



The Critical Initiative
Start Thinking

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*I thence Invoke thy aid to my adventurous Song, That with no middle flight intends to soar
Above th' Aonian Mount, while it pursues Things unattempted yet in Prose or Rhime.*

Department of Literature and Writing Studies



From the Editor – An Inaugural Address

Gregg Fields

Here we stand at the precipice of what can only be viewed as a significant critical venture in student publication for CSUSM, a moment that I hope will redefine the scholarly essay for many students and, perhaps, educators as well. My vision for this publication began with two anchoring motivations, each individually birthed out of my personal research on student acclimation to the academic discourse community.

First, students need something to reinforce the fact that the work that they do throughout any semester—all the essays, all the research, all the close textual analysis—embodies legitimate, professional writing. If students realize this thought, they become exponentially more likely to engage in deeper conversation, articulate more cogently, and push themselves for more polished prose. They, in essence, learn to go beyond the audience of one, working harder to communicate their critical thoughts clearly to not only their instructors but their greater academic audience as well.

Second, having made the first realization, I found myself wanting to facilitate an amplification of the student's critical voice by giving my fellow scholars a venue to express their critical thoughts. Therefore, *The Critical Initiative* acts as a pedagogical tool to aid students by giving them a greater motivation to write, knowing that their voice can be heard, and putting their voices in articulation with one another.

Thus, in this prototypic issue, we received fifty five total submissions. Each of these submissions receives blind readings from at least two of the eleven members of the editorial board. These editorial board members each provide constructive scholarly feedback, encouraging students to develop their process while publishing their product. From these submissions, we have selected three essays for immediate publication out of the original fifty five to showcase in this Spring issue of *The Critical Initiative*.

Now, one of the great benefits to digital publication comes through our ability to update a file without reprinting. For this reason, over the next two months we will continue to add revisions of these three articles as well as publishing another twenty or thirty essays. So, we encourage you to continue revisiting us throughout the Summer to experience all that *TCI* will have to offer.

Special Thanks to...

- California State University in San Marcos for providing both the digital space for this publication as well as the technical support and guidance from Instructional Developer & ADA Consultant Jay Rees.
- The CSUSM Literature and Writing Department Faculty for all their encouragement and support throughout this process.
- The entire supporting editorial board for late nights and long hours reading and reviewing the scholarly works submitted to *The Critical Initiative*.

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“When we as writers take our fears, beliefs, imaginations,
and research and offer them up...we are changed, and our
[writing] carries the power of truth” (xvii)
from *A Novel Idea* *Amy Wallace*

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Faculty Research Spotlight

Professor Catherine Cucinella, Ph.D.

Continuing her study of the female body in literature, Dr. Cucinella recently presented a piece focusing on a single author, Shirley Jackson, as part of the Women and Literature Panel at the 2011 Pacific Ancient Modern Language Conference (PAMLA). Consider the following abstract highlighting a small portion of her research.

Shirley Jackson's Strategies of Embodiment and Disembodiment

In her fiction, Shirley Jackson recognizes the female body's ontological significance without celebrating that body, but she does often place the body in a reciprocal relationship with its physical surroundings. Although, in her work, the body emerges as the touchstone for recognizing one's reality, it also, paradoxically, serves as a vehicle to escape the reality of one's circumstances through a deliberate strategy of disembodiment. Finally, the female body that circulates throughout Jackson's work becomes the screen on which the individual's psychic dramas become visible, and again, paradoxically, visibility does not insure interpretability. In this paper, I look at three of Jackson's short stories, "A Visit," from *Come Along with Me: Part of a Novel, Sixteen Short Stories, and Three Lectures*, "The Daemon Lover," from *The Lottery and Other Stories*, and "The Beautiful Stranger," from *Come Along with Me* and investigate how these works "embody" madness, sanity, fantasy, and reality. Jackson's reconfiguring of these elements depends upon the body's relationship to them, and more importantly, this reconfiguration challenges traditional understanding of "femaleness" in relation to the body.

Pornography & Colonization

Amanda Puckett

Sexuality and sexual preference are innate and inescapable aspects of human nature. Given the body of work surrounding scientific studies of the human form and critical theoretical pieces on the hegemonic influences within the microcosms of individual lives, it is surprising that no work exists that directly addresses the body of colonized pornography. While even Michel Foucault analyzes the relationships between the body, sexuality and power, he does so in a way that removes from the schema the biological imperatives and physiological inner workings of humanity. Pornography has the power to inform how individuals view sex as well as how they participate in sexual congress. Given the power of pornography as a form of communication and control, numerous activist groups call out for the destruction of pornography on the basis that, via its power, it is both damaging and immoral. Pornography is, at its core, a pedagogical tool that, when utilized by oppressive colonizing factors, can silence and erase pornographic sexual discourses, which in turn creates cultural *others* and marginalized sections of community.

For many, with a perspective to notice, Pornography and Colonization have been painstakingly interwoven. This is an understandable phenomenon. When Stuart Hall describes the defining factors of cultural identity, he privileges some communal markers as being stronger identifiers. By this definition, sexuality and sexual preference, extremely personal facets of individuality, are the stronger identifiers. These facets are the “critical points of deep and significant *difference*” (Hall 394). It is the oppressive influences of power structures on sexuality and sexual identity that interrupt how a sexual being does, could, and would identify him or herself. Pornography is

more than simply the presentation of erotic images meant to titillate and satisfy. Pornographic films serve a “pedagogic function as both sexual education” and as an audiovisual representation of that which is sexually desirable (Rhyne 42). For the colonized African, enslaved, destroyed, and deprived of culture, “sexual fantasies about whiteness are indications of colonialism upon the deepest parts of the self” (Shimizu 163). By engendering a sexual fantasy world where whiteness and hegemonic normality are all that exist, “fantasy [becomes] the ideology of victimization by racism” (Shimizu 166). By creating a manufactured sexually desirable ideal, the hegemonic interrupters of sexual discourse violate the mental processes of individuals. The forceful inclusion of whiteness into the African fantasy victimizes sexual identity. The privileging of whiteness and the discounting of blackness in a pornographic sexual discourse of desirability acts as instruction and forwards the agenda of the colonial oppressor.

By creating a manufactured sexually desirable ideal, the hegemonic interrupters of sexual discourse violate the mental processes of individuals.

