# MILK, BODY, WOMAN, NATURE
# UN-EARTHING THE ROOTS OF AGRI-CULTURE

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**ABSTRACT**

With the adoption of agricultural practices came a conceptual shift in the way humans viewed the natural world and thus themselves and o/Others. Agri-culture, a form of cultural philosophy to which agricultural practices are inherent, posits firstly that humans are distinct from and superior to nature. Certain forms of nature are perceived as being inherently inferior and thus are believed to need human control to reach full potential; other forms of nature are seen as inherently wild though eventually tameable through human intervention. This perception of the natural world is mapped onto human existence and relations; as such, paradoxes and crises arise simply from the fact that humans are natural beings. How can one be superior to or distinct from oneself? How does one relate to one's own body or other bodies as well as nature itself if these are seen as inherently inferior, controllable or uncontrollable? I examine four unique directions that have been posed as a response to this paradox of agri-cultural existence: transcendence via regulation and control of bodily acts of eating and breastfeeding; institutional denial of embodiment and existence; unwavering faith in human-created science; and above all, a fetishization of the natural world's creative power. I argue that food justice, birth justice, women's rights, feminist, and ecofeminist movements must reject the underlying agri-cultural philosophies that engender the mutually reinforcing oppressions of women, nature, food, and the body and instead must engage in praxis that is built upon and through notions of naturally embedded, embodied existences. Agri-cultural philosophy must be un-earthed; this is only possible through a complete and profound remembering of the unitive, natural existence from whence we came.

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## 1. AN INTRODUCTION TO PATRIARCHAL HUMAN/NATURE

As humans, we[1] are all natural beings.[2] We are born from and exist simultaneously within the natural world, as a part of the natural world, and as the natural world; the dimensions of being are unitive,[3] though not unitary.[4] There is no place in the world where an actual boundary exists between two realms of being–that is, human and nature.[5] Interaction in the natural realm occurs through and within us.[6] Yet rather than embrace such an embodied, embedded existence, agri-culture–a specific form of culture that I identify and explore throughout this thesis–conceptualizes humanness as a life distinct from and dominant over environmental (surrounding) nature as well as corporealized (bodily) nature. Nature, and the socially constructed manifestations of nature, are believed to be inherently inferior and thus to need human control to reach their fullest potential. In extreme circumstances humanness is also considered distinct from and dominant over conceptual nature; i.e., to be the agri-cultural human ideal is to to exist "above" the Earth–i.e., to have no need or respect for its creative power, believing that one possesses this power for oneself and having wholehearted, even unwavering faith in the success of this invented creative power to infinitely mold life.[7] These beliefs manifest as a cultural-symbolic distancing from what is categorized as "natural" as well as an assumption of physical separation from the natural world,[8] and they are institutionalized in our societies so as to maintain the patriarchal domination (inherent to agri-

[1] See below, "Who is 'we'?"
[2] Ynestra King, "The Ecology of Feminism and Feminism of Ecology," in *Healing the Wounds: The Promise of Ecofeminism*, ed. Judith Plant (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1989), 18.
[3] Charlene Spretnak, "Radical Nonduality in Ecofeminist Philosophy," in *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature*, ed. Karen J. Warren (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997): 425.
[4] Linda Vance, "Ecofeminism and Wilderness," in *NWSA Journal* 9 no. 3 (1997): 66.
[5] Sherry B. Ortner, "Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?," *Feminist Studies* 1, no. 2 (1972:: 10, https://doi.org/10.2307/3177638.
[6] Terri Field, "Is the Body Essential for Ecofeminism?," *Organization & Environment* 13, no. 1 (2000): 45, citing C. Bigwood, "Renaturalizing the body (with the help of Merleau-Ponty)," *Hypatia* 6(3) (1991).
[7] Field, "Body," 45-47.
[8] Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Ecofeminism: First and Third World Women," *American Journal of Theology & Philosophy* 18, no. 1 (1997): 34-35.

culture) of the natural world. Such demarcations are socially and historically generated and therefore are perpetually in flux; that is, it is not always the same forms of humans and natural spaces that are opposed, though humans are always opposed to nature symbolically and physically.

