes, and healthy eating tips, and has since become a disturbing experiment in binge-eating exhibitionism—all, seemingly, to further the creator’s entrepreneurship.

In 2014—perhaps the pinnacle of online vegan content creation—I had personally been vegetarian for several years and vegan for about six months, and had just begun to discover the robust vegan community of content creators on YouTube—channels with hundreds of thousands of subscribers like Freelee the Banana Girl, Unnatural Vegan, Vegan Gains, Banana Blondie, Happy Healthy Vegan, FullyRawKristina, and Earthling Ed just to name a few. These channels promoted veganism by making the philosophy of animal ethics and environmentalism into an attractive and alluring lifestyle. Healthy, “whole foods, plant-based” (WFPB) veganism was the central focus, along with content about how to go vegan, what the term “vegan” means, the history of veganism and animal rights, controversies and disagreements in the community, and other tips for maximizing mental and physical health with diet and exercise.

I began watching these YouTube channels because I often found vegan recipes, or vegan lifestyle hacks that made being vegan in a small town cheaper or easier. Watching this content taught me how to eat healthier, how to track my food to ensure that all of my nutritional requirements were being met, and it introduced me to many tasty foods and dishes that I had never

heard of and would have never thought to make on my own. I am still grateful to these “influencers” for helping me smoothly transition into veganism in those early days. But my interest in this content soon became less about learning how to live a healthy vegan lifestyle, and became more a daily practice in voyeurism. Reality TV executives couldn’t have scripted juicier melodrama than what could be found on early 2010s vegan YouTube.

One channel with the handle Nikocado Avocado was run by a young, raw vegan content creator named Nicholas who featured his daily raw vegan “mukbangs,” or the YouTube phenomenon of sitting down to eat large quantities of food (in his case raw fruit) on camera while having an unrelated “conversation” with your YouTube audience.^{ccxlvii} Mukbang videos can be anywhere between thirty minutes and two hours in length, and since around 2013, have taken YouTube by storm.^{ccxlviii} As one media studies scholar explains,

Mukbang is a digital dinner table where an individual known as a “broadcast jockey” (BJ) displays an array of mouthwatering dishes (often with beverages) and enjoys eating them as hundreds of viewers watch. While it might seem like this is merely an opportunity for voyeurism, in fact it is a virtual way of eating together. Specifically, the broadcaster and viewers multimodally communicate with each other to co-create eating actions: The eater speaks to the viewers through the livestream camera while eating, and the viewers type real-time comments to each other and to the eater through a live chat room. Thus, mukbang provides a virtual platform for sociable eating where participants are expected to work together.^{ccxlix}

The mukbang—which is a mashup of two Korean words; *mukja*, or ‘eating,’ and *bang-song*, meaning ‘to broadcast’^{cc1}—began as way for Korean millennials to bring the Korean value of togetherness at mealtimes to online platforms. But the practice now often includes a layer of gratuitous exhibitionism/voyeurism, as the sheer quantity of food consumed, on some channels, becomes the spectacle, rather than the original virtual/communal logic of the mukbang in Korea. This content, created largely by mukbang influencers outside of Korea, could not be considered “foodie” content, because the point is not to inform or educate the public on how to make better

or more interesting recipes; rather, the main goal of the Westernized mukbang is to shock the viewer so that they can't look away and continue to click on similar content to feed their curiosity.

Hundreds of thousands of content creators make their living posting YouTube mukbangs, and many of these content creators have millions of viewers, like ErikTheElectric who has about 1.86 million subscribers at the time of this writing, or the queen of mukbang (and many other types of melodramatic YouTube content), Trisha Paytas, who has 4.98 million. Nikocado, some would say, is one of many who has perfected this long-form video style, by not only eating gargantuan amounts of food, but also by speaking candidly about his personal life with his YouTube audience.

But in the early 2010s, Nick also posted videos showcasing other aspects of his daily life: his travels, his exercise routine, his opinions about vegan-related issues, and his relationship with his boyfriend Orlin. At the time, Nikocado Avocado would have best been described as a YouTube channel promoting positivity, “good vibes,” healthy eating, and mindful living; and always interwoven with these feel-good themes was a firm commitment to veganism and animal rights. Nick would often repeat that the physical and mental ailments a person faced were due to the constant consumption of animal products, and that his lifestyle at the time—relatively free (by his own account) from mental and physical affliction—was a result of his raw veganism. He says,

Veganism affects not only yourself but it affects other people. It affects the environment, it affects the animals, of course—animals that are being raised and killed for our consumption and usage. It affects us spiritually and mentally and physically.^{ccli}

Nikocado Avocado constantly linked (both implicitly and explicitly) a vegan lifestyle with self-actualization—that is, finding individual happiness, purpose, and fulfillment in life. This YouTube channel model was a popular one at the time, and it earned Nikocado Avocado many thousands of followers both inside and outside of the online vegan community.

But slowly, Nikocado's YouTube channel began to shift away from dogmatic vegan attitudes about health and happiness. This shift began with a video he posted titled, "Why I'm No Longer a Vegan YouTuber," in which he airs his frustrations with vegan content creators on the site. He cites the community's perfectionism and tendency to nitpick vegans not fully in line with raw vegan dogma. He explains, "Let's face it: We are not all going to eat the same way ever. Never, ever, ever. That's not going to happen. Yet people still want to put all of their energy into trying to make people identical, and trying to make everyone do the same thing. Like Christianity. It's weird. I think humans are just programmed to behave this way."^{ccli}

Nikocado bemoans the militancy of most online vegans. He explains how when he switched from eating a fully raw vegan diet to eating cooked vegan food again, he was "attacked" and heavily criticized for this choice. This sparked a kind of awakening in Nikocado: "I took a step back and said, What kind of people did I get involved with to come to a point where a potato is toxic? And if I eat potatoes I'm somehow less of a human being, or I'm somehow doing damage [to myself]."^{ccliii} He explains how these attitudes are not rooted in peer-reviewed science, but simply in blind belief. He is likening raw veganism to a faith-based system of belief like Christianity or other religions, in which evidence is not needed to make assertions about health or human fulfillment. In his mind, vegans (and raw vegans in particular) have begun to lose all credibility by decoupling their health claims from scientific evidence.

More disturbing at this time was a trend in which vegan content creators would leverage the burgeoning Black Lives Matter movement to promote a vegan agenda. Online vegans would argue that Black Americans succumbed to diet-related illnesses at higher rates than other populations, and thus needed to adopt a vegan diet if they really cared about Black lives. Some vegans would also liken the suffering of Black Americans under slavery to the suffering of

nonhuman animals on factory farms today—a proselytizing tactic which has since become (rightfully) taboo in vegan activist groups. Nick voices his disgust with these attitudes: “Why do vegans have to make everything about veganism? There’s so much more to life than veganism. Yes, it’s an important cause, but when it becomes everything you sound no different than the Mormons going door to door saying ‘Join my club! I can give you these promises, it’s going to make the earth a better place, it’s going to save us all!’ Look, if the earth goes vegan we are not saved.”^{ccliv} Nick is passionate about many other aspects of life aside from veganism. And he is identifying and calling out the online vegan community’s tendency to isolate members from their non-vegan families and friends, as well as their tendency to promote unfounded vegan dogma.

This video marked Nikocado’s turn away from raw veganism. But later, he would turn away from veganism altogether. In 2016, Nick made a tearful video announcing to the world that his mental health was suffering as a result of his vegan diet, and he dramatically ate canned tuna (his first taste of meat in ten years) for his viewers, while sobbing about the inadequacy of a vegan diet for human beings. This of course upset Nick’s largely vegan audience, and sparked a dramatic controversy about the long-term effects of vegan and raw vegan diets that would bring greater attention to his channel. Many of Nick’s videos in this period were responses to other content creators calling him out for reneging on his commitment to animal rights and environmentalism. Nick’s critics argued that Nick’s sudden shift away from promoting veganism to inflaming controversy on YouTube was evidence that he had learned that controversial videos brought more viewers, and more viewers brought more money. Indeed, Nick’s viewer statistics (published publicly on the site) show dramatic spikes in viewership when Nick posted videos about controversial topics, or when his videos’ thumbnails were pictures of him sobbing. This led many

to assume that Nick's quitting veganism had less to do with his health and more to do with his desire to become the next Trisha Paytas.

What onlookers at the time could not have known was that this was only the beginning of Nikocado's dramatic transformation. The content that followed documented Nick's head-first dive into gluttonous hedonism. Extra large buckets of KFC fried chicken and all the sides; multiple Domino's meat-lovers pizzas; massive mounds of packaged ramen noodles; a smorgasbord of McDonald's burgers, nuggets, fries, and shakes—each massive meal (some consisting of 10,000 calories or more) consumed in a single mukbang before the viewers' eyes. Nick's mukbangs were gratuitous, messy, massive, and blatantly unhealthy. Nick's viewers—both vegan and nonvegan—expressed their concern for him in the comments, as his physical and mental health appeared to take a nosedive. The more Nick ate, the more mentally unhinged he appeared to become. Many videos showed Nick screaming obscenities at the camera, at his boyfriend, or at no one in particular. Nick sobbed on camera on a near weekly basis. And he and his boyfriend Orlin filmed themselves getting into physical and verbal altercations. All the while both Nick and Orlin are packing on the pounds. When I first discovered Nick's channel in 2014, he was a (seemingly) healthy weight for his height, certainly under the 160 pound mark. In 2022, Nick posted a video in which he showcases his body for viewers at his new weight of over 400 pounds.^{cclv}

In one sobbing video, Nick details how Orlin attempted to take his own life after the couple had a fight while cooking in the kitchen.^{cclvi} The video is disturbing for a number of reasons. First, it is unsettling to know that anyone would make a lengthy video airing all of this personal information, edit it down, and publish it for millions of viewers. At the time it was unclear if Nick had Orlin's permission to post this information. Second, Nick is crying throughout the video and attempting to garner sympathy for himself even though it was his boyfriend's suicide attempt.

Third, it is unclear whether the story is actually true, or if this is another dramatic stunt to rake in YouTube cash. From whatever angle one views this video, it is disturbing indeed. And the unanswered questions that naturally arise from viewing this content add yet another troubling layer to viewers' feelings about it.

Absent an obvious explanation for the sudden shift in content creation from positive living to outright self-destruction, many vegan viewers of Nick's videos have argued that it is his turn away from a vegan lifestyle that has led to his demise—particularly the dramatic transformation of his body from one that is seemingly fit and healthy to one that is morbidly obese, and by Nick's own account, riddled with disease like sleep apnea, heart issues and other types of weight-related ailments. "Demise" may be an appropriate way to describe Nick's social media trajectory if one is only looking at his weight and health. But if one considers the number of viewers and subscribers Nick has garnered since his beginning in 2014, "success" would be a better descriptor for his journey as an influencer. Nikocado has become infamous in the YouTube foodie world because he turned away from veganism and set his mind to making shocking and dramatic videos that some would call "clickbait." But this dramatic shift has brought with it a whole host of other (perhaps unforeseen, perhaps calculated) consequences: Nick and Orlin's relationship became abusive, Nick claims to suffer from deeply-rooted mental illness, and both of them have packed on a shocking amount of weight in a relatively short amount of time.

To be clear, I am not arguing that Nick and Orlin's relationship became abusive because they both left the vegan lifestyle. It is not even clear to me that their relationship actually is abusive; it is very likely that the conflict is being put on as a kind of YouTube stunt. Nikocado Avocado's turn away from veganism and turn toward very public displays of mental health crises and relationship conflict is significant, not because online vegan in-fighting is terribly interesting, nor

because his relationship with his partner Orlin changed due to a major lifestyle shift around veganism. The drastic shift in Nikocado's public behavior is significant because it is a very outward display of the performativity of queer vegan politics (and the performativity of other consumption-oriented lifestyles like the mukbang or the on-camera indulgence in fast food). This performativity, like all types of political performativities, is rooted in a particular aesthetic, ideology, and, above all, agency.^{cclvii} Nick may not view his transition away from veganism as political (though it certainly is), but he does (or at least did in 2015) view his transition back to a standard American diet as a way of reclaiming his perceived loss of agency. Nick made it clear in videos at that time that he felt the vegan movement, particularly as it was promoted on YouTube, no longer served the values he held around community, unity, empathy, and kindness, and thus denied him his agency as an influencer and as a person.

It is possible that Nick and Orlin's relationship genuinely changed for the worse when the two stopped living a vegan lifestyle—though the link may not be causal in nature. It is also possible that their private relationship changed very little, and only the public face of their relationship—how they chose to perform their relationship—changed with the lifestyle overhaul. But it is clear that in order to accurately perform veganism online, the couple had to put their best face forward: they needed their audience to believe that they were happy together, well-adjusted, aligned in their shared values, and a model example of what two gay men in love could look like. Anything less and their relationship would have been out of step with their vegan philosophy (or their vegan brand, depending on how one looks at it). Veganism as a marginal social movement is fragile. The decision to maintain a vegan lifestyle in order to reduce harm done to animals is routinely attacked on a number of fronts discussed in greater detail in prior chapters. Nick and Orlin's vegan appeals to ethics and environmentalism could not have survived the negative attention they would have

received from publicly airing their toxic relationship or from throwing caution to the wind and packing on inordinate amounts of weight. Vegans who do not introduce shocking and controversial videos into their content and activism already face ample critiques from a non-vegan hegemonic American public. Thus, veganism had to go in order for Nick and Orlin to ascend the influencer ladder.

Once the couple shifted away from a vegan lifestyle, they were free to show the conflict within the relationship, or to script it and perform it. Nikocado Avocado's audience no longer expected Nick and Orlin to have a perfect relationship once the couple had abandoned the vegan perfectionist dogma. No one expects two obese, melodramatic, fast food-obsessed, gay men to be the face of a classic American romance. But for better or worse, whether it was genuine or contrived, a convincing vegan performance also demanded the performance of a convincing (if not perfect) queer romance.

As his channel has grown more gluttonous over the years, Nikocado's public displays of rapacious hunger call to mind other types of extreme desire, including lasciviousness. As Probyn writes in her early work on the intermingling of food and sex,

Beyond the phenomenological realm, hunger brings with it a swath of symbolic connotations that are central to life as we know it: 'strong desires', 'cravings', 'eagerness', 'greed', and 'poor', 'barren', and then it is closely linked to appetite, desires, and inclinations, 'a longing after, affinity, eagerly desirous'. Hunger brings out connotations of human rapaciousness: a visceral questing that operates at the level of food, sex, and money.^{cclviii}

Nick's YouTube channel demands (implicitly and perhaps unintentionally) that his viewers ask themselves questions about the connections between (Nick's) obvious physical hunger, and an array of other unstated desires—such as, desire for sex and romance, desire for money, and the (failed) quest for human actualization. Hunger is understood as visceral, "a basic human feeling, which is to say that it is understood as immediate, and that it connects us in an elemental way to

other humans.”^{cclix} Thus, an online public display of extreme hunger, that hunger going unquestioned, and then being met with grotesque quantities of food, immediately taps into the human hard drive and kicks up concern, questions, astonishment, and horror. What is missing, the average onlooker asks themselves, from Nick’s life that he, all at once, desires food at this level, feeds that desire to the point of abusing his own body, and needs people—nearly three million people—to bear witness to the entire ordeal?

Nick’s content does nothing if not throw into chaos innate human feelings about the connective desires for food, sex, and money. Every week, Nick makes public his tumultuous queer relationship and his extreme hunger for meat, dairy, and fried foods, such that the only possible explanation for such unhinged behavior is a third, unstated desire for money and notoriety. The chaotic and melodramatic interweaving of these desires is enough to keep at least three million viewers tuning in week by week.

Beyond the shock value of Nikocado’s content is the fascination that viewers have with Nikocado’s apparent commitment to raw veganism in his early 20s, and outright hatred of the same in his late 20s. Viewers who have stayed with Nikocado’s channel since those early days have experienced a kind of whiplash. They tuned in for one type of content and ended up staying for the exact opposite type of content. Nikocado not only stopped being vegan (as many former vegan influencers have) he has also thoroughly demonstrated his rejection of vegan ideals and ideologies. For many people who consume vegan content on social media, veganism represents a kind of ideal lifestyle. Perhaps not everyone can be fully vegan, and perhaps not every vegan can be an effective vegan activist. But everyone can strive to more closely achieve these ideals—at least in theory. This is a common message promoted at length by many vegan YouTubers and influencers.

Nikocado began as one of these influencers promoting this exact message. If you can't be the best version of yourself today, perhaps you can get closer tomorrow. And, of course, the "best version of oneself" always included devotion to the vegan cause. Despite being dogmatic, his vegan message was hopeful, joyous, and to some, inspiring. And today, to the extent that Nikocado promotes any message at all, it is one of nihilism, giving up on the world and one's health and well-being, hedonism, and self-destruction. For years now, he has been committed to the latter, at least publicly. Did veganism and its ideals and promises fail in this particular case? Or is this all one elaborate and perpetual piece of performance art, which Nick uses to reflect the absurdity of ideology back to vegans and other idealists?