Within pornography, hegemonic powers silence natural sexuality via the introduction of colonized normality. In America, obscenity laws define this normality. Through criminalization, any deviation from the stated realm of *normal* is an offense that, when violated, further imprisons the supposedly *deviant* individual. These normative standards are “community standards, as articulated by the Court, [and] invariably rely on ideologically dominant discourses of sex, or in more simple language, prevailing sexual moralities” (Cossman 10). It is this idea of dominance and sexual ideology hemming and confining via a creation of *acceptable* sexuality and therefore interrupting the natural development of sexual discourse and identity, which is a serious

concern. To whom does the responsibility of defining the dominant sexual discourse fall? Certainly it would not be within the purview of the oppressed sexual minority. Thus, as both the Church and the State conspire to define normality and enforce the legality of obscene violations, these institutions of power become the colonizing oppressors. As one of the targets of censorship in America, lesbian pornography has continuously struggled to exist despite the forceful eradication techniques embraced by the state. The lesbian pornography producers and consumers are aware that “from a lesbian perspective, the greatest site of danger lay in suppression, state-sponsored or other” (Strub 96). By labeling lesbian pornography obscene and criminalizing its creation, the colonizing powers are attempting to eliminate lesbianism from the entirety of pornographic sexual discourse. This action does not find itself halted on the borders of pornography either. Once lesbianism has been successfully termed deviant, it is not difficult to imagine that the lesbian herself will become a deviant member of society. The elimination of lesbian pornography is directly related to the marginalization of the lesbian in her respective communities. Thus, the power of hegemonic influence alters the cultural identity of the lesbian from member to other.

Ultimately that distinction between member and other is an achievement of successful colonization. In order to remove a culture and inculcate the previous possessors of culture with the culture of the colonizers, all aspects of cultural identity that conflict with the ruling ideology must be silenced. By embracing pornography and dictating the content of plots, images, and actors, the Colonizers can thoroughly erase entire avenues of sexuality. In *Yellowcaust: A Patriot Act*, scholar Darell Hamamoto seeks to highlight what has been the eradication of the *yellow* male in *yellow* sex. Hamamoto studies the absence or replacement of Asian men in Asian pornography with the White male. More than a violation of sexual desirability, this removal of the would-be-colonized Asian male is both an opportunity to replace his traditional sexual duty with a White male and

asexualize the *yellow*. As Shimizu states, this is a “sexual victimization of Asian American men [by their absence]...[which] actually further embeds Asian American men in lack and strengthens the gender and sexual hierarchy” (167). By removing the Asian male from pornography with their historically appropriate sexual partners, hegemonic influences have removed the Asian male from the possibility of being taught as desirable or belonging in the school of pornography. The insertion of the White male is representative of the White domination of the Yellow, as the male penetrates the female. Additionally it is the interjection, in the most intimate form, of White into the Yellow reproductive cycle. The White male becomes represented in pornography as sexually desirable, dominant, and *normal*. All of which occurs as the displaced yellow male is marginalized, de-sexed, and made unnecessary in the reproductive cycle, thus allowing for the eventual elimination of yellow in genetics.

Clearly, colonization affects and interrupts the sexual dialogues of cultures by silencing and erasing any aspect of pornographic sexuality that is counterproductive to the agenda of the colonizers. Given the frustration felt by lesbians, women, and Hamamoto’s *yellow* males (among others not discussed in this text), attempts have been made to interrupt these damaging hegemonic influences. The most well known action has been the anti-porn movements of the last 40 years. Unfortunately, “key to antiporn discourse was its claim to represent all women, literally; ‘We believe we represent all women,’ a 1984 Women Against Pornography press release flatly declared” (Strub 95). For proponents of cultural studies, the difficulty of this movement is easy to see. Chandra Mohanty, in her writing “Under western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses,” argues that the homogenous qualities of an analytic approach that claims to speak for all women as a “monolithic” grouping serves “to distort western feminist political practices, and limit the possibility of coalitions among...women” (197). It is certain that the previously mentioned lesbian anti-censorship movement was not being

spoken for in this press release. More than attempting to create pornography that was representative of their sexual discourses, the lesbian found herself at odds with heterosexual women of her era, women who did not have the perspective to see that pornography was a necessary avenue to re-normalize their discourse and step out of their place in the forcefully created margin.

Hamamoto, in direct contrast to the anti-pornography movement, has created a sort of *purposeful porn*. In relation to the way that Hamamoto utilizes this tool, it is a “process by which men aspire to gain the patriarchal power and heterosexual privilege that have been historically denied to them” (Shimizu 166). In a more general sense, purposeful pornography strives to “combat sexual lack with sexual presence” (Shimizu 165). This reaction to colonized pornography is reminiscent of Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s argument regarding the language of the oppressors. In his essay, Thiong’o states that one must “reconnect” with that which has been taken from a culture by joining the “revolutionary traditions...in their struggle to defeat imperialism and create a higher system of democracy...[U]nity in that struggle would ensure unity in our [mutual] diversity” (452-453). And so, Hamamoto has created *Yellow* porn featuring *yellow* males. In this way, he struggles to reconnect the sexuality discourse of Asian males generally, specifically within the arena of Asian male sex with Asian females. The reconnection has both the ability to be visually upsetting, being counter intuitive to what has become the hegemonically induced idea of normality, and the power to upset the largely unrealized presence of power structures within the sexual discourse that defines communities and identities.

Culturally, we require a comprehensive study of porn. If the purpose of cultural studies is to interrupt the hegemonic influences of power structures and colonizers, then pornography is a realm of cultural studies that is typically ignored. The taboo nature of the subject, whether created or naturally occurring, must be overturned. Students of culture must investigate the pedagogy of pornography and analyze the sexual discourses

that may no longer exist as well as the images that have replaced those that are missing. To continue to ignore the power of pornography on cultural identity and individuality is both foolish and equivalent to aiding hegemony and colonization in their attempt to hijack sexuality to further their own ends.



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The Submissive and Subdued Knight:

Masculine Anxieties over Feminine Autonomy in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*

Melanie James

The medieval literature featuring King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table often reflects the prescriptive gender roles of the Middle Ages. On the one hand, there are virile knights who hunt, quest, and fight. On the other, there are yielding damsels who need rescuing and who are chained to hearth and home. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is a poem where these prescribed gender roles are not only defied, but openly inverted. Thus, the object of this paper is twofold. First, I will illustrate the ways in which Gawain is stripped of the typical masculine qualities and then endowed with feminine characteristics. Second, I will argue that these gender role inversions illustrate masculine anxieties about feminine autonomy—both sexual and political—within the text.

In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, the author strips Gawain of his masculinity in four distinct ways. First, the poet does so by placing Gawain in the distinctively feminine sphere and space of Hautdesert, an alternate court sharply dissimilar to the masculine and conventional court at Camelot. Second, Gawain's masculinity—or lack thereof—contrasts with the masculinity of Sir Bertilak. Both men partake in gendered activities: Bertilak is an active hunter while Gawain lies abed and is passively hunted by a woman. These respective interactions therefore highlight the medieval gender roles expected of a man (activity) versus the gender roles expected of a woman (passivity). Third, Gawain's gender is defined through his relationship with Bertilak's wife. Here, their gender roles are inverted—

Gawain plays the submissive whilst Lady Bertilak plays the aggressor. Finally, Gawain's masculinity is chipped away by the homosexual threat present between Lord Bertilak and Gawain.

