VEG-GENDERED: A CULTURAL STUDY OF GENDERED ONSCREEN REPRESENTATIONS OF FOOD AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR VEGANISM

by

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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of

The Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts & Letters

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

Florida Atlantic University

Boca Raton, FL

August 2014

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This thesis was prepared under the direction of the candidate's thesis advisor, Dr. Christine Scodari, School of Communication and Multimedia Studies, and has been approved by the members of her supervisory committee. It was submitted to the faculty of The Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts and Letters and was accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author wishes to acknowledge Dr. Christine Scodari for her incredible guidance and immeasurable patience during the research and writing of this thesis. Acknowledgements are also in order to the participating committee members, Dr. Chris Robé and Dr. Fred Fejes, who provided further feedback and direction. Lastly, a special acknowledgement to Chandra Holst-Maldonado is necessary for her being an amazing source of moral support throughout the thesis process.

ABSTRACT

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Institution:	Florida Atlantic University
Thesis Advisor:	Dr. Christine Scodari
Degree:	Master of Arts
Year:	2014

This thesis is an exploration of popular media texts that influence veganism, with either explicit representations or implicit messages that implicate vegans. Research focuses on the question: How does the gendering of food in popular media texts implicate veganism? Theories used include a combination of cultural, film, and feminist studies, including Stuart Hall's audience reception, Laura Mulvey's male gaze, R.W. Connell's hegemonic masculinity, Carol Adams' feminist-vegetarian critical theory, and Rebecca Swenson's critical television studies.

A print and television advertisement analysis demonstrates the gendering of food, and subject-object relationship of meat, women, and men. A film analysis of texts with vegan characters and horror film texts with implicit vegan and feminist messaging follows, thus revealing interesting trends and developments in the characterization of

vegans on films, and hidden messages in the horror films studied. Lastly, an examination of competitive and instructional cooking shows ends the analysis, with interesting challenges to hegemony present in these television texts. The thesis concludes with examples of modern media feminizing veganism through food associations, the problematic imagery of women and meat as fetishized objects, along with challenges to hegemony that exist in some explicitly vegan texts.

DEDICATION

Without my family's continuing support during the research and writing process of my thesis, this manuscript would still be an idea that never came to fruition. I dedicate this work to the persistent questioning of Hugo Aguilera, Teresa Barraza, and Javiera Aguilera, whose inquisitiveness kept me going even when I was ready to give up.

I also dedicate this to my at-home supervisor and incredibly sharp husband, Chris Miranda. His willingness to push me into my "cave" to finish this manuscript is what got me through to the end. I am happy to say that I can finally fire him from his supervisory duties.

Lastly, I dedicate this work to my inspiring aunt, Eva Barraza, a fellow animal lover and health nut who believed in my ability to make even my wildest dreams come true.

VEG-GENDERED: A STUDY OF GENDERED ONSCREEN REPRESENTATIONS OF FOOD AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR VEGANISM

FIGURES

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

"As long as man continues to be the ruthless destroyer of lower living beings, he will never know health or peace. For as long as men massacre animals, they will kill each other." ~ Pythagoras

I. Introduction

Sitting down at a dinner table is rarely a cause for uproar. But the food on our plates reveal a striking divide between animal- and plant-based sources of sustenance in which each person sitting in front of the plate has made a choice worthy of Hamlet: To eat an animal, or not to eat an animal? As Marianne LeGreco notes, "As individuals living within a larger culture, we organize our eating amidst a range of institutions, prescriptions, and values that shape, and are shaped by, our food choices" (361). From this idea of choice and food as integral to culture, an idea was born in which I study how one particular food and lifestyle choice, that of veganism, is both portrayed by American media institutions and consumed by American audiences as either implicit or explicit texts.

The relationship between meat-eating, vegetarianism, veganism, and gender is worth further examination due to a dearth of literature on the subject. Matthew Ruby, one of the foremost academic thinkers in the vegetarian movement, is attempting to broaden the discourse surrounding vegetarianism, but it is not within the framework of a media studies approach. Before Ruby's vegetarian studies emerged, there was radical feminist-vegetarian Carol Adams writing as an independent scholar who contributed much to the

discourse on gender and meat-eating in Western societies. Through her critical theory tying feminism and vegetarianism, one can begin to see the extent to which gender is tied to both the meat industry and the consumption of vegetables, the gendered representations of which form the theoretical framework of this thesis.

II. Vegetarian vs. Vegan: A Look at Language

It is necessary before attempting to study implicit and explicit gendered food representations that implicate veganism to first define the terms associated with veganism, and its continuum that includes vegetarianism. Prior to the introduction of the term "vegetarian" in 1847, followers of a no-meat diet were more commonly known as Pythagoreans, so named after the Greek philosopher and mathematician Pythagoras (Adams 78). In chronicling the history of the term "vegetarian" in her book, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, Carol Adams shares how important language is in the formation of a counter-hegemonic culture:

> The Oxford English Dictionary states that the name is derived irregularly from "Veget-able" plus "arian". Vegetarians hold to a different etymology. They argue that it is "from the Latin word vegetus, meaning 'whole, sound, fresh or lively,' as in the ancient Latin term homo vegetus—a mentally and physically vigorous person. Thus, the English vegetarians were trying to make a point about the philosophical and moral tone of the lives they sought to lead. They were not simply promoting the use of vegetables in the diet. (Sussman qtd in Adams 79)

Vegetarians first defined themselves philosophically, with the term evolving to define "what they do not consume, differentiating themselves by rejecting a widespread social norm" (Hoffman et.al., 139). However, as is explored in the next section, the

“battle for meaning” in language begins by self-naming, which as Adams observed “consigns vegetarians to appear even more literal minded (or petty or narrow-minded), for inevitably the word has been corrupted” (79).

Almost one hundred years after the word vegetarian entered our lexicon, the term “vegan” appeared in 1944 as a means of separating lacto-vegetarians from non-dairy vegetarians (Watson n.p.). Woodworking teacher and founder of the Vegan Society, Donald Watson, was the first to coin the term when he sought to title a newsletter protesting the use of dairy, writing, “we believe the spiritual destiny of man is such that in time he will view with abhorrence the idea that men once fed on the products of animals' bodies.” The newsletter established the formation of what would become the Vegan Society, where the name “vegan” was chosen as it “marked the beginning and end of vegetarian” (“We’ve Come a Long Way!”). Seventy years later, veganism is today explained by the founding society as “a 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.” (“Key Facts: The Vegan Society”).

III. Statistics and Modern Use of the Term “Vegetarian”

Americans consume nearly 200 animals per year (“Vegans Save 198 Animals a Year”), thus making up about 70% of our protein sources. However, in eastern cultures, 80% of diets revolve around vegetables, seeds, nuts, and other plant-based food (Adams 79-80).

General estimates put the vegetarian population in the U.S. at about 6 to 8 million of people who have adopted a vegetarian diet (about 3%) with a third of that population consisting of strict vegetarians, which includes vegans (139). In simpler terms,

vegetarians are the umbrella group that includes smaller subsets. This includes vegans (those who do not consume or use any animal byproducts whatsoever), lacto-ovo vegetarians (vegetarians who also consume eggs and dairy), lacto-vegetarians (vegetarians who consume dairy), and pescatarians (those who abstain from red meat and poultry but consume seafood and fish), to name a few.

Within this last subset of vegetarians lies an ethical dilemma. While mainstream Americans may consider the consumption of seafood, fish, and in some cases chicken and turkey a form of vegetarianism, Adams upholds a stricter point of view. She says, "Vegetarianism as a word defining a certain set of 'restrictions' has been appropriated by meat eaters who dilute it by the inclusion of chickenmeat and fishmeat in their definition" (79). She continues her ethical vegetarian viewpoint by relating how the structure of the "absent referent" – a concept of hers that states, "[a]nimals in name and body are made absent *as animals* for meat to exist" (40) – prevails if the term vegetarian includes those who eat fishmeat or chickenmeat. Their inclusion essentially "eviscerates" and "dismembers" the meaning and history of the concept of vegetarianism (79).

This point of view advocates a literal emphasis on the term vegetarian, where no consumption of sentient beings occurs. For the purposes of this thesis, I refer to vegans specifically as those who adhere to its holistic lifestyle philosophy, and strict vegetarians as those who identify only with its dietary guidelines.

IV. Vegetarian & Vegan Schools of Thought

The logic involved in becoming vegan generally follows two main reasons: the first centers on one's well-being, where a convert to veganism makes choice in order to improve their health; the second reason ethical, and focuses on animal welfare (Hoffman

et. al., 139). There is also a critical difference in gender as to why a people adopt a vegan diet. For example, when men choose to become vegetarian or vegan, they are more likely to be health-conscious vegans. Media with a vegan message targeted towards men, while rare in the mainstream, tend to perpetuate the health benefits of switching from a meat-eating diet to a plant-based diet. In many cases, the health benefits of being a male vegan ties to sexual potency, as Justine Johnson observed in her study of male vegans, also termed "he-gans" (6).

This gendered difference between health and ethical vegans is a reflection of how little our food culture has changed over the years. A notable gendered divide exists between men and women who are vegetarians. It is noticeable that most quantitative studies reviewed in conducting research for this thesis prominently feature more female than male participants, with only a handful of studies pointing out this divide. The gendered gap between male and female vegans is particularly interesting when compared to the plant-based diets of eastern cultures in which more men abstain from meat eating (Adams 80).

Also important to consider in any study of veganism is the idea of embracing a new lifestyle as a way to act on ecological concerns. However, unlike health and ethical vegans, fewer vegans choose their diet / lifestyle solely because of the environment; it is less of a motivating factor than personal health and animal welfare, yet is still a common denominator for both groups.

Fox and Ward discovered that concern for the environment, due to the effects of the mass production of animals as meat, appeared to be an augmentation to already existing health and ethical concerns amongst their American, Canadian, and British

survey participants (14). Out of a survey with 33 respondents, only one claimed to embrace a vegan diet in order to "do more for the environment … to be as green as I can be" (13). They found that both health and ethical vegans also tended to be more environmentally conscious regardless of their differentiating ideologies on veganism. Many of the respondents of both vegan subsets were more likely to engage in environmentally friendly activities such as recycling and composting, commuting to work, and participating in other energy-reducing behaviors (13).

This preliminary look at the evolving meaning in the term "vegetarian," quantitative vegetarian studies, and the gendered nature of a meat-free diet suggesting that hegemonic masculinity is at work (a topic further explored in this thesis) provides the background necessary to move forward. With this overview in mind, we can set out to discover how veganism relates to food representations in popular media texts, which leads to the next topic of discussion: the issues addressed in this paper.

V. Issues to be Addressed

Considering the spread and wide influence of popular media texts in a more globalized world, it is necessary to study how mainstream media outlets represent a counter-hegemonic group such as vegans, either overtly in explicit texts or inconspicuously as an implicit message. My research question asks how food is gendered in modern popular media texts, how the continuum of non-meat-eaters are depicted by commercial media (Hollywood films, broadcast and cable news networks), and what is women's relation to meat as both consumers of it, and the objects of imagery that fetishizes meat. Following these questions, I examine each depiction's implications on

the continuum that includes veganism and vegetarianism. I ask, “How does the gendering of food in popular texts and everyday life cultural practices implicate veganism?”

In conducting this textual analysis, my objective is to get a better understanding of how the gendering of food influences the perception of vegans and the movement itself. This study focuses on the gender differences between masculine and feminine vegans, along with the gender and power relations between feminine / feminized objects representing meat, masculine subjects of power, female consumers of meat, the femininity associated with vegetables and non-meat-eaters, and masculinity associated with meat. However, due to the small number of vegans available for observation in popular texts, this study also includes vegetarians in the absence of vegans since both groups are part of the same continuum.

Following the primary issues and the research questions I address in this paper are the theories and concepts applied throughout the study.

VI. Literature Review

A. Theoretical Sources

The following are the theoretical sources that guide the analysis conducted in this thesis, subdivided into their respective theoretical categories.

1. Cultural Theory

Stuart Hall guides the communication framework for the audience reception portion of this study, which gives insight into how audiences respond to the depiction of non-meat-eaters in commercial media texts. In his theory, Hall describes the process of encoding and decoding which takes place with any given audience. I apply this influential

idea of encoding/decoding to the limited audience reception sections in the advertisement, television, and film portions of this paper. Hall writes:

> Before this message can have an "effect" (however defined), satisfy a "need" or be put to a "use", it must be appropriated as a meaningful discourse and be meaningfully decoded. It is this set of decoded meanings which "have an effect", influence, entertain, instruct or persuade, with very complex perceptual, cognitive, emotional, ideological or behavioural consequences (509).

Since veganism is a counter-hegemonic lifestyle, applying Hall's concept of audience reception of a message as a dominant-hegemonic, negotiated, or oppositional reading. A dominant-hegemonic reading (also known as a preferred reading) is "hegemonic precisely because they represent definitions of situations and events which are 'in dominance'" (516); a negotiated reading "accords the privileged position to the dominant definitions of events while reserving the right to make a more negotiated application to 'local conditions'" (516); and lastly, an oppositional reading is when a viewer "detotalises the message in the preferred code in order to retotalise the message within some alternative framework of reference" (517). Applying these readings gives insight into how both sets of audiences (vegans and non-vegans) respond to popular texts.

2. Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory

This thesis is largely influenced by the feminist-vegetarian critical theory that Carol J. Adams introduced in her essays of the 1970's and her seminal book published in 1990, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*. In using Adams' concepts, we can answer the question of how women relate to meat, most notably where women are objects implicitly fetishized along with meat. In the book, Adams begins by outlining a history of meat

consumption tied to patriarchal hegemony, which is the predominant cultural acceptance where men (usually white and usually of a higher social status) dominate over women. Adams explains that there is a cultural emphasis on meat-eating to preserve the virility and strength of men, which outweighed any kind of protein requirements for women, most notably pregnant women who have more protein needs (27). She cites a study by Dr. Edward Smith in 1863 that assessed the food consumption of British households in which he concluded that the biggest difference that existed was a sexual bias where men consumed far more meat than women in the same household. She notes a "hierarchy of meat" that characterizes the Western world as a symbol of male power that "reinforces an index of class, race, and sex" (30).

One of the ways Adams explores this patriarchal power as an influence on society is through the ideas of objectification (of which language and imagery are a vital component), consumption, and fragmentation. Of objectification, Adams writes, "The physical process of butchering an animal is recapitulated on a verbal level through words of objectification and fragmentation. Animals are rendered being-less not only by technology, but by innocuous phrases" (47). She cites the use of USDA verbiage such as "food-producing unit," "protein harvester," and "biomachines" as a detached way to discuss the beings who contribute to the food supply. We also tend to use non-gendered "it" instead of "he/she" pronouns when referring to animals. Thus, carefully constructed language separates our own body parts from those of the animals we consume. Part of the process of fragmentation includes changing the name of the animal's body parts in order to "obscure the fact that these once were animals." Of fragmentation, Adams says:

Since objects are possessions they cannot have possessions; thus, we say 'leg of

> lamb' not a 'lamb's leg'… We opt for less disquieting referent points not only by changing names from animals to meat, but also by cooking, seasoning, and covering the animals with sauces, disguising their original nature. Only then can consumption occur: actual consumption of the animal, now dead, and metaphorical consumption of the term 'meat,' so that it refers to food products alone rather than to the dead animal. (48)

She quotes Peter Singer who says that for many, meals are the most direct form of contact most people have with nonhuman animals. Yet many do not recognize it as such due to fragmentation – because of the renaming of animal parts in the fragmentation process of slaughter, we do not recognize the food we consume as an animal any longer (66). Language thus blurs the line that makes it palatable for us to consume living beings, even though "on some emotional level, everyone has some discomfort with eating of animals" (66). Finally, Adams cites the myth of Zeus eating the Titaness *Metis* ("wisdom") whole as a metaphor for male desire, which equates with consumption.

An important idea in Adams' work is also that of the "absent referent" to which Adams refers to both dead animals, and the metaphorical use of meat in describing the experiences of victimized women of domestic abuse or rape. The absent referent of nonhuman animals contains three notions: (1) The animal is literally absent through its death; (2) the language surrounding how we speak about animals (for example, referring to a baby cow as "veal") influences how we think about animals; and (3) the metaphors we use to describe people's experiences all serve to mark an animal's absence while referring to it abstractly at the same time (41-42).

Lastly, the biggest contribution from *The Sexual Politics of Meat* is the

exploitation of femaleness. For Adams, the literal oppression of female animals reinforces and epitomizes the sexual politics of meat. Humans consume the eggs laid by hens, and drink the milk of cows intended for their young (72). It is this exploitation of femaleness that emphasizes the minor power that "she" occupies within a patriarchal society, be it a female nonhuman animal or a female human. In her 2010 essay "Why Feminist-vegan now?" Adams updates *The Sexual Politics of Meat* with even more illustrations of how objectified women are symbolic representations of "pieces of meat." Most notably in Adams essay is the inclusion of animal rights foundation, PETA's campaigns, "I'd Rather Go Naked than Wear Fur" and "All Animals Have the Same Parts." Both campaigns objectify the bodies of celebrity vegans.

A supporting perspective that illustrates PETA's patriarchal marketing approach is in "Chicks and Nuggets: A Burkean Cluster Analysis of Animal-Rights Rhetoric." Shereen Siddiqui's considers PETA to be a patriarchal animal rights foundation. The reason, she posits, is "perhaps because it is easier to promote the vegetarian agenda in a patriarchal culture by reinforcing patriarchy" (9).

To illustrate the perceived feminine sentimentality of veganism and the animal rights movement, I use Josephine Donovan's essay "Animal Rights & Feminist Theory" from *The Animal Ethics Reader*. Donovan's concepts apply most in the film analysis as well as some portions of the television analysis. In this essay, male animal rights activists Peter Singer and Tom Regan come under fire for their use of what she deems "hyper-rationalization" with respect to veganism. Both Singer and Regan argue that animal activists need to detach themselves emotionally so as not to be regarded as "'irrational, 'sentimental,' 'emotional,'" etc. as it should be reason that "compels us to recognize the

equal inherent value of … animals and … their equal right to be treated with respect" (45). Donovan argues that this same form of hyper-rational thought justifies animal abuse in the first place through Cartesian objectivism (46). Donovan observes that women animal rights activists seem "to have developed more of a sense of emotional bonding with animals as the basis for their theory." This essay highlights the interesting distinction between the sexes and their choice in abstaining from animal byproducts, once again asserting that there is still a gendered divide even within the vegan animal rights community.