Nature, "essentially different from the dominant,"[9] is defined anthropocentrically and either inferiorized outright or considered with an offensive romanticization that Vance likens to the "noble savage" trope,[10] wherein indigenous peoples are idealized for their presumed innate goodness and moral superiority for their connection to and preservation of the earth, but at the same time are still considered "primitive" or "savage."[11] In the first instance, a recreational park is neither "good" nature nor is it "culture"[12]; it is a natural space designated by humans for human use and thus is often given less environmentalist consideration than other spaces where human impact threatens the romanticized "pure" wilderness.[13] The wilderness is "idealized as…the highest or purest form of nature"[14] because it is defined in anthropocentric terms as an uncontrollable space devoid of humans, a definition which ignores the multiple diverse environments and ecosystems of which the wilderness is composed[15] and instead fetishizes its "untouched" or "pure" nature. Vance notes that the precautions taken prior to entering the wilderness reinforce both the human/nature split as well as the belief that human innovation is superior to nature's irrationality.[16]

As an example of the cultural-symbolic distancing from nature we turn to science fiction, which can be analyzed not only as an explicit form of social criticism[17] but also as a way to

[9] King, "Ecology," 21.
[10] Vance, "Wilderness," 62.
[11] Ter Ellingson, *The Myth of the Noble Savage* (University of California Press: 2001).
[12] Vance, Wilderness, 63.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ivi., 62.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ivi., 63
[17] L.W. Michaelson, "Social Criticism in Science Fiction," *The Antioch Review* (1954): 503.

understand implicit cultural attitudes towards physical and conceptual nature. The genre often removes humans from the terrestrial earth (physical nature) in order to colonize space or creates new forms of nature: hyper-nutritious pellets replace food,[18] artificial wombs replace real wombs (and the process of birth),[19] and spaceships replace the Earth. What sort of cultural assertion about nature is necessary to engender these notions of the future? As we shall see, under patriarchal agri-culture, humans–but a specific kind of socially-constructed ideal human–remain distinct from and in control of (certain kinds of) nature that appear to be inherently inferior to humans and in need of human control, a hierarchy that is then projected onto other relationships. Such a separation is not a natural occurrence nor one that exists only in the past; rather, patriarchal agri-cultural philosophy has been constructed and refined over thousands of years. How did we come to extricate ourselves from nature?

### 1.1. Who are We?

I must first ask and answer the question: who are "we"? From a feminist lens, allowing for personal voice, or "the inclusion of emotional language for the purposes of expressing identity," in academic writing poses a multifaceted challenge to the false construction of the removed, impersonal masculine author.[20] Using "we" may speak not only to the author's womanhood and personal connection to the topic[21] but perhaps also to the reader herself. This can be quite powerful and emphasize, as King writes, women's/our "particular stake…in healing the alienation between human and nonhuman nature."[22] Yet who is included–or excluded–when she (or we) opts to use

[18] Edward Page Mitchell, *The Senator's Daughter*, in *The Tachypomp and Other Stories*, New York: The Sun, 1879), Retrieved from https://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks06/0602521h.html.
[19] Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*, London: Chatto & Windus, 1932): 6.
[20] Kim Mitchell, "Academic voice: On feminism, presence, and objectivity in writing," *Nursing Inquiry* (2017): 3.
[21] Ibid.
[22] King, "Ecology," 20.

these pluralities? What perspectives are prioritized, and which are silenced?[23] What does it mean to suggest that "women" have a special stake in healing the consequences of patriarchal actions? Firstly, nested within the human/nature dualism are further dualisms: not all humans are evenly divided from all nature or actively participate in the splitting of humans from nature (or the likening of some humans to nature). To speak of "all cultures" is ahistorical and as inaccurate as saying "all women" or "all men." My argument builds upon the nature/culture and male/female opposition posed by Ortner and identifies the origins of such a philosophy with agri-culture, thus attempting to correct the generalization of "all cultures" in her otherwise fantastic piece *Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?* Further, the word "human" is falsely inclusive; gender-neutral terms, which create the sense that gender does not matter,[24] have often been used to exclude or erase women's specific gendered and sexed experiences.