Zizek's work on the illusory nature of ideology is useful here, because Nick is throwing into question both the means and the ends of adhering to a firmly-cemented ideology or worldview—whether that worldview is optimistic veganism or nihilistic hedonism. Zizek writes:

The most elementary definition of ideology is probably the well-known phrase from Marx's *Capital*: 'they do not know it, but they are doing it.' The very concept of ideology implies a kind of basic, constitutive naivete... If our concept of ideology remains the classic one in which the illusion is located in the knowledge, then today's society must appear post-ideological: the prevailing ideology is that of cynicism; people no longer believe in ideological truth; they do not take ideological propositions seriously. The fundamental level of ideology, however, is not that of an illusion masking the real state of things but that of an (unconscious) fantasy structuring our social reality itself. And at this level, we are of course far from being a post-ideological society. Cynical distance is just one way—one of many ways—to blind ourselves to the structuring power of ideological fantasy: even if we do not take things seriously, even if we keep an ironical distance, *we are still doing them.*^{cclx}

Nikocado has never publicly (to my knowledge) mused on the nature of ideology in this way, but he has, at least for some viewers, upended the "structuring power of ideological fantasy." This is at the core of what is shocking in Nikocado's videos. To the extent that Nick's viewers moralize or express their concern in the comments sections of his videos, Nick responds to them with either a harsh kind of I-couldn't-care-less cynicism, or feigned obliviousness of his dire mental and

physical health crisis. His famous refrain, “It’s just water weight!” screamed at the top of his lungs in several of his videos is his way of gesturing toward our absurd ideological obsession with health, happiness, and well-being. Nick promotes many images of himself that invite viewers to comment on his body and health. For instance, he recently posted a video of a thumbnail in which he is shirtless and wearing the nosepiece for his CPAP machine—the machine used to counteract sleep apnea to help him breathe while he is sleeping. Nick appears to be aware that promoting this image casually will invite criticism and controversy to his social media accounts, and that criticism and controversy in turn encourages Nick to continue with these cynical gestures. What results, in the average viewer’s mind, is bafflement at how a person can openly mock deeply-rooted Western ideology—but in the mocking, Nick elucidates how the same society that promotes healthy living also enables people like Nick to destroy themselves with fast food. Nick’s videos are indeed absurd, but they are only a piece of a much more pervasive and insidious absurdity.

I would like to end this section with some of Nikocado’s own words about why he has chosen to remake himself into a super obese, infamous, mukbang celebrity—the stark opposite of what he put out into the world in 2014. But, in combing through his massive sea of internet content, I can find no such instance in which Nick explains himself or his decision to become an epic internet troll. This fact bolsters his allure. No one can fully explain Nikocado. Even Nikocado can’t explain Nikocado. People (myself included) continue watching because we think that maybe one day we will understand it—we will understand why a person would sacrifice their own well-being for some cheap and shocking internet videos. But Nick denies us this understanding, and insists instead that we examine the structures of power that enable his blatant disregard for the ideologies that demand self-respect, dignity, hard work, and the type of body that embodies these values. Like

Donald Trump, Nikocado Avocado is a postmodern icon that freezes our gaze onto him. We are afraid to look away.

Carnivorism, Veganism, and EcoFascism

Nikocado Avocado's story warrants a deeper discussion of raw veganism, raw eating in general, and the online raw community that launched Nick into social media infamy. YouTube content about raw eating (of many types) appears to have this staying power, as viewers are fascinated with the trend for various reasons. Among the most intriguing questions about raw diets is why? Why might someone choose to eat exclusively raw food? Almost no one grows up eating exclusively raw food, so the decision to do so is a very conscientious one. Second is how? How, in a culture obsessed with burgers, brats, beer, and pizza, does one actually achieve a fully raw lifestyle? Does fully raw eating mean social death? Does fully raw eating always spark the rapacious hunger that we observe in Nikocado many years after the fact?

Often interwoven with raw foodism and other rigid dietary programs are an array of chauvinistic beliefs ranging in topic from anti-vaccine ideology, to homophobia, to outright white nationalism. Both vegan and non-vegan raw foodies tend to apply hard lines to their belief systems both with regard to eating and with regard to religion, politics, sex, money, and other areas of life. It is unclear what causes these connections in rigid ideologies. Many scholars and cultural critics have opined that social media creates an "echo chamber" which leads many people to dig their heels into whatever belief systems they have long held.^{cclxi} Some have argued that veganism (and especially its more extreme raw version) attract people that are naturally prone to rigid and extreme thinking, which could lead to higher rates of mental health disorders.^{cclxii} Many have written about the social and political meanings attached to different types of eating, and how certain diets may engender certain political beliefs, or vice versa.^{cclxiii} I think each of these explanations may play a

role in the connection between food chauvinism and fascism. But my theory is that appeals to human nature, circulated widely online as a truism, is underpinning most dietary chauvinism and its related forms of prejudice. This logical fallacy is repackaged as the One True Logic from which all truth and enlightenment flows. What follows is an illustration of this.

One YouTube content creator with the name Sv3rige has garnered a following for taking raw eating to the next level. Sv3rige claims to eat exclusively raw (and sometimes rotten) meat, eggs, and milk. In one of his recent videos, Sv3rige films himself eating more than a pound of raw ground beef, a block of raw butter, and moldy goat cheese, while drinking a large bottle of blended egg yolks. For dinner, he eats a large bowl of raw blended eggs mixed with honey and sour milk.^{cclxiv} In some of his videos, Sv3rige eats room temperature raw chicken that has been rotting in a jar for over a year.^{cclxv}

Perhaps what is most shocking about his content (aside from the obvious shock-value of watching anyone eat rotting meat as a daily dietary staple) is that Sv3rige does not appear to be socially isolated as a result of his peculiar (many would say disgusting) diet. His current girlfriend has adopted the same diet, and his girlfriend before her ate the same way as well. Sv3rige also has several videos of him meeting up with other raw meat eaters going out for sashimi or sharing a jar of months-old raw chicken. Sv3rige and his friends seem to relish in the shock value of their lifestyle. They enjoy seeing people make a scene (in public and in the comments section) over their extreme and unsafe dietary choices. But they also subscribe to the philosophy that human beings are natural carnivores who were designed to hunt and eat raw meat, much like a cat in the wild would do. (Ironically, there are no videos of Sv3rige and his friends hunting, but there is one video in which Sv3rige catches a frog and eats it alive on camera.) Further, Sv3rige asserts that veganism in any form is unnatural, unhealthy, and, in the case of a parent feeding a child vegan

food, a form of child abuse. Sv3rige and his followers have even filmed themselves protesting at vegan food festivals by gnawing on uncooked animal organs in the crowd of vegans in an attempt to provoke them.^{cclxvi}

Sv3rige bases his claims about eating and human evolution on his own personal experience. He spent five months of his life eating a raw vegan diet and claims that doing so nearly ruined his health. He discusses this in one video titled, “Why I’m No Longer Vegan – My Ex-Vegan Story”:

“Two days before the New Year, it’s -7 degrees outside, I shit myself for the first time in my adult life, because when you eat plants, because they are indigestible, you get a lot of pressure and you got to go to the toilet a lot. And because there was nowhere to go, I was on the street, it happened, and because of muscle atrophy it’s hard to control it. It was horrible. I went home on the train. Everything smelled. Two days later I get pneumonia for the first time in my life, because of the cold. I probably almost died. January-February 2015, I believed that eating raw foods was the most natural way. Of course, I didn’t realize that I was eating man-made plants. I was mostly into vegetables and nuts. I tried to eat a lot of fat, which were plant oils. And because I also cooked them—I couldn’t stand eating them raw—I messed up my arteries for sure in that time.”^{cclxvii}

Sv3rige goes on to explain how he then developed several allergies, especially to avocados, which he relied on for healthy fats. Shortly thereafter, and also because of his vegan eating, Sv3rige claims he suffered a mental health break and was forcibly institutionalized in a psychiatric hospital because police believed he had become a danger to himself. Soon after being released from the hospital, Sv3rige began experimenting with juicing, then fasting, then finally eating raw meat and eggs. He was on a quest to determine what was the most “natural” diet for human beings. He explained, “We’ve never had [a vegan diet] because in nature you cannot survive without meat, and now people eat a lot of carbs that turn into fat, but the fat has no vitamins. It’s empty calories. And when you also don’t get B12 and all of those water soluble vitamins you end up mentally ill because in nature there would be no way to live like that. The plan is to make you ill, especially mentally ill.”^{cclxviii} From that point forward, Sv3rige became vehemently anti-vegan. He was convinced that all plants currently consumed by vegans (or by anyone for that matter) are man-

made, genetically modified, and unnatural, and that the unnaturalness of edible plants is what made him physically and mentally ill. The only way to reverse this physical and mental illness was to eat the diet that was most natural for human beings. And he concluded that this diet was one consisting entirely of raw animal flesh and by-products.

One interesting thing about Sv3rige's ideas about eating and human health is that, just like the vegan ideas he criticizes, they are rooted in logical fallacies, namely appeals to nature. Many vegans claim that veganism (and especially raw veganism) is the one true diet for human beings—that if we still “lived in nature” like our ancestors we would eat a diet consisting entirely of fruit, nuts, green vegetables, mushrooms, and other foraged foods. Sv3rige argues the exact opposite. He insists that human beings (again situated in a mythical “nature” long past) would eat exclusively raw meat, dairy, eggs, and fish. Though the claims are polar opposite of each other, it is rigid and simplistic thinking about human evolution that led each party to reach their respective conclusions. Neither vegans nor raw meat eaters acknowledge the vast variability in prehistoric humanoid lifestyles, and each group harkens back to a time in human history that best suits their already-established worldview. Raw vegans, for instance, draw upon the diets of pre-paleolithic humanoids in order to argue that human beings should be living in a tropical climate and eating mostly fruit. Raw meat eaters, draw from the more recent Paleolithic era to argue that human beings are hunter gatherers, that grains would not have been eaten at all, and that human diets should consist entirely of animal flesh and leafy greens. Neither group takes into account how human diets (even those from millions of years ago) would have varied greatly by region.^{cclxix} As one food historian argues in National Geographic, different populations of people have evolved to better digest different types of food in varying quantities. “You are what your ancestors ate,” she writes, “There is tremendous variation in what foods humans can thrive on, depending on genetic inheritance.

Traditional diets today include the vegetarian regimen of India's Jains, the meat-intensive fare of Inuit, and the fish-heavy diet of Malaysia's Bajau people. The Nochmani of the Nicobar Islands off the coast of India get by on protein from insects. What makes us human is our ability to find a meal in virtually any environment.^{ccclxx} This type of nuance about how traditional diets are largely formed by the environments in which they perpetuate is lost in much online raw eating discourse.

Levi-Strauss writes about the attitudes on rawness and cooking among many native tribes around the world. The difference between raw food and cooked food, he argues, is the difference between nature and culture. He writes, "Cooking is conceived of in native thought as a form of mediation...[These] communities view culinary operations as mediatory activities between heaven and earth, life and death, nature and society."^{ccclxxi} The cooking of food (and in some cases, the "cooking" of people, or the rites of bringing them into society and culture)^{ccclxxii} is part of a process of separating the human from animal, of raising the human above animal status. Cooking food makes for "real" eating, whereas the consumption of raw foods (like a ripe banana) constitutes snacking.^{ccclxxiii} For these tribes, cooking is what separates them from the animal kingdom and from the more atavistic behaviors of their ancestors. Cooking food is an essential part of becoming fully human and is thus revered.

Contrast these attitudes with burgeoning cultures of raw eaters, who see cooked food as a departure from human beings' evolutionary imperatives. For both vegan and non-vegan raw dieters, the eating of raw food represents purity of the body, and cooked food is something we have learned to do over many millennia but is not ideal for our health and well-being. It is not natural, they argue, for human beings to use tools, season their foods, cook over fire, and eat purely for pleasure, because early humanoids would not have been able to do these things. For these groups, a return

to atavism is a good thing, as it means we can optimize our health and longevity according to our innate biological needs.

Of course, there are zero online raw eaters (vegan or non-vegan) who are living tool-free lives, or lives not mediated by modern culture. After all, many of them are making a living from posting YouTube content online—also something that our ancestors could not do. And it is unclear to me how raw meat-eaters reconcile their belief that human beings should live entirely on raw meat, and that they should also not use tools to hunt. I have yet to meet a hunter who successfully procures meat without the use of weapons and knives. These appeals to nature constitute a fantasy about returning to a humanity devoid of culture—that is, humanity in its purest form, before our modern society corrupted our bodies with botox, vaccines, and 99 cent cheeseburgers.

My instinct tells me that the proliferation of these “return to nature” lifestyles is brought about, in part, by a need to reclaim some measure of authenticity. Most people are completely detached from the industries and farming processes that produce their food, and thus, they feel that they have no control over what they are eating. This fact, combined with the never-ending number of fad diets promoted online each year means that raw foodies seek a return to the basics. Americans in particular are inundated with diet “fixes” at the same time that rates of obesity and preventable disease increase annually. It makes sense why some people would seek out the “original” human diet, or the diet that Mother Nature would prescribe for us. All of that would be fine if such a diet actually existed.

Sv3rige and his followers’ thoughts about sex, gender, and race are rooted in the same cultural logics as their beliefs about food and eating—namely, that modernity has overcomplicated how people form relationships in the same way that it has overcomplicated our natural eating imperatives. Sv3rige’s beliefs border on fascism—he believes that sexism and racism are “natural”

and therefore optimal. He says, “Of course there’s no such thing as black and white. There’s different shades of brown—lighter and darker pigmentation. Kids who still have their natural senses point with fingers when they see a human of a different race. A Finnish kid seeing someone from Africa for the first time will believe that it’s a different creature because they see that they are completely different in every way.”^{cclxxiv} Sv3rige refers to this as “natural racism” and insists that it is a survival mechanism hardwired over many millennia into the brains of human beings. Thus, human beings should not attempt to correct racist attitudes in the same way that they should not try to change or correct a desire for flesh, however “unethical” our “brainwashed” leftist culture tells us it is.

This logic also leads Sv3rige to the belief that homosexuality, transness and queerness are all also unnatural and undesirable. In a recent video, Sv3rige reviews a trans- and queerphobic documentary made by right-wing influencer Matt Walsh called “What is a Woman?” Sv3rige generally agrees with the anti-transgender talking points promoted by Walsh in the film, but he also takes Walsh’s gender reductionism many steps further when he argues that women should not compete in sports because it will make them infertile, and that women who are competing in sports are already suffering from a kind of gender dysphoria by virtue of the fact that they are participating in a masculine endeavor in the first place.^{cclxxv} In another misogynistic video, Sv3rige argues that young girls should be impregnated as soon as they reach menstruation age, because this is what nature intended for them.^{cclxxvi} Clearly, Sv3rige has created a rich and detailed fantasy in his own mind about what “nature” prescribes for human beings—from what they eat to how or if they reproduce. And this appeal-to-nature fantasy takes him to some wild corners of human thought—from the prescription of a strict rotted meat diet for human health, to the moral superiority of pedophilia.

Interestingly, some raw vegans also share these right-wing attitudes about sex, gender, and sexuality (though admittedly, most are not nearly as extreme as Sv3rige's). This is surprising, considering how vegans in general tend to lean toward progressivism. This means that to fully understand new diet cultures, it is necessary to understand the cultural logics underpinning them. When we do this, some niche vegan and non-vegan diets (which would appear to have nothing in common at all) actually share very similar philosophical foundations. A “return to nature” leads some people to raw veganism at the same time that it leads others to subsist on months-old rotting chicken. But it can, in both groups simultaneously, lead to the adoption of many fascist beliefs espoused by Sv3rige and his ilk.

This “return to nature” led one vegan YouTuber to a “return to virtue,” that is, a return to his white racial heritage; further proof that vegans, too, can operate in the realm of eco-fascism. Jayme Liardi, who ran the YouTube channel Simply Vegan for several years in the 2010s, began his online content creation as an innocent foray into the “Raw-til-4” diet popularized by Freelee the Banana Girl. Raw-til-4 was a fully vegan diet in which adherent ate raw vegan until 4 p.m. and then had a cooked, high-carb, low-fat vegan meal for dinner. Jayme believed, as his earliest videos attest, that Raw-til-4 was the optimal diet for human health, and a way for vegans to compromise between a fully raw lifestyle and cooked eating. From 2011 to 2015, Jayme produced content related to healthy eating, happiness and positivity, athletics and exercise, and how to maintain a Raw-til-4 diet while living on a college campus. The tone of his content was light-hearted, carefree, and uplifting. He seemed agreeable, likeable, and sensible. His diet was different—some may have even said extreme—but he was not dogmatic about it. He seemed to sincerely want to help people become a healthier version of themselves. In 2013 he said of veganism, “If you choose to have the sort of thoughts that are conducive to an abundant, loving lifestyle, you’re going to have an

abundant, loving lifestyle. And even myself, I notice that two years after being on a high-carb vegan diet, that sort of pushed me to be more spiritual and be more grounded in the earth—that helped me to have a realistically positive outlook on life.”^{cclxxvii} Early on, Jayme credits his vegan diet for helping him achieve mental and physical health in his early 20s.

Jayme’s channel drastically changed in 2015 when he returned from a break from posting videos with a video titled, “The Coming Revelation.” The video, which is only 57 seconds long, is a single shot of a black and white lake scene. The words “Truth, Honor, and Valor” gradually flash on the scene; then at the end, an all-black screen with the words “Revelation: A Return to Virtue” in red and white.^{cclxxviii} At first glance, this video was odd for a channel promoting healthy vegan living, but to most of Jayme’s audience it was not immediately alarming. But to those who have studied fascist iconography, the signs were there even in this short video: the red and white color scheme, the use of abstract virtues to appeal to a common past—these are taken from the neo-Nazi playbook, and are particularly common in more recent white supremacist groups like Identity Evropa.