3. Feminist Film Theory

In addition to these feminist texts as theoretical frameworks for this thesis, I also employ the feminist film theory concepts of "the male gaze" in the advertisement and film portion of the analysis, as well as the "final girl" trope in the horror film portion of the analysis. In 1975, Laura Mulvey published the now oft-cited essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," offering a feminist approach to film theory in which cinematic pleasures are explained through a psychoanalytic lens. The "male gaze" derives from this seminal essay, described as the psychoanalytic phenomenon of scopophilia, where pleasure arises "in using another person as an object of sexual stimulation through sight" (715). The constructs of mainstream film relegate female figures to their "traditional exhibitionist role," where her appearance "is coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*." Mulvey's concept of the male gaze assumes the "male" to be a heterosexual man of a certain background, tying the gaze to patriarchy, and ignores other gazes, including the female gaze and queer gaze. For the

purposes of this thesis, the "gaze" is used in Mulvey's original sense—the male gaze which privileges the heterosexual male spectator.

Another contributor to feminist film theory, Carol Clover, introduced the trope of the "final girl" or the "female victim-hero" in "Her Body, Himself: Gender in the Slasher Film." Clover's textual analysis of various horror films popularized the concept of "the distressed female most likely to linger in memory…the one who did not die, the survivor, or Final Girl" (106). The "final girl" is considered a trope for her shared traits in horror films that include, but are not limited to, "smartness, gravity, competence in mechanical and other practical matters, and sexual reluctance," all of which ally her to "the very boys she fears or rejects, not to speak of the killer himself" (109). Clover also explains the relation between male and female in slasher films by adding the characterization of the slasher:

> The killer is with few exceptions recognizably human and distinctly male, his fury is unmistakably sexual in both roots and expression, his victims are mostly women, often sexually freed and always young and beautiful. (110)

To answer the question of why horror films gender the killer as male and victim as female, Clover quotes Linda Williams as she describes how slashers "represent an eruption of the normally repressed animal sexual energy of the civilised male."

B. Food & Culture

With respect to food and culture, several studies exist that examine both the gendered aspect of food as well as the vegan response to hegemonic food culture.

For both the competitive and instructional cooking show studies, I expand on Rebecca Swenson's analysis of the Food Network's programming, which reveals a

gendered segregation between male-hosted and female-hosted cooking shows, as well as competitive cooking shows. Her research discusses the privatized nature of the kitchen, which is traditionally women's work and part of her domestic duties at home (39). However, men have had their share of media that emphasized more of a presence in the kitchen, beginning with cookbooks that emerged during the sexual revolution of the 1960's. Yet the context has remained gendered by focusing on the preparation and cooking of meat, particularly barbecue. Swenson writes that "within the public sphere, the professional chef has long been male," thereby making the distinction especially sharp between where men and women "belong" when they decide to cook (40).

As Swenson studied daytime programming on the Food Network in 2008 and 2009, she discovered gendered codes where, "men as hosts demonstrated *cooking as a way to flex professional muscle* and *cooking as leisurely entertainment*" (41). Daytime shows with women hosts portrayed "*cooking as domestic work done for family and friends*." Men flexed their professional muscle by talking about business experiences in their restaurants and their culinary training, in addition to giving the audience a visual cue of their professionalism by wearing chef jackets. However, women tend to dress in casual apparel, oftentimes garbed with an apron, and rarely talk about their professional experience, regardless of their credentials (42). Distinctly gendered discourse is manifest in the way women discuss recipes compared to the men; women hosts regard them as treasured family possessions whereas men are more likely to talk about the science behind what they make.

Within competitive cooking shows such as *Iron Chef America*, Swenson writes, "competitive contests place cooking firmly in the public sphere and promote a version of

masculinity tied to hierarchy, success, power, speed, and stamina…. By supporting hegemonic masculinity rather than a domestic masculinity, competitive contests counter constructions of cooking as nurturing, democratic and family-centered labor" (49-50). This format serves to "normalize the 'manly' nature of professional cooking" even while female competitors partake in the competition.

Cultural studies of veganism reveal much of the same gender biases between men and women that Swenson observed. Matthew Ruby's essay "Vegetarianism: A Blossoming Field of Study" gives insight into the gendered differences of how men and women perceive meat consumption. Male participants in his study associated meat and maleness with one another, and preferred large helpings of "masculine" portions, which encompass more meat and less vegetables (148). Female participants favored healthier meals and tended to avoid red meat more so than men did. Because of this cultural difference between gender preference of meat, Ruby concludes "vegetarian women greatly outnumber vegetarian men in Western societies." Reinforcements of his findings are in similar studies conducted in Norway and New Zealand (Kubberod et al., 2002, Potts & White, 2007).

In a 2008 online ethnographic study on vegetarians (including vegans) conducted by British nutritional researchers Nick Fox and Katie Ward, it was observed that health vegetarians/vegans are inwardly focused individuals who are generally trying to reduce cholesterol, prevent heart disease, and lose weight. Health vegetarians/vegan respondents of a survey about their diet said they chose to abstain from consuming meat, and in the cases of vegans, all animal products, because it was "perceived as central to good health and longevity, with poor diet associated with lower levels of health." Some respondents

even cited specific diseases they were trying to avoid by following a vegetarian/vegan diet (7). The change to a meat-free diet was also a justification to continue eating vegetarian/vegan in order to maintain optimal health as many health vegetarians/vegans reported an overall improvement in how they felt physically after making the switch (8). While health vegetarians/vegans abstain from consuming animals for food, it is important to note that they are less likely to abstain from animal-based products in their other consumption habits. For example, they may not eat a hamburger but may still purchase leather products, making them align more with the definition of a strict vegetarian than a vegan, per The Vegan Society's definition of veganism. This is a critical difference between health and ethical vegetarians/vegans. Ethical vegetarians align more with today's definition of veganism, and maintain a meat and animal product-free lifestyle reaching beyond their forks. Fox and Ward concluded that vegetarians concerned for animal welfare (ethical vegetarians) are outwardly focused individuals who place more emphasis on saving animals' lives. Their view is more philosophical, which leads to an ideological divide between health and ethical vegetarians/vegans.

Nutritional scientists Jennifer Jabs, Carol Devine, and Jeffrey Sobal at Cornell University support this idea in their 1998 study of vegetarians. They found that health vegetarians tended to adopt their dietary change gradually, "because of information that influenced their beliefs about the benefits of these diets to their health" (201). Meanwhile ethical vegetarians, described as vegans for their differing ideology, were more drastic upon making their decision (196). This change in behavior is attributed to "cognitive consistency theory" in which ethical vegetarians "collected and processed information, and when an inconsistency existed they changed their behaviors to support their beliefs or

changed their beliefs to support their behaviors" (199). As ethical vegetarians became aware of the treatment of animals raised for human consumption, which inevitably "led to internal dissonance when respondents realized that their behavior of eating animal-derived food was against their values of compassion, nonviolence, and ecological preservation," ethical vegetarians alleviated this dissonance by re-evaluating their food choices and changing their behaviors by adopting vegetarian diets" (199-200).

Johnson scrutinized several articles that appeared in popular men's general interest and health magazines (*GQ*, *Esquire*, *Men's Health Magazine*, and *Men's Fitness Magazine*), screening for content that was centered around veganism. She found that content is carefully structured to reinforce R.W. Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity. The perception is that veganism is good for one's health but is an "unmanly" decision. Meanwhile, the majority of ethical vegetarians are skewed with more women being vegetarian than men (Ruby 148), and being more likely to perceive meat in daily meals as a morally unjustifiable choice (Beardsworth et. al., 477).

Laura Lindenfeld notes how "Dominant U.S. [food] media offer the seeming pleasure of celebrating diversity while simultaneously positioning gendered, racialized, and sexualized bodies as objects of consumption" (4). Food discourse is "critical to the negotiation of U.S. cultural politics" and as she explores in her chapter on food films, they serve to "engage in a kind of 'lifestyle' marketing, as do food television… this participation is gendered, sexualized, and racialized in particular ways" (13). She mentions how media representations "often stylistically code food with an erotic aura" with close-ups of food shown and consumed onscreen in a state of "semi-arousal." This

idea of sexualized and gendered food imagery ties into Carol J. Adam's feminist-vegetarian critical theory, which she first proposed in the 1970s.

Having shared the theoretical framework and concepts that apply to this paper, we can move on to the procedures of this media study, and the application of the theories discussed.

VII. Research Procedures & Methodology

All sections of the study use textual analysis, and some sections offer a limited audience reception analysis. The limited audience reception analysis in this thesis will only look at how audiences read vegans in popular media texts, and uses Hall's cultural theory. By examining audience reception to the selected media analyzed in this study, we can see how mainstream and vegan audience responses align with Hall's concepts of dominant, negotiated, or oppositional readings, thereby answering the research question of how these texts implicate veganism.

A. Advertisements

I analyze advertising campaigns of the 2000s in which the gendering of food occurs, and where fetishized images of women tie closely to that of meat, which even occurs with PETA ads. First, I study implicitly gendered food representations as seen on Hillshire Farms' "Go Meat!" television spots, where the cooking and consumption of meat reads as masculine, and consumption of vegetables as feminine. Next, print and television advertisements from food franchises Burger King, Hardee's, and Carl's Jr. are analyzed, each of which depict images of women consuming meat, and the fragmentation of their bodies in relation to meat. These images were selected due to their overt hyper-sexualization of the act of meat-eating, and its close relationship to the female form.

Following this textual analysis, I examine PETA's advertising campaigns which use a similar approach to that of the fast food industry by objectifying women to convey their anti-meat-eating message – a point that was explored by Adams in her 2010 essay "Why Feminist-vegan Now?" The theories most relevant to this section that are applied in the analysis include Swenson's study of the masculine / feminine gender binary in cooking shows (for the Hillshire Farms portion of the study), Mulvey's concept of "the male gaze," and Adams' definition of pornography as it applies to advertisements from *The Pornography of Meat*. Shereen Siddiqui's rhetorical study on PETA's advertising campaigns is also included for an additional perspective on the perpetuation of patriarchal hegemony in the animal rights group's marketing strategies. This portion of the study uses YouTube videos of Hillshire Farms' television spots, Carl's Jr.'s Paris Hilton spot, and a Google image search for the Burger King and Arby's print advertisements.

B. Film

For the film portion of the study, I introduce male and female vegan characters in mainstream film through the selection of movies that feature explicitly vegan characters. I examine select titles for their portrayals of vegetarians/vegans on screen. *Year of the Dog* stars Molly Shannon as the lead character who spirals into a life-altering depression after the death of her dog, eventually becoming a vegan as part of her journey towards recovering from her loss. *Seven Pounds* stars various A-listers, including Will Smith and real-life vegan Woody Harrelson, two significant characters on which the analysis centers. *Scott Pilgrim Versus the World* with Michael Cera features a male vegan with the least amount of screen time, played by Brandon Routh who has "super powers" that

stem from his vegan lifestyle. Adams and Johnson's study of "he-gans" are the main theorists applied in this section that examines characterizations of vegans.

While an examination of the fictitious treatments of vegetarians on screen is critical, perhaps the most revealing texts are those that are implicit and therefore metaphorical. I choose the slasher sub-genre within the horror film genre for study due to its gory depiction of female victims. Male antagonists savagely butcher and viciously attack these women with slaughterhouse-style imagery. In *The Pornography of Meat*, Adams writes, "Ninety percent of serial murders take place against women and girls…. In sexual murder, a woman's corpse is 'written' upon through dismemberment, disemboweling, continual knife penetrations, or the slashing off of her breasts or genitals" (120, 122). This startling fact makes an examination of the slasher film a critical piece of a vegetarian study centered on feminist-vegetarian theory. It posits the female as the object butchered and the male as the butcher, thus reinforcing patriarchal hegemony in both a literal and metaphorical sense. The typical formula for a slasher film features a male butcher, a female victim, and gruesome, gory scenes that are reminiscent of animal butchery. This is why I have chosen the classic slasher film, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974), and its most recent installment, *Texas Chainsaw* (2013) to study and compare to one another as both films are part of the same franchise, but exhibit different messages due to their unique modes of production. For this study, I apply Mulvey's "male gaze" and Clover's "final girl" trope, with the additional application of my own spin of the film as a pro-vegetarian text. I used the DVD of the original film for this study, and streamed the most recent film online through Netflix.

C. Television

For examples where gendered representations of food and hegemonic biases occur in broadcast networks, I examine competitive and instructional cooking shows. On the competitive side, *The Taste* and *Masterchef* are analyzed as representative texts from broadcast networks, both of which have featured explicitly vegetarian and vegan contestants during the coveted prime-time hour in which these shows air. Covering the cable networks' food texts in a competitive setting, I examine the Food Network's *Chopped* and *Cupcake Wars*, two shows that have featured vegan chefs and bakers in the past.

For the instructional component of this television analysis, I explore the shows *Christina Cooks* and *Jazzy Vegetarian*. Both shows air locally on public broadcast networks PBS and Create TV. Interestingly, on the cable side of television, only one of the two cable networks features an instructional vegan cooking show in Jason Wrobel's *How to Live to 100*. Borrowing on Swenson's 2009 study on the Food Network and how cooking shows are gendered, each production is textually analyzed using the same concepts of hegemonic masculinity and the domestic labor traditionally assigned to women.

The content studied in this television analysis used various YouTube clips, Netflix, Amazon Prime, and Hulu for video access. In cases where full episodes were not available, I use dialogue and cooking segments from archived YouTube clips, which I identified by using vegan- and vegetarian-related keywords along with the show's title on the search bar of the video content site.

After studying specific ads, television series and episodes, films and related texts within the context of the theories and concepts previously outlined, this paper shifts focus on conclusions driven by the analysis, and opportunities for further research, thus comprising the last chapter of this thesis.

VIII. Forthcoming Chapters

In the chapters to come, I present my in-depth, three-part analysis of gendered food representations of popular media texts described above, starting with advertisements and ending with television. Adams' feminist-vegetarian theoretical framework guides the bulk of the analysis, and concepts from Swenson, Clover, and Mulvey support this thesis.

Following the analysis, I draw conclusions of how the gendering of food occurs for modern audiences, and what the implications may be on a plant-based and animal rights continuum. The study will conclude with opportunities for further research on both gendered food representations and vegan discourse in the media.

CHAPTER TWO: ANALYSIS

"Butchering is that which creates or causes one's existence as meat; metaphorical 'butchering' silently invokes the violent act of animal slaughter while reinforcing raped women's sense of themselves as 'pieces of meat.'" ~ Carol J. Adams

This chapter begins with an analysis of print and television food advertisements that ran in the 2000s from Hillshire Farms, Burger King, Carl's Jr., and Arby's. The texts feature implicit gendered messages tied to meat and meat-eating that could affect audience reception of veganism. I also compare these meat texts against the anti-meat and anti-fur messages in print, television, and online advertising campaigns from People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), revealing how both organizations treat women in each text. After exploring the texts and audience reception aspects of the ads, I share an in-depth analysis of popular films.

I divide films into those featuring explicitly vegan characters found in the comedy-drama genre, and implicit pro-animal, anti-meat-eating texts of the horror genre in both the first and most recent film of the *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* franchise. Following the film study, several popular television shows centered on food and cooking are analyzed, with texts from both cable and non-cable networks analyzed. The shows focus on the gendered aspect of televised cooking, the representation of food, and vegan home cooks and chefs, who are featured as either competitors or educators on television. I also divide the cooking shows into competitive and instructional programs.

I. Advertisements

To first illustrate the masculine and feminine gender binary that implicitly genders meat, I reference one of Hillshire Farms' most recent advertising campaigns. A series of 15- and 30-second spots aired nationwide in 2007 with a catchy jingle (similar to a sports chant: "When I say Hillshire, you say Farms!") and the phrase "Go Meat!" tying the ads together.

Three spots in particular are notable for visually positioning salad-eating as feminine, and meat-cooking and eating as masculine. Hillshire Farms' Entrée Salads spot, which are comprised of either chicken or turkey, have two women sitting down to eat salads inside their home (Fig. 1).

Figure 1: Gendering vegetables and eating salad as feminine (2007)

No spots for the same product feature men eating salads. In Rebecca Swenson's study of the gendering that occurs in cooking shows, the home and particularly the kitchen is observed as traditionally a woman's realm (39), and is reinforced in this ad.

Additionally, the women are consuming meat products that are considered less masculine than other forms of meat, such as wild game or red meat (40).

One example of a spot that genders meat as masculine, particularly sausages and cold cuts, has several men chanting the jingle back and forth to each other as they grill sausage products in their backyards (Fig. 2). In another ad, a man eats cold cuts straight from the package as disembodied voices cheer him on to compete against no one else but himself to finish the contents of the package.

Figure 2: Gendering meat and cooking meat as masculine (2007)

This spot again reinforces Swenson's research in which men are encouraged to "prepare meat over a roaring fire, assuming an innate, caveman-like connection between men and barbequed meat" (39). The spot where the man consumes a whole package of cold cuts straight from his refrigerator highlights a competitive focus that is typical of hegemonic masculinity (49). Despite the fact that he is alone, the disembodied chanters push him to engage in competitive-style eating as he consumes the meat as quickly as possible, and throws his hands up in victory after achieving the feat.

Masculinity in meat-eating is supported in other spots from the same series. One example has a group of men and women biting into sandwiches while watching a football game. As they eat, a large group of people joins the scene, each tied to the game playing on television: a fan in his team's colors pops out of a closet, several football players barge into the living room, the coach joins in, along with a sports broadcaster and marching band members. The result is an aggressive, in-your-face advertisement undoubtedly reinforcing meat as masculine as the spot ties its meat products to football, a symbol of hegemonic masculinity (49). Based on this analysis, we can see how food is gendered with clear delineations of meat being masculine, and vegetables being feminine through cultural symbols that include competition and domesticity.

In 2009, Burger King created an English language print advertising campaign to promote their new Super Seven Incher in Singapore. The ad featured a profile of a young, blonde Caucasian woman on the left, eyes wide, mouth gaping open, ready to take in the sandwich (Fig. 3).