The poem begins at the court of Camelot, which functions as an idealized comparative of the court of Hautdesert. As Harvey De Roo points out in his article, "What's in a Name? Power Dynamics in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*," the opening of the poem establishes the "idealization of Camelot" (237). The Gawain-poet connects the magnificence and glory of Arthur's court not only to Rome, but to Troy as well, linking the Matter of Britain to the Matter of Rome and legitimizing Camelot as the normative, idealized court. Additionally, the public nature of Camelot lends weight to its idealization. A.C. Spearing argues that "at Camelot, all action takes places in public and involved the whole community of Arthur's court ... the poet seems to treat Arthur's whole court as constituting a single public space" (141). This public nature suggests that everything is on the up-and-up: everything is honorable without any subversive sneakiness. In other words, there is nothing rotten in the state of Camelot.

It is within this idealized court that idealized gender roles are also established.

The king lay at Camelot at Christmastide;
Many good knights and gay his guests were there,
Arrayed of the Round Table rightful brothers,
With feasting and fellowship and carefree mirth.
There true men contended in tournaments many,
Joined there in jousting these gentle knights. (37-42)

Thus, the story begins on Christmas—a Christian holiday—where both men and women have gathered. This passage, however, illustrates prescriptive masculine qualities. First, it underlines the importance of homosocial ties that bind Camelot together. The knights of Arthur's court were like "brothers." These homosocial ties are later threatened when Gawain

ventures forth from Camelot to Hautdesert. Catherine Cox suggests this “Christian ‘broperhede’ of Camelot effectively subsumes Gawain and his identity—‘for sake of þat segge,’ ostensibly for Gawain’s own good” (386). While I am not convinced that his identity is subsumed, Camelot does seem to exist within a normative and even static state where Christianity and gender roles are never called into question. This normalcy can be seen in the above passage, where it outlines the “true” masculine pastimes such as feasting, partaking in masculine fellowship, and jousting. All of these activities are done within the group and in public, further legitimizing their normative nature.

Not only are the homosocial relationships defined, but so are male-female relationships: “Clergy and all the court acclaimed the glad season, / Cried Noel anew, good news to men; / Then gallants gather gaily, hand-gifts to make” (64-66). The mentioning of clergy, Christmas, and good news (reminding one of the gospels) underlines the Christian expectations of courtly behavior between men and women. The “hand-gifts” are additionally of great importance. Marie Borroff points out in the footnote of her translation that “what seems to be meant is a game in which men concealed gifts in their outstretched hands, offering them to ladies who had to guess what the gift was or perhaps which hand held it. The forfeit for guessing wrong was a kiss” (5). Game playing is obviously an on-going theme throughout the poem. In this instance, however, the men act as the instigators of the game, whereas the women must forfeit a kiss. This mirrors the gender-inverted kissing game between Gawain and Bertilak later in the text. Thus, the “hand-games” illustrate not only normative male-female relationships (i.e. the man as the instigator and the female as the prize) but also normative game-playing.

The role of women is likewise established at the court of Camelot:

Guenevere the goodly queen gay in the midst

On a dais well-decked and duly arrayed

.....
Fair queen, without a flaw,
She glanced with eyes of grey
A seemlier that once he saw,
In truth, no man could say. (76-77, 81-84)

Guinevere is uncharacteristically described as good and flawless. Here, there is no hint that she is the adulterous and petty queen, as she is often described in the earlier Arthurian cycles. Thus, I suggest that she is meant to be the foil of the subversive females in the text—Lady Bertilak and Morgan le Fey. More importantly, however, despite her goodness and her beauty, she remains static and unmoving. She does not once speak in the poem. This silence suggests that in Camelot, the idealized role of a woman is to be but a beautiful ornament. Once again, this idealized nature of the court is called into question at Hautdesert.

After Gawain leaves the normative court of Camelot, he arrives at the subversive court of Hautdesert. Here, gender roles (as prescribed by Camelot) begin to break down. Thus, upon Gawain's arrival, his masculinity is called into question. Immediately upon his arrival, he is stripped of his shield and arms: "When his high helm was off, there hastened a throng / Of attendants to take it, and see to its care; / They bore away his broad sword and blazoned shield" (826-28). It is important to note that not only his armor is removed, but also his "broad sword and blazoned shield." These two objects are symbols of the Christian and normative court of Camelot. Additionally, the stripping of Gawain's weapons and armor is, in a sense, a stripping of his masculinity.

Michael Amey suggests that the function of knightly armor was defense—it was through this armor that one could be physically recognized as a man (66-67). Amey also points out that in the story of Percival King Arthur himself gifts the armor to Percival—a common practice seen throughout Arthurian literature. This gifting would further tie the knight and his armor to his king and the king's court. Along the lines of defense, a knight is defined

through his prowess in battle, and thus, his weapons are symbols of masculine warfare. This is reminiscent of the jousting previously mentioned at Camelot: weaponry and battles—even mock battles—define “true” manhood.

Jane E. Burns likewise discusses the importance of gendering clothing in the Middle Ages and suggests that “the properly socialized body in Arthurian romance results from encasing the male anatomy so fully in armor that no skin shows” (118). Thus when Gawain’s armor is removed from his body at Hautdesert, a subversion of gender roles occurs. Burns argues that

When we encounter this knight relieved of his armor and most of his weapons, we confront a man “stripped bare” ... although he remains fully clothed. Thus the courtly knight’s masculinity and social status derive from the fact that his specific body parts are encased and literally unseen. He is gendered masculine precisely to the extent that his anatomical sex is concealed and unverified. He is a knight and a man, curiously, to the degree that he has no clearly sexed body. (119)

While I agree that a man stripped of his armor and weapons is “stripped bare,” unlike Burns, I suggest that this is due to their symbolized gender roles. It is the role of a noble knight to participate in mock battles, real battles, and defense—this is what genders a knight as a man. Thus, to remove Gawain’s armor is to remove his knightly masculinity. This can further be seen in the text, when “With light talk and laughter they loosened from him then / His war-dress of weight and his worthy clothes” (860-61). Once again, this strips away his previous association with King Arthur’s court—a court where masculinity is never called into question and also where the paragon of femininity—Guinevere—remains static and unmoving. His “war-dress” in particular calls to mind his masculine chivalric duties at King Arthur’s court. As a result, the elimination of Gawain’s sword and shield

upon his arrival at Hautdesert and the subsequent confiscation of his clothing symbolize a stripping of hegemonic gender roles.