In subsequent videos, Jayme begins to elucidate this newfound ideology that he stumbled upon in online spaces. Most of the videos after this remain vague, but will link to interviews and writings that more explicitly detail his fall into fascism. In one video, he links to an interview he did with Red Ice Radio, a far right podcasting website, in which he flies his fascist flag. In the interview, many of his attitudes toward sex, gender, and culture echo those espoused by Sv3rige.

Jayme says,

You know, I go down the street in suburbia, and it’s just disgusting architecture. Just the most disgusting, decadent, communistic, brutalist architecture, and it’s depressing. And then you look at the people. The women don’t even look like women. The girls are just dressed like complete whores. And the men don’t even look like men, and when they do, they’re listening to jungle music and wearing

these backwards hats. And they're driving these giant trucks and they think that means masculinity. Wake up.^{cclxxix}

These fascist and racist attitudes—from the mouth of a former “RawTil4” style, peace-loving vegan—echo those same attitudes promoted by prominent members of the raw carnivore community. And again, in Jayme’s case, one of the primary cultural logics underpinning these fascist attitudes is an appeal to nature. Jayme argues at length that “cultural Marxism,” Hollywood, public universities, and “the left,” are waging a war against human nature and against nature itself. He veers deep into eco-fascist territory as he explains,

I realized that I'd been lied to and I completely accepted the bait. I was championing these tyrannical masters that refer to us as cattle. I was acting as the cattle and whipping other cattle to get back in their cages. When I was twelve, I was kayaking one time, and I had this moment where I just couldn't speak, and I was looking at the trees in the distance, and I just said to myself 'I need to preserve this.' And I realized that that symbolizes beauty. And it symbolizes *who we are*, and doing the right thing. I always want to preserve what I love and hold dear, and to have justice, and truth, and abide by nature's laws.^{cclxxx}

In the above quote, one can see how Jayme implicitly links veganism and fascism. He refers to himself and other white Europeans (whom he views as oppressed under all major American institutions) as “cattle” who are whipping each other into obedience. Vegans often conceptualize non-human animals as an oppressed group that must be liberated from factory farms and CAFOs. Jayme appeals to white nationalist sensibilities by comparing white Europeans to helpless animals in cages. In other words, he casually remakes the oppressor into an oppressed group.

One can also see how Jayme’s love of nature has influenced his vegan fascism. He is vegan for the same reason that he is fascist: because he wants to preserve something that he feels belongs to his people. To Jayme, the trees, the river, and all of the natural world—which he views as distinct from *and threatened by* a globalized 21st century American culture—represents beauty and “who we are,” that is, who white people are. The preservation of animals, trees, rivers, and white European heritage all adhere to “nature’s laws.” Jayme feels that he learned his most cherished

ideologies from nature, not from corrupt American institutions like the university. And because he perceives his ideologies and way of life as threatened, his movement to preserve them is noble.

Jayme is not the only online vegan harboring fascist beliefs. One YouTube channel out of Germany called Balaclava Kuche, or Balaclava Kitchen, consists of a group of neo-Nazis who post vegan cooking videos while discussing and promoting fascist ideologies. The members of the group, made up of several men and one woman, conceal their faces with balaclavas so they can adorn themselves with Nazi slogans and insignia without being identified. It is difficult to know if veganism and fascism were consciously linked in the minds of these individuals, as all of Balaclava Kuche's YouTube content has been removed from the site in recent years. But others have posited that the group promoted veganism alongside fascism because of ecological preservationist ideologies that are similar to Jayme Liardi's.^{cclxxxix}

It has been made abundantly clear throughout the course of every millennial's life that nature, the environment, and the planet are at imminent risk of collapse. Many conservatives deny this fact that is universally agreed upon by academics and climate scientists. But fascists differ from American establishment conservatism in that they—the fascists—view themselves as victims, or potential victims of a corrupt global system. Žižek writes, “The whole fascist ideology is structured as a struggle against the element which holds the place of the immanent impossibility of the very fascist project: the ‘Jew’ is nothing but a fetishistic embodiment of a certain fundamental blockage.”^{cclxxxix} In our discussion of eco-fascism, ‘the Jew,’ or the fundamental blockage on the way to fascism, is sometimes literally a Jew, but is sometimes global capital, is sometimes a feminist college professor, is sometimes a man listening to “jungle music” in his giant truck. The blockage standing in the way of the preservation of nature and of the preservation of

the white race is the totality of modern Western culture—everything that it is and hopes to be, so long as it continues destroying nature to make room for more nonwhite people, as the fear goes.

Both Jayme’s and Sv3rige’s raw foodism and its accompanying prejudices fall under the umbrella of “ecofascism,” which is, at its core, an “imaginary and cultural expression of mystical, anti-humanist Romanticism.”^{ccclxxxiii} It is aligned with Romanticism in that it resists universalizing ideas of enlightenment, and holds fast to concepts of the nation and national culture as a natural tendency innate to human beings.^{ccclxxxiv} And ecofascism’s alignment with mysticism is in the tendency of ecofascists to seek the source of “ultimate reality” rather than have reality mediated by other human beings.^{ccclxxxv} A commitment to Romanticism combined with this particular form of mysticism leads ecofascists to conclude that certain groups of human beings are responsible for destroying their values, their way of life, their nation, and/or their planet.

Both Jayme and Sv3rige fit this bill because they both blame (flawed) human cultures for all of the major problems facing the planet and humanity today. In Sv3rige’s case, a “return to nature” devoid of human culture would allow human beings to live as they were “naturally” designed; and in Jayme’s case, the perceived devaluing of white culture in particular has led to globalism (i.e. global industry) that destroys “virtue” and the planet along with it.

Vegan Restaurants and Trans-inclusive Restrooms

In 2016, North Carolina’s state government made itself infamous for instituting the “Public Facilities Privacy & Security Act,” a bill that sought to limit transgender and gender-nonconforming peoples’ access to communal public restrooms. The statute equated “gender” with “sex assigned at birth,” and thus made it illegal for a person to enter the restroom corresponding with their gender identity if that gender identity did not also correspond with the assigned sex on

their birth certificate.^{cclxxxvi} This meant that transgender and non-binary people were barred from using the restrooms they were most comfortable using.

Proponents of the bill argued that this measure would help keep women and children safe in public restrooms by barring “men” from entering women-only spaces. Despite there being zero evidence of any transgender women preying on cisgender women or their children in public restrooms, the bill painted all trans women with a broad predatory brush, effectively linking transness and gender nonconformity to perversion and criminal sexual misconduct, a longstanding prejudice against queer people.

Opponents of the bill cited its blatant transphobia, as well as the lack of evidence that a trans woman had ever harmed a cisgender woman in a public restroom. In fact, transgender and gender-nonconforming people were much more likely to be harmed by cisgender people for entering their desired restroom.^{cclxxxvii} Furthermore, there was no practical way to enforce such a law. Would citizens be required to present a birth certificate before entering any public restroom? Or would they simply be asked to drop their pants? Would police officers now be present in public restrooms? How would this bill impact cisgender women who read as very masculine, or cis men who read as effeminate? Aside from the obvious discrimination inherent in such a law, its application was impractical. The law would correct one imaginary problem by creating a dozen new problems for all involved.

The bill was revoked only a year after its passing, making it merely a flash in the reactionary pan. It was the first bill of its kind in the United States, and it was backed, not by scientific studies or statistics proving that it would increase privacy and security for (regular, cisgender) citizens in public restrooms, but by a vague sense of moral panic that if differently-gendered people can exist openly in public spaces they might just take over American culture

altogether. In fact, conservatives weren't far off in this assumption. Instead of removing any semblance of queerness from public spaces, the conservative bathroom bill would have the opposite effect. LGBTQ+ groups and the "cultural left" doubled down on the need for restrooms to be labeled in a gender-neutral way and for added single-stall restrooms in new construction. The bigoted "bathroom bill" sparked important conversations on the left about issues of access, accurate gender terminology, and privacy concerns for marginalized groups. This resulted in a rise in gender-neutral and single-stall restrooms in businesses, schools, universities, and government buildings.

Bars and restaurants, those quintessential fixtures of American pastime and entertainment, are now expected to signal—by way of their bathroom offerings—what types of clientele they would like to have frequenting their establishments. Some bars and restaurants cater explicitly to queer needs with signs on their bathroom doors reading, "Friendly For All Genders," signaling their understanding that gender identity and expression is nuanced and not binary. Or, an edgier establishment may post a sign that says, "We Don't Care" accompanied by the classic half-man, half-woman restroom stick figure with added tentacles for arms, a robot head, and/or animal legs—a move that seems to mock the idea of multiple genders at the same time as it displays its ability to accommodate them. Then, there are those restaurants that go a more diplomatic route, labeling their single-stall restrooms simply "RESTROOM," leaving each patron to decide whether they are friendly to queer and trans needs, or if this is just a happy accident born of the establishment's layout and limited plumbing. And lastly, there is the old guard—those bars and restaurants with the classic binary communal rows of stalls. Each patron must choose: Are you with the Men or the Women? There is no nuance or room for interpretation.

In this tricky American cultural climate, how does a manager or business owner decide how to style their restrooms? The decision must be informed by that owner's personal politics to some degree. But surely the neighborhood culture and its make-up of residents also comes into play. Is the bar or restaurant surrounded by residents above the age of 60 or under the age of 29? Are the residents mostly white, mostly of color, or a mix? Is it an immigrant neighborhood? Are there many churches? And then from these questions comes the most important question of all: What is best for business? It would come as no surprise that a hip, new gastropub in the East Village would also don all-gender restrooms. They are serving a young, diverse, and queer neighborhood in NYC, a population that may feel snubbed without queer alternatives to traditional toilet options. Similarly, it would come as no surprise that Lisa's Front Porch, the only ma and pa diner in my hometown of Louisa, Kentucky (population 3,000) would have traditional binary restroom options that cater to its white, Bible Belt clientele. Most residents of Louisa would look with confusion upon an all-gender restroom sign and then likely decide to cook at home on Sundays from that point forward.

These considerations about a particular restaurant's cultural environment extend far beyond how best to style a restroom (and include choices about décor, menu selections, employee compensation, outdoor signage, location, hours of operation, and so on). But the conversation regarding the queer politics of restaurant restroom culture is relatively new and significant. One popular restaurant review columnist for the San Francisco Chronicle factors in a restaurant's accommodations for marginalized groups in her overall rating of the experience there. The Washington Post's write-up on Soleil Ho explains, "When Ho walks into a restaurant she always has a member of her party scout out whether the bathrooms are gender-neutral. She also considers accessibility for people with disabilities and the availability of plant-based dishes on the menu."

Ho aims to make the restaurant industry “more equitable, more accessible, and more just” with her critiques.^{cclxxxviii} Her reviews take into account, not just taste and service, but the overall dining experience, and what types of people would be welcomed inside the establishment. Ho’s popularity (and controversy) is due in part to her commitment to making sure marginalized groups are represented as viable patrons of the restaurant industry—a priority that sets her apart from other restaurant reviewers.

It is significant that Ho is concerned, not just with the quality of a restaurant’s food, but also with how marginalized groups are treated, catered to, or left out of American restaurant culture. If, broadly speaking, American hegemony skews white, upper-class, straight, cisgender, and Christian, then wouldn’t American food hegemony skew much the same? Ho understands that vegans, too, are left out of the hegemonic foodscape that privileges animal-based dishes and centers meat on the plate. But it doesn’t appear to register in her reviews that the need to accommodate vegans and the need to accommodate queer patrons is politically linked. Rather, these are two cultural trends that have happened to arise concurrently—a coincidence and nothing more. But is it possible that one trend has followed the other? Might accommodating queer patrons also mean providing ample vegan options on the menu?

Below, I observe and analyze queer culture in vegan and vegan-friendly restaurant spaces. I have visited vegan restaurants and vegan-friendly (defined as having three or more vegan options on its menu) restaurants in my current city of Indianapolis and in surrounding cities. I will chart how each veg restaurant has chosen to style its restrooms according to three types: overtly queer-friendly, non-descript queer-friendly, or not queer-friendly. Overtly queer-friendly includes multiple single-stall restrooms, or a multi-stall restroom with some version of an all-gender or “We Don’t Care” sign. Non-descript queer-friendly includes restrooms consisting of one or more single-

stall options labeled in a neutral way such as “Restroom.” And finally the not queer-friendly restrooms consist of either single- or multi-stall options labeled in the traditional binary way—Men or Women. I also make notes of any other ways that veg-friendly restaurants signal their support of queer culture—pride flags or other queer decor, queer staff, diverse clientele, and so on. This demonstrates how vegan and vegan-friendly establishments, unlike their meat-centric restaurant counterparts, more readily cater to LGBTQ+ communities.

The restaurants I visited are all located in the metro Indianapolis area, as I am located in this city at the time of this writing. In addition, Indianapolis could be representative of other similarly-sized cities in “flyover” states—cities like Cincinnati, St. Louis, Columbus, Milwaukee, Pittsburgh, Louisville, Madison, and the like. I am not suggesting that each of these cities is culturally the same, or demographically homogenous, but they do share some important similarities. Each is a liberal-leaning, “blue” city in an otherwise predominantly conservative, “red” or “swing” state. These cities all have approximately the same size metro area. And each of these cities is located in the Midwest or in a Midwest-adjacent region of the country. It is possible (though remains to be studied) that trends occurring in Indianapolis with regard to veganism and/or queer social spaces could be happening in similar nearby cities as well. This research constitutes qualitative cultural analysis and observational study rather than wider-spread surveying with reproducible findings. My aim is to expound upon trends in my immediate surroundings and later build upon these observations.

The population of the Indianapolis metro area is approximately 1.2 million people, and the region supports dozens of vegan-only and vegan-friendly restaurants and eateries. These restaurants exist in many different types of neighborhoods—not just in gentrified or gentrifying ones. Some of the neighborhoods surrounding these restaurants are upper class or mostly white,

and sometimes the neighborhoods are more diverse. Some of these businesses are black-owned or queer-owned, and some are not. My only aim was to visit popular, well-known vegan and vegan-friendly restaurant options to observe whether or not queer people would be welcome and comfortable in those spaces and if queer culture is represented there. Sometimes there were limitations on which restaurants I could visit. For instance, some vegan restaurants in Indianapolis only offered curbside pick-up for the majority of the pandemic, while other establishments stayed open for dine-in service, but with limited seating options. The COVID-19 pandemic has fundamentally changed how some restaurants conduct business, which means at times I also had to adapt how I studied these establishments. Because I was not able to go inside some businesses, some of what I have written about its culture is from pre-pandemic memory. The aim of this writing is to chart how vegan and vegan-friendly establishments engage (if at all) with their queer clientele and the broader queer community in Indianapolis.

The restaurants in Indianapolis that I studied are: Three Carrots, 10th Street Diner, Ezra's Enlightened Café, Cul De Sac Kitchen, Broad Ripple Brew Pub, Union Jack Pub, Mimi Blue Meatballs, Three Sisters Café, BrewDog, King Dough, Futuro Pizza, Always Bean LLC, the Yard House, Tlaolli, Burgeezy, Hoagies and Hops, Upland Brewing, Blue Sushi Sake, and La Margarita. Of the four vegan-only restaurants in Indy (Three Carrots, 10th Street Diner, Ezra's Enlightened Café, and Cul De Sac Kitchen), three of them have either overt or non-descript queer-friendly restroom options. Only one restaurant, Cul De Sac Kitchen, does not. But because Cul De Sac is one stall in a larger food court and not its own brick-and-mortar, I'm not sure it can be counted, as the traditional communal restrooms are provided by the broader establishment that houses it.

In sum, all of Indy's fully vegan restaurants offer queer-friendly restrooms and also signal that they are friendly to the LGBTQ+ community in other ways—with Pride insignia or by hiring

openly queer people to their staff. Of the “vegan-friendly” restaurants included, more than half offered queer-friendly restroom options, and signaled their support of queer culture with decorations and signage in their dining areas. This (albeit limited) data collection shows that vegan and vegan-friendly restaurants in Indianapolis are more likely to cater to and support the LGBTQ+ community.

Determining whether or not this parallel phenomenon is simply a coincidence is more difficult due to the variety of factors that go into a restaurant owner or manager’s style choices. One could deduce that both veganism and LGBTQ+ equality are on the rise, and therefore the representation of each movement is becoming more common in public life and in restaurants that have opened in the last ten-or-so years. Newer restaurants catering to younger patrons would be remiss not to cultivate an atmosphere and offerings friendly to both queer people and vegans. On the motivation of restaurant owners to build inclusive restrooms, one scholar writes,

Cost-effectiveness is a key motivator, but restaurants and other public accommodations should also explicitly state their intention to use such design to fight sex-identity discrimination and sex-based disadvantage. I see no-gender public bathrooms as the architectural manifestation of Butler’s notion of “livability.” Pressing beyond legal remedies, Butler asks, what are the conditions that make it possible for us to see ourselves and others as subjects of love, desire, pain, and ultimately grief? We have the right not to be watched by others as we are in the process of using public toilets, but we also have the right to be seen as worthy enough to access public toilets on equal terms with others, regardless of our gendered appearance... A major benefit of using inclusive design to imagine and build public restrooms differently than we do currently is that it has the potential win over conservatives who morally object to “transgender” bathroom inclusion on the grounds of traditional gender roles.^{cclxxxix}

Restaurants may be able to save money on construction by simplifying their restroom offerings into a few single, no-gender stalls, rather than two sets of sex-segregated stalls. But restaurants should be and sometimes are motivated by their ability to influence public social culture. Conservatives faced with no-gender restroom options will be implicitly asked (by the restaurant) to consider their traditional and out-dated position on sex-segregated restrooms. In the case of

vegan restaurants, advocating for queer and trans people by way of their restroom offerings may be an easier decision to make, since they may not expect many conservatives to seek out vegan restaurants in the first place.