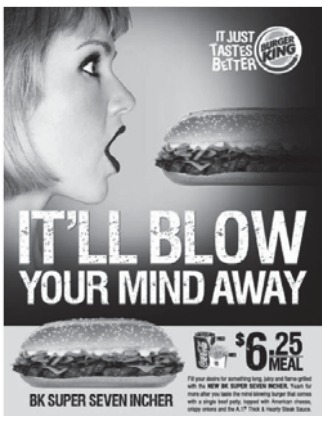

Figure 3: BK Super Seven Incher campaign (2009)

The tagline reads, “It’ll Blow Your Mind Away,” with the slogan in a smaller font that says, “It Just Tastes Better.” The even smaller copy at the bottom of the ad reads: “Fill your desire for something long, juicy and flame-grilled with the new BK Super Seven Incher. Yearn for more after you taste the mind-blowing burger that comes with a single beef patty, topped with American cheese, crispy onions and the A.1. Thick & Hearty Steak Sauce.”

While the ad highlights an interesting gender and race intersection, showing how one Asian market fetishizes a white woman to appeal to an Eastern audience (perhaps as the ideal for this culture’s gaze) its overt sexualization of the women with the phallic sandwich is the critical object of study in this analysis. From the name of the sandwich, to the images, taglines, and copy of the campaign itself, it is clear that the advertisement targets heterosexual males, putting the male gaze to work. As Mulvey determines in the introduction of her seminal essay on the gaze, “it is her lack that produces the phallus as a symbolic presence” (711).

Despite the fact that she is the only person depicted in the shot, the model’s expression connotes a lack of power in the face of the phallic burger. The burger thus acts as the “active/male” facing the “passive/female” (Mulvey 715), blatantly setting the sexual tone of the ad, and perpetuating a phallic symbol of masculinity on two levels: the first is the burger as phallus, as has already been discussed; the second is the animal as burger. Both are examples that exercise patriarchy and power.

In *The Pornography of Meat*, Adams simplifies the act of meat-eating, describing it as a “primal male act” in which “eating meat, especially steaks, gives bull-length strength,” noting that this is accepted as truth despite the fact that bulls receive their

strength from plants (36). Burger King's message surrounding the meaty sandwich perpetuates this idea of meat as the masculine symbol of virility and strength, also implying that size matters in more ways than one. As psychoanalyst and blogger Paul Joannides asks in his blog "As You Like It":

> [I]s the new Burger King seven-incher ad a poke at Subway, who has been trying to hawk its six-incher since time began? This assumes that women believe bigger is better when it comes to penis size. The average (penis, not sandwich) is somewhere between 5.5 and 6.5 inches long.

Even though the ad ran in Singapore, it quickly became viral in the U.S. as American advertising executives, the National Organization for Women, and networks of feminist bloggers blasted the campaign as tasteless. As one blogger put it,

> Why don't they just say choke on it bitch, because that is clearly what the image and the language of this advertisement is implying? Using sex to sell is a common tactic in advertising; however this particular ad is demeaning and reductive. This woman isn't fulfilling her needs by consuming this meal, she is performing a service. (Martin para 1)

NOW responded by putting Burger King in its Media Hall of Shame, noting that this ad "continues to objectify and hypersexualize women by putting a model—who has the carefully crafted appearance of a blow-up doll—on the receiving end of its latest all-beef, mayo-oozing sandwich" (Hobbs para 1). The organization continued its response by saying that the "highly suggestive terminology" could not be coincidental, giving rise to an accusation of misogynistic advertising tactics.

Advertising executives expressed similar sentiments. In many interviews

reviewed for this segment of the thesis, several male executives expressed their displeasure with Burger King's advertising approach. One such executive of a New York marketing and advertising firm, Scott Purvis explained: "This would be the kind of ad you might see for a smaller brand trying to get itself noticed. … It's probably something that wouldn't see the light of day in this country" (Miller para 14). In response to the widespread backlash, Burger King attempted to distance itself by placing the responsibility on its Singapore franchisee, and the local agency that created the ad.

The Burger King ad thus begins to form the answer to the question of what women's relation is to meat. In this case, she and the meat are objects of fetishism, and although she is its consumer, the image does not suggest any pleasure in her consumption of the product. The metaphorically masculinized meat seems to hold a greater position of power, and implies that she is merely the attractive "scale for size" that displays the large portion of meat.

Also noteworthy in a study of gendered food representations, particularly those employing the male gaze, are the fast food chains of Carl's Jr., Hardee's, and Arby's. All have had imagery of young women suggestively posing with and eating meat. The following ads demonstrate "the way the unconscious of patriarchal society" (Mulvey 711) has constructed imagery of meat-eating with female objectification.

In 2005, Carl's Jr. and sister franchise Hardee's promoted their new Spicy BBQ Six Dollar Burger with a provocative commercial featuring Paris Hilton, who at the time was at the height of her reality TV career. The ad ran during the spring and summer, with Hilton "in a skin-tight swimsuit soaping up a Bentley and crawling all over it before taking a big bite out of the burger" (Silver para 1) (Fig. 4).

Figure 4: A scantily clad Paris Hilton in front of a Bentley (2005).

The one-minute spot spotlights 36 seconds of Hilton (who makes her entrance in a white fur stole) soaping a sponge, dripping it all over herself, crawling on all fours on top of the Bentley, and rubbing herself on the car. The shots with Hilton biting into the burger have her crawling up to the sandwich before taking a big bite, with the added sound effect of a pleasurable moan emanating from Hilton.

From the beginning to the end of the ad, Hilton uses "the look" which Mulvey maintained was used to play to and signify male desire (715). The look is evident in this ad in which meat-eating is fetishized in order to appeal to heterosexual men, the most important collective in a patriarchal society with an economic dependency on meat. There are also several symbols of power in the commercial, from Hilton's fur-clad entrance to the Bentley to the meat comprising the burger.

To some degree, the ad resonated with viewers. Carl's Jr. experienced a modest increase in sales during the time the ad aired, a 1.7% uptick in business. Yet the limited-time burger and its uptick in business were not the motivating factors behind the ad. For CEO of Carl's Jr. and Hardee's, Andrew Puzder, it was a matter of brand building with a

memorable TV spot. Indeed, as Puzder notes in his interview with CNN Money, "The goal of the commercial … was mostly to perk up customer awareness rather than advertise one product."

It is notable that a key strategy to the burger chains' customer awareness involves a celebrity whose fame derives from her wealth. This may be a new spin on how those in power "have always eaten meat. … Dietary habits proclaim class distinction, but they proclaim patriarchal distinctions as well" (Adams 26). If money defines power, than an image of a well-known heiress consuming a burger confirms that meat consumption is a symbol of power, status, and wealth. Thus, it could be argued that Carl's Jr. and Hardee's attempted to align themselves as a fast food chain for those with status by showing such imagery; that this included a woman could be perceived as empowering.

However, the general tone of the ad, with the main object being not the burger, but the woman who eats the burger, suggests otherwise. The Spicy BBQ Burger that is supposedly being advertised is only shown for a total of about six seconds; thus that which is being objectified is the female form, and not the food. The expectation is for the audience to consume the images of Hilton in much the same way they physically consume the Spicy BBQ Burger in the ad. With their attention drawn to the female form, they are distracted from thinking about the source of the burger meat, making it easier to eat. Instead of having close ups of the burger, the absent referent of the animal from which the meat came is represented by the animalistic Hilton who crawls around the Bentley to get to the meat as the human animal that is at top of the food chain. This imagery ties her as "a symbol for what is not seen but is always there – patriarchal control of animals" (Adams 16).

Four years after the Hilton ad aired on TV and the same year as Burger King's Singapore ad, Arby's ran an eye-catching print campaign itself in 2009's *Sports Illustrated* Swimsuit Edition. The ad depicts a compromising angle of a disembodied woman. "She" holds two large burgers with her arms crossed, discreetly keeping them from sight in their entirety (Fig. 5).

Figure 5: Arby's ad, *Sports Illustrated* (2009)

The main headline says "We're about to reveal something you'll really drool over." The ad's copy reads: "What a tease. Arby's introduces exciting new menu items including the RoastBurger. It's the burger done better. Unfortunately, you'll have to wait until March for the full mouthwatering experience."

Given the context of where this ad was placed, the once-a-year swimsuit edition of a sports magazine for men, it is not surprising that Arby's would want to quickly catch the attention of the magazine's mostly male readers by tantalizing with an image of breasts, again employing Mulvey's "male gaze" concept. This advertisement falls into the "men to men" dialogue that Adams explored in *The Pornography of Meat* in which her

analysis of the Hooters logo applies. Both images relate in their use of women's breasts to relay a familiar message to men. As a magazine created for men and published by men, this ad shows "not just *what* is to be seen (breasts) but also *how* to look (in a fragmenting, objectifying way) and who is looking (a subject is looking at an object)" (28). The fragmentation of this ad is what makes it stand out as it fragments a woman's body and the animal from which the meat in the burger comes from. Both the woman and the animal are absent referents in this image. We know what they look like as a whole, yet we consume "pieces" of them anyway. Both represent physical desire, where the animal and woman are set up for the literal and "metaphorical butchering" that Adams describes, after which the one in control and who ultimately consumes these beings is the one holding the magazine, a masculine figure who holds the gaze.

From the Hillshire Farms ads through the Arby's ad, women are seen consuming meat, presenting a challenging paradox. I explain this by considering that the women depicted, and all the women they represent, are operating in a culture where they are subjects of the prevailing attitude of hegemonic masculinity in which eating meat is the norm. As Johnson noted, hegemonic masculinity promotes the idea that men should dominate women and animals, and since men control food production and distribution (25), we can conclude that the paradox of women consuming meat is a result of hegemonic masculinity's influence in a patriarchal culture.

Interestingly, the fast food ads position women as powerless or subservient. This is a typical function of the male gaze – the female figure is always passive (Mulvey 711). The face of the model in the Burger King ad is doll-like. Her wide-eyes, averted from the camera lens, connote a hollow expression while faced with the phallic sandwich in front

of her. While Hilton's fame derives from her family's status as elite, powerful, and wealthy Americans, she is still in a subservient role by physically "washing" the luxury car, and doing so in a bathing suit. The implied female torso in the Arby's ad demonstrates a woman covering up her breasts-as-burgers, hiding that which she does not want us to see. With no head attached to her body to show her expression, there is no knowing whether this revelation of her breasts is intended or not.

All of the fast food ads share a clear link to the "exploitation of femaleness" which fetishizes women and meat, through objectification, fragmentation, consumption, and the removal of power. This further solidifies the parallelism of how women and meat relate, as both are objects for the patriarchal male (i.e., Western, heterosexual men) to consume. Of course, one could argue that, with the exception of the doll-like model of the Burger King ad, both Hilton and the Arby's ad in fact show female power in a post-feminist sense, with Hilton *choosing* to display her body and the arms *choosing* to keep its symbolic breasts hidden. These ads featuring powerless versions of women align with Adams' findings in which the objectification and fragmentation of women and meat by the fast food and meat-producing industries qualify these ads as pornographic imagery. By her definition:

> With pornography, fragmented body parts become sexualized so that someone can get pleasure from something. … Two mass terms are merged as one—individual animals into hamburger, an individual woman into an object 'woman.' Through this doubling of objectification, what we have before us is the butchering of women's subject status. (25)

However, even while this idea of female objectification holds true in ads promoting meat consumption, they are also prevalent in one of the leading vegan animal rights groups, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals.

In 1991, PETA, an animal rights organization with more than three million members, launched its "I'd Rather Go Naked than Wear Fur Campaign" with the all-female rock band The Go-Gos ("Would You Rather Go Naked?"). This marked the beginning of a long-running fur-boycotting campaign featuring a number of celebrities in the nude. The "Naked" campaign would later branch out to include anti-meat ads similarly styled in their use of nude female, and eventually, nude male celebrities. Further study of the inclusion of men in PETA's ads could provide a deeper understanding of its significance to the intersections of gender, sexuality, and veganism.

By relying so heavily on marketing its animal rights message with the bodies of women, PETA leaves no question as to their dependency of the male gaze in their advertising, linking their tactics to the meat industry they campaign against. Not only have they been using this strategy for over 20 years, they have also relied on the most attractive female forms to relay their message through objectification. One such example of their reliance on using buxom figures in their messaging is in the images of Playboy Playmate, Pamela Anderson, a celebrated supporter of the organization (Fig. 6) (Fig. 7).

Figure 6: "I'd Rather Go Naked than Wear Fur" campaign (2003)

Figure 7: "All Animals Have the Same Parts" campaign (2010)

Aside from its excessive use of the male gaze in its nude ad campaigns, PETA regularly stages protests with naked or provocatively dressed women. In 2013, PETA released a new pro-vegan website featuring "Lettuce Ladies," which was also studied by Shereen Siddiqui the same year in which it debuted. Much of the content of the Lettuce Ladies website models the style of Playboy's magazine content: it lists each woman's name, hometown, and answers to their "turn ons" and "turn offs" (Fig. 8).

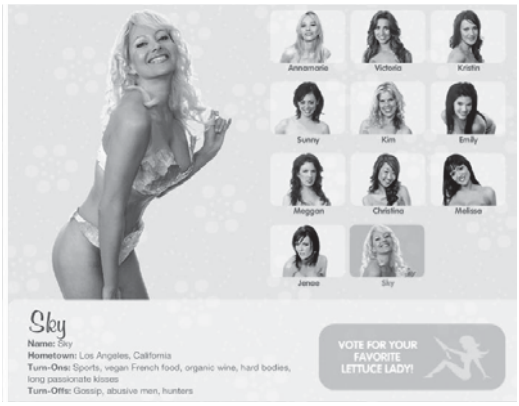

Figure 8: PETA's Lettuce Ladies (2013)

The Lettuce Ladies website also features raunchy video content such as a "Girl-on-Girl" video with "sexy PETA members heat[ing] things up in public," a tofu-wrestling video (more girl-on-girl) and a "Make Out Tour" video. The bottom of the page has a buxom Lettuce Lady with a cartoonish comment bubble offering somewhat of a *non sequitur* call to action: "Join the Lettuce Ladies. Order our Vegetarian Starter Kit!"

To some feminists, PETA's use of women's bodies to spread its messages merely perpetuates "the idea that women are to-be-looked-at" (Kocieda para 4). As blogger Aphrodite Kocieda wrote in 2013, "women shouldn't *have* to be sexy and naked in order to get the attention of the media (yet they do) … PETA perpetuates the myth that, in order to raise any type of awareness about *ethical* issues, they must either objectify women or link it to a type of sex that men enjoy." Siddiqui agrees: "PETA prioritizes the oppression of animals by joining the patriarchal society in the reification of women to further the organization's goals. Just as meat texts manipulate "language and meaning through a code that subjugates animals' lives to human needs," anti-meat texts subjugate women's lives to promote the anti-meat agenda (Adams 94)" (9).

PETA has defended its actions by saying that using women's bodies is an important part of their marketing strategy to bring awareness to animal suffering. In an interview with *The Guardian* in 2010, a PETA campaign director is quoted as saying:

> Using a woman's body to show that animals are made of flesh and blood and bones, just like you, is a very serious point that we are trying to put out, so that people can think of animals as sentient human beings, not just pieces of meat on supermarket shelves. The results we are getting for the animals is part of our main aim, which is to alleviate their suffering. (Bindel para 7)

This statement reveals that, similar to the fast food industry it is supposedly fighting against, PETA's objectification of women is a means to an end. It is a tactic that is very much in line with what the fast food industry uses, and is no different in strategy when marketing to the same demographic of heterosexual males. For the fast food chains discussed, it is a matter of building their brands on the literal backs of women in order to appeal to men. For PETA, it is to raise awareness of animal suffering so consumers stop buying meat products.

While both use the same strategy of objectifying women, PETA is unique in their attempt to recall the absent referent of the animals that become meat by displaying animal parts as a whole through a woman's body (Fig. 7). However, in attempting to raise awareness in consumers' minds of where their meat comes from, PETA still tantalizes consumers of meat by fetishizing women in much the same way that the meat industry fetishizes both women and meat. Thus, PETA continues to operate in the constructs of hegemonic masculinity, albeit metaphorically, by linking the consumption of animals to the visual consumption of women through fetishism. In trying to remove the stigma of animals as food, PETA traded in the flesh of animals for the flesh of women, sending the message that it is acceptable to objectify women's bodies if it helps to alleviate animal suffering, thus implying that women are less than animals. In essence, its message and imagery inadvertently perpetuate the myth that eating meat is masculine by featuring sexualized female figures; this in effect polarizes potential female converts to veganism, and ultimately the animal rights movement.

For as much criticism by feminists that PETA receives, some of its tactics have proven successful. Avon Cosmetics stopped testing on animals in 1989, and kept its

promise for two decades after PETA urged a boycott of its products ("Avon, Mary Kay, Estée Lauder Resume Animal Tests"). In June 2006, Ralph Lauren announced that it would no longer be using fur in its clothing. A press release on its Investor Relations website refers to PETA as having received the company's signed promise to refrain from fur use ("Polo Ralph Lauren Announces Decision To Remove Fur From Its Collections"). McDonald's was also the target of PETA's boycotts in 2009 when a debate ensued about the most humane way to slaughter its chickens (Hughlett para 9). PETA called for the chain to use the more humane "gas and hang" method instead of the "electric shock and throat-slitting" method. The boycott lasted for several months, until McDonald's finally agreed to change its slaughtering methods to the one favored by PETA. While each of these examples show PETAs successes against industries who use animals in their products, the successes were not achieved their print ads; they were simply boycotts.

As Shereen Siddiqui observed in her rhetorical study of PETA campaigns, PETA refuses to make the connection between veganism, animal rights and feminism because "it is easier to promote the vegetarian agenda in a patriarchal culture by reinforcing patriarchy" thereby establishing PETA as another subscriber of patriarchal language (9).

In recent years, PETA launched a campaign known as "Ink Not Mink" that display famous male athletes and musicians' tattooed bodies. While not explored in this study, further opportunities for exploration, including female and queer gazes and readings of this campaign and others, are in the concluding chapter of this thesis. It is also worth noting that PETA is part of a wider masculinist positioning that exists in animal rights and environmental advocacy groups. Additional perspectives on the larger topic of

the abuse of the natural world and its nonhuman species in patriarchal societies are available from eco-feminists Marti Kheel, Wendy Brown, and Marilyn French.