After being parted from his sword and shield, Gawain is then led into a bower, or lady's chamber. That he is led into a chamber and not a hall is of particular significance. Spearing discusses how specific locations were endowed with gendered connotations: "given the patriarchal nature of medieval society, which denies public status to most women, the hall is a masculine space; the chamber is a feminine space, or at least, from the predominant male point of view, a space where male encounters female" (140). Spearing further contrasts the private and enclosed spaces of Hautdesert (such as the lady's bower) with the public spaces of Camelot. Therefore, Gawain's entrance into this "feminine space" signals the beginning of Gawain's feminization. Within the bower, the strict boundaries of prescribed gender roles are beginning to break down. Gawain is placed directly into a space typically inhabited by women. By this proximity, he is viewed through the same lens that one would view the lady of the household. Therefore, the dissident court of Hautdesert symbolizes the beginning of Gawain's gender role inversion.

Yet, it is not only the setting that challenges Gawain's prescribed gender. After his host has ensured a stripping away of Gawain's masculinity, Gawain is then further endowed with feminine characteristics. The seduction and hunting sequences in Fit III put Gawain's feminization into stark relief. First, the overall structure of this section demands an obvious contrast between Gawain and Bertilak. Bertilak's masculinity is established and the gendered activities of the two men are contrasted.

The two men make a pact to exchange winnings, and Bertilak decrees, "A-hunting I will go / While you lie late and rest" (1101-02). This juxtaposition of hunting and lying abed sets the stage to view Gawain as a feminized character. While Gawain lounges abed and engages with the Lady, Bertilak's hunting scenes are described in violent detail.

Developing this idea further, in his book on the art of medieval hunting, John Cummins argues that in late medieval literature, the prey is often an allegory for a woman who must be caught (that is, sexually seduced), whereas the hunter can be read as a sexual pursuer (80). However, as Cummins points out, these masculine hunting scenes are usually coupled with the seduction of a woman. This allegorical counterpart—the seduction of a woman—is missing from Bertilak’s role as the hunter. Instead, it is Bertilak’s wife who plays the huntress in attempting to seduce Gawain—a point to which I will later return.

Bertilak’s active hunting scenes establish the hetero-normative role within the text. The first day of the hunt the prey is deer. As Cummins establishes, courtly love allegories generally connect to deer hunting (80).

They harmed not the harts, with their high heads,
Let the bucks go by, with their broad antlers,
For it was counted a crime, in the close season,
If a man of that demesne should molest the male deer.
The hinds were headed up, with ‘Hey!’ and ‘Ware!’
The does with great din were driven into the valleys. (1154-59)

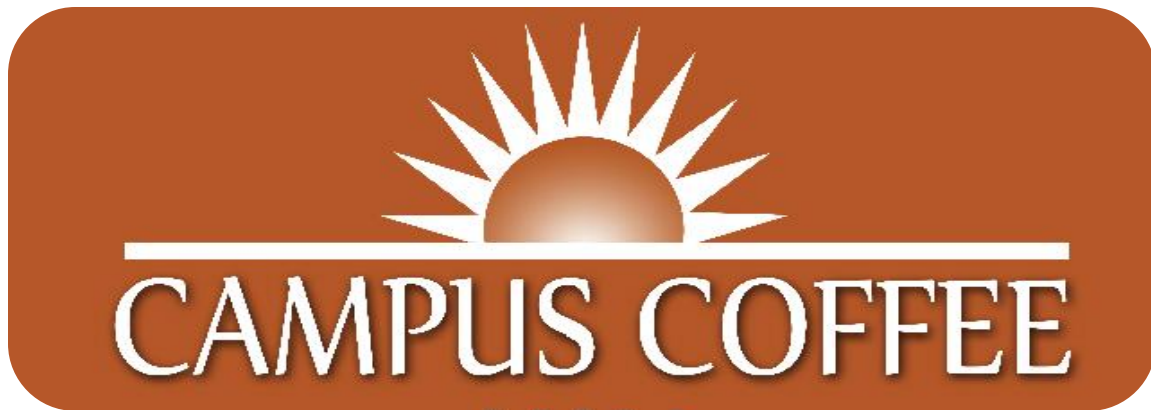
I would like to draw attention to two aspects of this particular passage. First, a great emphasis is placed upon the fact that it is female deer and not bucks that Bertilak hunts. This emphasis further reinforces the symbolism of the male hunter and the female prey. Second, equal emphasis is placed on the negativity of hunting males—indeed it is decreed a crime. This negative view toward hunting males serves two functions in the text. It subtly denounces Lady Bertilak’s hunting of Gawain, as males ought not to be hunted, but rather be the hunters. It also foreshadows the homosexual threat that arises between Gawain and Bertilak, giving sly warning that a man of the demesne molesting another man is considered a crime by the Church.

The conclusion of the deer hunting and the death scene that follows is not only vividly violent, but lengthy in its detail.

They divide the crotch in two,
And straightway then they start
To cut the backbone through
And cleave the trunk apart
With hard strokes they hewed off the head and the neck,
Then swiftly from the sides they severed the chine,
And the corbie's bone they cast on a branch. (1349-55)

J.D. Burnley suggests that the Gawain-poet's devotion to the dismembering is a medieval literary trend: "Manuals set out the craft, and skill in dismembering the quarry was so esteemed that whole scenes are devoted to this in more than one romance. Skill in breaking the deer, as part of courtly accomplishment, may attract the attention of onlooking ladies in the same way as exemplary conduct on the field of battle or *mesure* in the counsels of the hall" (4). While this may indeed be the case, Burnley overlooks the symbolic connection between death and sexual fulfillment. According to Cummins, in medieval hunting descriptions, the final killing and death of the animal is akin to the "consummation or at least the reciprocation of feeling" (80). Therefore, this lengthy dismemberment scene is yet another expression of masculine virility, hinting at the male orgasm. Thus, yet another comparison is demanded: Bertilak achieves his masculine fulfillment by way of killing and dismembering, whereas Gawain is unable to reach sexual fulfillment with Lady Bertilak.

Bertilak's next hunt is for a boar—a decidedly more dangerous animal than the guileless deer. While hunting in general is a masculine pastime, the hunting of a boar lends particular weight to establishing Bertilak's strength and virility. Indeed, the hunting techniques differ sharply. Whereas Bertilak employs hounds and other knights to kill the harts, Bertilak himself slays the actual boar: "For the man, when they first met, marked him with care, / Sights well the slot, slips in the blade / Shoves it home to the hilt, and the heart shattered" (1592-94). The sexuality in this death scene is



unmistakable: the sword is not only a masculine symbol, but also a phallic one. Shoving the sword into the boar “to the hilt” is highly reminiscent of sexual intercourse. Thus, once again, the death of the animal serves as a symbol of sexual fulfillment and thereby the fulfillment of masculinity.