Certainly vegan restaurants are not the only restaurants adapting their restroom offerings to be more inclusive for their clientele. But restaurants of all kinds are a contested site for queer politics, and must make decisions about whether or not to provide an inclusive atmosphere for queer patrons. Vegan restaurants, because their clientele skews younger and because they tend to serve more urban populations, often choose to signal their support for LGBTQ+ communities with inclusive restroom offerings and other queer social markers.

CONCLUSION

Drag Cuisines has done the work of building upon existing theory linking queerness to animality, by applying that connection to several arenas of Western culture. Veganism, I argue, is the concrete political application of the more abstract theory of “queer animality,” a concept formulated by Mel Y. Chen in their text *Animacies*. And the politics of the innate connections between queer and animal takes myriad forms—from staunch direct action outside of factory farms and slaughterhouses to good vibes and healthy living on Instagram. But whatever style or aesthetic veganism is performed within, it is largely queer people who are invested in its performance and promotion.

Future scholarship on veganism and/or queer food movements could be continued in a number of disciplines. Sociological studies—more extensive interviews, surveying, and epidemiological studies—could provide more reliable statistics about both the numbers LGBTQ+ people and vegans living in the United States and what percentage of these groups overlap. Quantitative scholarship could also provide insights into how vegan food alternatives (that is, vegan meats, cheeses, and milks) are marketed and how successful they have become in the free market. This information could provide clues as to how similar products will perform in the marketplace. Additionally, quantitative analysis could help researchers predict future food-related social movements in animal rights, food access, and food justice.

Further intersectional frameworks are needed for understanding how veganism impacts or is impacted by other marginalized communities, including a number of religious minorities who have historically had interests in promoting veganism and vegetarianism, such as the Seventh Day Adventists who touted the spiritual and physical benefits of a strict vegan diet. Interestingly, several large double-blind peer reviewed nutritional studies have been conducted on groups of

Seventh Day Adventist in order to compare and contrast the long-term health effects of a vegan diet against a multitude of omnivorous diets.^{ccxc} Many other religious minorities also adhere to different versions of a plant-based lifestyle, usually in an effort reduce harm in the world. Certain Rastafarian sects (or “mashons” as it is termed), such as the Bobo Ashanti and the Nyabinghi, practice an “ital” lifestyle, a word derived from the English “vital.” Ital is a holistic lifestyle that promotes liveliness, energy, and spirituality in its practitioners by promoting marijuana smoking, the growing of dreadlocks, and strict adherence to a vegetarian diet (though some ital adherents still occasionally allow fish to be consumed). Additionally, many Buddhists and Hindus practice vegetarianism or veganism in order to do less harm. One source estimates that approximately 39 percent of Hindus living in India adhere to some version of a vegetarian diet, and 81 percent of Hindus limit their meat intake.^{ccxc}

Other types of minority groups have also begun to incorporate a vegan lifestyle into their cultures. Black Americans—who are often stereotyped as eating an unhealthy, high-meat, low-vegetable junk food diet that promotes disease—are in many cases leading the charge to promote veganism in their communities and beyond. In Indianapolis alone, there are now three Black-owned fully vegan businesses (Cul De Sac Kitchen, That Vegan Joint, and Black Leaf Vegan), and other Black-owned businesses are known for being vegan friendly (such as Gordon’s Milkshakes on Mass Avenue). This is one small example of how Black entrepreneurs and restaurateurs are promoting plant-based lifestyles in the city where much of the research for Drag Cuisines was conducted. But Black-owned vegan businesses are not unique to Indianapolis—Black-owned food trucks as well as brick-and-mortar restaurants are popping up in every major city in the United States. Interestingly, many Black vegans cite poor nutrition and dietary habits in their communities as their primary motivation for adopting and promoting a vegan lifestyle. More

scholarship is needed to understand the long lineage of Black eating styles in the United States, and where veganism is currently situated in that lineage.

In short, all types of minority groups are starting to subvert or challenge their community's entrenched cultural beliefs and practices by adopting and promoting veganism. More qualitative, intersectional research (like that conducted for Drag Cuisines) is needed to understand how veganism is situated in other religious and racial minorities. This scholarship could help to normalize veganism and plant-based lifestyles in each of these respective communities and in the world at large, and could begin to elucidate the myriad motivations each of these groups has for promoting veganism. What motivates queer Americans to adopt a vegan lifestyle may not be what motivates Black Americans to do the same. Therefore, we could not only learn more about the different styles of vegan activism by studying minority groups, we could also learn about these groups themselves and how they relate to diet, eating, and consumption more generally.

ⁱ Vegan Society, The. The foundations of ethical veganism. Last modified, 2020.

<https://www.vegansociety.com/news/blog/foundations-ethical-veganism#:~:text=The%20Vegan%20Society%20defines%20veganism,based%20diet%20witho,ut%20animal%20products>.

ⁱⁱ Hallock, Betty. "To make a burger, first you need 660 gallons of water..." Los Angeles Times. Last modified, 2014. <https://www.latimes.com/food/dailydish/la-dd-gallons-of-water-to-make-a-burger-20140124-story.html>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Vetter, David. "Got Beef? Here's What Your Hamburger is Doing to the Climate." Forbes. Last modified, 2020. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/davidrvetter/2020/10/05/got-beef-heres-what-your-hamburger-is-doing-to-the-climate/?sh=448531175206>.

^{iv} Jones, Benji. "Some people launder money. Other people launder cattle. ." Vox. Last modified, 2022. <https://www.vox.com/science-and-health/2022/10/19/23403330/amazon-rainforest-deforestation-cattle-laundering>.

^v Andrei, Mihai. "The environmental impact of veggie patties vs meat burgers." ZME Science. Last modified, 2021. <https://www.zmescience.com/other/feature-post/the-environmental-impact-of-veggie-patties-vs-meat-burgers/>.

^{vi} Mhrshahi, Seema, Ding Ding, Joanne Gale, Margaret Allman-Farinelli, and Emily Banks. "Vegetarian diet and all-cause mortality: Evidence from a large population-based Australian cohort - the 45 and Up Study." *Prev Med* (2017). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ypmed.2016.12.044>.

-
- ^{vii} Petre, Alina. "Does the Vegan Diet Extend Your Lifespan?" Healthline. Last modified, 2020. <https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/do-vegans-live-longer>.
- ^{viii} Link, Rachael. "Does a Vegan Diet Promote High or Low Cholesterol?" Healthline. Last modified, 2021. <https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/vegans-with-high-cholesterol>.
- ^{ix} Spencer, E A, P N Appleby, G K Davey, and T J Key. "Diet and body mass index in 38 000 EPIC-Oxford meat-eaters, fish-eaters, vegetarians and vegans." *International Journal of Obesity* (2003). [https://www.nature.com/articles/0802300#:~:text=Mean%20\(unadjusted\)%20BMI%20was%20highest,kg%2Fm2%20in%20women](https://www.nature.com/articles/0802300#:~:text=Mean%20(unadjusted)%20BMI%20was%20highest,kg%2Fm2%20in%20women).
- ^x Mayo Clinic Staff. How plant-based food helps fight cancer. Last modified, 2019. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/cancer/in-depth/how-plant-based-food-helps-fight-cancer/art-20457590>.
- ^{xi} Olfert, Melissa D., and Rachel A. Wattick. "Vegetarian Diets and the Risk of Diabetes." *Current Diabetes Reports* (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11892-018-1070-9>.
- ^{xii} Alwarith, Jihad, Hana Kahleova, Emilie Rembert, Willy Yonas, and Sara Dort. "Nutrition Interventions in Rheumatoid Arthritis: The Potential Use of Plant-Based Diets. A Review." *Frontiers in Nutrition* (2019). <https://doi.org/10.3389/fnut.2019.00141>.
- ^{xiii} Tarrow, Sidney G. *Power in Movement : Social Movements, Collective Action, and Politics*. Cambridge [England] ;: Cambridge University Press, 1994. p. 9.
- ^{xiv} Ibid.
- ^{xv} Ibid.
- ^{xvi} University of Veterinary Medicine, Vienna. "Early separation of cow and calf has long-term effects on social behavior." ScienceDaily. www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2015/04/150428081801.htm (accessed February 1, 2022).
- ^{xvii} Tarrow, Sidney G. *Power in Movement : Social Movements, Collective Action, and Politics*. Cambridge [England] ;: Cambridge University Press, 1994. p. 11.
- ^{xviii} Ibid.
- ^{xix} Zaraska, Marta. "The bizarre story of one of the world's first modern vegetarians — and how his diet made him an outcast from society." Business Insider. Last modified, 2016. <https://www.businessinsider.com/the-story-of-one-of-the-worlds-first-modern-vegetarians-2016-3>.
- ^{xx} Butler, Judith. "Critically Queer." In *The Routledge Queer Studies Reader*, edited by Donald Hall, Annamarie Jagose, Andrea Bebell, and Susan Potter, 19. New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2013.
- ^{xxi} Ahmed, Sara. "Orientations: Toward a Queer Phenomenology." *GLQ* 12, no. 4 (2006): 543–574.
- ^{xxii} Muñoz, José Esteban. *Disidentifications : Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*. Cultural Studies of the Americas ; v. 2. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.
- ^{xxiii} Alexandrowicz, Conrad. *Acting Queer: Gender Dissidence and the Subversion of Realism*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020.
- ^{xxiv} Ilmonen, Kaisa. *Queer Rebellion in the Novels of Michelle Cliff: Intersectionality and Sexual Modernity*. Newcastle upon Tyne, England: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017.
- ^{xxv} Lorenz, Renate. *Queer Art A Freak Theory*. 1st ed. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2014. p. 17.
- ^{xxvi} Pickering, Michael, Michael Pickering, and Michael Pickering. *Research Methods for Cultural Studies*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008.

-
- ^{xxvii} Lawler, Steph. "Stories and the Social World." In *Research Methods for Cultural Studies*, edited by Michael Pickering, 33-34. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008. Proquest Ebook Central.
- ^{xxviii} Schneider, Tanja, and Karin Eli. "Fieldwork in Online Foodscapes: How to bring an ethnographic approach to studies of digital food and digital eating." In *Research Methods in Digital Food Studies*, edited by Jonatan Leer and Stinne Krogager, N.p.: Taylor and Francis Group, 2021. Proquest Ebook Central.
- ^{xxix} Ibid.
- ^{xxx} Simonsen, Thomas M., and Stinne Krogager. "How to approach food texts on YouTube." In *Research Methods in Digital Food Studies*, edited by Stinne Krogager and Jonatan Leer, N.p.: Taylor and Francis Group, 2021. Proquest Ebook Central.
- ^{xxxi} Ibid.
- ^{xxxii} Ibid.
- ^{xxxiii} Ernstson, Henrik, and David Nilsson. "Towards Situated Histories of Heterogenous Infrastructures: Oral History as Method and Meaning." *Geoforum* 134 (2022): 48–58.
- ^{xxxiv} Chen, Mel Y. *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect*. Durham [N.C.: Duke University Press, 2012.
- ^{xxxv} Mehnert, David. "What Is Queer Food?" *Slate Magazine*. *Slate*, April 3, 2002. <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2002/04/what-is-queer-food.html>.
- ^{xxxvi} Ibid.
- ^{xxxvii} Ibid.
- ^{xxxviii} Fitzpatrick, Kyle. "Queer Food Is Hiding in Plain Sight." *Eater*. June 28, 2018. <https://www.eater.com/2018/6/28/17508420/what-is-queer-food>.
- ^{xxxix} Ibid.
- ^{xl} Ibid.
- ^{xli} Bowker, Geoffrey C., and Susan Star. *Sorting Things Out: Classification and Its Consequences*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2000, p. 2-32.
- ^{xlii} "Poultry Slaughter 2020 Summary." *National Agricultural Statistics Service*. United States Department of Agriculture, 2021, downloads.usda.library.cornell.edu/usda-esmis/files/pg15bd88s/f1882d39g/j6731z19s/pslaan21.pdf.
- "Livestock Slaughter 2020 Summary ." *National Agricultural Statistics Service*. United States Department of Agriculture, 2021, www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/Todays_Reports/reports/lsan0421.pdf.
- ^{xliii} Lawrence, Felicity. "If consumers knew how farmed chickens were raised, they might never eat their meat again." *The Guardian*, April 24, 2016. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/apr/24/real-cost-of-roast-chicken-animal-welfare-farms>.
- ^{xliv} Winders, Delcianna J., and Elan Abrell. "Slaughterhouse Workers, Animals, and the Environment." *Health and Human Rights Journal* (December 23, 2021). <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8694297/>.
- ^{xlv} Ahmed, Sara. *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*. Duke University Press, 2006, p. 161.
- ^{xlvi} Dictionary.com. Entry for "Queer". <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/queer>.
- ^{xlvii} O'Rourke, Michael, and Kolozova, Katerina; Joy, Eileen A. "“Girls Welcome!!!”: Speculative Realism, Object-Oriented Ontology, and Queer Theory.” 2016.
- ^{xlviii} Ibid.

-
- ^{xlix} NYC Pride. "Queers Read This." *Lesbian Herstory Archives*, 1990.
- ¹ "'Queer' Definition Changes with the Times." *Society*, vol. 41, no. 2, 2004, pp. 2-3. *ProQuest*, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/206718338?accountid=13360>.
- ^{li} Probyn, Elspeth. *Carnal Appetites: Foodsexidentities*. Routledge, 2000, p. 29
- ^{lii} Adams, Carol. *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory*. Bloomsbury, 1990, p. 56-57.
- ^{liii} *Ibid.*
- ^{liv} Messina, M. "Soybean isoflavone exposure does not have feminizing effects on men: a critical examination of the clinical evidence." *Fertility and Sterility*, vol. 93, no. 7, 8 Apr. 2010, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20378106>.
- ^{lv} Psihoyos, Louie, *The Game Changers*. Directed by James Wilks, USA: Netflix, 2018. Film.
- ^{lvi} Bowker, Geoffrey C., and Susan Star. *Sorting Things Out: Classification and Its Consequences*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2000, p. 2-32.
- ^{lvii} Bowker, Geoffrey C., and Susan Star. *Sorting Things Out: Classification and Its Consequences*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2000, p. 10-11.
- ^{lviii} *Ibid.*
- ^{lix} Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. 2006, Preface.
- ^{lx} Haley, Sarah. *No Mercy Here: Gender, Punishment, and the Making of Jim Crow Modernity*. Justice, Power, and Politics. 2016.
- ^{lxi} Chen, Mel Y. *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect*. Perverse Modernities. Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 2012.
- ^{lxii} Adams, Carol J. *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-vegetarian Critical Theory*. New York: Continuum, 1990.
- ^{lxiii} Hofweber, Thomas. "Logic and Ontology." The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Last modified , 2021. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/logic-ontology/>.
- ^{lxiv} Bowker, Geoffrey C., and Susan Star. *Sorting Things Out: Classification and Its Consequences*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2000,
- ^{lxv} *Ibid.* p.5
- ^{lxvi} Ogle, Maureen. *In Meat We Trust: An Unexpected History of Carnivore America*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013.
- ^{lxvii} Barclay, Eliza. *A Nation of Meat Eaters: See How it All Adds Up*, NPR, 27 June 2012, www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2012/06/27/155527365/visualizing-a-nation-of-meat-eaters.
- ^{lxviii} "Livestock's Long Shadow: Environmental Issues and Options." *Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations* (2006).
- ^{lxix} Jacobson, Michael F. "Six Arguments for a Greener Diet: How a More Plant-Based Diet Could Save Your Health and the Environment". *Center for Science in the Public Interest* (2006).
- ^{lxx} Thornton, Philip, Mario Herrero, and Polly Ericksen. "Livestock and Climate Change." In *Livestock Xchange*, N.p.: International Livestock Research Institute, 2011. <https://cgspace.cgiar.org/bitstream/handle/10568/10601/IssueBrief3.pdf>.
- ^{lxxi} Hance, Jeremy. "How Humans are Driving the Sixth Mass Extinction." N.p.: The Guardian, 2015. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/radical-conservation/2015/oct/20/the-four-horsemen-of-the-sixth-mass-extinction>.
- ^{lxxii} Barns, Laura. Seitan: What is it and is it healthy? <https://allplants.com/blog/lifestyle/what-is-seitan>.