II. Film Analysis

In this section, I made two film analyses, with the films originating from different genres. The first analysis examines a small selection of vegan characters that have appeared in dramatic and comedic roles from 2005 to 2010, revealing an interesting trend during that period, particularly for introducing the first onscreen depictions of male vegans. The second analysis observes at a closer level how veganism and feminism intertwine in the slasher sub-genre within the horror genre, which notoriously genders the killers as male and victims as female (Clover 114).

A. Vegan Characters in Film

The films analyzed for this section focus explicitly on vegan characters, which are a much smaller minority depicted on film than vegetarian characters. Because vegetarians can fall along a continuum that includes veganism or a less strict variety of vegetarian, I include an explicit study of vegans to incorporate the lifestyle and philosophical aspect of veganism instead of simply diet. What the following characters demonstrate is an interesting trend introducing the rise of male vegans, and one of the first instances of a vegan character as the film's lead.

1. *Year of the Dog* (2007)

In 2007, veganism was for the first time explicitly explored. The commercially produced comedy-drama *Year of the Dog* chronicles one woman's journey into the world of animal activism. Molly Shannon and Peter Sarsgaard play animal lovers Peggy and Newt, who meet when Peggy's beloved beagle, Pencil, dies after ingesting a substance

toxic to dogs. Newt, a manager at the veterinary clinic where Peggy took Pencil in for treatment, strikes up a friendship with Peggy and introduces her to his vegan lifestyle, which Peggy wholly embraces after feeling lost and depressed for several weeks as she grieves for the loss of her dog.

Peggy enters several stages of exploration and action that slowly changes her character from a passionate animal lover to a law-breaking animal rights activist with near manic behavior. At first, she shows a healthy curiosity about the vegan lifestyle by reading books and learning from Newt. Her acceptance of veganism eventually turns towards activism as she navigates the Internet to discover the horrors of factory farms, and the animal testing practices of pharmaceutical and cosmetics companies. As an administrative assistant in a pharmaceutical company, Peggy begins to feel guilty of her indirect association to animal suffering. She introduces petitions at work to end animal testing, which her boss reminds her is a conflict of interest, and makes her put a stop to the petitioning. In her first break with the law, Peggy retaliates by forging her bosses signature on company checks, and mailing out hundreds of dollars in donations to animal rights groups and animal sanctuaries around the country. She hides “thank you” calls from each organization from her boss and continues to discreetly mail out donations in his name. Her boss discovers this and fires her for embezzling funds.

In another act of retaliation against her brother and sister-in-law, Peggy takes her young niece and infant nephew to an animal sanctuary when asked to watch the kids while housesitting during New Year’s Eve. After her niece spends the day petting and playing with the animals saved from slaughter, Peggy firmly explains that they have to see the other side of the sanctuary by visiting a chicken slaughterhouse just up the street.

This is one of the more disturbing scenes of the film as her niece begins to cry and begs not to go inside, which they fortunately do not do. Upon their return to her brother's house, an inebriated Peggy discovers a collection of fur coats, shawls, and stoles belonging to her sister-in-law and throws them away after damaging the furs by soaking them in water, making this the first time she vandalizes someone else's property.

Peggy's downward cycle into a manic animal activist finally reaches a tipping point when she goes to the pound to adopt another dog – only to take home 15 dogs who are about to be euthanized. The city's limit is three dogs per house, and soon her neighbor, Al (John C. Reilly) threatens to tell the city about her dog hoarding if they cannot keep quiet. Towards the end of the film, Peggy epitomizes a "crazy dog lady" as she stocks a shopping cart full of canned dog food in a frenzy, startling other shoppers as she swipes armfuls of cans from the shelf into her cart. Peggy's disheveled appearance, after having lost her job and no longer having much contact with other people, earns her stares from the cashier and bagger as she checks out. By the time she gets home with all of the dog food, the city has already confiscated the 15 dogs she left behind, leaving a notice of eviction behind. This enrages Peggy, who immediately goes next door to confront Al about her missing dogs. She then breaks into his home, steals a hunting knife from a display case, and waits in a closet for him to return before attempting to assault and stab him for what she suspects is his involvement with Pencil's death.

While having a female vegan character in a lead role is a step forward, the obvious issues with Peggy's character are her emotional instability and deconstruction throughout the film, as demonstrated above. Her emotional reactions take her from a deep depression after her dog's death to irrationally stealing money from her workplace, and

attempting to stab and possibly kill her neighbor. This extreme emotional response from Peggy is what animal activist Peter Singer believes is an association of animal rights with "womanish" sentimentality, which in turn trivializes the movement (Donovan 45). In observing Peggy's character from a rational perspective, there is no doubt that she is one of these "irrational" animal rights activists who trivializes her own activist work. However, if we consider female animal activist literature, responding emotionally to animal exploitation is natural. As Mary Midgley explains, "What makes our fellow beings entitled to basic consideration is surely not intellectual capacity but emotional fellowship" (Midgely qtd in Donovan 46). In this sense, Peggy is merely responding as is expected for someone tied to animal activism.

In each of her choices throughout the film, Peggy shows a closer connection to animals than to the humans around her. As a result, the more involved in animal activism Peggy becomes, the more isolated she becomes. Every instance of the poor decisions she makes precludes some kind of negative interaction with another person in her life.

Before Peggy embraces veganism, she goes on a date with her neighbor Al and discovers that while her passion is dogs, his is hunting. He shows her his knife collection and taxidermy animals collected over the years from his hunts, which disturbs Peggy as she absorbs his hunting décor.

Soon after her interaction with Al, she becomes vegan under Newt's influence. Later when she confesses that she has intimate feelings for Newt, he turns her down, proclaiming that he is celibate and prefers to live his life that way. Peggy turns her depressed feelings of rejection into activism by petitioning at work and later forging her boss's checks. After repeated criticism and mockery by her brother and sister-in-law for

being vegan, Peggy takes her niece and nephew to the animal sanctuary, and destroys her sister's furs. The euthanasia of her second adopted dog, Valentine, for which Newt was responsible for after Valentine killed one of his own adopted dogs, leads her to the pound to adopt 15 dogs. Each case of Peggy's activism is an emotional reaction to other people's negative actions.

Her relationship to Peter Saarsgard's character, Newt, is one of the most interesting from a vegan and gender studies point of view. Newt is a compassionate person who understands Peggy's loss since he, too, loves animals and practices a lifestyle that aims to reduce animal suffering. He volunteers at pet adoption drives and is a part-time animal trainer who uses positive reinforcement as his only training method.

However, from the onset, his character comes across as effeminate due to his emotional association with animals, a supposed trait of vegans and animal activists noted by Adams, Donovan, and Johnson. In one scene, he and Peggy share a tame kiss, but after she expresses her feelings for more, he turns her down, making her believe that maybe he is gay. Newt makes it clear that he prefers not to engage in sexual relationships with either men or women, removing any question of his sexual preference since he does not appear to have any. Newt is the perfect example of a character who challenges hegemonic masculinity: instead of exuding power and domination, he is compassionate and lives a life of empathy towards animals, which does not align with R.W. Connell's definition of hegemonic masculinity (Johnson 5).

By comparison, John C. Reilly's role, as the neighbor who hunts, is a powerful, dominant, and sexually active heterosexual man: the hegemonic masculine ideal. Al the Hunter has sexual connotations that are later evident in the film with the introduction of

an anonymous woman companion that he dates after Peggy. As Joanna Bourke explains, "'normal' men were psychologically capable of killing because they were tough, did not mind seeing animals killed, were gregarious and mischievous youths, and were actively heterosexual" (qtd in Adams 93). Given this context, not only does Al represent a practitioner of what is an abhorrent practice to a vegan, his affinity for hunting makes him a stand-in for the male heterosexuality that is lacking in Newt's character. After his attempt to connect with Peggy fails, he soon begins a relationship with an attractive blonde that frequently visits his house throughout the rest of the film, which a lonely Peggy observes through the curtains of her window.

Newt is thus the embodiment of what a patriarchal culture perceives when a man chooses to follow a compassionate lifestyle with a plant-based diet at its core: asexual and effeminate, but certainly not masculine (Adams 48, Johnson 10); this typifies when Valentine mauls Newt's disabled dog, Buttons. Peggy returns from housesitting to find Newt bawling on the floor next to Button's empty dog wheelchair, saying that his positive reinforcement training failed, and there was no saving a violent dog like Valentine. He cautions her not to go to the backyard because the mess left behind from the mauling is still there. Newt is too emotionally distraught to clean up, and this is where we find out that he has reported Valentine to the city, which euthanizes the dog. In this scene, Newt comes across as powerless, childish, and hopeless – the polar opposite of the hegemonic ideal of Al.

Where *Year of the Dog* succeeds is offering insight into the reactions of everyday people to the idea of the nonconformist subculture of veganism. When Peggy brings cupcakes to work one day, a few of her colleagues excitedly grab the cupcakes, until she

mentions that they are vegan. Their enthusiasm quickly dissipates, and one colleague even puts a cupcake back instead of trying it. When another colleague comes into the room, Peggy offers her a cupcake with the vegan disclaimer, and she rejects it before cautiously accepting it with some coercion. Peggy also experiences what it is like to answer questions about her veganism, and her own family laughs at her after she shares her decision to be vegan. While at her brother's house one night, she tells him about becoming a vegan, saying "It's nice to have a word that describes you. I've never had that before." Her turn towards veganism and animal activism gives her a sense of finally having a mission in life, but her brother questions her decision by asking how long she will be vegan, as if though it were just a temporary decision, and if it is really a healthy choice. During Christmastime, Peggy adopts animals saved from slaughter in her family's names, and is mocked by her brother and sister-in-law, who laugh after Peggy shares that his animal is a pig and hers is a cow, exemplifying the gendered animal stereotype of men as pigs and women as cows. These reactions show the shared experience many new vegans face, and briefly demonstrate the continuing challenges of having to explain oneself for being vegan.

Mike White, a vegan who also wrote the critically acclaimed screenplay *The Good Girl*, wrote and directed *Year of the Dog*. He wrote the part of Peggy specifically for Molly Shannon ("Shannon Experiences 'Dog' Days at Paramount"); however, the film received mixed reviews from critics, and generally confused audiences who had a difficult time understanding the message of the movie. The movie's message is obscured for several reasons—partly because it featured a darker side to former *Saturday Night Live* comedienne Molly Shannon, partly because of its being advertised as a "quirky

comedy," and partly because it offered a mixed message on animal rights since its main character becomes more and more disconnected from humanity with each act of animal activism.

In several IMDB user reviews, users expressed their disappointment, with varying reviews showing a dominant reading of the film, stating how it was a left-wing, "90-minute PETA ad" (Danielle from Syracuse, 2008), and some revealing a negotiated reading, asserting that it was not at all an animal rights propaganda film (moistsnackcake 2007). The film's ambiguity is due to White's writing style, one noted during his interview with *The New Yorker*'s Nick Paumgarten upon the film's release:

> At first, you think White is making fun of [Peggy], but then you come to realize that he's in her corner. Still, a certain ambiguity of tone, a typical White trait, makes you wonder where he really stands on the question of, say, killing animals for clothes, food, or sport. (Paumgarten para 1)

I attribute his ambiguous style to satisfying both factions of the animal rights issue in order to draw a wider audience for his film, demonstrating a limit to the kind of exploration a commercial film can endeavor under a vegan lens. It also reveals how White attempted to create a text that negotiated between the dominant view of vegan ideology and an oppositional view that challenges the normative act of meat-eating.

2. *Seven Pounds* (2008)

Seven Pounds is the story of Tim Thomas, an engineer who causes the death of six strangers and his fiancée in a car crash. Ridden with guilt at his role in seven deaths, Tim seeks seven people who need help. His idea of helping these individuals, whom he must first deem as "good" people, is to donate his organs to them after his suicide.

One person Tim seeks to help is Ezra Turner, a blind telemarketer at Cheyenne Meats who is in need of a cornea transplant. Tim calls the company to complain about a non-existent order so that he can test Ezra's goodness. While Ezra begins to look up the order, Tim discusses the bad quality of meat the company sells, particularly the pork, which Ezra says he has not tried himself since he's "not much of a meat-eater." Tim then asks why Ezra does not eat meat, and questions him about his faith ("Are you Jewish? Is that why you don't eat pork, Ezra?"). As Ezra attempts to get the order back on track, his computer's accessibility feature chimes in to say that there is no order under the pseudonym Tim gave him, Ben Thomas. When Tim figures out that the voice he heard was because Ezra is blind, he begins to berate him in order to provoke him into proving that he is not a good person.

Tim: Ezra, what was that voice?

Ezra: What voice?

Tim: Are you blind?

Ezra: Excuse me?

Tim: You're kidding me. A blind beef salesman who doesn't eat meat. Now, that... That is rich. That is rich. Have you ever had sex, Ezra?

Ezra: Did Lawrence in Accounting put you up to this?

Tim: Because somehow I can't imagine the blind, vegan beef salesman having sex.

Although Tim attempts to provoke Ezra into reacting negatively, he fails. Ezra holds back his emotions and continues to be polite until he hangs up.

This scene is interesting for Tim's choice of words and Ezra's emotional response to them. Tim's first question upon finding out that Ezra abstains from meat is if he is Jewish. His comment suggests that someone would only choose not to eat meat (or pork in this case) because of religious teachings, and not philosophical or ethical thought. Ezra avoids provocation with this question, despite being uncomfortable, by steering Tim back to the task at hand, after which Tim discovers that Ezra is blind. It is only once he knows that Ezra is blind that Tim calls Ezra a vegan, as opposed to a vegetarian – despite Ezra's never mentioning dairy.

During his tirade of bemoaning the blind, vegan salesman on the other end of the line, Tim spouts dialogue that demonstrates an emotional, feminized and even asexual perception of Ezra. In Johnson's research on "he-gans," she cites Donna Maurer who explains in her book, *Vegetarianism: Movement or Moment?,* how men who give up meat are perceived as feminine (10), a concept also shared by Adams (48). This is apparent in Ezra who is a male that refuses to eat meat, the symbol of health and virility, and who instead follows a diet traditionally attributed to women (Adams 17). Another male shuns Ezra since he buys into the dominant patriarchal idea that "meat is masculine," which is why Tim says he cannot imagine "the blind, vegan beef salesman having sex." Ezra has a physical reaction to the taunting by getting teary eyed while Tim yells at him. He begins to stutter and his voice trails until he finally hangs up the phone, his emotions getting the better of him. This emotional response is one perceived as feminine, which was a perspective Josephine Donovan fought against in her response to male animal rights activists Peter Singer and Tom Regan's hyper-rationalization of the animal rights

movement (45). Ezra withstands the worst of Tim's cruelty without getting aggressive in return.

A feminization of Ezra's character further ties him to the feminine realm, with actor Woody Harrelson's hair styled much longer in the beginning than in his final scene of the movie. He also sits during the phone call, and sits in another scene later on when Tim sees him at a diner. In both scenes, Tim is stands up by contrast, showing the difference in the power structure between the characters. Ezra has not lost the use of his legs, but seating him continues the trope that he is weak and powerless, presumably he is both because he does not consume meat and he is blind (Johnson 40).

One of the underlying subtexts of *Seven Pounds* is the idea of "consuming" flesh for survival, where the flesh represents Tim's organs. This subtext may have been lost to much of the film's audience, but it resonated with some. One reviewer said the film had a "strong vegetarian agenda," citing how Emily, Rosario Dawson's character, and her Great Dane are also vegetarians (but not vegans), and the prominence of the word "vegan" on a hospital chalkboard behind Will Smith (Toppman para 7). While these examples offer interesting insight into the film, it is most important to note how both the vegan and vegetarian characters "consume" Tim's organs to stay alive; Ezra is given Tim's eyes, and Emily receives his heart. In the film's last scene, Ezra is in a suit, hair cropped short, and we finally see him standing. One assumes his transformation is because of the new eyes from which he sees the world – flesh that he had to accept into his body before being able to restore his vitality and power. This is yet another affirmation that the consumption of flesh is an indicator of health and strength, a myth that continually perpetuated in a patriarchal culture (Johnson 16).

3. *Scott Pilgrim Versus the World* (2010)

In the graphic novel-inspired film of the same name, the bassist of a garage rock band, Scott Pilgrim, falls for the eccentric Ramona Flowers. In order to win Ramona, he must vanquish all seven of her evil ex-boyfriends. The film then follows Scott as he attempts to defeat each evil ex one by one, with video game-style fight scenes featuring one-ups, coins, and special weapons. The vegan character in this film is ex-boyfriend number three, Todd Ingram, who now dates Scott's ex-girlfriend, Envy, and plays bass in her band.

While Todd and Ramona dated, he went off to a vegan academy and over time, developed vegan superpowers, namely the power to move people and objects with his mind. When Scott finally meets Todd, he encounters a good-looking, but pretentious man. Todd offends Scott with an insult about there being nothing to do in Toronto, Scott's hometown. Scott throws down his fists in a fury, but Todd responds by lifting Scott up in the air with his telekinetic superpower. Todd's eyes ignite with a bright white light, and as he suspends Scott by the neck in the air, Envy says, "Didn't you know? Todd's vegan."

Todd uses his power to knock Scott through a brick wall, temporarily subduing Scott as he assesses his vegan opponent. As Todd walks over to where Scott lies, the following dialogue ensues:

Todd: It's not that big of a deal.

Scott: No kidding. Anyone can be vegan.

Todd: Ovo-lacto vegetarian maybe.

Scott: Ovo what?

Todd: I partake in none of the meat, or the breastmilk, nor the ovum of any creature with a face.

Envy: Short answer – being vegan just makes you better than everyone else.

Todd flings Scott into the night sky with telekinesis, and as they wait for him to return to the ground, Scott's friends mockingly ask how not eating dairy gives one superpowers. Todd gives the inane answer, "You know how you only use ten percent of your brain? Well, it's because the other ninety percent is filled up with curds and whey."

When Scott lands back on the ground, he challenges Todd to a bass off, which Todd easily wins. Scott offers a truce of a "fair trade blend with soymilk" which Todd accepts, only to find out that Scott poured Half & Half into his drink. The scene ends when two uniformed officers known as the Vegan Police reprimand Todd for "veganity violations" that include his sip of coffee tainted with Half & Half, and two other occasions where Todd broke his vegan diet by eating gelato and chicken parmesan. He becomes powerless by the Vegan Police with a "deveganizing ray" that removes his telekinesis.