The final hunt on day three—this time for a fox—further reinforces the seduction symbolism. Here the fox is portrayed as wily and Bertilak must work hard to finally catch his prey. The fox “blenches from the blade” (1902), symbolizing a courtly dance between man and woman where the woman plays “hard-to-get.” Yet, once again, Bertilak goes in for the kill and finalizes the hunt. In conclusion, these three hunting scenes serve to highlight Bertilak’s masculinity: he partakes in the pastime designated to the lord of a manor outside of the castle, and he kills and dismembers his prey effectively and efficiently. Therefore, these scenes function to highlight Gawain’s activities within the castle. While Bertilak is away from the court, Gawain lies within a lady’s chamber. Then, Gawain stays abed, resting, when he should partake in the masculine sports of hunting. Finally, while Bertilak achieves his ultimate fulfillment (that is, the killing and dismembering), Gawain never reaches the parallel sexual fulfillment, despite the sexual games instigated by Lady Bertilak.

This leads me to the third way in which Gawain’s gender roles are inverted—namely through his relationship with Lady Bertilak. While Bertilak plays the traditional role of the masculine hunter of female animal

prey, the analogous sexual prey is not a woman, but rather Gawain, and it is Lady Bertilak who is the hunter and the seductress. At the time that Bertilak engages in the masculine hunt, Gawain lies abed and plays the part traditionally assigned to a female seducee. While many critics have noted the ways in which the hunting scenes parallel the Lady's seduction tactics, I will instead focus on the gendered language within these sequences and illustrate Gawain's passive role and the Lady's aggressive one.

Critics such as De Roo and David Boyd agree that the Lady's attempted seduction places Gawain in a feminized position. De Roo suggests that the "play in the bedroom ... 'softens' Sir Gawain" ("Undressing Lady Bertilak" 312). Boyd, likewise, says that "being hunted and entrapped by the Lady manipulated him into a position traditionally assigned to the courtly female" (81). I agree with both of these interpretations and further suggest that Gawain's inverted gender role (that is his feminization) can be seen through the masculinity assigned to Lady Bertilak.

To support this idea, the first day, the Lady threatens force as a way of physically subduing Gawain. Lady Bertilak tells Gawain: "You will not rise from your bed; I direct you better: / I shall hem and hold you on either hand, / And keep company awhile with my captive knight" (1223-25). Here, the Lady uses the language of domination to force Gawain into a passive role. In this way, not only does Gawain experience a gender inversion, but so too does Lady Bertilak. She is endowed with the masculine qualities of boldness (as she entered the chamber while he was sleeping). She refers to Gawain as her "captive" and she threatens to forcibly bind him. Thus, her physical instigations take center stage. Gawain, too, uses the language of submission and thereby roots himself in the role typically assigned to the female: "For I surrender myself, and sue for your grace/ ... And were pleased to permit your prisoner to rise" (1215, 1219). Once again, the notion of "surrender" reinforces that hunting symbolism. Likewise, he refers to himself as a "prisoner." This clearly positions him within the realm of female power.

On the second day of the seduction, the subversive power of female sexuality comes into sharp relief. “Thus she tested his temper and tried many a time / Whatever her true intent, to entice him to sin” (1149-1150). Through her sexuality, she attempts to force Gawain to “sin”—that is, to commit adultery. One must note here that it is not merely female sexuality that is subversive, however, it is aggressive female sexuality—that is to say, the prescribed male sexuality. Boyd points out the importance of position in medieval romances. “Active” and “top” were considered decidedly male traits, whereas “passive” and “bottom” belonged to females (Boyd 80). In the case of Lady Bertilak, she takes the active sexual role: this active role not only associates her with masculine gender, but it also leaves Gawain to fulfill the passive (and feminine) sexual role.

She further uses this sexuality to tempt Gawain on the third day: “her face and her fair throat freely displayed; / her bosom all but bare, and her back as well” (1740-1741). The emphasis of her throat recalls the hunting and dismembering scenes, where the throat is physically assaulted on each animal. Likewise, she bares her bosom and her back, using her female flesh to entice him to sin. Gawain is not immune to the power of her sexuality—“his heart swelled swiftly with surging joys” (1762). Gawain clearly becomes aroused and enjoys the sight of her bared flesh. Ultimately, however, Gawain is able to resist the temptation she offers: he does not enjoy the consummation of their constant flirtation. However, the hypothetical sexual consummation brings forth yet another concern within the text. As Gawain and Bertilak have entered into the exchange pact, if Lady Bertilak and Gawain were to engage in sexual intercourse, this pact would necessitate sexual intercourse between Bertilak and Gawain.

This brings us to the fourth and final gender inversion that Gawain experiences in the text—namely kissing Bertilak. Both Carolyn Dinshaw and Chris Boyd agree that Gawain plays a feminine role when bestowing the kisses on Bertilak. Dinshaw suggests that “Gawain acts like a woman. The

structure of identity—gender identity, sexual identity, Christian chivalric identity (which partakes of both gender and sex)—is threatened in these narrative moments” (211). Adding to Dinshaw, Boyd likewise argues that “medieval gender and sexuality are as much about positionality—active/passive, top/bottom—as they are about genitality *per se*. *Sir Gawain* cleverly sets up the possibility of such a substitutive exchange as easily fulfilling the game’s requirements” (80). In discussing the active/passive and top/bottom system of gender, Boyd argues that the homosexual fulfillment of the exchange pact would force Gawain into a sexually passive (i.e. feminizing) role (80). While both Dinshaw’s and Boyd’s make viable conclusions, both critics largely overlook the overarching context of game-play in which the kisses are delivered.

Therefore it is not the threat of homosexuality that genders Gawain as female, but rather the gender binary that exists within the normative game play.

To develop this idea of game-play, Gawain is placed in a feminized role through the direct correlation of the hand-gifts of Camelot that I earlier discussed. Gawain is put into the former role of the female kissers at Camelot (the ladies giving kisses as rewards) and, thus, is transformed into a feminine figure. With the hand-gifts, the men initiate the game. In the case of Gawain and Bertilak, it is Bertilak who initiates the exchange game—thereby casting himself into the male role. Additionally, females were the ones who forfeited up a kiss during the game—as does Gawain. The normative game play at Camelot demands a comparative glance at the inverted gender play at Hautdesert. Therefore, it is not the threat of homosexuality that genders Gawain as female, but rather the gender binary that exists within the normative game play.