-
- ^{lxxiii} Bramen, Lisa. "Seitan: The Other Fake Meat." *Smithsonian Magazine*, August 25, 2010. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/seitan-the-other-fake-meat-97622092/>.
- ^{lxxiv} Mehnert, David. "What Is Queer Food?" *Slate Magazine*. *Slate*, April 3, 2002. <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2002/04/what-is-queer-food.html>.
- ^{lxxv} Adams, Carol J. *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-vegetarian Critical Theory*. New York: Continuum, 1990.
- ^{lxxvi} Butler, Judith. "Imitation and Gender Insubordination." In *The Routledge Critical and Cultural Theory Reader*, edited by Neil Badmington and Julia Thomas, 365-77. New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2008.
- ^{lxxvii} Butler, Judith. "Critically Queer" In *The Routledge Queer Studies Reader*, edited by Donald E. Hall and Annemarie Jagose, 22-24. New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2013.
- ^{lxxviii} Carson, Biz. "Hampton Creek gets to keep the 'Just Mayo' name as long as it changes its label." *Business Insider*, December 17, 2015. <https://www.businessinsider.com/hampton-creek-gets-to-keep-just-mayo-2015-12>.
- ^{lxxix} Ibid.
- ^{lxxx} Ibid.
- ^{lxxxi} "IMPOSSIBLE WHOPPER BOOSTED BURGER KING TRAFFIC." *The Food Institute Report* 92, no. 22 (2019): 4.
- ^{lxxxii} CNBC.com Staff. 24. Impossible Foods. Last modified May 25, 2021. <https://www.cnbc.com/2021/05/25/impossible-foods-disruptor-50.html>.
- ^{lxxxiii} Taste of 2021. Last modified, 2021. <https://blog.grubhub.com/taste-of-2021/>.
- ^{lxxxiv} Ibid.
- ^{lxxxv} Adams, Carol J. *Burger*. Bloomsbury, 2018.
- ^{lxxxvi} Ibid.
- ^{lxxxvii} Ahmed, Sara. *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*. Duke University Press, 2006, p.158
- ^{lxxxviii} "Seafood." Andrew Zimmern, *Go Fork Yourself*, andrewzimmern.com, 15 June 2012, andrewzimmern.com/2012/06/15/go-fork-yourself-seafood/.
- ^{lxxxix} Rogan, Joe. Is the Impossible Burger Healthy? Last modified, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VHgCnYiEWMc>.
- ^{xc} GMO Science. RAT FEEDING STUDY SUGGESTS THE IMPOSSIBLE BURGER MAY NOT BE SAFE TO EAT. Last modified, 2019. <https://gmoscience.org/2019/06/25/rat-feeding-studies-suggest-the-impossible-burger-may-not-be-safe-to-eat/>.
- ^{xci} Morgan, Piers. Twitter. "I just ordered a sausage roll..." Last modified, 2019.
- ^{xcii} Kirts, Leah. "The Queer Politics of Vegan Hot Dogs." *Tenderly*, Medium, 27 Feb. 2020, tenderly.medium.com/the-queer-politics-of-vegan-hot-dogs-cce66a0d1dfd.
- ^{xciii} Ibid.
- ^{xciv} McDougall, John. "Plant foods have a complete amino acid composition." *Circulation* (June 25, 2002). <https://doi.org/10.1161/01.cir.0000018905.97677.1f>.
- ^{xcv} Clark, Michelle J., and Joanne L. Slavin. "The effect of fiber on satiety and food intake: a systematic review." *Journal of the American College of Nutrition* (2013). <https://doi.org/10.1080/07315724.2013.791194>.
- ^{xcvi} Psihoyos, Louie, dir. *The Game Changers*. Directed by James Wilks, USA: Netflix, 2018. Film.
- ^{xcvii} Barclay, Eliza. *A Nation of Meat Eaters: See How it All Adds Up*, NPR, 27 June 2012, www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2012/06/27/155527365/visualizing-a-nation-of-meat-eaters.

xcviii Ibid.

xcix Ibid.

c Ibid.

ci Ibid.

cii Eisen, Michael B., and Patrick O. Brown. "Rapid global phaseout of animal agriculture has the potential to stabilize greenhouse gas levels for 30 years and offset 68 percent of CO2 emissions this century." *PLOS Climate* (February 1, 2022).

<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pclm.0000010>.

ciii Center for Disease Control. Water Contamination from Animal Feeding Operations. Last modified, 2022. [https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/emergency/sanitation-wastewater/animal-feeding-](https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/emergency/sanitation-wastewater/animal-feeding-operations.html#:~:text=Animal%20Feeding%20Operations%20(AFOs)%20are,surface%20water%20and%20the%20environment)

[operations.html#:~:text=Animal%20Feeding%20Operations%20\(AFOs\)%20are,surface%20water%20and%20the%20environment](https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/emergency/sanitation-wastewater/animal-feeding-operations.html#:~:text=Animal%20Feeding%20Operations%20(AFOs)%20are,surface%20water%20and%20the%20environment).

civ Kirkhorn, Steven, and Marc Schenker. "Human Health Effects of Agriculture: Physical Diseases and Illnesses.", National Ag Safety Database, 2001, [nasdonline.org/static_content/documents/1827/d001772.pdf](https://www.nasdonline.org/static_content/documents/1827/d001772.pdf). p. 1-18.

cv Berke, Jeremy. "How eating meat creates a 'dead zone' the size of New Jersey in the Gulf of Mexico every year." *Business Insider*, April 7, 2018. <https://www.businessinsider.com/eating-meat-affects-environment-dead-zone-2018-4>.

cvi Hyner, Christopher. "A Leading Cause of Everything: One Industry That Is Destroying Our Planet and Our Ability to Thrive on It." *Stanford Law School*, Stanford Environmental Law Journal, 2016, <https://journals.law.stanford.edu/stanford-environmental-law-journal-elj/blog/leading-cause-everything-one-industry-destroying-our-planet-and-our-ability-thrive-it>.

cvii Environmental Protection Agency. Estimated Animal Agriculture Nitrogen and Phosphorus from Manure. Last modified January 11, 2022. <https://www.epa.gov/nutrient-policy-data/estimated-animal-agriculture-nitrogen-and-phosphorus-manure#:~:text=Animal%20agriculture%20manure%20is%20a,through%20surface%20runoff%20or%20infiltration>.

cviii "HSI Report: The Impact of Industrialized Animal Agriculture on World Hunger." *Humane Society International*, Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN, 2009, www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/animalwelfare/HSI--The%20Impact%20of%20Industrialized%20Animal%20Agriculture%20on%20World%20Hunger.pdf.

cix Schlosser, Eric. *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal*. New York, Harper Perennial, 2001, p. 240-250.

cx Ibid.

cxii Ibid.

cxiii Ibid.

cxiii Williams, Kim A. "CardioBuzz: Vegan Diet, Healthy Heart?" *MedPage Today*, MedPage Today, 2014, www.medpagetoday.com/Blogs/CardioBuzz/46860.

cxiv Esselstyn, Caldwell. "Dr. Esselstyn's Program." *Cleveland Clinic*, Cleveland Clinic Wellness, <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/ccf/media/files/Wellness/Dr-Esselstyn-Insert.pdf>.

cxv Campbell, T. Colin. *The China Study: Startling Implications for Diet, Weight Loss, and Long-term Health*. Dallas, Benbella Books, 2006.

cxvi Foer, Johnathan Safran. *Eating Animals*. New York, Little, Brown and Company, 2010.

cxvii Ibid.

-
- ^{cxviii} Ibid.
- ^{cxix} Sewell, Christina. "Removing the Meat Subsidy: Our Cognitive Dissonance Around Animal Agriculture." *Journal of International Affairs* (February 11, 2020).
<https://jia.sipa.columbia.edu/removing-meat-subsidy-our-cognitive-dissonance-around-animal-agriculture>.
- ^{cxx} O'Connor, Anahad. "How the Government Supports Your Junk Food Habit." *The New York Times*, 2016. <https://archive.nytimes.com/well.blogs.nytimes.com/2016/07/19/how-the-government-supports-your-junk-food-habit/>.
- ^{cxxi} Ibid.
- ^{cxxii} Ibid.
- ^{cxxiii} "Heightened Sense of Smell? ." Veggie Boards: A Vegetarian and Vegan Community. Last modified , 2008. <https://www.veggieboards.com/threads/heightened-sense-of-smell.76623/>.
- ^{cxxiv} Nozhdehi, Fatemeh, Sashey Abeywickrema, Phil Bremer, and Mei Peng. "Comparing Taste Detection Thresholds across Individuals Following Vegan, Vegetarian, or Omnivore Diets." *Foods* (2021). <https://doi.org/10.3390/foods10112704>.
- ^{cxxv} Stewart, J E., and R S. Keast. "Recent fat intake modulates fat taste sensitivity in lean and overweight subjects." *International Journal of Obesity* (2012).
<https://doi.org/10.1038/ijo.2011.155>.
- ^{cxxvi} Nozhdehi, Fatemeh, Sashey Abeywickrema, Phil Bremer, and Mei Peng. "Comparing Taste Detection Thresholds across Individuals Following Vegan, Vegetarian, or Omnivore Diets." *Foods* (2021). <https://doi.org/10.3390/foods10112704>.
- ^{cxxvii} Bourdieu, Pierre. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. London And New York: Routledge Classics, 2010. p. 257.
- ^{cxxviii} Ibid.
- ^{cxxix} Vester, Katharina. *A Taste of Power: Food and American Identities*. Oakland, University of California Press, 2015, p. 18.
- ^{cxxxx} Ibid. p. 70.
- ^{cxxxi} Ibid. p. 18-23.
- ^{cxxxii} Deloria, Philip Joseph. *Playing Indian*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998.
- ^{cxxxiii} Ibid.
- ^{cxxxiv} Ibid.
- ^{cxxxv} Joy, Melanie. *Why We Love Dogs, Eat Pigs, and Wear Cows: An Introduction to Carnism*. San Francisco: Conari Press, 2010.
- ^{cxxxvi} Weinbaum, Alys E. "'Nation'." In *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*, edited by Bruce Burgett and Glenn Hendler, N.p.: NYU Press, 2007.
- ^{cxxxvii} Ibid.
- ^{cxxxviii} Ibid.
- ^{cxxxix} "Mystique and the Western X-tra Bacon Thickburger." *AdForum*. Screenshot. Last modified, 2014. <https://www.adforum.com/creative-work/ad/player/34495728/mystique-and-the-western-x-tra-bacon-thickburger/carls-jrhardees>.
- ^{cxli} Adams, Carol J. *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-vegetarian Critical Theory*. New York: Continuum, 1990. Cover Image.
- ^{cxlii} Adams, Carol J. *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-vegetarian Critical Theory*. New York: Continuum, 1990, p. 13
- ^{cxliii} Voydatch, Bryannah. *Overlapping Oppressions: Patriarchal Links between Women and Animals*. 2017. 10.13140/RG.2.2.26463.76967.

-
- cxliii "Carl's Jr. The Most American Thickburger." Youtube.com. Last modified, 2016. Screenshot. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sckyo3-f2D8>.
- cxliv Lee, Erika. *At America's Gates: Chinese Immigration During the Exclusion Era, 1882-1943*. Durham: University of North Carolina Press, 2003.
- cxlv Ogle, Maureen. *In Meat We Trust: An Unexpected History of Carnivore America*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013, p. 1-2
- cxlvi Youtube.com. *The Post Traumatic Slave Diet*, 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I-GQYK-UrRQ>
- cxlvii Harper, Breeze. *Sistah Vegan: Black Female Vegans Speak on Food, Identity, Health, and Society*. N.p.: Lantern Books, 2009.
- cxlviii *Ibid.* p. 51
- cxlix Cohen, Cathy J. "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?" In *The Routledge Queer Studies Reader*, edited by Donald E. Hall, Annamarie Jagose, Andrea Bell, and Susan Potter, 74-95. London And New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2013.
- cl Muñoz, José Esteban. *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*. Cultural Studies of the Americas; v. 2. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999, p. 80-81, and 128
- cli Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. N.p.: Routledge Classics, 1990. <https://sachafrey.files.wordpress.com/2009/10/subversive-bodily-acts-ss-330-11.pdf>.
- clii McKibben, Beth. "According to Some, Cracker Barrel Has Gone 'Woke' by Offering Vegan Sausage." *Eater Atlanta*. Last modified August 5, 2022. <https://atlanta.eater.com/2022/8/5/23293553/cracker-barrel-impossible-vegan-sausage-breakfast-menu>.
- cliii Stevens, Ashlie D. "After Cracker Barrel adds vegan sausage to its menu, some customers say the chain is too 'woke'." *Salon*, August 5, 2022. <https://www.salon.com/2022/08/05/after-cracker-barrel-adds-vegan-sausage-to-its-menu-some-customers-say-the-chain-is-too-woke/>.
- cliv *Ibid.*
- clv Chen, Mel Y. *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect*. Perverse Modernities. Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 2012.
- clvi *Ibid.*
- clvii *Ibid.*
- clviii Singer, Peter. *Animal Liberation*. 1st Ecco Paperback ed. New York: Ecco, 2002. p. 6
- clix Muñoz, José Esteban. *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*. Cultural Studies of the Americas; v. 2. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999, p. 71
- clx Bronski Beat. *Smalltown Boy*. N.p.: The Age of Consent, 1984.
- clxi Olwagan, Christiaan, dir. *Kanarie*. South Africa: Marche Media, 2018. Film.
- clxii Munoz, Jose E. "Feeling Brown, Feeling Down: Latina Effect, The Performativity of Race, and the Depressive Position." *The Routledge Queer Studies Reader*, edited by Donald E. Hall, Annamarie Jagose, Andrea Bebell, and Susan Potter, Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2013, pp. 412-21.
- clxiii *Ibid.*
- clxiv Derrida, Jacques, Marie-Louise Mallet, and David Wills. *The Animal That Therefore I Am*. Perspectives in Continental Philosophy. 2008, p. 9

-
- clxv Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty., and Rosalind C. Morris. *Can the Subaltern Speak? : Reflections on the History of an Idea*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2010.
- clxvi Foer, Jonathan Safran. *Eating Animals*. 1st ed. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2009, pp. 181.
- clxvii Foer, Jonathan Safran. *Eating Animals*. 1st ed. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2009, pp. 182.
- clxviii *Ibid.*
- clxix Foer, Jonathan Safran. *Eating Animals*. 1st ed. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2009, pp. 64-65.
- clxx Science Daily, "It's not just a grunt. Pigs really do have something to say." <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2016/06/160629100349.htm>
- clxxi *Ibid.*
- clxxii Aaltola, Elisa. *Animal Suffering : Philosophy and Culture*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.
- clxxiii Levinas, Emmanuel. *The Name of a Dog, or Natural Rights*. N.p.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990. https://www.sas.upenn.edu/~cavitch/pdf-library/Levinas_Name_of_Dog.pdf.
- clxxiv *Ibid.*
- clxxv Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality*. 1st American ed. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978, p. 43
- clxxvi *Ibid.*
- clxxvii Rupp, Leila J. *A Desired Past: A Short History of Same-sex Love in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999.
- clxxviii *Ibid.*
- clxxix Rupp, Leila J. *A Desired past : A Short History of Same-sex Love in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999, p. 78
- clxxx Adams, Carol J. *Neither Man nor Beast : Feminism and the Defense of Animals*. Bloomsbury Revelations editon. London: Bloomsbury Academic, an imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018, p. 84.
- clxxxi Bezan, Sarah, and James Tink. *Seeing Animals after Derrida*. Edited by Sarah Bezan and James Tink. Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2018.
- clxxxii *Ibid.* pg. 206
- clxxxiii Fitch, W Tecumseh. "What Animals Can Teach Us About Human Language: The Phonological Continuity Hypothesis." *Current opinion in behavioral sciences* 21 (2018): 68–75.
- clxxxiv Haraway, Donna Jeanne. *When Species Meet*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008, p. 235.
- clxxxv *Ibid.* p. 4
- clxxxvi Puar, Jasbir K. "Queer Times, Queer Assemblages." *The Routledge Queer Studies Reader*, edited by Donald E. Hall, Annamarie Jagose, Andrea Bebell, and Susan Potter, Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2013, pp. 515-26.
- clxxxvii Munoz, Jose Esteban. "Feeling Brown, Feeling Down: Latina Affect, the Performativity of Race, and the Depressive Position." *The Routledge Queer Studies Reader*, edited by Donald E. Hall, Annamarie Jagose, Andrea Bebell, and Susan Potter, Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2013, pp. 412-21.
- clxxxviii Halberstam, Judith. *Female Masculinity*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1998, p. 179
- clxxxix Hall, Radclyffe. *The Well of Loneliness*. Cutchogue, NY: Buccaneer Books, 1992, pp. 19.
- cx Hall, Radclyffe. *The Well of Loneliness*. Cutchogue, NY: Buccaneer Books, 1992, p. 35.

-
- cxci Ibid. p. 111.
- excii Ibid.
- exciii Ibid. p. 112-113.
- exciv Troubridge, Una. *The Life and Death of Radclyffe Hall*. N.p.: Hesperides Press, 2013.
- excv Ibid. Location 622.
- cxevi Ibid. Location 608.
- excvii Ibid. Location 630.
- excviii Hall, Radclyffe. *The Well of Loneliness*. Cutchogue, NY: Buccaneer Books, 1992, p. 205.
- excix Ibid. p. 209.
- cc D'Stair, Sarah. "'That rare gift: perfect hands on a horse': Radclyffe Hall's eros of cross-species communion." *Feminist Modernist Studies* 3, no. 1 (January 12, 2020). <https://doi.org/10.1080/24692921.2020.1712762>.
- cci Ibid.
- ccii Carter, Monica. "Paul Takes the Form of a Mortal Girl." *ForeWord*, October 27, 2017. *Gale Academic OneFile* (accessed February 2, 2022). https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A512224137/AONE?u=purdue_main&sid=bookmark-AONE&xid=dcf06833.
- cciii Michigan Womyn's Music Festival Aug. 7 - 12, 2001 General Festival Information. Last modified , 2001. <https://web.archive.org/web/20010801171142/http://www.michfest.com/General/general.htm>.
- cciv A Grrrl's Two Sound Cents. Why the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival Had to End. Last modified, 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QoXVIPGoLwY>.
- ccv Ibid.
- ccvi Lawlor, Andrea. *Paul Takes The Form of a Mortal Girl*. Rescue Press. Chicago, 2017, p. 82.
- ccvii Ibid. p. 85.
- ccviii Ibid. p. 88
- ccix Ibid. p. 88-89.
- ccx Ibid. p. 83.
- ccxi Muskett, Gina. "Diana, Goddess of the Chase." National Museums Liverpool. Last modified , 2022. <https://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/stories/diana-goddess-of-chase>.
- ccxii Althusser, Louis. "Ideological State Apparatuses". *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. London. NLB, 1971.
- ccxiii Ibid.
- ccxiv Lawlor, Andrea. *Paul Takes The Form of a Mortal Girl*. Rescue Press. Chicago, 2017.
- ccxv Tharp, Julie. "The Transvestite as Monster: Gender Horror in "Silence of the Lambs" and "Psycho"." *Journal of Popular Film & Television*, 1991, p. 108-109
- ccxvi Demme, Jonathan, dir. *The Silence of the Lambs*. 1991.
- ccxvii Hochman, Jhan. "The Silence of the Lambs: A Quiet Bestiary." *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* 1, no. 2 (1993). <https://doi.org/10.1093/isle/1.2.57>.
- ccxviii Nast, Heidi. "Critical Pet Studies." *Antipode* 38, no. 5 (2006): 894–906.
- ccxix Edelman, Lee. "The Future is Kid Stuff: Queer Theory, Disidentification, and the Death Drive." *The Routledge Queer Studies Reader*, edited by Donald E. Hall, Annamarie Jagose, Andrea Bebell, and Susan Potter, Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2013, pp. 287-98.
- ccxx Wolfe, Cary. *Animal Rites : American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.
- ccxxi Ibid.