I cannot criticize the erasure of "women" in the word "human" without also addressing that "woman" historically has not meant all women; it has primarily meant elite white women. Womanhood is not homogeneous.[25] As such, the all-inclusive "women" must be clarified. Otherwise, this term speaks only to hegemonic women, the ones whose voices are already most likely to be heard and amplified. When King speaks of how "women and nature…are the original 'others'" under patriarchy, with "man over woman" serving as the "prototype of other forms of domination,"[26] she fails to address that dominations manifest and are embodied differently based on positionality. To assume "all of us [women] are Others" and therefore should be united erases both the material reality of non-equal patriarchal oppression[27] and, crucially, that of intragynal

[23] Alexis Easley, "Toward a Feminist Theory of Teaching Argumentative Writing," *Feminist Teacher* (1997): 7.
[24] Paige Hall Smith and Ethan T. Bamberger, "Gender Inclusivity is Not Gender Neutrality," *Journal of Human Lactation* 37(3) (2021):442.
[25] Mitchell, "Voice," 3.
[26] King, "Ecology," 20.
[27] Niamh Moore, "Ecofeminism as Third Wave Feminism? Essentialism, Activism and the Academy," *Third Wave Feminism*, 2004, 212.

relations. Speaking for "all women" at once flattens and denies the voices of oppressed women.[28] The use of "we" or "woman" without clarifying exactly *to whom* one is referring or, crucially, who one is, erases the racism perpetuated by white women against black women, the classism perpetuated by rich women against poor women, and every other form of intersecting oppression *within* "women." Even when "all women" do experience misogyny at the hands of men, the misogyny is not the same for all women, nor between or within women. As such, I clarify these terms (we, women, human) when I use them, and urge you as the reader to also consider who you imagine "we" to be.

### 1.2. Where Did Patriarchy Create/Leave the Path?

With the eventual adoption of agricultural practices came a conceptual and cultural shift in the way humans viewed the natural world; this inherently also changed cultural perceptions of themselves and o/Others. I argue that Agri-culture, which I define as a culture that not only originates with and survives on agriculture but also proclaims agricultural philosophy to be essential for civilization and vice versa–for a distance from and control over nature to be essential for agriculture; is the origin of the human/nature hierarchy, which itself is the original prototype for the resulting dualistic philosophy that underlies all patriarchal and agri-cultural human relations with/in the self and the other(s). It is only through a deconstruction of this underlying dualism, thus, that we may address the crises and oppressions of nature, food, and embodiment that are built upon it.

#### 1.2.1. *Some Humans, Some Nature*

[28] Mitchell, "Voice," 4.

Of course, not all humans were agriculturalists, nor were all agriculturalists bent on subjugating the Earth. However, it is generally from the hegemonic agri-cultural perspective that human history is recorded, interpreted, and presented. As this is a theoretical paper, I remain cautious firstly when interpreting the historical and social record and secondly when formulating my questions about history and society, as the framework that informs these questions is undeniably constructed by my surrounding culture and positionality.[29] Ecofeminist, feminist, and food justice positions inspire my own writing and questioning, and it is through these lenses that I examine the historical origins of the patriarchal agri-culture that influences modern-day oppressive philosophy and practice; e.g., institutionalized food oppression, disparities in breastfeeding rates, promotion of irresponsible and oppressive technology at the expense of non-privileged persons, ecological disasters, and fetishization of natural creative power, among others. As Lerner notes, speaking of patriarchy's origins must also include an exploration of this system's change over time; that is, patriarchy is not primordial or unchanging but rather manifests differently over time and space.[30] "Agriculture" today means a different thing than thousands of years ago, though much like the prior note to the changing nature and function of patriarchy, I hold that agri-cultural philosophy is historic, changing, visible, and manifests/ed in varied ways–though I note that in this paper I specifically focus on women's experiences and oppressions under patriarchal agri-culture, building upon Ortner's exploration of male/female and nature/culture,[31] Spelman's discussion of Plato's mind/body dualism,[32] Lerner's *The Creation of Patriarchy,*[33] Adams' fantastic linkage of