Having illustrated the ways in which Gawain's masculine gender roles are inverted and transformed to the feminine, I will now turn my attention to my interpretation of what these gender inversions suggest. First, the gender inversions are indicative of anxieties about female sexuality. Lady Bertilak's aggressive and masculine sexuality threatens to undermine the entire hetero-normative conventions of chivalry and courtly love. If she were to successfully seduce Gawain, not only would Gawain break the duty-bound homosocial ties between himself and Bertilak (by engaging in adultery against his lord and host), but it would also necessitate a homosexual exchange of winnings between Gawain and Bertilak. As Boyd points out, "queer male behavior and desire ... ultimately derive from the deceits and wiles of women" (78). Further expanding upon Boyd's argument, female sexuality in this text can be read as a destructive force that would ultimately obliterate all the religious and chivalric conventions under which knights operate.

Gawain suffers a fall from chivalric pride and honor by accepting the green girdle proffered by Lady Bertilak. Without wading into the numerous significations offered by critics on the meaning of the girdle, one cannot overlook that Gawain breaks a chivalric and feudal oath to exchange winnings with Bertilak:

"And Gawain," said the good host, "agree now to this:
Whatever I win in the woods I will give you at eve,
And all you have earned you must offer to me;
Swear now, sweet friend, to swap as I say,
Whether hands, in the end, go empty or no."
"By God," said Sir Gawain, "I grant it forthwith!

If you find the game good, I shall gladly take part." (1105-11)

Gawain "swears" to offer Bertilak everything he earns. By withholding the girdle, he breaks this oath. Moreover, Gawain swears by God. This further legitimates the oath between the two men, as Gawain is a Christian knight operating under the rules of chivalry. This scene also mirrors the oath of

fealty between vassal and lord. According to Jacques Le Goff, a “vassal placed his hands, joined together, between those of his lord, who closed his hands over those of his vassal; the vassal then declared his wish to give himself to his lord ... Next he pronounced an oath of fealty, he gave the lord his faith and he could add a kiss” (91). Their public declaration to exchange winnings is thus similar to the public and open declaration of homage. The two men even seal their deal with a kiss: “They talked in low tones, and tarried at parting. / With compliments comely they kiss at the last” (1117-18). This kiss functions as a feudal “sealing” of Gawain’s oath—an oath which he breaks. By breaking the oath, Gawain suffers a fall from chivalric pride and honor.

The women in the text are directly endowed with the blame that leads to this fall from chivalric honor. This can first be seen in Lady Bertilak’s attempt to make Gawain “sin.” The Lady tempts Gawain away from not only his chastity, but succeeds in subverting his piety. By convincing Gawain to accept the girdle, she supplants the pentangle and the Virgin Mary. This removal from Christianity further underscores his oath both to God and to Bertilak to exchange the winnings. Thus, she also succeeds in subverting honor—by convincing Gawain to take the girdle and thereby break his exchange contract with Bertilak.

Yet another woman responsible for Gawain’s downfall is Morgan le Fey. Her character in particular represents masculine anxieties over female intervention within the political sphere. As Susan Carter points out, female “agency is down-played, mentioned but not fully interrogated” (34). Carter suggests that this functions as a way of maintaining the mystery of female magic. I, however, see it as a hidden threat hovering below the surface. Morgan le Fey represents the ultimate autonomous—and therefore dangerous—female in the text. She is the master manipulator who transforms Bertilak into the Green Knight, and sends him forth to Arthur’s court.

Indeed, it is entirely by Morgan's design that Gawain experiences a fall from grace, as both Bertilak and his wife operate under the control and orders of Morgan. The text gives two reasons why Morgan le Fey orchestrates this elaborate scheme. First "To assay, if such it were, the surfeit of pride / That is rumored of the retinue of the Round Table" (2457-58). This mentioning of pride directly correlates to Gawain's fall. Thus, if this is indeed her motive, Gawain's shame directly results from Morgan's test of his excessive pride.

The other reason given is "To afflict the fair queen, and frighten her to death" (2460). While this seems an excessively petty reason at first glance—to merely frighten another woman—it hints at Machiavellian schemes. The goal is not only to frighten Guinevere, but to essentially assassinate her. One cannot overlook the historical tradition in which Guinevere's adultery lends a hand to the fall of the Round Table. Thus, this line recaptures Guinevere's faults, because, however passively, she lends a hand to Gawain's shame. More importantly, however, this line opposes the virtuous married female who operates under her husband's power (Guinevere) with the dangerous unmarried female who operates under her own power (Morgan). Thus, it is the culmination of masculine anxieties about feminine autonomy as it illustrates how, at the behest of a woman, the entire court could potentially suffer—and indeed, how Gawain actually suffers a fall from chivalric pride and honor because of the machinations of a woman.

And yet, one must question how this female autonomy connects to the historical time period. Sheila Fisher argues that "Morgan and the Lady exercise a function and power that their historical counterparts did not often enjoy" (72). Unlike Fisher, I suggest that within the tradition of courtly love, females exercised a considerable amount of social power. After all, James Schultz argues that courtly love put constraints on masculine power:

Courtly protocols served to contain male violence – by forbidding it outright in many situations, by redirecting its energies to less

disruptive ends, and by offering an alternative way for men to distinguish themselves. At court men were also expected to display restraint in their relations with women. In other words, the same two domains—fighting and women—in which noble men were feeling restrictions in the world at large were also subject to more intensive regulation in the already more restrictive world of the court. (174)

If men were forced to sublimate their violence and restrain themselves with women, the courtly love construct can be seen as putting fetters on masculine behavior. Women are given a large degree of autonomy not otherwise present within medieval society. A woman is given permission to love outside of marriage, distancing herself from her husband's control. Further, a courtly lover is bound to do the will of his lady: the power dynamics are inverted.

Therefore, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* embodies unease about female control within the courtly love tradition. Gender roles are inverted, placing Gawain in a submissive and subdued position while privileging the females of the text as powerful and dominating. This privileging thus exposes the anxieties present within the text: not only do women have the power to seduce a man away from chivalric duties and thereby emasculate him, these women also possess autonomous power and are never effectively brought back within the realm of hegemonic masculine control.

“To portray writers as solitary individuals is to divorce them from the social context in which language always operates.”
(260)

From *A Rhetoric for Writing Teachers*

Erika Lindemann

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Faculty Research Spotlight

Professor Susie Lan Cassel, Ph.D.

Professor Cassel has spent the last year on grant leave (Fall, NEH Fellowship; Spring, National Archives External Grant) working on The Ah Quin Diary. In short, she has been editing—that is, creating a reference work—from the original manuscript of a ten-volume, local diary. This diary runs from 1877-1902 and is arguably the first significant writing in English by a Chinese immigrant to America. Further, she is one of twelve scholars invited (expenses paid) to Wu Yi University in China to speak at an International Conference on International Migration by the China Society for Overseas Chinese History Studies. Consider the following abstract detailing a small portion of her work.