-
- ccxxii Lundblad, Michael. "From Animal to Animality Studies." *PMLA* 124, no. 2 (2009): 496–502. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25614290>.
- ccxxiii Deleuze, Gilles, and Felix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. N.p.: University of Minnesota Press, 1987.
- ccxxiv Merrill, Samuel, Emily Keightley, and Priska Dephi. *Social Movements, Cultural Memory, and Digital Media: Mobilising Mediated Remembrance*. N.p.: Springer International Publishing AG, 2020.
- ccxxv Ibid. p. 115.
- ccxxvi Puar, Jasbir K. "Queer Times, Queer Assemblages." *Social text* 23, no. 3-4 (2005): 121–122.
- ccxxvii Anonymous, 24-year-old bisexual interviewee, in discussion with the author, July 2022.
- ccxxviii Ibid.
- ccxxix Anonymous, 30-year-old nonbinary interviewee, in discussion with the author, July 2022.
- ccxxx Anonymous, 24-year-old gay interviewee, in discussion with the author, July 2022.
- ccxxxi Anonymous, 52-year-old queer interviewee, in discussion with the author, July 2022.
- ccxxxii Ibid.
- ccxxxiii Ratschen, Elena, Emily Shoesmith, Lion Shahab, Karine Silva, and Dimitra Kale. "Human-animal relationships and interactions during the Covid-19 lockdown phase in the UK: Investigating links with mental health and loneliness." *Plos One* (2020). <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0239397>.
- ccxxxiv Anonymous, 52-year-old queer interviewee, in discussion with the author, July 2022.
- ccxxxv Berger, Peter, and Thomas Luckmann. *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. N.p.: Anchor Books, 1966, p. 54.
- ccxxxvi Ibid.
- ccxxxvii Ibid. p. 54-55
- ccxxxviii Schillinger, Dean, and Cristin Kearns. "Guidelines to Limit Added Sugar Intake: Junk Science or Junk Food?" *Annals of Internal Medicine* (2017). <https://doi.org/10.7326/M16-2754>.
- ccxxxix Kelly, Casey Ryan. *Food Television and Otherness in the Age of Globalization*. Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2017, p. 1.
- ccxli Harding, Kim, and Abby Day. "Vegan Youtubers Performing Ethical Beliefs." *Religions* (Basel, Switzerland) 12, no. 1 (2021): 1–13.
- ccxli Ibid.
- ccxlii Speer, Mike. "Twitter as Town Hall: The Purely "Social" Social Media Platform." Medium. Last modified September 3, 2019. <https://medium.com/@realmikespeer/twitter-as-town-hall-the-purely-social-social-media-platform-b1cdb6743322>.
- ccxliii *Are All Lesbians Vegan? : Lacie and Robin*, LacieandRobin, 2018, www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZeujLHkhuY8.
- ccxliv E. Patrick Johnson. *Appropriating Blackness*. Duke University Press, 2003.
- ccxlv *Absurdly Over the Top Vegan Recipes*. So You're Dating a Vegan, 2019. www.youtube.com/watch?v=kdeeuTRb6gc.
- ccxlvii Lupton, Deborah, and Zeena Feldman. *Digital Food Cultures*. N.p.: Taylor and Francis Group, 2020. Proquest Ebook Central
- ccxlviii "The Dark Past That Led to Nikocado Avocado's Transformation." Youtube.com. Last modified June, 2022. youtube.com/watch?v=CKBGkFibuBQ.
- ccxlviii Ibid.

-
- ccxlix Choe, Hanwool. "Mukbang as Your Digital Tablemate: Creating Commensality Online." *Identity and Ideology in Digital Food Discourse: Social Media Interactions Across Cultural Contexts* (2020). Proquest Ebook Central.
- ccl "Why Mukbang is Huuuuuge." Men's Health. Last modified April , 2019. ProQuest.
- ccli *The Never-Ending Nightmare of Nikocado Avocado – From Vegan to Villain*, The Right Opinion, 2020, www.youtube.com/watch?v=mTn_rmpDCV8&t=2737s.
- cclii *WHY I'M NO LONGER A VEGAN YOUTUBER*. Nikocado Avocado, 2016, www.youtube.com/watch?v=kFOuhr-8i3c&t=550s.
- ccliii Ibid.
- ccliv Ibid.
- cclv "Celebrating My 400 Pound Milestone.... Chick-Fil-A Mukbang." Nikocado Avocado, 2022. youtube.com/watch?v=qmN_KO5yNNU.
- cclvi *The Never-Ending Nightmare of Nikocado Avocado – From Vegan to Villain*. , The Right Opinion, 2020, www.youtube.com/watch?v=mTn_rmpDCV8&t=2737s.
- cclvii Halsema, Annemie, Katja Kwastek, and Roel van den Oever. *Bodies That Still Matter : Resonances of the Work of Judith Butler / Edited by Annemie Halsema, Katja Kwastek, and Roel van Den Oever*. Edited by Annemie Halsema, Katja Kwastek, and Roel van den Oever. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2021.
- cclviii Elspeth Probyn. *Carnal Appetites: FoodSexIdentities*. p.80. Taylor and Francis, 2003.
- cclix Elspeth Probyn, *Carnal Appetites: FoodSexIdentities*. p. 12-13. Taylor and Francis, 2003.
- cclx Zizek, Slavoj. *The Sublime Object of Ideology*. p. 24-30. London: Verso, 1989.
- cclxi Wien, Charlotte, and Daniella B. Deutz. "What's in a Tweet? Creating Social Media Echo Chambers to Inflate 'the Donut.'" *LIBER Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (2019): 3–3.
- cclxii Michalak, Johannes, Xiao Chi Zhang, and Frank Jacobi. "Vegetarian Diet and Mental Disorders: Results from a Representative Community Survey." *The international journal of behavioral nutrition and physical activity* 9, no. 1 (2012): 67–67.
- cclxiii Esterik, Penny Van, Carole Counihan, and Alice Julier. *Food and Culture: A Reader*. 4th ed. Routledge, 2019.
- cclxiv *What I Eat in a Day Living in France*, Sv3rigrige, 2021, www.youtube.com/watch?v=8dcsH3F12_0.
- cclxv "Eating 1.5 Year Old Rotten Chicken (High Meat)." Youtube.com. Last modified, 2020. youtube.com/watch?v=q6bXYGwKAT8.
- cclxvi "Eating Raw Veal Heart @ Vegan Food Festival 2018 - POLICE CALLED & BANNED - Amsterdam, Netherlands." Youtube.com. Last modified, 2018. youtube.com/watch?v=unnzbghJB28.
- cclxvii "Why I'm No Longer Vegan - My Ex-Vegan Story." Youtube.com. Last modified, 2018. youtube.com/watch?v=-WgQNhM-oc&t=324s.
- cclxviii Ibid.
- cclxix Standage, Tom. *An Edible History of Humanity*. Pbk. ed. New York: Walker & Co., 2010.
- cclxx Gibbons, Ann. "The Evolution of Diet." Nationalgeographic.com. Last modified , 2013. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/foodfeatures/evolution-of-diet/>.
- cclxxi Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *The Raw and the Cooked*. [1st U.S. ed.]. p. 64-65. New York: Harper & Row, 1969.
- cclxxii Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *The Raw and the Cooked*. [1st U.S. ed.]. p. 335-337. New York: Harper & Row, 1969.
- cclxxiii Ibid.

-
- cclxxiv *Veganism Destroyed Europe - Why Over 90% of Vegans are White.* , Sv3rige, 2018, www.youtube.com/watch?v=yR3x0kOJdMM
- cclxxv "What is a Woman? Documentary Thoughts @Matt Walsh." Youtube.com. Last modified , 2022. youtube.com/watch?v=wSk-cfr6GKY.
- cclxxvi "A Woman's Purpose." Youtube.com. Last modified, 2022. youtube.com/watch?v=uR5JYJ52wjo.
- cclxxvii Simply Vegan. "Change Your Perspective NOW." Youtube.com. Last modified, 2014. youtube.com/watch?v=rlcCoDrGTM&t=90s.
- cclxxviii Simply Vegan. "The Coming Revelation." Youtube.com. Last modified , 2015. youtube.com/watch?v=dn_JqXulZSc.
- cclxxix Palmgren, Henrik. "Millennial Rebellion: Confessions of a Former Liberal." Redice.tv. Last modified September 25, 2015. redice.tv/red-ice-radio/millennial-rebellion-confessions-of-a-former-liberal#disqus_thread.
- cclxxx Ibid.
- cclxxxi Lupton, Deborah. "Carnavalesque Food Videos: Excess, gender, and affect on YouTube." *Digital Food Cultures* (2020). Proquest Ebook Central.
- cclxxxii Zizek, Slavoj. *The Sublime Object of Ideology*. London: Verso, 1989. p. 142-143.
- cclxxxiii "Ecofascism: An Examination of the Far-Right/Ecology Nexus in the Online Space." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 34, no. 5 (June 14, 2022): 997-1023. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2022.2069932>.
- cclxxxiv Ibid.
- cclxxxv Ibid.
- cclxxxvi Avery, Dan. "LGBTQ rights fight reignited 4 years after N.C.'s 'bathroom bill' controversy." *NBC News*, 8 Dec. 2020, www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/lgbtq-rights-fight-reignited-4-years-after-n-c-s-n1250390.
- cclxxxvii Ibid.
- cclxxxviii Judkis, Maura. "Soleil Ho is a young, queer woman of color who wants to redefine food criticism." *Washington Post*, 8 Mar. 2019, www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/food/soleil-ho-is-a-young-queer-woman-of-color-who-wants-to-redefine-food-criticism/2019/03/07/d76eb89e-3eca-11e9-a0d3-1210e58a94cf_story.html.
- cclxxxix Davis, Heath F. "Why the "transgender" bathroom controversy should make us rethink sex-segregated public bathrooms." *Politics, Groups, and Identities* 6, no. 2 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2017.1338971>.
- ccxc Ibid.
- ccxci Corichi, Manolo. "Eight-in-ten Indians limit meat in their diets, and four-in-ten consider themselves vegetarian." *Pew Research Center* (July 8, 2021). <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/07/08/eight-in-ten-indians-limit-meat-in-their-diets-and-four-in-ten-consider-themselves-vegetarian/>.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A Note on the Bibliography: Because this project's foundations consist of a triangulation of the concepts of Queerness, Veganism, and Animality, most of the below sources are secondary theoretical and cultural sources that in some way speak to a relationship between these three concepts. The bulk of the sources I relied upon are secondary sources coming from Queer Studies, Food Studies, and Animal Studies. And I used these secondary sources to help me interrogate and articulate my arguments about content mined from primary sources, mainly social media content, works of film and literature, and interviews. While in the early research stages of this project I thought that archival materials may play a more central role in the finished work, but chose to forego these methods partly because of the Covid-19 pandemic which made it more difficult to visit relevant archives, and partly because the research I was conducting on other primary sources was so ripe for exploration and interrogation. Nonetheless, I have attributed the archives I visited over the course of this project, as the materials I viewed there informed my thinking even if they were not cited in the final work.

Primary Sources

Archives

Dr. John P. De Cecco Archives and Special Collections. *GLBT Historical Society*. San Francisco: Visited October 2018.

LGBT Collection. Published Materials. *Historical Society of Pennsylvania*. Philadelphia: Visited May 2022.

Michigan Womyn's Music Festival Aug. 7 - 12, 2001 General Festival Information. Last modified, 2001. <https://web.archive.org/web/20010801171142/http://www.michfest.com/General/general.htm>.

Muskett, Gina. "Diana, Goddess of the Chase." National Museums Liverpool. Last modified, 2022. <https://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/stories/diana-goddess-of-chase>.

NYC Pride. "Queers Read This." *Lesbian Herstory Archives*, 1990. Brooklyn, New York: Visited June 2018.

Images

Adams, Carol J. *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-vegetarian Critical Theory*. New York: Continuum, 1990. Cover Image.

"Carl's Jr. The Most American Thickburger." Youtube.com. Last modified, 2016. Screenshot. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sckyo3-f2D8>.

"Mystique and the Western X-tra Bacon Thickburger." *AdForum*. Screenshot. Last modified, 2014. <https://www.adforum.com/creative-work/ad/player/34495728/mystique-and-the-western-x-tra-bacon-thickburger/carls-jrhardees>.

Voydatch, Bryannah. *Overlapping Oppressions: Patriarchal Links between Women and Animals*. 2017. 10.13140/RG.2.2.26463.76967.

Interviews

Anonymous, 20-year-old queer interviewee, in phone discussion with the author, August 2022.

Anonymous, 21-year-old, queer interviewee, in Zoom discussion with the author, July 2022.

Anonymous, 24-year-old bisexual interviewee, in phone discussion with the author, July 2022.

Anonymous, 24-year-old gay interviewee, in phone discussion with the author, July 2022.

Anonymous, 27-year-old queer interviewee, in Zoom discussion with the author, July 2022.

Anonymous, 27-year-old lesbian interviewee, in phone discussion with the author, August 2022.

Anonymous, 30-year-old nonbinary interviewee, in phone discussion with the author, July 2022.

Anonymous, 33-year-old gay interviewee, in phone discussion with the author, August 2022.

Anonymous, 34-year-old transgender interviewee, in phone discussion with the author, August 2022.

Anonymous, 52-year-old queer interviewee, in Zoom discussion with the author, July 2022.

Anonymous, 61-year-old gay interviewee, in phone discussion with the author, August 2022.

Literature, Film, and Music

Barnes, Djuna. *Nightwood*. New Directions, 2006.

Bechdel, Alison. *The Essential Dykes to Watch Out For*. Jonathan Cape, 2008.

Bronski Beat. *Smalltown Boy*. N.p.: The Age of Consent, 1984.

Chee, Alexander. *Edinburgh*. Mariner Books, 2016.

Demme, Jonathan, dir. *The Silence of the Lambs*. 1991. Film.

Eugenides, Jeffrey. *Middlesex*. Picador, 2007.

Feinberg, Leslie. *Stone Butch Blues: a Novel*. Ithaca, NY: Firebrand Books, 1993.

Forster, E.M. *Maurice*. W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2005.

Hall, Radclyffe. *The Well of Loneliness*. Wordsworth Editions, 2014.

Highsmith, Patricia. *The Price of Salt*. Dover Publications, 2015.

Lawlor, Andrea. *Paul Takes the Form of a Mortal Girl*. Rescue Press, 2017.

Olwagen, Christiaan, dir. *Kanarie*. South Africa: Marche Media, 2018. Film.

Troubridge, Una. *The Life and Death of Radclyffe Hall*. N.p.: Hesperides Press, 2013.

Social Media Content

"A Woman's Purpose." Sv3rige. Youtube.com. Last modified, 2022.
[youtube.com/watch?v=uR5JYJ52wjo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uR5JYJ52wjo).

"Absurdly Over the Top Vegan Recipes." So You're Dating a Vegan, 2019.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=kdeeuTRb6gc.

"Are All Lesbians Vegan? : Lacie and Robin." LacieandRobin, 2018.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZeujLHkhuY8.

"Celebrating My 400 Pound Milestone.... Chick-Fil-A Mukbang." Nikocado Avocado, Youtube.com, 2022. [youtube.com/watch?v=qmN_KO5yNNU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qmN_KO5yNNU).

"Change Your Perspective NOW." Simply Vegan. Youtube.com. Last modified, 2014.
[youtube.com/watch?v=rlcCoDrGTM&t=90s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rlcCoDrGTM&t=90s).

"Eating 1.5 Year Old Rotten Chicken (High Meat)." Sv3rige. Youtube.com. Last modified, 2020.
[youtube.com/watch?v=q6bXYGwKAT8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q6bXYGwKAT8).

"Eating Raw Veal Heart @ Vegan Food Festival 2018." Youtube.com. Last modified, 2018.
[youtube.com/watch?v=unnzbghJB28](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=unnzbghJB28).

"Is the Impossible Burger Healthy?" The Joe Rogan Experience. Last modified, 2019.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VHgCnYiEWMc>.