[29] Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy*, (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986): 15.
[30] Ivi., 37.
[31] Orter, "Is Female."
[32] Elizabeth V. Spelman, "Woman as Body: Ancient and Contemporary Views," *Feminist Studies* 8, no. 1 (1982): 109, https://doi.org/10.2307/3177582.
[33] Lerner, "Creation," 1986.

sexism, misogyny, racism, and speciesism in *The Sexual Politics of Meat*,[34] and numerous other arguments within the fields of ecofeminism, food justice, women's studies, and sociology. I hope to speak to eco/feminists who have not considered the dualism of eater/eaten, to food studies scholars who have never considered feminism in their work, and to women everywhere; it is only through a combined force–as agri-culture is inherently dualist–that oppressive agri-cultural philosophy can be deconstructed.

### 1.2.2. *Agriculture and Animal Domestication as Original Prototype*

As Nature became Othered through agri-culture, those identified with Nature were similarly Othered. Before we explore who these created Others are, we must ask: what is agri-culture and how does it relate to agriculture? Darwin posited that it was agriculture that split "savagery" from "civilization"[35]; deconstructing this statement requires an understanding of what each of these terms ("savage," "civilized," and "agriculture") means and how they intersect and perpetuate hierarchies within what I specify to be agri-culture. I stress that the terms "civilized," "primitive" and "savage," are not acceptable anthropologically;[36] I use them as a method of deconstructing the context that creates and perpetuates their use. The word agriculture specifically refers to the cultivation (*culturare, colere*) of *agri*, or fields; thus, Agri-culture as a culture identifies certain forms of nature as amenable to human control and embeds this split *and* hierarchy (which engenders others) within its story. Ortner pinpoints the "specific…human ability to act upon and regulate, rather than passively move with and be moved by…natural existence" as an

[34] Carol Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat* (New York and London: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 1990).
[35] Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man* (London: John Murray, Albermarle Street, 1871): 158-184.
[36] For a great explanation of the term "civilized," I suggest: Brett Bowden, "Civilization and Its Consequences," in *Oxford Handbook Topics in Politics*, ed. Oxford Handbooks Editorial Board, 1st ed. (Oxford University Press, 2016), https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199935307.013.30.

inherent assertion made by *all* human cultures [emphasis mine];[37] while I agree with the first part of this argument, I suggest that generalizing all human cultures as actively regulating nature is ahistorical. Perhaps it is true, but this is only speculation. Yet the separation and subsequent control of nature and natural existence that she theorizes are inherent to culture are useful in the definition of agri-culture. Parts of nature that are not tendable are Othered within the discourse on "civilization," either uplifted in an inferiorizing way (as with the fetishized "primitive" wilderness) or inferiorized outright (as with barren land). The term "civilization," though outdated, proves useful once deconstructed: In Darwin's view, to be civilized means to be distinct from and superior to nature, with superiority manifesting as control or improvement of nature. Thus, a "civilized" human must be an agri-cultural one; agri-culture relies on the existence of a concept of "civility" and "savagery," or the inverse of civility: to live within nature and not to exert dominance over it– that is, to not conceive of one's existence as being dominant in an inherently hierarchical relationship with nature. There is no natural hierarchy,[38] yet agri-culture depends on the appearance thereof.

Physically and metaphysically, agriculture and animal domestication not only separated "civilized" humans from who they believed to be "savage" humans, a dualism that is based on one's connection to and dominance over nature, but also separated agricultural humans from the objects of their control and the objects of their production, who/which were objectified for their seemingly essential connection to nature. Crucially, such a connection was then used to justify their domination akin to that of nature.

[37] Ortner, "Is Female," 11.
[38] King, "Ecology," 19.