The Mayor of San Diego's Chinatown:

Tom Ah Quin and His Diary

When looking for primary resources about Chinese immigrants to America in the 19th century, scholars usually find themselves nearly empty handed. They turn to books such as the *Wells Fargo English-Chinese Phrase Book* (circa 1875) and the autobiography of Yale-educated Yan Phou Lee (1887), but the former lacks the richness of a lived life and the latter is written from the perspective of a man with strikingly different economic and cultural circumstances from the vast majority of 19th century Chinese emigrants. By contrast, the Ah Quin Diary exists in ten volumes, spanning twenty-five years from 1877-1902, and is written mostly in English.

Tom Ah Quin lived in San Diego's early Chinatown for the last half of his life, from approximately 1881 until his death in 1914, and was affectionately called "The Mayor of Chinatown." He learned to read and write

in English and in Chinese at an American Presbyterian Mission School in Guangzhou and emigrated to California in the 1860's where he worked as a cook for coal miners in Alaska, as a domestic for Army officers at the Presideo in San Francisco, and as a labor broker for the Southern California Railroads. He left behind ten volumes of diaries which give us an amazing account of this entrepreneur and father of twelve.

The diary that Ah Quin left behind is important because it addresses from a first-person perspective most of the landmark experiences of 19th century Chinese emigrants to America, including working as a cook, houseboy, railroad labor recruiter, and laundry and restaurant owner. In addition, it gives us insight on the life of a man who converted to Christianity and married a woman rescued from prostitution by the famous Donaldina Cameron Mission Home. It was handed down through Ah Quin's descendants until a great grandson donated the extant volumes to the San Diego Historical Society (probably half of the volumes have not survived). No other primary resource like the Ah Quin Diary is currently known to exist. Her paper will discuss this impressive man and the text he left behind as well as the process of turning a family diary into a published reference volume for use by scholars around the world.

A Plan “Taylor-Made?”

A Rhetorical Review

Avery Throop

Sunaura Taylor and Alexander Taylor strive to inspire within a diversified audience some stirring of responsibility towards animals, the environment, and each other through their literary commentary “Is It Possible to Be a Conscientious Meat Eater?” Although enforcing their points with a tone of dismissiveness and perhaps hostility towards opposing views, Taylor and Taylor employ various rhetorical strategies to persuade readers to undergo a conversion of sorts. Advocating veganism to promote kindness and nonviolence and to combat animal cruelty, world hunger, and “basically every other environmental problem,” the authors have an admirable undertaking (Taylor & Taylor 200). The authors’ devotion, almost religious in nature, towards their belief that it is impossible to provide animal products ethically and sustainably, as well as matters involving veganism, is commendable. However, the extent to which Taylor and Taylor attempt to force their audience into submission to their mission unfortunately stunts the performance and effectiveness of their argument overall.

Sympathy was not a commodity that many readers of opposing beliefs tended to impart upon Taylor and Taylor due to the barriers they, themselves, erected within their argument. The first, exceedingly glaring error made by the authors is their confusion between opinion and fact—not to mention the assumptions, controversial and often incorrect, that they make about the personal beliefs of their readers.

There are two instances, in particular, of such rhetorical blunders. The primary inaccuracy is the assumption that all readers readily believe in and accept that global warming as caused by human beings is a fact, when in

reality many suspect that it is simply a normal environmental cycle. Controversy continues over this idea, so to expect that the entire audience shares the same feelings inevitably alienates the sizeable share of readers who disagree. Starting out by distancing a significant portion of the audience with such a tiny part of the overall argument, Taylor and Taylor's declaration regarding "the animal industry's devastating effects on the planet and global warming," certainly reverses any progress to that point in the article towards a conversion (200).

The other conspicuous mistake made by Taylor and Taylor...is their lack of citation by solid and reputable sources to back up questionable statements made throughout the work.

The other assumption that also aptly alienates Taylor and Taylor's audience is the supposition, by the authors, that it is difficult "for even the most ardent omnivore to consume meat without guilt" (200). This seems to be complete fiction. There are plenty of people who feel absolutely no guilt about eating meat in the audience to which the authors are speaking. Exceedingly divisive, this comment remains unsupported with data and acts as the only one within the commentary that concerns guilt about eating meat.

The other conspicuous mistake made by Taylor and Taylor that, if avoided, would have made their commentary incredibly effective towards their mission—at least to a receptive audience—is their lack of citation by solid and reputable sources to back up questionable statements made throughout the work. There are only four outside sources mentioned throughout the entire article, only one of which is academically viable and for which enough data is provided that readers would be able to obtain the original source for additional information or clarification. The reference to the article, which appeared in *Newsweek*, is the most tangible support

attainable in the commentary (199). The other three citations are either incomplete, unwise to use, or both.

The first, occurring early on in the commentary, is a hyperlink to a Wikipedia article written by an external source about the report “Livestock’s Long Shadow -- Environmental Issues and Options” by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (200). Wikipedia is, in itself, not a scholarly source to be used to support an argument in a published article and extensively weakens the credibility of Taylor and Taylor. It would have been much more appropriate to provide excerpts or a link to the actual report where the readers could read directly from the source.

Taylor and Taylor also cite Gary Francione of Rutgers University. While referring to a university academic is an appropriate source from which to quote, the citation is nonetheless incomplete as the authors do not directly quote Mr. Francione, nor do they provide from where the statement was originally obtained. And so, This source performs as a sort of literary “sound-bite” as the audience has no idea of the context in which Francione made his assertion. Also, the addition of this source is divisive and nullifies any comradery formed by previous aspects of the authors’ argument.

Attempting to regain support by their readers through logic, Taylor and Taylor refer to the laws and regulations in governmental documents. The authors state that there are “FDA regulations, which send all larger meat animals to the same slaughterhouses that are used for factory-farmed animals” (202). Unfortunately, no code sections were provided, so it is impossible not to be critical of such a statement. Should Taylor and Taylor have made some citation available so that readers could see or even look up the FDA regulations, the argument would have made great strides.

However, nearing the culmination of the editorial piece, authors Taylor and Taylor had a moment of clarity. To be frank, the conclusion is phenomenal and provides for a balance to the incredibly loaded and controversial statements of the previous few paragraphs, perhaps the whole

essay. Drawing all readers together under the same umbrella of ambitions, Taylor and Taylor succinctly combine their goals with those of their opposition to create an aspiration to which 90% of their audience would be receptive and sympathetic. Taylor and Taylor use the phrase “we hope” which shows a more pacifistic facet of themselves and aligns more with their nonviolent motivation (204). They also *ask* their readers to “think beyond [their] taste buds” which furthers this aim (204). In effect, the authors finally reach some level of redemption and accomplish a very important aspect of their mission in writing the commentary, saving it from complete ineffectiveness. The last two paragraphs affirm that the real reason for the argument against meat is not a simple battle of preferences: it is a battle of high stakes, a battle most average Americans consider of great importance. Ultimately, it is a battle for “kindness and nonviolence” (204). Nevertheless, this battle cannot be won if the two sides are warring among themselves. So, thankfully, the attacks on personal beliefs and the hostile tone that the Taylor’s present throughout the rest of the work are absent in these final paragraphs. That is why this last section, purposefully or not, brings all readers back onto the same page.