Morgan, Piers. Twitter. "I just ordered a sausage roll..." Last modified, 2019.

Palmgren, Henrik. "Millennial Rebellion: Confessions of a Former Liberal." Redice.tv. Last modified September 25, 2015. redice.tv/red-ice-radio/millennial-rebellion-confessions-of-a-former-liberal#disqus_thread.

"The Coming Revelation." Simply Vegan. Youtube.com. Last modified, 2015. [youtube.com/watch?v=dn_JqXulZSc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dn_JqXulZSc).

"The Dark Past That Led to Nikocado Avocado's Transformation." Youtube.com. Last modified, June, 2022. [youtube.com/watch?v=CKBGkFiluBQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CKBGkFiluBQ).

"The Never-Ending Nightmare of Nikocado Avocado – From Vegan to Villain," The Right Opinion. 2020. www.youtube.com/watch?v=mTn_rmpDCV8&t=2737s.

The Post Traumatic Slave Diet, Youtube.com. 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I-GQYK-UrRQ>

"Veganism Destroyed Europe - Why Over 90% of Vegans are White." Sv3rige. Youtube.com, 2018. www.youtube.com/watch?v=yR3x0kOJdMM

"What I Eat in a Day Living in France." Sv3rige. Youtube.com, 2021. www.youtube.com/watch?v=8dcsH3F12_0.

"What is a Woman? Documentary Thoughts @Matt Walsh." Sv3rige. Youtube.com. Last modified, 2022. [youtube.com/watch?v=wSk-cfr6GKY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wSk-cfr6GKY).

"Why I'm No Longer a Vegan YouTuber." Nikocado Avocado, 2016. www.youtube.com/watch?v=kFOuhr-8i3c&t=550s.

"Why I'm No Longer Vegan - My Ex-Vegan Story." Sv3rige. Youtube.com. Last modified, 2018. [youtube.com/watch?v=-WgQNhM-oc&t=324s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-WgQNhM-oc&t=324s).

"Why the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival Had to End." A Grrrl's Two Sound Cents. Last modified, 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QoXVIPGoLwY>.

Secondary Sources

Animals and Animality

Aaltola, Elisa. *Animal Suffering: Philosophy and Culture*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

Adams, Carol J. *Neither Man nor Beast: Feminism and the Defense of Animals*. Bloomsbury Revelations editon. London: Bloomsbury Academic, an imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018.

Bezan, Sarah, and James Tink. *Seeing Animals after Derrida*. Edited by Sarah Bezan and James Tink. Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2018.

Center for Disease Control. Water Contamination from Animal Feeding Operations. Last modified, 2022. [https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/emergency/sanitation-wastewater/animal-feeding-operations.html#:~:text=Animal%20Feeding%20Operations%20\(AFOs\)%20are,surface%20water%20and%20the%20environment](https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/emergency/sanitation-wastewater/animal-feeding-operations.html#:~:text=Animal%20Feeding%20Operations%20(AFOs)%20are,surface%20water%20and%20the%20environment).

Cherry, Elizabeth. *Culture and Activism: Animal Rights in France and the United States*. Routledge, 2016.

Derrida, Jacques, Marie-Louise Mallet, and David Wills. *The Animal That Therefore I Am. Perspectives in Continental Philosophy*. 2008.

D'Stair, Sarah. "'That rare gift: perfect hands on a horse': Radclyffe Hall's eros of cross-species communion." *Feminist Modernist Studies* 3, no. 1, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1080/24692921.2020.1712762>.

Eisen, Michael B., and Patrick O. Brown. "Rapid global phaseout of animal agriculture has the potential to stabilize greenhouse gas levels for 30 years and offset 68 percent of CO2 emissions this century." *PLOS Climate*, 2022. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pclm.0000010>.

Environmental Protection Agency. Estimated Animal Agriculture Nitrogen and Phosphorus from Manure. Last modified January 11, 2022. <https://www.epa.gov/nutrient-policy-data/estimated-animal-agriculture-nitrogen-and-phosphorus-manure#:~:text=Animal%20agriculture%20manure%20is%20a,through%20surface%20runoff%20or%20infiltration>.

Fitch, W Tecumseh. "What Animals Can Teach Us About Human Language: The Phonological Continuity Hypothesis." *Current opinion in behavioral sciences*, 2018.

Foer, Johnathan Safran. *Eating Animals*. New York, Little, Brown and Company, 2010.

Fraiman, S. "Pussy Panic versus Liking Animals: Tracking Gender in Animal Studies." *Critical Inquiry*. vol. 39, no. 1, 2012, pp. 89–115.

Haraway, Donna Jeanne. *When Species Meet*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008.

Hochman, Jhan. "The Silence of the Lambs: A Quiet Bestiary." *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* 1, no. 2, 1993. <https://doi.org/10.1093/isle/1.2.57>.

"HSI Report: The Impact of Industrialized Animal Agriculture on World Hunger." *Humane Society International*, Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN, 2009. www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/animalwelfare/HSI--The%20Impact%20of%20Industrialized%20Animal%20Agriculture%20on%20World%20Hunger.pdf.

-
- Hyner, Christopher. "A Leading Cause of Everything: One Industry That Is Destroying Our Planet and Our Ability to Thrive on It." *Stanford Law School*, Stanford Environmental Law Journal, 2016. <https://journals.law.stanford.edu/stanford-environmental-law-journal-elj/blog/leading-cause-everything-one-industry-destroying-our-planet-and-our-ability-thrive-it>.
- Jones, Benji. "Some people launder money. Other people launder cattle." Vox. Last modified, 2022. <https://www.vox.com/science-and-health/2022/10/19/23403330/amazon-rainforest-deforestation-cattle-laundering>.
- Joy, Melanie. *Why We Love Dogs, Eat Pigs, and Wear Cows: An Introduction to Carnism*. San Francisco: Conari Press, 2010.
- Kemmerer, Lisa. *Sister Species : Women, Animals, and Social Justice*. University of Illinois Press, 2011.
- Kirkhorn, Steven, and Marc Schenker. "Human Health Effects of Agriculture: Physical Diseases and Illnesses." National Ag Safety Database, 2001. nasdonline.org/static_content/documents/1827/d001772.pdf.
- Lawrence, Felicity. "If consumers knew how farmed chickens were raised, they might never eat their meat again." *The Guardian*, April 24, 2016. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/apr/24/real-cost-of-roast-chicken-animal-welfare-farms>.
- Levinas, Emmanuel. *The Name of a Dog, or Natural Rights*. N.p.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990. https://www.sas.upenn.edu/~cavitch/pdf-library/Levinas_Name_of_Dog.pdf.
- "Livestock's Long Shadow: Environmental Issues and Options." *Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations*, 2006.
- "Livestock Slaughter 2020 Summary." *National Agricultural Statistics Service*. United States Department of Agriculture, 2021. www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/Todays_Reports/reports/lisan0421.pdf.
- Lundblad, Michael. "From Animal to Animality Studies." *PMLA* 124, no. 2, 2009. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25614290>. McKenna, Erin. *Livestock: Food, Fiber, and Friends*. The University of Georgia Press, 2018.
- Nast, Heidi. "Critical Pet Studies." *Antipode* 38, no. 5, 2006.
- "Poultry Slaughter 2020 Summary." *National Agricultural Statistics Service*. United States Department of Agriculture, 2021. downloads.usda.library.cornell.edu/usda-esmis/files/pg15bd88s/f1882d39g/j6731z19s/pslaan21.pdf.

Ratschen, Elena, Emily Shoesmith, Lion Shahab, Karine Silva, and Dimitra Kale. "Human-animal relationships and interactions during the Covid-19 lockdown phase in the UK: Investigating links with mental health and loneliness." *Plos One*, 2020.
<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0239397>.

Science Daily, "It's not just a grunt. Pigs really do have something to say."
<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2016/06/160629100349.htm>

Sewell, Christina. "Removing the Meat Subsidy: Our Cognitive Dissonance Around Animal Agriculture." *Journal of International Affairs* (February 11, 2020).
<https://jia.sipa.columbia.edu/removing-meat-subsidy-our-cognitive-dissonance-around-animal-agriculture>.

Singer, Peter. *Animal Liberation*. 1st Ecco Paperback ed. New York: Ecco, 2002.

Thornton, Philip, Mario Herrero, and Polly Ericksen. "Livestock and Climate Change." In *Livestock Xchange*, N.p.: International Livestock Research Institute, 2011.
<https://cgspace.cgiar.org/bitstream/handle/10568/10601/IssueBrief3.pdf>.

University of Veterinary Medicine, Vienna. "Early separation of cow and calf has long-term effects on social behavior." ScienceDaily. 2022.
www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2015/04/150428081801.htm

Winders, Delcianna J., and Elan Abrell. "Slaughterhouse Workers, Animals, and the Environment." *Health and Human Rights Journal*, 2021.
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8694297/>.

Wolfe, Cary. *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.

Critical Theory

Althusser, Louis. "Ideological State Apparatuses". *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. London: NLB, 1971.

Berger, Peter, and Thomas Luckmann. *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. N.p.: Anchor Books, 1966.

Bourdieu, Pierre. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. London And New York: Routledge Classics, 2010.

Bowker, Geoffrey C., and Susan Star. *Sorting Things Out: Classification and Its Consequences*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2000.

Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Routledge, 1999.

-
- Butler, Judith. "Imitation and Gender Insubordination." In *The Routledge Critical and Cultural Theory Reader*, edited by Neil Badmington and Julia Thomas, 365-77. New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2008.
- Deleuze, Gilles, and Felix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. N.p.: University of Minnesota Press, 1987.
- Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality*. 1st American ed. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978.
- Gramsci, Antonio. "Selections from the Prison Notebooks." edited by Quintin Hoare, N.p.: International Publishers Co., 1989.
- Hofweber, Thomas. "Logic and Ontology." The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Last modified, 2021. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/logic-ontology/>.
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *The Raw and the Cooked*. [1st U.S. ed.]. New York: Harper & Row, 1969.
- Smith, Barbara. *Toward a Black Feminist Criticism*. Out & Out Books ; Distributed by Crossing Press, 1980.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty and Rosalind C. Morris. *Can the Subaltern Speak?: Reflections on the History of an Idea*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2010.
- Tarrow, Sidney G. *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action, and Politics*. Cambridge [England] ;: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Wittig, Monique. *The Straight Mind and Other Essays*. Beacon Press, 1992.
- Zizek, Slavoj. *The Sublime Object of Ideology*. London: Verso, 1989.

Cultural Studies

- Canaday, Margot. *The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America*. Course Book. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009.
- Chen, Mel Y. *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012.
- Deloria, Philip Joseph. *Playing Indian*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998.
- E. Patrick Johnson. *Appropriating Blackness*. Duke University Press, 2003.
- Grosz, Elizabeth. *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994.
- Haley, Sarah. *No Mercy Here: Gender, Punishment, and the Making of Jim Crow Modernity*. Justice, Power, and Politics. 2016.

-
- Hughes, Brian. "Ecofascism: An Examination of the Far-Right/Ecology Nexus in the Online Space." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 34, no. 5, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2022.2069932>.
- Lee, Erika. *At America's Gates: Chinese Immigration During the Exclusion Era, 1882-1943*. Durham: University of North Carolina Press, 2003.
- Lupton, Deborah. "Carnavalesque Food Videos: Excess, gender, and affect on YouTube." *Digital Food Cultures*, 2020.
- Merrill, Samuel, Emily Keightley, and Priska Dephi. *Social Movements, Cultural Memory, and Digital Media: Mobilising Mediated Remembrance*. N.p.: Springer International Publishing AG, 2020.
- Speer, Mike. "Twitter as Town Hall: The Purely “Social” Social Media Platform." Medium. Last modified September 3, 2019. <https://medium.com/@realmikespeer/twitter-as-town-hall-the-purely-social-social-media-platform-b1cdb6743322>.
- Waltz, Lynn. *Hog Wild: The Battle for Workers' Rights at the World's Largest Slaughterhouse*. University of Iowa Press, 2018.
- Weinbaum, Alys E. "'Nation'." In *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*, edited by Bruce Burgett and Glenn Hendler, N.p.: NYU Press, 2007.
- Weiss, Jillian Todd. "The Gender Caste System: Identity, Privacy, and Heteronormativity." *Law & Sexuality*, vol. 10, 2001.
- Wien, Charlotte, and Daniella B. Deutz. "What's in a Tweet? Creating Social Media Echo Chambers to Inflate 'the Donut.'" *LIBER Quarterly* 29, no. 1, 2019.

Food Studies

- Adams, Carol J. *Burger*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2018.
- Adams, Carol. *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory*. Bloomsbury, 1990.
- Alkon, Alison H., and Julian Agyeman, editors. *Cultivating Food Justice: Race, Class, and Sustainability*. The MIT Press, 2011.
- Anderson, Jill E. "The Ecology of Power: Queerness and Food Studies." *MFS: Modern Fiction Studies*, vol. 61, no. 1, 2015, pp. 168–176.
- Barns, Laura. "Seitan: What is it and is it healthy?" <https://allplants.com/blog/lifestyle/what-is-seitan>.

-
- Best, Amy. *Fast Food Kids: French Fries, Lunch Lines, and Social Ties*. New York University Press, 2017.
- Bramen, Lisa. "Seitan: The Other Fake Meat." *Smithsonian Magazine*, August 25, 2010.
<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/seitan-the-other-fake-meat-97622092/>.
- Cairns, Katie, and Josee Johnston. *Food and Femininity*. Bloomsbury Publishing Inc., 2015.
- Campbell, T. Colin. *The China Study: Startling Implications for Diet, Weight Loss, and Long-term Health*. Dallas, Benbella Books, 2006.
- Cargill, Kima, editor. *Food Cults: How Fads, Dogma, and Doctrine Influence Diet*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2017.
- Carruth, Allison. *Global Appetites: American Power and the Literature of Food*. Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- Choe, Hanwool. "Mukbang as Your Digital Tablemate: Creating Commensality Online." *Identity and Ideology in Digital Food Discourse: Social Media Interactions Across Cultural Contexts*, 2020.
- Clark, Michelle J., and Joanne L. Slavin. "The effect of fiber on satiety and food intake: a systematic review." *Journal of the American College of Nutrition*, 2013.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/07315724.2013.791194>.
- Deetz, Kelley F. *Bound to the Fire: How Virginia's Enslaved Cooks Helped Invent American Cuisine*. The University Press of Kentucky, 2017.
- Esterik, Penny Van, Carole Counihan, and Alice Julier. *Food and Culture: A Reader*. 4th ed. Routledge, 2019.
- Fitzpatrick, Kyle. "Queer Food Is Hiding in Plain Sight." *Eater*. June 28, 2018.
<https://www.eater.com/2018/6/28/17508420/what-is-queer-food>.
- Garcia, Matt. "Setting the Table: Historians, Popular Writers, and Food History." *Journal of American History*, vol. 103, no. 3, 2016, pp. 656–678.
- Gray, Margaret. *Labor and the Locavore: The Making of a Comprehensive Food Ethic*. University of California Press, 2014.
- Heldke, Lisa. "Community Gardeners or Radical Homemakers?" *Contemporary Feminist Pragmatism*, 2012, archives.gac.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/ir/id/1273.
- Horowitz, Roger. *Putting Meat on the American Table: Taste, Technology, Transformation*. The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006.
- Kelly, Casey R. *Food Television and Otherness in the Age of Globalization*. Lexington Books, 2017.

-
- Lupton, Deborah, and Zeena Feldman. *Digital Food Cultures*. N.p.: Taylor and Francis Group, 2020.
- Messina, M. "Soybean isoflavone exposure does not have feminizing effects on men: a critical examination of the clinical evidence." *Fertility and Sterility*, vol. 93, no. 7, 2010, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20378106>.
- Miller, Laura J. *Building Nature's Market: The Business and Politics of Natural Foods*. The University of Chicago Press, 2017.
- Naccarato, Peter, and Kathleen Lebesco. *Culinary Capital*. Berg, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2012.
- Neswald, Elizabeth, et al., editors. *Setting Nutritional Standards: Theory, Policies, Practices*. University of Rochester Press, 2017.
- Ogle, Maureen. *In Meat We Trust: An Unexpected History of Carnivore America*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013.
- Perales, Monica. "The Food Historian's Dilemma: Reconsidering the Role of Authenticity in Food Scholarship." *Journal Of American History*, vol. 103, no. 3, 2016, pp. 690-693.
- Pilcher, Jeffrey. *Food in World History*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2017.
- Probyn, Elspeth. *Carnal Appetites: Foodsexidentities*. Routledge, 2000.
- Riches, Graham. *Food Bank Nations: Poverty, Corporate Charity, and the Right to Food*. Routledge, 2018.
- Schillinger, Dean, and Cristin Kearns. "Guidelines to Limit Added Sugar Intake: Junk Science or Junk Food?" *Annals of Internal Medicine*, 2017. <https://doi.org/10.7326/M16-2754>.
- Schlosser, Eric. *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal*. New York, Harper Perennial, 2001.
- Standage, Tom. *An Edible History of Humanity*. Walker Publishing Company, Inc., 2009.
- Stewart, J E., and R S. Keast. "Recent fat intake modulates fat taste sensitivity in lean and overweight subjects." *International Journal of Obesity*, 2012. <https://doi.org/10.1038/ijo.2011.155>.
- Szabo, Michelle K. "I'm a Real Catch: The Blurring of Alternative and Hegemonic Masculinities in Men's Talk about Home Cooking." *Women's Studies International Forum*, vol. 44, no. 1, 2013, pp. 228–235.
- Tompkins, Kyla W. *Racial Indigestion: Eating Bodies in the 19th Century*. New York University Press, 2012.
- Vester, Katharina. *A Taste of Power: Food and American Identities*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2015.