In a reversal of what the previous two vegan male characters studied depict, Todd stands apart for being vegan, possessing extreme physical prowess, and being unquestionably heterosexual. His superpower derives from his plant-based diet, and takes on in mythic proportions. The myth of a super vegan takes shape in the way he handles Scott telekinetically, in his super strength when punching a hole in the moon for Ramona during the time they dated, and by easily out-bassing Scott during their bass-off. What these superpowers stand for are exaggerations of the health benefits of veganism. Todd represents a virile, powerful man who maintains full control over a foe through the

benefits of his vegan diet. The only time he shows weakness is after consuming dairy and losing his powers as punishment.

Todd's extreme powers contrast sharply with the weak, feminizing characteristics usually attributed to followers of a plant-based diet (Johnson 17). This is likely overcompensation because he is a male character following a diet seen as feminizing; he retains masculine qualities of strength in order to identify as male in a patriarchal society. Todd also challenges the pacifism expected of vegans by engaging in a fight with Scott. Despite his veganism, Todd is another example of hegemonic masculinity in his displays of power and domination (Johnson 11). That he has repeatedly broken his vegan diet ties him even further to hegemonic masculinity because he could not remain vegan.

All three films show how the commercial media depict the continuum of non-meat-eaters, demonstrating how the gendering of food implicates vegans on screen through feminizing qualities. Two clearly feminized male display over-sentimentality, just like the lone vegan woman depicted, and feminine attributes. In the case of the strong vegan male character, the implication is that veganism is an insufficient diet.

Although the rise of vegans on film is promising, they have so far only been limited to minor supporting roles and are still largely a rarity. However, merely establishing a presence of vegans, as seen in the films analyzed above, in the last decade shows an acceptance of veganism that has earned this movement a place on screen that did not exist in the years prior. Where the depictions are troubling are in the mental health implications of *Year of the Dog*, feminizing the masculine followers of veganism as *Year of the Dog* and *Seven Pounds* did, and overcompensating in feats of strength for a perceived lack of masculinity in *Scott Pilgrim*.

B. Horror Films

In *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, Adams explains how Western cultures elide the actual violence involved in creating meat, separating consumers from "the action of fragmentation, the killing, and the dividing" of animals, thus forcing our minds to change the way we think of animals as it "move[s] from objectified being to consumable food" (49). She explains that because Western culture is a patriarchal culture, it surrounds actual butchering with silence, and gives an example of how slaughterhouses cloistering, so we "do not see or hear what transpires there." It is interesting then to note how we protect one aspect of everyday cultural practice, the slaughtering of animals, from our eyes and ears while blatantly displaying images of raped and butchered women onscreen in slasher and horror films.

This part of the film analysis parallels Adams feminist-vegetarian theory with that of Carol Clover's "final girl" trope and Mulvey's "male gaze," intertwining for the first time feminist film theory, and feminist-vegetarian theory with the following studies of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* franchise, in which the first and the most recent film in the franchise are studied.

1. *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974)

The Texas Chainsaw Massacre premiered in 1974, beginning what would become a successful franchise extending beyond its several prequels and sequels, and into video game and comic book territory, thus entrenching it in popular culture through various mediums. It would also serve as one of Carol Clover's prime examples of a slasher movie with a "final girl" trope, which is now a staple of feminist film theory.

The study of this film as a pro-vegetarian text is a recent occurrence. In 2013, film critic and video essayist Rob Ager shared an analysis from an animal rights perspective on YouTube, noting how Leatherface squeals like a pig throughout the movie and wears another human's face as "The human activity of wearing animal skins is here reversed – a pig-like executioner wears human skin." Forrest Wickam of *Slate* expands on Ager's video in his own analysis of the film, and asks, "Why haven't more people written about this theme in the film? It's not as if the movie hasn't been the subject of close analysis. And once you begin to see the theme it is about as subtle as Leatherface's sledgehammer." Both perspectives offer an oppositional reading to the traditional readings of this film.

The analysis that follows expands on this oppositional view with insights into further symbolic references of a pro-vegetarian message missed by Ager and Wickman. In addition, my analysis ties these references to feminist-vegetarian critical theory, namely through the discussion of fragmentation, consumption, women as emotional, and the film's emphasis on the morality of meat-eating.

From the start of the film, fragmentation is evident. The first images after the cautionary message in the introduction are close ups of human body parts, the spoils of grave robbing. The sound and visual effects imply that a camera and its flash are at work documenting these random body parts. This brings to mind Adams's idea of the camera lens as a component of metaphorical butchering, where the lens replaces the knife in committing implemental violence (58). The butchering, in this case, occurs with the deceased humans. Two violations occur on the flesh of the human corpses; the first violation is of consumption, and the second of objectification.

The opening shot of the film is of a dead animal on the side of the road, followed by a pan of the camera to the van driving with this film's victims: Sally, the Final Girl, her paraplegic brother Franklin, and her friends Pam, Jerry and Kirk. All of them are heading over to the final resting place of Sally's grandfather to investigate these reports of grave robbing and missing corpses. This opening scene and its dialogue sets up the trope of butchery after the van drives past a slaughterhouse; this slaughterhouse is the common denominator for all the characters and scenes to follow.

Interestingly, the fact that this film begins with grave robbing and a slaughterhouse ties it back the Romantic era of literature to Frankenstein's monster, created by vegetarian Mary Shelley. While it was common for Romantic-era novelists to write about grave robbing, Adam writes, Shelley's Victor Frankenstein "makes forays to the slaughterhouse as well" (117). This move towards making the creature out of leftover bits from a slaughterhouse makes him herbivorous since only herbivorous animals face slaughter. Thus the slaughterhouse and graves serve as a sort of "rape" of human and non-human animal flesh in both stories, aligning with a pro-vegetarian message. Frankenstein's creature eats berries and roots, but is "a Being who, like the animals eaten for meat, finds itself excluded from the moral circle of humanity," which is symbolic of the exclusion of vegetarian thought in a meat-eating patriarchal society. The film's cannibals, too, exclude themselves by their meat consumption practices from the moral circle of humanity for consuming other humans. The parallel of a slaughterhouse and practitioners of cannibalism tied to the slaughterhouse could be intentional, perhaps to make audiences question the morality of meat eating. Ultimately, what both stories share is that cannibalism and vegetarianism, though completely different from a moral

standpoint, are ostracizing in Western societies since they do not align with traditional meat-eating practices. Yet one attempts to preserve sentient life while the other destroys it.

After driving past the slaughterhouse and noticing the stench in the air surrounding the building, Franklin describes in graphic detail the process of slaughtering animals. His explanation of the "sledgehammer to the head" slaughtering method is an important one, which prompts Pam to say, "People shouldn't kill animals for food." Franklin assures her that they do not use sledgehammers anymore and demonstrates how the more humane air gun functions as Sally pleads, "Franklin, I like meat. Please change the subject," to which Pam looks at her friend and says "Sally, that's terrible. It's still going on." Pam's reprimand of Sally calls into question the morality of meat eating.

The group of friends picks up a hitchhiker who reminds Franklin of Dracula. He shares that his family worked at the slaughterhouse, and Franklin sarcastically says he comes from "a whole family of Draculas." Franklin asks the hitchhiker if he ever went to the slaughter room to see the air gun in action, but the hitchhiker is dismissive of the air gun, saying that the "old way" of butchering with the sledgehammer made the animals "die better."

This scene, still in the first minutes of the film, again raises the issue of morality by questioning slaughtering practices. While Franklin favors what he perceives to be the more humane approach, an air gun, the hitchhiker insists that the force of a sledgehammer to the head is better due to what we can presume is greater animal suffering. We can tell that the hitchhiker enjoys grisly deaths because he proudly shares Polaroids of a dead cow to Franklin, and mentions that he killed it. The photos signify

that this character harbors fetishism with animal suffering, blood, and death. Furthermore, he continues the graphic conversation of animal slaughter by sharing how leftover animal parts can create an edible jelly when boiled. After a clearly disturbed Pam asks them to talk about something else, Franklin replies, "You'd probably like it if you didn't know what was in it." Franklin's comment highlights what the meat industry wants people to think, which is not to think. The less you known about slaughtering practices, the more enjoyment the product of slaughter can bring.

The film's next reference to slaughter occurs when Pam and Kirk run off from the rest of the group to find a watering hole that has already dried up. From the watering hole, they venture to a house nearby, drawn by the sounds of a gas-powered generator, to see if anyone can offer them gas for their empty gas tank. Kirk steps up to the house to knock, and Pam sits on a swing in front of the house to wait. After calling out and knocking, Kirk finally enters the house, curious to explore the sound of pig-like squeals and grunts from the inside; this is when we first meet the film's killer, Leatherface, who wears another human's face as a mask, and a butcher's apron. Kirk barely has time to react before Leatherface dramatically bashes him over the head with a sledgehammer, making Kirk fall to the floor and writhe while dripping in blood, after which Leatherface closes a metal door, resembling one at a slaughterhouse, which ends the scene. The sledgehammer used to kill Kirk is a direct link to the hitchhiker at the start of the film, whom we later discover is Leatherface's brother.

Kirk's death is as Clover noted in *Her Body, Himself:* "The death of a male is always swift; even if the victim grasps what is happening to him, he has no time to react or register terror. He is dispatched and the camera moves on" (105). Indeed, the camera

moves on to Pam, and stays much longer with her, as she investigates why Kirk has taken so long to come out. Once inside the house, she hears the sound of flapping wings and falls into a room littered with feathers, and the bones of humans and animals. The remnants of human and animal bodies entwine in this scene, linking them to their flesh-eating murderers. In the middle of the room hanging from the ceiling is the source of the flapping wings – a live chicken, swinging from its cage. The chicken and Pam, like the human and animal bones on the ground, are the animal and human that are symbolically linked to an animal rights message. The chicken's cage is too small for the bird, contributing to a sense of panic and claustrophobia that Pam exhibits as the scene plays out. Her breathing turns panicked and for quite some time, she stumbles around the room, turning towards furniture made from human bones and a skull with bull horns jammed into its mouth, another symbol of the consumption of animals by humans. Pam finally gets sick and runs off into the hallway towards the front door where Leatherface finds her.

Pam, as a woman, faces a death that is prolonged and anguish, an aspect of slasher films Clover also addressed: "The murders of women … are filmed at closer range, in more graphic detail, and at a greater length" (105). Pam's death is implied and not depicted. She is first tortured with a hanging meat cleaver, where she hangs in the house's slaughterhouse room. While she screams in agony (which sounds remarkably sexual in nature), Leatherface begins to butcher Kirk with the film's iconic chainsaw as Pam is forced to watch. After the butchering, he stuffs her into a freezer, presumably to keep her meat "fresh." What is notable about Pam's death from a vegan perspective is that she was the only character who made the comment that people should not eat

animals. No matter how disgusted the others may have been during the slaughterhouse conversation at the beginning of the film, Pam's was the lone voice to say anything against the practice of eating meat, while Sally insisted that she liked it but wanted to remain ignorant of slaughter practices. Pam's comment thus aligns her with animal rights opinions, which according to Adams is "equated with sentimentality, childish emotions, or 'Bambi-morality'"— a point of view that must be "muted" in a patriarchal society of flesh eaters: "To assert that someone other than oneself has rights is not sentimental. Not that it would be the gravest of sins if it were. 'Sentimentalist' is the abuse with which people counter the accusation that they are cruel" (Brophy qtd in Adams 78).

Identifying vegans and vegetarians as emotional relegates them from omnivores, and is "how the dominant culture attempts to deflect critical discourse" (79). Being emotional is also an attribute commonly associated with femininity more so than masculinity. This deflection is evident in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* through Pam's character. Even though her sentiment on killing animals is brief, she fits the "emotional" profile described above. Her sentimentality reveals itself when she says we should not kill animals, and when she sits on the swing in front of the house after Kirk gives her a human tooth he finds on the porch. Instead of joining Kirk to keep knocking and asking for help, she displays childlike emotional characteristics by pouting and running off to the swing. Jerry reaffirms her childishness when he goes after his friends. As he approaches the house, he hears sounds coming from inside which he thinks is Pam playing with him. Jerry then finds the slaughter room and, in a macabre version of hide and seek, discovers that the sound of what he thought was Pam playing a game is actually of Pam pounding to be let out from inside of the freezer. Like Kirk, Jerry dies quickly with a swift

sledgehammer swing to the temple, and Leatherface shoves Pam back into the freezer, where we no longer hear or see her again, thereby silencing the lone voice for vegetarianism. It is not coincidence that a butcher does the silencing.

The next killing happens to Franklin as he and Sally set off to find their missing friends in the darkness of rural Texas. He, too, is disposed of, but instead of a sledgehammer, Leatherface employs his infamous chainsaw, prolonging Franklin's death just a little longer than Kirk and Jerry. Sally makes a dramatic run for the woods where Leatherface chases her in a suspenseful scene that resembles a hunt. After being chased into his house and escaping, Sally seemingly loses Leatherface once she reaches the gas station she and her friends had stopped at earlier. The gas station attendant comforts her and there gives her solace by saying he will take her to file a police report, and leaves the room to get his truck. What happens next solidifies the meat-eating tropes of the film. Sally waits in a room with sizzling meats on a grill. Close ups and slow camera pans frame the meat, with the sound of the sizzle dramatically upturned. The attendant returns with his truck only to surprise Sally by pulling out rope and beating her senseless to the ground, where she is then bound and bagged like an animal. He ties Sally up in the same house where all of her friends died, and they present her to the ultimate patriarchal figure: The grandfather of Leatherface and the hitchhiker, who proclaim him "the best [slaughterhouse] killer there ever was."

The return to the house is one of the most interesting scenes from a gender perspective. First, Leatherface wears a wig and swaps the butcher's apron for a kitchen apron. He works in the kitchen to prepare supper, and his father, the gas station attendant, yells at him with a stick in his hand. The domestic scene recalls a husband abusing his

wife. When asked if anyone got away, Leatherface answers no and obediently points to Franklin's wheelchair against a wall, the freezer that imprisons Pam, and the meat on the kitchen counter. Leatherface thus shifts from a male killer who is in control to a powerless, feminized laborer of the house. It is as Clover wrote of the male slasher, "his masculinity is severely qualified: he ranges from the virginal or sexually inert to the transvestite or transsexual…" (114).

When they place the ancient grandfather beside Sally, her finger is cut and he feeds on her blood until she loses consciousness. The grandfather's affinity for blood goes back to earlier in the film when Franklin mentioned that he thought the hitchhiker and his family sounded like Draculas. The consumption of Sally's blood also recalls the Zeus and Metis metaphor for the consumption of a female by a male as the ultimate symbol of sexual desire, one punctuated by dinner in which meats and sausage, the consumption of which signifies virility, served. This idea carries new meaning when assuming the meat on the table is one of her friends.

With the amount of imagery, sound effects, and dialogue that suggests an animal rights message as explored by Ager, Wickman, and this analysis, it is surprising that only recently is *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* described as a pro-vegetarian film. There is no mistaking the fact that this film's subtext is vegetarian. When asked by *Bizarre Magazine* in 2010 if he created a pro-vegetarian film, writer and director Tobe Hooper said, "I gave up meat while making that film. In a way I thought the heart of the film was about meat; it's about the chain of life and killing sentient beings, and it has cannibalism in it, although you have to come to that conclusion by yourself because it's only implied" (Waddell para 10). Even with this revelation by the filmmaker, the nascence of the

discussion from an animal rights perspective shows how for almost 40 years, critics and audiences have largely ignored this message and its implications. However, the two critical pieces from Ager and Wickman addressing this subtext are a move in a new direction for the animal rights and vegan movements. Online comments left on Ager's YouTube video support this oppositional reading, with many citing the director's *Bizarre* interview as proof that the film has an anti-meat message.

2. *Texas Chainsaw* (2013)

The seventh installment in the *Texas Chainsaw* franchise continues the tropes established by the first film, paralleling many scenes from the first movie, except this time the final girl, Heather, expresses an agency much different from Sally's. The film's opening scene is a flashback of the Sawyer house, where the cannibalizing slaughterhouse workers and Leatherface live. The Sawyers had an infant daughter in their midst when the locals gathered around to burn the house after learning of their cannibalizing tendencies. The infant is Heather, an orphan adopted by a couple of the townspeople who burn the Sawyer house down with nearly everyone in it. Her relationship to the butchering Sawyer family is why her agency differs from Sally's in the first film: Heather is one of the Sawyers and not your ordinary girl. Heather is immediately in a position of power within her first scene, where she is carefully butchering meat at the grocery store she works in. Once home, we see a collection of animal bones on a table, which she picks up and uses to put together a piece of art she is constructing. Her comfort with animal parts is what immediately sets her apart from the first film's protagonist.

Upon discovering that she has inherited an estate in Texas from a grandmother she has never met, Heather has to go down to Texas on Halloween to claim her property. Her friends decide to join, with one chiming in that he heard they have great barbecue in Texas. Like the first film, they pick up a hitchhiker, Darryl, except he is the first to die after discovering Leatherface's lair in the estate's wine cellar while the group is in town for food and supplies. His death is like those of Kirk and Jerry – he is swiftly bludgeoned with a sledgehammer. While in town, both women, Heather and Nikki, are ogled by the local men, including the mayor, in a scene which clearly employs the male gaze to objectify the only two female characters, making them the "pieces of meat" to consume visually.

After discovering that Darryl is missing and believing he robbed Heather, her friend Kenny sets up an outdoor barbecue, with close ups of the sizzling meats recalling a similar scene at the gas station from the first film, and foreshadowing the death of Kenny. While in the kitchen preparing dinner, he discovers a hidden door by the pantry that leads to a wine cellar where Leatherface now lives. He is immediately bludgeoned, with a meat cleaver this time instead of a sledgehammer, and dragged away. Heather is made to watch Kenny die as Leatherface chops him in half while he hangs on a meat cleaver, giving her the chance to escape.

In keeping with the first film and the deaths of men in horror films in general, Darryl, Kenny, and Heather's boyfriend, Ryan, all share quick deaths. Heather and Nikki, however, suffer the most as the two who stay alive the longest. Leatherface stuffs Nikki into a freezer, while Heather runs away to find police protection, where she discovers that

the mayor and other members of the Newt community, including her adopted mother and father, burned down and killed her biological family.