First we explore the objectification of nature in being redefined as "natural resources."[39] Language and terminology are especially relevant in the realm of "food." Unlike "eater" or "eaten," which may apply to the same animal at various times throughout its life, describing aspects of nature as "food" defines them in relation to humanity while keeping them distinct from humanity. "Should animals be ontologized as meat?" asks Vance.[40] Adams similarly addresses questions of the absent referent, the original animal which disappears in the act of butchering, packaging, and eating meat.[41] Referring to cows as beef, pigs as pork, and chicken as nuggets splits the meat from the animal[42] and the animal from us–in both senses of the word. Food is always the Other, though there is no actual, real boundary between human and food–a subdivision of human/nature. To question such a boundary, however, is wildly threatening and antithetical to agri-culture, which again defines nature as distinct and subordinate. The taboo of human meat exemplifies this clearly: to consume one's own species is to challenge the Self/Other dualism, the eater/eaten dualism, and the human/nature dualism, among others. "Food," as each of us defines it, means what objects we consume (as to be a food is to be solely objectified) and excludes those we do not; these objects are then used to categorize or define us–especially in relation to others either within agri-culture or outside of it. Sallust, writing of "rude and uncivilized folk," mentions that they "fed like beasts on the flesh of wild animals and the fruits of the earth."[43] His statement reflects the belief that food *production* and *consumption* were inherent to the constructed notions of civility. Emblematic of civilization in the classical world were three foods: bread, wine, and olive oil.[44] These require both the knowledge of how to control the land and how to process the

[39] Ivi., 20.
[40] Vance, "Wilderness," 70.
[41] Adams, *Sexual Politics*, 13.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Sallust, *Sallust*, trans. J.C. Rolfe (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 172-173.
[44] Massimo Montanari, and Beth Archer Brombert, "Hunger for Meat," In *Medieval Tastes: Food, Cooking, and the Table* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012): 62. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7312/mont16786.9.

resulting products–none grow from the earth; it is through complicated processes that grain, grapes, and olives become what we recognize as bread, wine, and olive oil. In comparison, meat and milk were seen as foods of the barbarians,[45] though of course, "civilized" people of the classical era did eat meat and milk, as do hegemonic people today–the freedom to eat both "civilized" and "savage" foods is reserved for those who are not essentialized as being savage.[46] As Adams notes, citing a conversation with Wise:

> "When white people, men in particular, eat "sausage on a stick" or "pork chop on a stick" at the state fair, for instance, it's a performance of primitivism that evokes a sense of their mastery over their imagined animal nature—a primitiveness that is perceived as mutable for white people, whose very ability to cross back and forth across the divide between savagery and civilization is one of the basic foundations of white cultural privilege."[47]

Agri-culture necessarily includes both physical separation from and control of nature (such as agricultural practices on fields) as well as a cultural-symbolic distancing (such as through choice of food) from conceptual nature. This bifold domination and separation became emblematic of Agri-cultural civilization, a social construct that justified political and social oppression of nature and of those who were seen as "closer to nature" on the basis of their supposed cultural and physical inferiority.

### 1.2.3. *Essentialism and the Body as the Origin*

[45] Ibid.
[46] Carol Adams, *The Pornography of Meat*, (New York and London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020): 39.
[47] Ibid.

While I have mostly touched on the Othering of certain humans as if it were solely related to cultural traits–i.e., the presence or absence of agricultural practices, what someone eats, where someone lives–such Othering also occurred on the basis of a perceived "internal" and essential connection to nature. This is particularly true for women, who, under patriarchal agri-culture, are likened to nature: that is, we are firstly separated from the falsely neutral category of human, then inferiorized based on our essentialized connection to nature, which is compounded by race, class, and other aspects of identity. Ecofeminism specifically examines this oppression in regards to women, women's embodied experiences, and nature, the oppressions of which intersect and are reinforced under patriarchy.[48] As Moore notes, critics often see ecofeminism as reproducing essentialist claims that women are inherently closer to nature.[49] Yet Field argues that while this is a mischaracterization of ecofeminism, we should not be so quick to disregard "'essentialism's great text.'"[50] I too find that the body–and particularly the female body–is essential for understanding agri-cultural notions of control and separation over nature, as these (the body, the female body, and nature) are ontologized as one and the same and thus denied, devalued, and inferiorized jointly.