Williams-Forsen, Psyche A., and Carole Counihan. *Taking Food Public: Redefining Foodways in a Changing World*. Routledge, 2011.

Wilson, Marisa, editor. *Postcolonialism, Indigeneity, and Struggles for Food Sovereignty: Alternative food networks in subaltern spaces*. Routledge, 2016.

Methods

Lawler, Steph. "Stories and the Social World." In *Research Methods for Cultural Studies*, edited by Michael Pickering, 33-34. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008.

Leer, Jonatan, and Stinne Gunder Strom Krogager. *Research Methods in Digital Food Studies*. Edited by Jonatan Leer and Stinne Gunder Strom Krogager. London: Routledge, 2021.

Miller, Jeff, and Jonathan Deutsch. *Food Studies: An Introduction to Research Methods*. Bloomsbury Publishing Inc., 2009.

Pickering, Michael, Michael Pickering, and Michael Pickering. *Research Methods for Cultural Studies*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008.

Schneider, Tanja, and Karin Eli. "Fieldwork in Online Foodscapes: How to bring an ethnographic approach to studies of digital food and digital eating." In *Research Methods in Digital Food Studies*, edited by Jonatan Leer and Stinne Krogager, N.p.: Taylor and Francis Group, 2021.

Simonsen, Thomas M., and Stinne Krogager. "How to approach food texts on YouTube." In *Research Methods in Digital Food Studies*, edited by Stinne Krogager and Jonatan Leer, N.p.: Taylor and Francis Group, 2021.

Popular Culture

Avery, Dan. "LGBTQ rights fight reignited 4 years after N.C.'s 'bathroom bill' controversy." *NBC News*, 8 Dec. 2020, www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/lgbtq-rights-fight-reignited-4-years-after-n-c-s-n1250390.

Barclay, Eliza. *A Nation of Meat Eaters: See How it All Adds Up*, NPR, 27 June 2012, www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2012/06/27/155527365/visualizing-a-nation-of-meat-eaters.

Berke, Jeremy. "How eating meat creates a 'dead zone' the size of New Jersey in the Gulf of Mexico every year." *Business Insider*, 2018. <https://www.businessinsider.com/eating-meat-affects-environment-dead-zone-2018-4>.

-
- Carson, Biz. "Hampton Creek gets to keep the 'Just Mayo' name as long as it changes its label." *Business Insider*, December 17, 2015. <https://www.businessinsider.com/hampton-creek-gets-to-keep-just-mayo-2015-12>.
- CNBC.com Staff. 24. Impossible Foods. Last modified, May 25, 2021. <https://www.cnbc.com/2021/05/25/impossible-foods-disruptor-50.html>.
- Dictionary.com. Entry for "Queer". <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/queer>.
- Gibbons, Ann. "The Evolution of Diet." Nationalgeographic.com. Last modified, 2013. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/foodfeatures/evolution-of-diet/>.
- GMO Science. Rat Feeding Study Suggests Impossible Burger May Not Be Safe to Eat. Last modified, 2019. <https://gmoscience.org/2019/06/25/rat-feeding-studies-suggest-the-impossible-burger-may-not-be-safe-to-eat/>.
- Hallock, Betty. "To make a burger, first you need 660 gallons of water..." Los Angeles Times. Last modified, 2014. <https://www.latimes.com/food/dailydish/la-dd-gallons-of-water-to-make-a-burger-20140124-story.html>.
- Hance, Jeremy. "How Humans are Driving the Sixth Mass Extinction." N.p.: The Guardian, 2015. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/radical-conservation/2015/oct/20/the-four-horsemen-of-the-sixth-mass-extinction>.
- "Impossible Whopper Boosted Burger King Traffic" *The Food Institute Report* 92, no. 22, 2019.
- Judkis, Maura. "Soleil Ho is a young, queer woman of color who wants to redefine food criticism." *Washington Post*, 2019. www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/food/soleil-ho-is-a-young-queer-woman-of-color-who-wants-to-redefine-food-criticism/2019/03/07/d76eb89e-3eca-11e9-a0d3-1210e58a94cf_story.html.
- McKibben, Beth. "According to Some, Cracker Barrel Has Gone 'Woke' by Offering Vegan Sausage." *Eater Atlanta*. Last modified, August 5, 2022. <https://atlanta.eater.com/2022/8/5/23293553/cracker-barrel-impossible-vegan-sausage-breakfast-menu>.
- Mehnert, David. "What Is Queer Food?" *Slate Magazine*. *Slate*, April 3, 2002. <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2002/04/what-is-queer-food.html>.
- O'Connor, Anahad. "How the Government Supports Your Junk Food Habit." *The New York Times*, 2016. <https://archive.nytimes.com/well.blogs.nytimes.com/2016/07/19/how-the-government-supports-your-junk-food-habit/>.
- "Seafood." Andrew Zimmern, *Go Fork Yourself*, Andrewzimmern.com, 15 June 2012, andrewzimmern.com/2012/06/15/go-fork-yourself-seafood/.

Stevens, Ashlie D. "After Cracker Barrel adds vegan sausage to its menu, some customers say the chain is too "woke"." *Salon*, August 5, 2022.
<https://www.salon.com/2022/08/05/after-cracker-barrel-adds-vegan-sausage-to-its-menu-some-customers-say-the-chain-is-too-woke/>.

Taste of 2021. Last modified, 2021. <https://blog.grubhub.com/taste-of-2021/>.

Vetter, David. "Got Beef? Here's What Your Hamburger is Doing to the Climate." *Forbes*. Last modified, 2020. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/davidrvetter/2020/10/05/got-beef-heres-what-your-hamburger-is-doing-to-the-climate/?sh=448531175206>.

"Why Mukbang is Huuuuuge." *Men's Health*. Last modified, April 2019.

Zaraska, Marta. "The bizarre story of one of the world's first modern vegetarians — and how his diet made him an outcast from society." *Business Insider*. Last modified, 2016.
<https://www.businessinsider.com/the-story-of-one-of-the-worlds-first-modern-vegetarians-2016-3>.

Queer Studies

Ahmed, Sara. "Orientations: Toward a Queer Phenomenology." *GLQ* 12, no. 4, 2006.

Ahmed, Sara. *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006.

Alexandrowicz, Conrad. *Acting Queer: Gender Dissidence and the Subversion of Realism*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020.

Beachy, Robert. *Gay Berlin: Birthplace of a Modern Identity*. New York: Knopf, 2014.

Berlant, Lauren, and Lee Edelman. *Sex, or the Unbearable (Theory Q)*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013.

Bram, Christopher. *Eminent Outlaws: the Gay Writers Who Changed America*. 1st ed. New York: Twelve, 2012.

Bronski, Michael. *A Queer History of the United States*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2011.

Butler, Judith. "Critically Queer." In *The Routledge Queer Studies Reader*, edited by Donald Hall, Annamarie Jagose, Andrea Bebell, and Susan Potter, 19. New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2013.

Carter, Monica. "Paul Takes the Form of a Mortal Girl." *ForeWord*, 2017. *Gale Academic OneFile* (accessed February 2, 2022). https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A512224137/AONE?u=purdue_main&sid=bookmark-AONE&xid=dcf06833.

-
- Chauncey, George. *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940*. New York: Basic Books, 1994.
- Cohen, Cathy J. "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?" In *The Routledge Queer Studies Reader*, edited by Donald E. Hall, Annamarie Jagose, Andrea Bell, and Susan Potter. London And New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2013.
- Davis, Heath F. "Why the "transgender" bathroom controversy should make us rethink sex-segregated public bathrooms." *Politics, Groups, and Identities* 6, no. 2, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2017.1338971>.
- Downs, Jim. *Stand by Me: the Forgotten History of Gay Liberation*. New York: Basic Books, 2016.
- Edelman, Lee. *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004.
- Edelman, Lee. "The Future is Kid Stuff: Queer Theory, Disidentification, and the Death Drive." *The Routledge Queer Studies Reader*, edited by Donald E. Hall, Annamarie Jagose, Andrea Bebell, and Susan Potter, Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2013.
- Escoffier, Jeffrey. "Sex in the Seventies: Gay Porn Cinema as an Archive for the History of American Sexuality." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 26, no. 1 (2017): 88–113.
- Faderman, Lillian. *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: a History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-Century America*. New York: Penguin, 1992.
- Feinberg, Leslie. *Transgender Warriors: Making History from Joan of Arc to Dennis Rodman*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1996.
- Gallo, Marcia M. *Different Daughters: a History of the Daughters of Bilitis and the Rights of the Lesbian Rights Movement*. 1st Carroll & Graf ed. New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2006.
- Halberstam, Jack. *The Queer Art of Failure*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011.
- Halberstam, Judith. *Female Masculinity*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1998.
- Hall, Donald E., and Annamarie Jagose. *The Routledge Queer Studies Reader*. New York: Routledge Literature Readers, 2013.
- Halsema, Annemie, Katja Kwastek, and Roel van den Oever. *Bodies That Still Matter: Resonances of the Work of Judith Butler*. Edited by Annemie Halsema, Katja Kwastek, and Roel van den Oever. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2021.
- Hanhardt, Christina B. *Safe Space: Gay Neighborhood History and the Politics of Violence*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013.

-
- Holland, Sharon P., et al. "Introduction: On the Visceral." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, vol. 20, no. 4, 2014, pp. 391–406.
- Ilmonen, Kaisa. *Queer Rebellion in the Novels of Michelle Cliff: Intersectionality and Sexual Modernity*. Newcastle upon Tyne, England: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017.
- Johnson, E. Patrick, and Mae G. Henderson, editors. *Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005.
- Lorenz, Renate. *Queer Art A Freak Theory*. 1st ed. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2014.
- Muñoz, José Esteban. *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.
- Munoz, Jose E. "Feeling Brown, Feeling Down: Latina Effect, The Performativity of Race, and the Depressive Position." *The Routledge Queer Studies Reader*, edited by Donald E. Hall, Annamarie Jagose, Andrea Bebell, and Susan Potter, Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2013.
- O'Rourke, Michael, and Kolozova, Katerina; Joy, Eileen A. "'Girls Welcome!!!': Speculative Realism, Object-Oriented Ontology, and Queer Theory." 2016.
- Probyn, Elspeth. "An Ethos with a Bite: Queer Appetites from Sex to Food." *Sexualities*, vol. 2, no. 4, 1999, pp. 421–431.
- Puar, Jasbir K. "Queer Times, Queer Assemblages." *The Routledge Queer Studies Reader*, edited by Donald E. Hall, Annamarie Jagose, Andrea Bebell, and Susan Potter, Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2013. Puar, Jasbir. *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007.
- "'Queer' Definition Changes with the Times." *Society*, vol. 41, no. 2, 2004. *ProQuest*, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/206718338?accountid=13360>.
- Rupp, Leila J. *A Desired Past: A Short History of Same-sex Love in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999.
- Rupp, Leila J. *Sapphistries: A Global History of Love Between Women*. New York: New York University Press, 2011.
- Schoppman, Claudia. *Days of Masquerade: Life Stories of Lesbian Women During the Third Reich*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996.
- Schwarz, A.B. Christa. *Gay Voices of the Harlem Renaissance (Blacks in the Diaspora)*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003.
- Somerville, Siobhan B. *Queering the Color Line: Race and the Invention of Homosexuality in American Culture*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000.

-
- Stryker, Susan. *Transgender History*. 2nd ed. Seal Press, 2017.
- Sullivan, Nikki. *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory*. New York University Press, 2003.
- Tharp, Julie. "The Transvestite as Monster: Gender Horror in "Silence of the Lambs" and "Psycho"." *Journal of Popular Film & Television*, 1991.
- Weiss, Jillian Todd. "GL vs. BT: The Archaeology of Biphobia and Transphobia Within the U.S. Gay and Lesbian Community." *Journal of Bisexuality*, vol. 3, no. 3/4, 2003.
- Whisnant, Clayton J. *Queer Identities and Politics in Germany: A History 1880-1945*. Harrington Park Press, 2016.
- Zimmerman, Bonnie. "What Has Never Been: An Overview of Lesbian Feminist Literary Criticism." *Feminist Studies*, vol. 7, no. 3, 1981, pp. 451–76.

Veganism

- Alwarith, Jihad, Hana Kahleova, Emilie Rembert, Willy Yonas, and Sara Dort. "Nutrition Interventions in Rheumatoid Arthritis: The Potential Use of Plant-Based Diets. A Review." *Frontiers in Nutrition*, 2019. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fnut.2019.00141>.
- Andrei, Mihai. "The environmental impact of veggie patties vs meat burgers." ZME Science. Last modified, 2021. <https://www.zmescience.com/other/feature-post/the-environmental-impact-of-veggie-patties-vs-meat-burgers/>.
- Corichi, Manolo. "Eight-in-ten Indians limit meat in their diets, and four-in-ten consider themselves vegetarian." *Pew Research Center*, 2021. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/07/08/eight-in-ten-indians-limit-meat-in-their-diets-and-four-in-ten-consider-themselves-vegetarian/>.
- Esselstyn, Caldwell. "Dr. Esselstyn's Program." *Cleveland Clinic*, Cleveland Clinic Wellness, <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/ccf/media/files/Wellness/Dr-Esselstyn-Insert.pdf>.
- Harding, Kim, and Abby Day. "Vegan Youtubers Performing Ethical Beliefs." *Religions* (Basel, Switzerland) 12, no. 1, 2021.
- Harper, Breeze "Doing Veganism Differently: Racialized Trauma and the Personal Journey towards Vegan Healing." *Doing Nutrition Differently: Critical Approaches to Diet and Dietary Intervention*, Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2013.
- Harper, Breeze. *Sistah Vegan: Black Female Vegans Speak on Food, Identity, Health, and Society*. N.p.: Lantern Books, 2009.

-
- "Heightened Sense of Smell?" Veggie Boards: A Vegetarian and Vegan Community. Last modified, 2008. <https://www.veggieboards.com/threads/heightened-sense-of-smell.76623/>.
- Jacobson, Michael F. "Six Arguments for a Greener Diet: How a More Plant-Based Diet Could Save Your Health and the Environment" *Center for Science in the Public Interest*, 2006.
- Kirts, Leah. "The Queer Politics of Vegan Hot Dogs." *Tenderly*, Medium, 27 Feb. 2020, tenderly.medium.com/the-queer-politics-of-vegan-hot-dogs-cce66a0d1dfd.
- Link, Rachael. "Does a Vegan Diet Promote High or Low Cholesterol?" Healthline. Last modified, 2021. <https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/vegans-with-high-cholesterol>.
- Mayo Clinic Staff. How plant-based food helps fight cancer. Last modified, 2019. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/cancer/in-depth/how-plant-based-food-helps-fight-cancer/art-20457590>.
- McDougall, John. "Plant foods have a complete amino acid composition." *Circulation*, 2002. <https://doi.org/10.1161/01.cir.0000018905.97677.1f>.
- Michalak, Johannes, Xiao Chi Zhang, and Frank Jacobi. "Vegetarian Diet and Mental Disorders: Results from a Representative Community Survey." *The international journal of behavioral nutrition and physical activity* 9, no. 1, 2012.
- Mihrshahi, Seema, Ding Ding, Joanne Gale, Margaret Allman-Farinelli, and Emily Banks. "Vegetarian diet and all-cause mortality: Evidence from a large population-based Australian cohort - the 45 and Up Study." *Prev Med*, 2017. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ypmed.2016.12.044>.
- Morris, Carol, and James Kirwan. "Vegetarians: Uninvited, Uncomfortable or Special Guests at the Table of the Alternative Food Economy?" *Sociologia Ruralis*, vol. 46, no. 3, 2006, pp. 192–213.
- Nozhdehi, Fatemeh, Sashey Abeywickrema, Phil Bremer, and Mei Peng. "Comparing Taste Detection Thresholds across Individuals Following Vegan, Vegetarian, or Omnivore Diets." *Foods*, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.3390/foods10112704>.
- Olfert, Melissa D., and Rachel A. Wattick. "Vegetarian Diets and the Risk of Diabetes." *Current Diabetes Reports*, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11892-018-1070-9>.
- Petre, Alina. "Does the Vegan Diet Extend Your Lifespan?" Healthline. Last modified, 2020. <https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/do-vegans-live-longer>.
- Psihoyos, Louie, *The Game Changers*. Directed by James Wilks, USA: Netflix, 2018.

Spencer, E A, P N Appleby, G K Davey, and T J Key. "Diet and body mass index in 38 000 EPIC-Oxford meat-eaters, fish-eaters, vegetarians and vegans." *International Journal of Obesity*, 2003.

[https://www.nature.com/articles/0802300#:~:text=Mean%20\(unadjusted\)%20BMI%20was%20highest,kg%2Fm2%20in%20women](https://www.nature.com/articles/0802300#:~:text=Mean%20(unadjusted)%20BMI%20was%20highest,kg%2Fm2%20in%20women).

Vegan Society, The. The foundations of ethical veganism. Last modified, 2020.

<https://www.vegansociety.com/news/blog/foundations-ethical-veganism#:~:text=The%20Vegan%20Society%20defines%20veganism,based%20diet%20without%20animal%20products>.

Williams, Kim A. "CardioBuzz: Vegan Diet, Healthy Heart?" *MedPage Today*, MedPage Today, 2014. www.medpagetoday.com/Blogs/CardioBuzz/46860.