The film's climax takes place in the slaughterhouse the Sawyers used to work in, where the mayor's son binds and gags Heather. It is here that Leatherface catches up to Heather whom he plans to kill, only to discover that she is his cousin. He cuts down her ropes with his chainsaw, and Heather narrowly escapes as the mayor and his crony overpower Leatherface, knocking down his phallic chainsaw and rendering him powerless. Heather hears them beating her cousin as she runs away, and turns back around to help him. As Leatherface is beaten and dragged closer and closer to a meat grinder, Heather interrupts, distracting the mayor for a long enough time to pick up the chainsaw, throw it at Leatherface and prompt him to "Do your thing, cous." Together, the cousins eliminate the mayor, whose death by meat grinder is one of the most gruesome. Heather and Leatherface return home, where she finally reads her grandmother's letter detailing how to care for her only remaining special needs cousin. With all her friends dead and having discovered her family and a new home in Texas, Heather decides to embrace her roots as a Sawyer and stays with Leatherface, whose name we learn is Jedidiah.

Heather's agency may be more prevalent in this film than for Sally in the first, but its ending relegates her back to the traditional norms expected of women in a patriarchal society. She accepts her role as her cousin's caretaker and in her first scene alone with Jedidiah after all the deaths are over, she embodies a motherly sentiment as she carefully wipes blood from his face and attempts to remove his mask, which he denies her. Early in the film while driving to Texas, she makes the comment that "Family is family" after

having learned of her biological family, so we understand that familial ties are important to Heather. She assumes the role of housekeeper and guardian to Leatherface – a stranger to her whose only objective prior to the slaughterhouse scene had been to kill her – without question and gets to work around the house almost immediately, starting by taking Leatherface's dishes from his lair for cleaning. Heather puts his needs before her own, and in the end, he rewards her. The final "scare" after the film's credits have Heather's adoptive parents eagerly ringing the bell as they absorb the grand estate and discuss how much money she must have now. Leatherface meets her greedy adoptive parents at the door with his chainsaw, and he presumably kills both as the scene fades to black accompanied by the sound of his chainsaw.

What a study of both films from the same franchise made almost 40 years apart reveals is different treatments of the animal rights message due to production and distribution histories, and the static nature of patriarchy. The first film demonstrates the directorial freedom to explore a vegan subtext, which an independent film medium allows, while the last film shows a reluctance to undergo similar exploration due to its commercial film status. Tobe Hooper produced *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* with a small budget and a crew of university students (Shred para 2), which was later distributed by Bryanstone pictures. This gave the director more freedom to explore a subject as taboo as cannibalism with a vegan subtext. By comparison, *Texas Chainsaw* had a 3D release and a multi-million dollar budget. The production qualities of the latest installment muted any vegan or animal rights subtext from the film; however, there are counter-hegemonic subtexts of the film that give rise to feminist readings. Animal rights take a backseat in favor of a message centered on the patriarchal family. Emphasis of the slaughterhouse as

a center for animal suffering does not happen; it is instead the setting where justice occurs. The relatively quick deaths of male characters remain the same as the first film, with particular brutality enacted on the mayor who rallied the locals to burn down Leatherface's family home. Even though Heather exercises more control in her fate than Sally, both female protagonists need the help of men in the end for their rescue; Sally hitches a ride in the back of a random male driver's pickup truck to escape Leatherface, and Heather's cousin frees, maintaining the slasher film norm of female helplessness. Lastly, the male gaze is prevalent in both films where all female characters are objects to the male spectator, evident by the gaze that fetishizes their bodies. Sally and Pam's bottoms are given excessive close ups in the first film, and Nikki's breasts are on display from her first to final scene, later to be replaced by Heather's breasts when she dies. In forty years, it is interesting to see how much has remained the same within one film franchise, thus perpetuating the gendered tropes of the horror film.

Insofar as how these texts implicate veganism, we again see women, the symbolically weak "vegetables" of the cinema, depicted as less powerful than men, symbolically shown with meat imagery, who are present in the first film as the cannibalistic family with the patriarch, and in the second as the figures of authority in the town. Similar to the fast food ads, Pam, Sally, Nikki, and Heather are all objects of fetishism, with their "femaleness" on exhibit as fragmented rumps and breasts that recall the meat and milk products of their non-human animal counterparts.

III. Television Analysis

Televised cooking has come a long way since it first began locally produced

daytime programming that targeted women (Collins para 2). Entertainment with a focus on food preparation and cooking now permeates cable and broadcast television networks with a wide range of shows to suit every taste. Competitive and instructional cooking shows from broadcast and cable networks are explored in this section for masculine and feminine tropes that reflect gendered associations with food that implicate veganism. This analysis is as an expansion of Rebecca Swenson's research in "Domestic Divo? Televised Treatments of Masculinity, Femininity and Food."

A. Competitive Cooking Shows

A study of the televised phenomenon of the "kitchen as stadium" (Swenson 36) is in this section as I analyze food shows with a competitive focus that feature vegetarian and vegan cooks or bakers. Swenson's exploration on the gendering of food with these two segments of modern cooking shows guides this part of the analysis.

With the competitive cooking shows analyzed, each one demonstrates how televised cooking contests "place cooking firmly in the public sphere and promote a version of masculinity tied to hierarchy, success, power, speed, and stamina" while countering "constructions of cooking as nurturing, democratic and family-centered labor" (49-50). The main object for the shows' competitors is to win, and in the case of each vegetarian or vegan contestant, the running thread in their desire to win is to also validate that plant-based cooking is worthy of winning.

One of the most basic formats for a cooking competition is The Food Network's *Chopped*, which premiered in 2009. The show bills itself as a competition "about skill, speed and ingenuity" where four chefs "compete before a panel of expert judges and turn baskets of mystery ingredients into an extraordinary three-course meal" ("Chopped").

Four years after the show began airing, its first vegan chef, Philadelphia-based chef Rich Landau, won in 2013 (S15E12). As Swenson observed "competitive contests place cooking firmly in the public sphere" thus promoting hegemonic masculinity. Landau's participation is no exception, but his veganism presents an interesting challenge to this form of hegemony.

In the show's introduction to Landau, he says he wants to show how delicious food without meat can be – a desire shared in all the vegan and vegetarian competitors profiled in this analysis. As a show with various mystery ingredients, many of which include meat or animal product, this episode of *Chopped* exclusively featured vegetarian mystery ingredients, but it did not promote itself as such. Instead, the contestants make the connection by noting how the mystery ingredients are plant based. The show's only female contestant bemoans that fact when she shared how she focused on improving her butchering techniques in preparation for the show. In the last round of the show in which the chefs must create a dessert, Landau faces with an ethical dilemma. One of the final ingredients he must use in his dessert dish is honey, an ingredient that constitutes an animal byproduct that goes against his veganism. He must choose whether to use the honey, thereby creating a non-vegan dish that goes against his personal ethos, or not using it and facing possible disqualification. In the end, the win is more important to him and he uses the honey, finally becoming the show's first vegan winner. However, this is questionable. Is he still successful when he compromised his values by using an animal product? Vegans who left commentary in response an article on Landau's win expressed both oppositional and negotiated readings ("Vegan Chef Wins Food Network's *Chopped* Competition"). Several users asserted that vegans do not use honey, so he should have

"stood for his beliefs" and been "a voice for the bees" (Jane V. Moffat). Viewers with a negotiated reading reconciled his decision by saying "there are worse things in the world" (Adeelah Haleedah) and one made the point that "considering all the hacking of animals they do on that show, using honey would be the least offensive" (Shirley Young Jackson). One vegan user also accepted the use of honey by mentioning how much of the $10,000 prize money went to an animal shelter (Shiftless Aderes).

Landau's win counters hegemonic masculinity while still operating within its constructs through the cooking-competition-as-sport framework that Swenson analyzed. That a male vegan – whose values and beliefs align against hegemonic masculinity – wins a show structured in support of hegemonic masculinity shows an evolution of the acceptance of veganism within a patriarchal hegemony (Swenson 49).

Following the success of *Chopped*, The Food Network's *Cupcake Wars* premiered one year later in 2010 with a similar format, where "four of the country's top cupcake bakers face off in three elimination challenges until only one decorator remains," with the eliminations being decided on by a panel of three judges ("Cupcake Wars"). The contestants create cupcakes, usually using unconventional ingredients, for a chance to win $10,000 and the opportunity to have their cupcakes featured at a high-profile event. The show has had three episodes in its nine-season run that have exclusively showcased vegan bakers, but during its first season a vegan baker competing with non-vegan bakers won on the show (S01E03).

Chef Chloe Coscarelli, graduate of Cornell University's Plant-Based Nutrition program based on Dr. T. Colin Campbell's *The China Study* (chefchloecoscarelli.com), was the first vegan ever featured on a Food Network competition and the first vegan to

win. In her *Cupcake Wars* debut, she understands that her vegan cupcakes are a "huge risk" based on the misconception people have about how vegan cupcakes "look like cardboard." During the presentation of the first round of cupcakes, she discloses to the judges that her cupcakes are vegan. The first judge to respond is Candace Nelson, proprietor of the world's first cupcake bakery, Sprinkles Cupcakes, and its popular cupcake-dispensing ATM ("Sprinkles Cupcake ATM Beverly Hills"). Her critique starts negatively, with her expressing worry at hearing that the cupcake was completely vegan since, "as far as I'm concerned, butter should be an ingredient." However, she follows this up by saying, "But I felt completely indulged by eating this cupcake." Interestingly, the other two judges do not comment on the vegan nature of the cupcake, and both use the adjective "perfect" to describe it.

Even with Coscarelli's win, it was not until the show's fourth season that a competition solely with vegan bakers would premiere (WS0413). Other competitions featuring only vegan chefs would again surface in season eight (WS0809H) and season nine (WS0908H). In each of these competitions, the most obvious gendered occurrence is that each of the vegan contestants is female. While *Cupcake Wars* generally skews towards having more female than male contestants, this is most evident in the vegan competitions. There has, to date, never been a male vegan contestant on *Cupcake Wars*. With this is mind, the show appears to follow the same construct of hegemonic masculinity of the competition format. However, the presence of all female contestants challenges this idea. While invited to participate in "the public sport of cooking and the performance of hegemonic masculinity" (Swenson 50), they also counter this concept by following a lifestyle that goes against the norms associated with hegemonic masculinity.

America's best home cooks comprise the show *MasterChef* on FOX, a revival of a 1990's show that originally aired on the BBC. The latest iteration features celebrity chefs and restaurateurs Gordon Ramsay, Joe Bastianich (son of renowned chef Lidia Bastianich from public television), and Graham Elliot as the judges. The first season had no vegetarian or vegan contestants, but it came close with Sheetal Bhagat. One episode of the second season required the contestants to cook a live Dungeness crab, going against Bhagat's Hindu faith whose practitioners "don't believe in taking the life of an animal" (Episode 0108). She has a breakdown during the challenge, explaining to Ramsay that she has never killed anyone in her life. Ramsay tries to help by offering to kill it for her, to which she replies that she just needs to "grow up." In the end, she goes against her faith and kills the crab in boiling water. Despite her reservations about killing the crab, Bhagat manages to place in the top three for the challenge. While this scene is poignant from a vegan perspective, Bhagat is not a vegan or vegetarian, even though she grew up in a vegetarian home. In an interview with a local FOX affiliate in Chicago, Bhagat dispels the notion that she is a vegetarian, but show's editing made her out to be the "token Hindu chick" (Heinert).

Three more seasons passed with no vegetarian or vegan contestants on *MasterChef*, but in 2013 for season four, vegetarian contestant Bri Kozior made her debut. The other home cooks repeatedly underestimate Kozior throughout the season because of her vegetarianism – and at times, the panel of celebrity chefs does the same. One contestant, Krissi Biasiello, spewed more than enough vitriol about Bri's vegetarianism to fuel the main rivalry of the season. Biasiello's TV persona depicted her as a bully who frequently said Kozior was a weak cook because she was a vegetarian,

perpetuating the myth of vegetarians as weak (Johnson 17). After elimination midway through the season, Kozior goes back to the show to compete for a second chance in the competition – and wins. Her return to the show was supported by viewers, as Graham Elliot noted in a Q&A with SheKnows.com, "A million people wanted her to come back, so they're all excited" (Sprankles para 35). Although Kozior did not make it to the final round of challenges, her rivalry with Biasiello based on her being a vegetarian made her a much talked about figure in the blogosphere and on social media. While the show aired, a popular rumor circulated the Internet, which speculated that Kozier was season four's "ringer." This implies a dominant reading denying the possibility of a vegetarian winner. Bloggers and readers speculated that Kozier was a hired actress who was not really a vegetarian.

MasterChef may have featured a vegetarian contestant, but their absence in the show's first years is telling. While the moral dilemma of killing an animal for food was explored in the first season through Bhagat's emotional reaction at having to kill a crab, the outcome is disconcerting as one individual compromises deep-seeded beliefs in order to win, which is not unusual when we take into account *Chopped*'s first vegan winner's decision. Bhagat's TV persona, as a suggested vegetarian, leaves the door open for misinterpretation, and ties religious beliefs with the moral question of animal suffering that also aligns with veganism. Her response to the challenge is emotional enough to make audiences believe that it must stem from her being vegetarian as part of her Hindu culture; it also serves to support the perception that vegetarians are perceived as overly emotional and sentimental (Adams 78, Donovan 45). The misinterpretation of her as a vegetarian due to the show's editing tactics resulted in having to correct her FOX affiliate

interviewers who initially thought she was a vegetarian, despite the fact that she cooked with the same meats as her fellow season one contestants. Meanwhile, the self-identified vegetarian, Kozior, also cooked with the same meats as her contestant colleagues, and faced the same dilemma of having to kill her main ingredient, which was again a live Dungeness crab. Kozier displays emotional reactions to the animals she has to cook during the show, albeit they are extreme reactions. In the season's sixth episode, the cooks must cook with the head of a pig, and Bri covers hers up with a towel while preparing the meal. Yet she tastes her dishes all the same and manages to win several of the challenges, one of them being a wild mushroom-based dish that was wholly vegetarian (Episode 0115), before finally being defeated. Kozior also does not allow Biasiello to bully her; she stands up for herself without being overly aggressive, challenging the myth of weak and powerless vegetarians (Johnson 17). As the only vegetarian contestant so far, Kozior demonstrates that the stereotype expectations associated with women and followers of plant-based diets do not apply to her, thus possibly changing perceptions of vegetarians as weak, childish, and sentimental.

January 2013 saw the premier of ABC's *The Taste*, where a panel of four celebrity judges (who also act as mentors) conduct blind taste tests on themed dishes created by a variety of home cook contestants. One member of the panel is Anthony Bourdain, who is an outspoken critic of vegetarians and vegans, who he perceives to be by the "Hezbollah-like splinter faction" of vegetarians (Bourdain 70). In his book *Kitchen Confidential*, Bourdain describes vegetarians as the "enemy of everything good and decent in the human spirit, an affront to all I stand for, the pure enjoyment of food" (70).

As a judge, Bourdain continues his well-known disdain of vegetarians on *The Taste* as soon as he encounters them. In 2013's season one premiere, three vegan chefs are in the auditions process, all of whom are women. One woman's black bean "taste" at first confuses Nigella, to which Bourdain chimes in with "I suspect vegetarianism." The vegan chef, Dayna McLeod, then steps out to defend her dish, explaining that it is entirely plant-based. She is quickly shot down from joining the judges' teams, with the dialogue between her and Bourdain lingering the longest as he tells her that the dish could have "greatly benefited" from having an animal protein. The final judge also decides not to have a vegan on his team since he is a meat eater and needs meat cooks in his team. In this same show, Bourdain adamantly reiterates his antipathy for vegans and vegetarians, and says that he would never select a non-meat-eating chef, a sentiment that remained consistent in season two.

In one moment of the auditions phase during the show's second season premiere, the judges have a taste of a vegan cupcake created by vegetarian chef Cassandra Bodzak. As she prepares her taste, she relates her understanding of how Bourdain feels about vegans and expresses a desire to open his eyes to "vegan being delicious." The judges taste her food and spend time mulling over the texture, flavor, and lack of fat in the pastry. Judge Marcus Samuelsson's critique includes the comment "At least it's not dry" to which Bourdain retorts, "You're talking like I just came up to you with an amputated arm, squirting blood all over the stage and you're saying 'At least it's not cancer!'" Upon finding out that Bodzak's taste was vegan, Bourdain dismisses the chef from having the opportunity to be on his team with the sentiment, "We're here to live, to love, to die with rich, fatty delicious food. I'm deeply prejudiced against pastries, baked goods, desserts,

vegans and healthy stuff. Not for me." Unlike season one, however, the final judge to decide, French celebrity chef Ludo Lefebvre, says he does not mind that Bodzak is vegan and decides to take a "risk" by adding her to his team. Judge Bourdain looks on with a shocked expression as Lefebvre defends his position by explaining that he is "tired of fat" and that it is a new world now. His decision makes Bodzak the series' first vegan chef eligible to continue the competition, and elicits an admonishment from Bourdain as he points an accusatory finger in Lefebvre's direction while saying, "J'accuse! Traitor to France!"

From one year to the next, we already see a transformation in the producers' decision to include a vegan chef that goes beyond the audition phase. But is this a positive move for vegans, or is it intended to antagonize vegans against a well-known anti-vegan? The answer is likely a mixture of both. On the positive side, Bodzak makes the cut with a French chef famous for his lamb racks and creating rich, indulgent animal-based dishes. In the fifth episode of season two, the chefs face a "Go Green" challenge where vegetarian dishes must be created, a challenge that was absent from the show's first season, and won by a contestant being mentored by Anthony Bourdain. Yet even with the inclusion of a vegan chef among the competitors, and the addition of a vegetarian challenge in this season, a positive portrayal of Bodzak is nonexistent, and she distances herself from being wholly vegan.

Negative associations begin with her father's interview for the season premiere. He refers to her as "kinda crazy" for taking "a cupcake against bacon, which is gonna be tough," and likens her bringing a vegan cupcake into the show like "bringing a knife to a gunfight." At one point in the series, her mentor has her try a piece of chicken. She is also

sexualized in the series as she and another male contestant appear to develop a close relationship on the show.