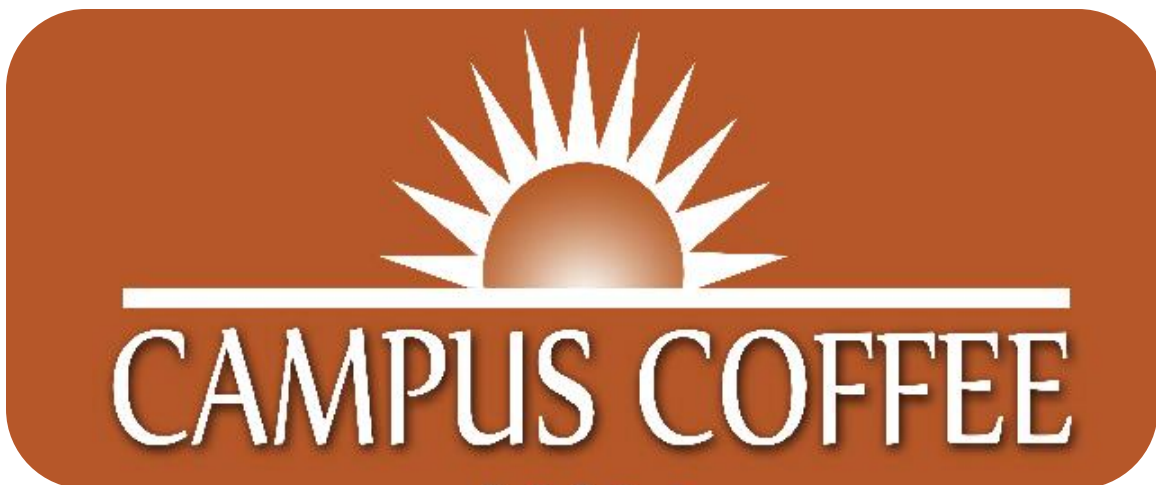
Unfortunately, however, while readers of many social classes may see the Taylor and Taylor commentary, the article is truly only directed towards a specific group, creating more division. Regrettable as it may be, members of the lower classes tend to eat what they can afford for the most part. Fresh, organic, locally grown fruits and vegetables can be expensive, so it is usually people of the middle-to-upper classes with disposable incomes who are able to afford such a lifestyle as veganism. Thus, Taylor and Taylor look towards those with disposable incomes—the middle to upper-middle class and the upper class—for support, endeavoring to attract readers who are either already sympathetic to their cause or who have the potential to convert.

As a reader, I fall into the category of persons to whom the authors looked for support. Despite only having a meager disposable income as a

college student, I nonetheless possess the ability to choose what I eat. Should Taylor and Taylor's argument have been more convincing, I may have considered becoming vegan. However, due to various aspects of their argument, I am alienated by them, as I am sure others like myself are as well. Even the drastic turn-around achieved in the last couple of paragraphs does not save this piece from near complete ineffectiveness as the false assumptions and rhetorical missteps overshadow any redeeming qualities that the article may possess.

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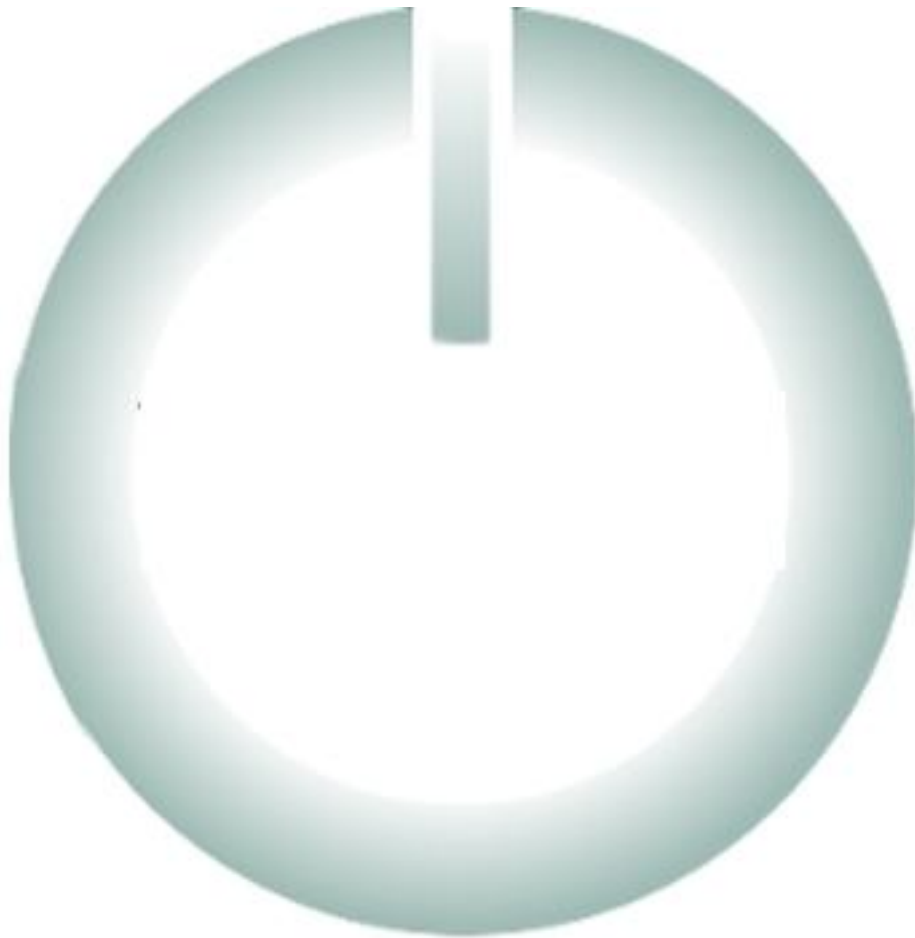
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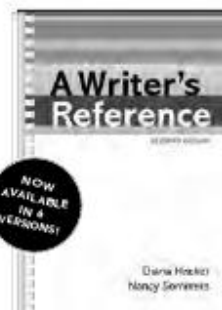
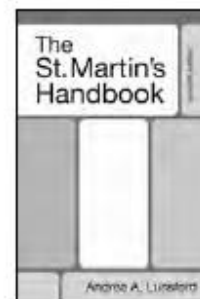


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