During her audition, Bodzak is almost apologetic in presenting a vegan entry, saying that she does not always cook vegan after hearing the judges' initial reactions. In an interview with Metro, Bodzak stresses the healthy aspect of her lifestyle choice, and not animal suffering:

> My main philosophy is that I want to make happy, healthy living attainable for anyone. … Even though a lot of my recipes are vegan and vegetarian, I don't believe in labeling. I probably eat 80 percent vegan and 20 percent of the time I'm more flexible with myself. (Prinz para 8)

In response to negative criticism from other vegans who expressed an oppositional reading to the episode where she ate chicken on the show, Bodzak says, "I do strongly believe in a lot of reasons why people are vegan, and I think vegan food is delicious. I just feel that I'll be able to help more people and inspire more people if I'm not so extremist."

Bodzak's reaction to the chefs on the show, and her interviews after the show are another manifestation of the hegemonic masculinity that is present in competitive cooking shows (Swenson 50). Her attitude in stressing the healthy aspect of her vegan cooking, instead of the animal exploitation, aligns with Johnson's findings. Generally, the word "healthy" ties to femininity. However, the discourse around "healthy eating" in male-centered vegan texts serves hegemonic masculinity by stressing sexual potency (43). Bodzak's stress on healthy eating, and the characterization of her as a sexualized competitor operating in a show constructed by hegemonic masculinity, supports this idea.

B. Instructional Cooking Shows

The following texts are explicitly vegan cooking shows that are educational and instructional in nature. All three hosts studied share vivacious personalities and dole out plant-based recipes created in the domestic setting of a home kitchen.

Christina Cooks and *The Jazzy Vegetarian* are both public television programs featuring the only vegan chefs for non-cable viewers. Both shows are similarly styled where female hosts Christina Pirello and Laura Theodore cook for the entirety of the show with their street clothes in a home kitchen setting. The production trait that Swenson observed as part of the Food Network's styling of their female hosts' cooking shows thus also applies to publicly funded cooking shows (43). However, the production similarities end.

Philadelphia-based Christina Pirello's main focus in *Christina Cooks* is to offer fresh, healthy recipes for healthier living, stemming from her own experience as a leukemia survivor who "beat cancer with the help of her healthy, macrobiotic diet" ("Christina Cooks"). This is an important distinction when compared to the vegan chefs that follow since nowhere on her website or on the shows analyzed is the word "vegan" ever used. However, she has written one book that does use the term, *This Crazy Vegan Life* (2008).

Her recipes cover a wide range of health topics, with episodes centering on obesity ("The Story of Obesity" #701), children's health ("Vegetarian Kids" #616), and skin care through proper diet ("Your Skin Makeover" #926). Although Pirello's objective is to share in her knowledge of macrobiotic food as the basis for a healthy lifestyle, her show still focuses on teaching to women viewers, as can be seen in the episodes centered

on children's health and men's health ("The Man Show" #607). Some of her shows also take viewers on musical interludes with singer/songwriter Jon Michaels who sings and plays guitar while she cooks ("Christina Cooks"). The musical segments seem disjointed and at times remove the viewer from the kitchen and put them in an entirely new setting with Pirello and Michaels, leading to a sense of awkwardness for viewers of the show:

> Anyone seen this show on the Create channel on PBS? She presents vegetarian and health oriented recipes, mixed with segments of singing by someone who seems like her lover. Her coarse manner, oddball recipes, mixed musical numbers, just doesn't seem to make me want to take her seriously at all.
>
> ([S]tratford, "Christina Cooks Show on PBS: An Odd Formula")

> [I]t is an odd show. [A]nd that guy isn't her husband, either. [T]he songs are an interruption to the cooking, and [I] just don't "get it." ([A]lkapal, "Christina Cooks Show on PBS: An Odd Formula")

Pirello had another eponymous public program based on her weekend macrobiotics cooking demonstrations. On her website, she describes the show with the following:

> From heart health to fitness to diabetes; from everyday meals to special occasion feasts; from cooking to facts and statistics to support all of the ideas presented in class; these episodes of *Christina* will inform and entertain like nothing I have done before. ("About My Show")

Indeed, *Christina* bears little similarity to any other cooking show with a female chef, vegan or not. Unlike the homey, studio kitchen used for *Christina Cooks*, the show

Christina has notable variants. Cameras are in the classroom for a live taping of her macrobiotic cooking demos, featuring students who paid to take the class. The students are encouraged to interact with Pirello and ask questions as she cooks. The classroom setting is close to the professional studio kitchen environment that is more common to male chefs like Emeril Lagasse (Swenson 50). Pirello is also dressed in professional chef's garb, again tying her to the professional realm of cooking that is more closely associated with male chefs. Since her focus is on the science behind her healthy recipes, Pirello aligns with the "science, business and professional training function" that serves to separate "the work done behind the stove by masculine hosts from that of 'women's work'" (Swenson 51). The show *Christin*a presents an interesting challenge to Swenson's findings since she is a woman, a vegan, and professionally portrayed. Yet some viewers of the show were turned off by the style and format of *Christina*, perhaps because of the challenge Pirello presents to the hegemony of meat-eating and masculinity.

In one thread on the website Television Without Pity, the subject of *Christina* was brought up by one user, and resulted in a string of interesting commentary in which users (most of whom were split between self-identified vegetarians and meat eaters) agreed that Pirello's style of hosting, healthy recipes, and even her chef's jacket made her a condescending TV personality:

> When I saw this title "Christina Condescends" I thought it was perfect!! ... I can't recall a cooking show where the host talked down to the audience as much as she does. … In this one she is in front of an audience and is wearing some sort of buttoned uniform top that reminds me of something a communist country's leader

would have worn in the 1960's. ([E]dmonds, “Christina Condescends, I Mean, Cooks”)

Another user, who identified as a meat eater, made several jabs at her appearance, focusing less on the food and more on Pirello as an object of to-be-looked-at-ness:

I have been watching this creature on Create and the more I watch her, the more she irritates me. First of all, she doesn't look healthy at all-please reintroduce your vegan self to the sun. Second, she is pretty chunky for her "healthy" diet. (PonzuSauce, “Christina Condescends, I Mean, Cooks”)

Comments such as these demonstrate both a dominant attitude of the hegemony revolving around meat-eating, and a patriarchal woman-as-object mentality, with commentary on Pirello’s appearance made by both men and women.

Musicality is also evident in the show *Jazzy Vegetarian* with host Laura Theodore. Throughout her show, as Theodore explains her recipes, theme songs for certain segments or a highlighted produce are interjected with Theodore singing the lyrics thus giving the show its name. *Jazzy Vegetarian* differs from *Christina Cooks* in two ways: First, Theodore makes it clear that she is cooking to entertain as opposed to focusing on the health of the family, as she expects guests at the end of the show. This supports Swenson’s observation that female chefs center on traditional gender roles involving the women’s work of entertaining through the labor of cooking (44). Second, Theodore mentions that her recipes are vegan more so than Christina, who instead focuses on the macrobiotic aspect of her cooking and positions herself as a macrobiotic chef instead of a vegan chef. Theodore makes no qualms about being associated as a vegetarian; however, it cannot go without notice that the show is not called *Jazzy Vegan,*

which is a more accurate description of the food she makes. By having "vegetarian" instead of "vegan" in the show's title, there is a sense of rejection of the term vegan, despite its accuracy to her style of food. For viewers of the show, the favorite public vegan chef is Theodore. Viewers perceive her as more "warm" and "non-judgmental" than Pirello, demonstrating a negotiated reading of her show. One user also expressed their approval of her use of readily accessible ingredients, as opposed to Pirello's hard-to-find ingredients that are only available at health stores:

> [Theodore] uses ingredients that are found in any well stocked grocery store…. like [P]ortobello mushrooms, walnuts, onions etc. not some hard to find sea vegetable that you have to look up to find out what it is. ... I learned more from watching the few shows of the *Jazzy Vegetarian* than I ever did watching all the versions of Christina Pirello's many shows. ("Vegetarian/ Vegan Cooking Shows")

In general, Pirello's show put off viewers from vegan cooking because it looked "unappetizing" and ingredients were considered strange and hard to find. Theodore, however, had a more positive response with viewers, but some considered her "cornier" than Pirello, which is likely due to the musical aspect of her show ("Christina Condescends, I Mean, Cooks").

So far, Swenson's concept of how women are framed in cooking shows for cable holds true for the two female vegan chefs that are featured in public programming, but her findings concerning male chefs are challenged with The Cooking Channel's *How to Live to 100* hosted by vegan chef Jason Wrobel. Whereas male chefs in Swenson's study were coded toward cooking as a way to "flex professional muscle" or cooking as

"leisurely entertainment" through meat cooking via grilling (41), *How to Live to 100* codes Wrobel as neither. Instead, the show focuses on the viewer's health by highlighting how dishes are low in calories, the nutritional benefits of the vitamins and minerals of each dish, and the convenience in making them—much like Pirello's take on vegan cooking. He speaks to audience with the general "you" pronoun and never mentions expecting company or preparing his dishes for anyone other than the general enjoyment of either himself or the gender-neutral audience. Wrobel cooks in a studio kitchen with his street clothes, without ever switching to an apron or chef's jacket, as Swenson observed the male hosts on the Food Network doing. However, Wrobel's masculinity asserts itself in other ways, namely the setting of his show. More masculine décor in the background offsets the softness of the domestic kitchen, such as circular cogs and mechanical parts, which supports to some extent the physical manifestation of the "science" aspect of male cooking that Swenson observed in The Food Network (44). It could also be argued that his focus on health is another aspect of "cooking as a science" where Wrobel's masculinity can be asserted.

Wrobel's hosting style uses humor – when making a tomatillo salsa, he uses a Spanish accent, and he frequently makes funny faces as he cooks – and an occasional reference to sports or strength. In one segment of his show, Wrobel makes a cashew cream dipping sauce and says that it is "more versatile than Lebron James, it can play any position in the kitchen" (Episode 0102). Yet even with these references, Wrobel also makes female-centered commentary, such as how one can become "skinnier than Victoria Beckham" with his recipes ("Curried Broccoli with Grilled Tempeh"). While Wrobel's humorous hosting style supports Swenson's analysis that male hosts position cooking as a

fun activity, the idea of cooking as a "temporary, and voluntary leisure activity" is challenged since his focus is on nutrition, health, and general well-being (45).

From the episode guide list on their website, only four episodes were produced in its first season, with 13 web-only videos featured, signifying the show's lack of success on the cable channel, leaving a void in vegan instructional cooking shows within the cable television medium. The Cooking Channel currently runs the four produced episodes by billing them as "specials" instead of episodes from a failed vegan cooking show ("How to Live to 100").

What is most noticeably absent for all of these cooking shows is the ethical aspect of vegan cooking. The three instructional cooking shows analyzed highlight the nutritional and health benefits of a plant-based diet, with some environmental and "green" tips added in, but not one makes a point to discuss animal welfare as part of their mission statement. Dishes that are low calorie, low cholesterol, and nutritious take center stage over the message of animal suffering. This may explain why most vegans join the movement as a health initiative before an ethical one; veganism as a healthy and prolonging lifestyle is the message that is predominantly available and perpetuated in popular texts, including explicitly vegan cooking shows.

This television analysis confirms Swenson's findings that "cooking is negotiated in ways that protect traditional understandings of masculinity and femininity." Both analyses illustrate how the female non-meat-eater stereotype continues to dominate on television, confirming the gendered trope of veganism in commercial media. Popular media texts continue to cast female vegans as contestants, and audiences seem to prefer non-threatening female vegans (i.e., women who do not show traditionally masculine-

associated cooking show traits) as hosts of cooking shows. Yet there are challenges to this norm that are present with competitive contestants such as *MasterChef*'s Bri Kozior, *Chopped*'s Rich Landau, and instructional cooking host Jason Wrobel from *How to Live to 100*.

The issues addressed in this analysis divulge information that illustrates interesting new developments in popular media. Potential disputes to some of the theory applied in the study hint at media texts that are slowly legitimizing plant-based lifestyles, if only to acknowledge them. At the same time, static results support existing theory, particularly where gender roles are concerned. More detail is in the next chapter, and additional texts provide further exploration.

CHAPTER THREE: CONCLUSIONS & FURTHER RESEARCH

In setting the course for this study, my initial research question asked, "How does the gendering of food in popular texts and everyday life cultural practices implicate veganism?" To answer the question of the gendering of food in modern popular media texts, I recall the Hillshire advertisement analysis here, and the studies of televised cooking shows. The film and television analyses are used to answer the next question of how the continuum of non-meat-eaters are depicted in media texts such as Hollywood films, popular competitive cooking shows, and instructional cooking shows that explicitly feature vegans. To conclude the implicit messaging of women's positioning in relation to meat in images where they consume meat or are the objects of imagery that fetishizes meat, I use both facets of the advertisement analysis (fast food and PETA ads), as well as the horror film analysis.

I. Conclusions on Advertisements

The collection of advertisements studied from Hillshire, Burger King, Carl's Jr., and Arby's all share the common trait in that they implicitly implicate veganism in how food is gendered, and how women are positioned in relation to meat. With their depiction as consumers of meat, the ads offer a paradox that goes against the traditional view of women as consumers of vegetables (Adams 14). All five brands position women as consumers of meat, with the fast food chains being notable for their subject-object positioning of women as fetishized objects by the use of the male gaze.

However, the connection of fetishized women as fragmented objects that are subject to the male gaze also links them metaphorically to the very literal fragmentation of the animals sold as meat products. This equates them to the binary of being the "pieces of meat" that are made available for the presumed heterosexual male subject: "he" consumes the image of both female human flesh and non-human animal flesh.

On the opposite side of the spectrum, PETA's explicitly pro-vegan advertisements that feature female models also use this male subject/female object perspective that privileges the heterosexual male by fetishizing women, thus making them appear as appealing as the meat products sold by the fast food industry, which goes contradicts PETA's anti-meat eating agenda. Further concluding thoughts on all three collections of advertisements follow.

To fully understand a study of this nature, the Hillshire analysis offers a mainstream view of how American culture genders the consumption of meat and vegetables. The television spots studied revealed how Hillshire advertisers equated meat with masculinity and vegetables with femininity. This was done by first placing men standing in front of a grill, an age-old tradition that was asserted by Swenson where fire assumes "an innate caveman-like connection between men and barbecued meat" (39), and ensuring that what was grilled was not of the "white meat" variety such as chicken or fish.

Further asserting masculinity is imagery of hegemonic masculinity in action, with an aggressive sports scenario and competitive eating metaphor, where the cooking or consumption of meat occurs. In positioning vegetables as feminine, Hillshire depicts women in sitting positions and eating salads with chicken or turkey meat products. Both

women are eating indoors in a kitchen, thus emphasizing their "place" in the domestic sphere.

Not one of the ads studied had men eating the salad with white meat products from Hillshire, suggesting that vegetables, and non-red meat products, are women's foods. That the men are standing and women are sitting serves to reaffirm the power structure within a patriarchal hegemony, justifying what Adams observed as a power hierarchy in which men's need for meat outweighs women's need for meat. Traditionally, men needed a bigger share of meat since meat-eating gives the strength that a working man needs, but is less important to women whose domestic work is undervalued (33). Although the first study of meat consumption in Western households where this meat-eating hierarchy played out domestically occurred in the mid-19th century, it is still occurring symbolically in 21st century advertising.

The fast food brands studied each use the male gaze to sexualize meat products, and fetishize the act of eating meat. Sexualized meat products are present in print as a symbol of the phallus in the Burger King ad, and as "placeholders" for breasts in the Arby's ad. The Hardee's television spot with Paris Hilton fetishizes the act of meat eating by spending the majority of the ad's time showing Hilton seductively washing a car before biting into the sandwich with an unmistakably sexual moan, symbolizing the release of the sexual tension that the ad attempts to build by using Hilton's body. Even though women are the consumers of these meat products, perhaps signaling intent to appeal to women, the employment of the male gaze nullifies this possibility.

What is made clear instead is the double consumption of human and non-human flesh by the male subject that the gaze privileges. These ads encourage him to consume

the female body on display, and the sexualized meat object she consumes or represents. The significance of this double consumption sustains men's dominance of women and animals, thereby reinforcing hegemonic masculinity (Johnson 17).

From its "All Animals Have the Same Parts" campaign to the Lettuce Ladies website analyzed, it is obvious that PETA, too, operates in the same patriarchal code as the meat industry that it fights against. PETA also uses the male subject-female object positioning of its animal rights messaging. This clearly makes PETA an organization that diminishes women in several ways. First, they offer their female models as sexual objects for metaphorical consumption through visual mediums. Second, they ignore women as potential converts to veganism by focusing on advertising that privileges the male. Lastly, they claim that the use of women's bodies is a critical component of their marketing strategy, which means they do not consider using a different approach to make their message gender neutral.

II. Conclusions on Film

The narratives films featuring explicitly vegan characters that I analyzed for this thesis have positive and negative characterizations of vegans. The *Year of the Dog* clearly genders vegans as mentally unstable and undeniably feminine, even in the case where there was a male vegan character. *Seven Pounds* does the same by feminizing its only male vegan character. The film only places him in a more positive light once the metaphorical act of flesh consumption takes place in the form of an organ donation.

Alternately, while *Scott Pilgrim* demonstrates the physical strength of a vegan that does not exist in the other two narratives, it is an exaggerated characterization, which serves to overcompensate by deeming veganism as a source of super powers and super

strength so as not to compromise its vegan character's masculinity. It is an affirmation of hegemonic masculinity through brute strength, and is ultimately demeaned by the revelation that the vegan did not practice an entirely vegan diet, suggesting that veganism cannot be maintained with such temptations as chicken parmesan.

The horror films analyzed as implicit vegan subtexts conflict with one another. The original 1974 version of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* featured more vegan subtext than its subsequent film. Images of factory farmed animals, the emphasis on the slaughterhouse and its killing practices, and the use of sound – squawking chickens, mooing cows, squealing pigs, pig-like sounds from Leatherface, and the sizzle of meat on a grill – all add to the anti-meat message of the film. In addition to these visual and audio cues, the treatment of the final girl, Sally, parallels her character to that of an animal about to face slaughter. This is especially notable during the scenes where she is "hog-tied" en route to the cannibals' house, and the aged patriarch sucks the blood from her hand. Her dramatic escape emphasizes an animalistic struggle for survival, which is coupled with her screams of terror that make up the last third of the film as she is relentlessly chased by Leatherface.

By contrast, the 2013 *Texas Chainsaw* film's final girl, Heather, is a member of the cannibalistic, patriarchal family that carries out the slaughter of humans. While she is unaware of this connection at first, the first scenes of the film present her dominance of animals. Her first scene has her butchering meat in a grocery store, and she has a macabre fondness of using animal bones as a form of expression in her artwork. This is reminiscent of the creative use of animal and human bone furniture that Pam stumbled across in the first *Texas Chainsaw* film. Although the slaughterhouse is the setting of the

final scene in the film, there are no interspersed images of factory farm animals or animal sound effects employed in this climactic scene.

The male gaze is far more prevalent in the latter version of the *Texas Chainsaw* franchise than the former. While the first film implies sex, the last film overtly depicts it. Heather's sexualized friend takes off her clothing on more than one occasion, and has sex with Heather's boyfriend. Heather exposes her breasts – thought not by choice – near the end of the film in the slaughterhouse. The exploitation of the feminine occurs in both films visually, but not tied as much to the act of slaughter in the 2013 film.

Patriarchy also prevails in both films. Sally only escapes certain death when a man in a truck drives by the house and picks her up. Leatherface saves Heather, and she ultimately becomes his caretaker after discovering their family connection. The agency of both women is limited and only the presence of a male rescuer assures that they continue living. Despite there being nearly 40 years between the films, they are strikingly similar in this respect.

III. Conclusions on Television

The competitive and instructional cooking shows analyzed in this study support and challenge hegemonic masculinity, and the gendered representations of food. The nature of competitive cooking shows link them to hegemonic masculinity by their emphasis on cooking as sport, where winning and aggression are celebrated. The vegan and vegetarian competitors featured in cooking show contests such as *Chopped*, *Cupcake Wars*, *The Taste*, and *Masterchef* compete in a hegemonically masculine format, but their mere presence as vegan chefs establishes a precedent of plant-based cooking that had been absent from mainstream competitive cooking shows.

Participants of a counter-hegemonic diet were given equal air time, and ultimately legitimized as a mainstream dietary option by the two vegan chefs who won against non-vegan chefs on *Cupcake Wars* and *Chopped*. By giving vegan chefs the win instead of their opponents who used meat and dairy products, the non-vegan judges endorse veganism as a viable contender in competitions that adhere to the meat and dairy normative that is expected in cooking shows.

This is a more important factor for Chef Chloe Coscarelli in *Cupcake Wars* because her episode of the show did not center on creating vegan cupcakes. The show's expectation (though not a requirement) revolves around using dairy to create the cupcakes, resulting in the surprising reaction by the judges of giving her the win when she won with dairy-free creations. Yet even with Coscarelli's win, veganism receives different treatment in the following episodes of *Cupcake Wars* that featured vegan bakers. The show's producers segregated vegan bakers from chefs who used dairy products and gave them their own "vegan bake-off" episodes. This move may be a way of equalizing the playing field for vegan and non-vegan competitors, but their segregation from other bakers is problematic. It implies a sense of "otherness" where vegans are not equal to their non-vegan competitors, or are perhaps a threat to the established expectations of non-vegan competitors, and must be isolated into their own episodes.

In contrast, Chef Rich Landau's episode of *Chopped* was a plant-based episode, yet his opponents used meat and dairy ingredients to enhance their plant-based proteins while Landau maintained the standards of vegan cooking with almost all of his dishes, the exception being in the dessert when he used honey. Since *Chopped* spotlights

unconventional ingredients in their shows, the plant-based episode with Landau reinforces the "otherness" of veganism.

The instructional vegan cooking shows *Jazzy Vegetarian* and *Christina Cooks* reinforce patriarchal gender roles through setting and costume, and by extension, the femininity of being vegan. Both shows place its female chefs in a domestic kitchen setting, and they cook in street clothes instead of a chef's jacket, or other visual indicators of their status as food professionals. Despite similar domestic settings between the two vegan chefs, the audience reception of Christina Pirello held some surprisingly hostile commentary, mainly centered on the host's appearance. This shows a preference toward the male gaze for viewers of Pirello's cooking show who expressed various critiques of how Pirello should improve her appearance for television. Such critiques are absent in regards to *Jazzy Vegetarian*'s host, Laura Theodore, perhaps due to the age difference between herself and Pirello.

Pirello's second cooking show, *Christina*, contradicts the domestic female home cook version of *Christina Cooks*. She prepares vegan meals in front of a live audience with a professional kitchen backdrop, wears a chef's jacket, and interacts with her audience on the science and nutrition of her macrobiotic vegan cooking. Swenson's research shows that this approach to instructional cooking is largely associated with male chefs. Pirello thus presents several challenges against this cooking show standard. First, she is a female chef shown in a professional light; second, she discusses the science behind her cooking instead of focusing on cooking for the family, or preserving family recipes; and third, she subscribes to a counter-hegemonic vegan diet.

The Cooking Channel's *How to Live to 100* counters yet fortifies Swenson's television study. Jason Wrobel is a male vegan who does his cooking in a domestic setting, bringing a sense of effeminacy and unprofessionalism that is an echo of his female vegan counterparts. The show's producers counter this effeminate effect of his surroundings by adding or removing details on the set that reaffirm Wrobel's masculinity: mechanical cogs decorate the counter behind the host, and the minimalist décor is reminiscent of a more professional kitchen setting. *How to Live to 100* fortifies Swenson's findings by showcasing humor and science. Humor is one aspect of male chef hosting styles that makes the cooking of food a fun, leisurely activity instead of a domestic chore; it is an activity a man *wants* to do instead of one he *has* to do. This puts him in a position of power by giving him the choice to cook for fun. Science is another aspect of male hosts that brings reason and logic to his show, instead of the emotional connection of treasuring family recipes that is common with female hosts. Since Wrobel focuses on creating healthy recipes, and often details the nutritional benefits of his food, this facet of his show continues to tie him to the hegemonically masculine ideal that goes against his vegan perspective. *How to Live to 100*'s failure to extend to more than one season, and its rebranding as a "special" on The Cooking Channel's website, speaks to the poor reception of the vegan cooking show in a cable network.

IV. Implications of This Study

Contemporary food media that depicts a strong gender bias of meat as masculine and vegetables of feminine creates the foundation that works against a vegan lifestyle. Popular media and the institutions behind it perpetuate the myth of consuming animal flesh to gain the strength of the animal killed. This asserts hegemonic masculinity by

attempting to place meat consumers in a position of superiority and dominance over animals. Yet the majority of slaughtered animals in modern times no longer hold any strength as their lives begin and end within restricted, tightly confined conditions found on factory farms. The same institutions responsible for perpetuating the myth of consuming flesh to gain strength reinforce this mythology by situating organisms harvested of the earth as food for the weak. Both of these myths are remnants of hunter-gatherer societies in which gender placed men as hunters and women as gatherers, and continue to dominate in the prevailing attitudes toward meat-eating.

Meat continues to be a staple of Western diets, but this is evolving as producers of vegan foods create substitute meat products that appeal to both meat and non-meat eaters alike. This strategy is currently succeeding. Target now stocks Gardein products, which are soy- and grain-based "fake meats" that include Buffalo wings, chik'n sliders, and chik'n cutlets that resemble chicken breasts. An interview with the Gardein CEO, Yves Potvin, shows breakthrough figures for this industry in 2012 and 2013, with more than a third of Americans buying these products (Watson para 4). Potvin also mentions that testing is underway with major fast food chains, which if successful, would drastically change Americans' perspectives on meat.

Furthermore, there is a cultural shift where the first explicitly vegan texts are appearing in popular media, as this study shows, originating from the first decade of the 21st century. A subculture without a presence in mainstream media decades ago has many faces today, exposing itself to wider audiences in unprecedented ways ("Vegan Goes Mainstream"). The first fictionalized vegans on film, and real-life vegans on cooking

shows that my thesis uncovers finally emerged in the last decade, but they only represent a small portion of this subculture.

The rise in celebrity interest seems to play a more significant role in this cultural shift, adding a prominent and diverse representation of vegans in media. Vegan celebrities are more diverse than the vegan representations I studied. White, middle-aged men have parallel vegan figures to pique their interest in Bill Clinton and Al Gore (Conasen para 1, Eilperin para 1). Latino women of all ages have a vegan representative in Jennifer Lopez, who shared her dietary change to New York City radio station Z100. Black men have vegans Mike Tyson and Samuel L. Jackson to represent them (Neporent para 2, D'Estries para 1), and the list goes on. Those involved and featured in popular media texts, whether they practice veganism or not, exert an undeniable influence on society, and invite dialogue of this subculture in media. As more vegan texts emerge, additional and accurate representations of vegans are essential, and should include fictional and real accounts of vegans. Further discussion on this area of representation is in the Veganism & Race section that follows.

Prevailing meat-eating attitudes, which proclaim that animal products are necessary for our health, are likely to change over time as more studies on the health effects of vegetarianism and veganism consistently prove otherwise. Existing studies show that the likelihood of diabetes, heart disease, cancer and obesity occurring tend to increase with saturated animal fats and cholesterol from animal products, but they all improve with plant-based diets (Barnard et. al., 1777, Mann et. al., 450, Mccarty 459). If meat-eaters consume a vegan meal with more frequency, without entirely giving up meat, a positive impact on public health would follow. First the attitude of meat-eating as

beneficial must change, which is what the studies cited above attempt to do. For that to happen, media should dispel the myth of meat eating mentioned at the beginning of these implications since science alone has not.

V. Further Research

Popular media texts with explicit and implicit vegan messaging were the focus of this study because of their potential to appeal to a wider audience of consumers. This thesis did not set out to be a holistic view of veganism and media, offering, instead, a gateway to further studies in cultural theory, gender studies, and multimedia. Varied studies of additional media texts would give a comprehensive view of veganism and the gendered nuances of being vegan, not only in popular culture, but also within the vegan subculture. The references below offer different branches of further study that would be fruitful from a vegan studies and gender studies perspective.

A. Documentary Film

As the focus of the film portion in this study was narrowed to narratives, a broader perspective could be offered with a textual and audience reception analysis of implicit and explicit vegan films.

In 2009, *The Cove* exposed the killing of dolphins for food off the coasts of Japan through hidden cameras and microphones. Critical acclaim and prestigious awards – including an Academy Award for "Best Documentary" – followed the film's release. A study of this film could serve as a gateway for a wider discussion of speciesism, where humans demonstrate a bias of superiority against non-human animals. Further exploration in a cultural study may show why different types of species are preferred as meat sources over others in certain cultures. As an example, in the U.S. cattle slaughterhouses are

completely legal whereas in India, 24 states have laws that ban the slaughter of cows (Lahiri para 4). At the same time, India's vegetarian population is slowly diminishing in urban areas where affluence prevails (Roy para 5). Religion, socio-economics, and

In addition to *The Cove*, the 2013 film *Blackfish*, a documentary exposing the abuse of keeping orcas in captivity, offers another implicit vegan text that explores the rights of intelligent non-human animals held captive for entertainment purposes. The film's focus on one orca in particular, Tilikum in SeaWorld, reveals how a wild animal is capable of lashing out on its captors, resulting in deadly consequences. Again, while not an explicit vegan text, it offers a window into the animal rights continuum that includes veganism.

On the explicit side of vegan film texts, the 2005 documentary *Earthlings* offers detailed accounts of the animal abuse and exploitation that occurs in major industries, including meat production, pet stores, fashion, cosmetics, and scientific research. This explicitly vegan text is evident by those who were involved in the film: Joaquin Phoenix narrates, Moby scores, and Shaun Monson directs, and all are practicing vegans. They are also men, giving voice to the sex that is not as widely represented in the vegan population. *Earthlings* can provide a male vegan perspective that may or may not challenge hegemonic masculinity.

B. Anarchism & Veganism

Veganism is in many ways tied to anarchism since both are counter-hegemonic movements that rattle the establishment through action. Because this thesis focused on a wider view of vegan texts created by commercial establishments (due to its wide-reaching influence extending to meat-eaters and non-meat-eaters), a counter perspective

on alternative media could result in interesting findings. Publications of the anarchist variety with vegan messaging would offer insight on how eco-anarchists position themselves, and the prominence of veganism with this community.

A precursory look at anarchist publications gives interesting findings. The website for the eco-anarchist journal *Earth First!* does not mention veganism in its description of itself. Instead, its primary position is to preserve wilderness and wildlife, thus implicitly tying this publication to environmental veganism. Why do they not feature veganism more prominently if the preservation of the environment is its goal? Industrial agriculture is one of the leading culprits of environmental damage. Changing dietary habits that revolve around the consumption of factory farmed animals, and in effect, the damaging soy and grain farms that sustain factory farms, is a more immediate form of activism that is achieved as simply as walking into a grocery store or farmer's market. A close examination of how they call their readership to action may show a particular preference towards the type of activism that may explain why they do or do not refer explicitly to veganism. It appears that this journal favors a top-down, macroscopic approach to ecological activism, focusing on organizing against institutions with the biggest impact on ecological systems. Perhaps this is because the publication assumes its audience is already familiar with the personal forms of protest they can undertake, which includes a vegan lifestyle, and so they choose to publish implicitly vegan texts. One way of verifying this is to first narrow which texts discuss animal rights, and then conduct a textual analysis of the articles, followed by an audience reception analysis of online users in their Newswire board.

Conversely, the anarchist magazine *Rolling Thunder* makes no qualms about being eco-anarchist-vegans not defined by gender norms. Their website's description asks for vegan recipe submissions, and claims to offer a "gender mutiny" within their pages, implying a point of view that may prove interesting for a cultural study on gender, and a plant-based, animal rights continuum. Examining reader submissions beyond vegan recipes, such as artwork and letters to the publication, may favor an explicitly vegan approach, perhaps since the magazine calls out vegans in their requests for submissions, thereby sanctioning veganism upfront.

C. Intersections of Veganism, Race & Sexuality

In each of the texts examined for this thesis, little to no people of color were associated with veganism, the consumption of meat, or as sexual objects to be visually consumed along with meat products. The only exception lies in the Hillshire ads. One of the women in the kitchen appears to be of Asian descent, and the man who consumed a package of Hillshire meat in the style of a competitive eater is black – yet both still eat meat. Since the "Go Meat" ads served to show the gendering of food, and includes both sexes eating meat, it does not answer the question of why people of color are not vegans or objects of sexual desire.

This may be an institutional bias in favor of Caucasian models and actors in texts with meat consumption, particularly when a fetishizing of meat and models occurs. However, in the explicitly vegan texts, the lack of vegan people of color, from the television shows to the films studied, results in the inevitable question of why? The answer may be a result of the subcultural differences between races and ethnicities and their attitudes towards meat.

Amie Breeze Harper is one of the first to offer a critical study on veganism and race, particularly in a black subcultural perspective in her 2010 book *Sistah Vegan*. The collection of essays, poems, and critical writings amassed from various black vegan women is a starting point in racial and vegan studies that deserves further scrutiny, particularly from a socio-economic and health context.

Even with Harper's black vegan perspective, there is a missing element of black vegan men. Tyeese Gaines attempts to cover this gap with her 2012 article "Veganism Makes its Way into Black Men's Diets", but does not go into the kind of detail necessary for academic study. This area of race and veganism deserves further exploration, particularly where the influence of celebrity is concerned since Gaines' article emphasizes the changing diets of black male athletes.

In addition to studying vegans and race, another area of cultural study related to this intersection is the fetishizing of race in relation to meat, mentioned briefly in the Burger King ad, as well as a study of how skin color influences advertising in certain cultures. Some questions that could offer interesting results include, how do race and meat-eating relate, and how does gender play a role? Does Adams' concept of the "hierarchy of meat," where meat symbolizes power and status, apply in other cultures, and does it privilege one race over another? Is the privileged culture the home culture or a foreign one? Do other races and cultures gender food in their popular media texts? Based on this analysis, one would think that American popular culture as an export influences other cultures around the world, perhaps emphasizing a Caucasian meat-eating ideal, somewhat similar to what the Singapore ad in Burger King suggests. Only further study could answer these questions.

Lastly, a divergent analysis on how different sexualities read the same or other popular media texts would be insightful. Additional readings on PETA's advertising campaigns would support a female and queer gaze concept with the "Ink Not Mink" campaign, which asserts hegemonic masculinity with imagery of muscular, famous athletes, while also welcoming queer readings. More study on why PETA began to include men in its ad campaign can answer the questions of why they have shifted to this marketing strategy, and how the public are responding to this shift.

D. Other Televised Competitive Uses of Animal Products

To further round out a study of veganism in mainstream media, one can undertake an analysis of how other non-edible animal products are used in televised competitions. One show that uses a variety of animals products is Lifetime's *Project Runway*. Unlike the competitive cooking shows studied, contestants generally have their choice in the materials they use, with leather being a staple animal-based material. It would be interesting to see how a vegan contestant counters this choice, and what audience reactions would be to such an individual. In past seasons, there have been eco-friendly contestants, so perhaps a study of previous environmentally conscious contestants would be a good starting point. In addition, what would happen if one or more models refused to wear wool, leather, or any other textile made from an animal? Do the producers replace them with another model, and cut their protests from the episode? Do they face disqualification from competing for a modeling contract? Other aspects of televised veganism that do not include meat-consumption alone may offer further prejudices against veganism, or support for the vegan movement. A social media study of tweets and hashtags used during televised shows, as well as fan blogs, may be the most direct way to

gauge audience reception of vegan participants in additional media that implicate veganism.

The past decade on which this study focuses shows a definitive rise in an interest of veganism that appears to continue on an upward trajectory. From the search habits of Google users from 2011 to 2014, there exists an undeniable uptick in interest over time for vegan-related online search terms (Sareen para 2).

This interest may be the result of a variety of factors. Perhaps Americans are attempting to understand veganism in conjunction with a rise to exposure of more popular cultural texts with vegans. Maybe it is an indicator of more people becoming health conscious or attempting to lose weight with a new diet, which relegates veganism as a "fad diet" to some. It could even be an awakening of the environmental consciousness where veganism offers a solution to the devastating effects of environmental destruction from factory farms. In one study from the Netherlands, "universal vegetarianism" would eschew the effects of climate change significantly by the year 2050 (Anderson para 4). While global acceptance of veganism is hardly a reality, this interest in veganism shows that curiosity is rising.

Regardless of why more people are searching for answers to veganism, it is a subculture in need of further study. From a cultural and media studies point of view, we should understand why more interest exists at this particular point in time, and further explore how popular media texts contribute to this interest.

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