Ortner asks, "What could there be in the generalized structure and conditions of existence, common to every culture, that would lead every culture to devalue women?"[51] Again, while I note that perhaps it is not *every* culture that does so but rather patriarchal and agri-cultural ones, her question forces us to search for what has been deemed essential in Others that would appear to justify oppression. "It all begins…with the body," Ortner writes[52]; indeed, this is also where I

[48] King, "Ecology," 20.
[49] Moore, "Ecofeminism," 228.
[50] Field, "Body," 39; citing E. Rooney, as cited in G.C. Spivak (with E. Rooney). (1994). In a word: Interview. In N. Schor & E. Weed (Eds.), *The essential difference* (pp. 151-184). Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
[51] Ortner, "Is Female," 10.
[52] Ivi., 12.

begin. Useful is Spelman's exploration of cultural somatophobia as rooted in the mind/body dualism, a philosophical belief that posits that the human is internally split into mind and body,[53] and one that is based on the human/nature split. This may mean one sees oneself as living with a body[54] (i.e., possessing a body) or living *within* a body (inhabiting a body).[55] In both the body is perceived as the object, with the mind existing separately as the subject. The mind is considered to be of a higher order not in the physical plane of existence; the body is perceived as being separate and lower, literally "of the flesh." "It is in and through the soul, if at all, that we shall have knowledge, be in touch with reality, and lead a life of virtue," Plato's lessons on the soul and body tell us.[56] The body is not a neutral zone. Rather, it "keeps us from real knowledge" and "tempts us away from the virtuous life."[57] Thus, the mind and body are constantly at war within the self; or rather, the mind's hold on the self is continuously tugged at by the body's terrestrial weight. Well, it stands to reason that getting rid of the body, or the traits that characterize the body, will free the mind. We readily see how this is influenced by the belief that humans, as agriculturalists, are the removed, civilized subject to the terrestrial, uncivilized nature that must be continually reined in. This also begs us to ask the question of how humans ontologize themselves and other humans, given that we all are natural beings.

Spelman helpfully asks, "how are we to know when the body has the upper hand over the soul?"[58] In other words, who/what epitomizes the body? According to Plato, all women, slaves, children, and animals: they "exemplify…states of being and forms of living most removed from

[53] Spelman, "Woman," 131.
[54] Ortner, "Is Female," 10.
[55] Thomas Fuchs, "The Disappearing Body: Anorexia as a Conflict of Embodiment," Eating and Weight Disorders 27, no. 1 (2022): 110, https://doi.org/10.1007/s40519-021-01122-7.
[56] Spelman, "Woman," 131.
[57] Ivi., 111.
[58] Ivi., 115.

the philosophical ideal."[59] Agri-cultural philosophy does not exist in a vacuum; indeed, Plato's mind/body hierarchy is integral to his system of politics.[60] Much as the highest kind of mind should rule supreme over the lower aspects of the self, he believes that rulers of the state must keep watch over the "unruly appetitive" multitudes.[61] It is not an absurd leap to see how a philosophy identifying specific kinds of people as manifestations of the body–a terrible beast dragging the mind down and preventing it from ascending to higher planes of existence–readily translates into systematic oppression and suppression of such people. They/we are the symbolic body manifested in reality and thus, unlike the floating mind we cannot see to emulate, *can* be compared to oneself. As such, to prove that one is as little connected to and dependent on the body/nature as possible, one must examine the characteristics that appear inherent to these inferior groups (i.e., essentialize them) and then deny and erase these traits *as well as* nature itself, for the only way the reality of our dependence on nature can be denied is if nature is wholly eradicated and controlled *and* human still survives. This is exactly what agri-culture vehemently argues when it exploits the Earth with, as King notes, no regard for the consequences of such actions.[62]

### 1.3. Agri-culture as Fundamental to Patriarchy

Ecofeminists have tended to assert that male domination over women is the basis for patriarchal domination over nature[63] and thus engenders the other dualisms and oppressions present in today's society. Fisher, in contrast, argues that the domestication of animals, which involves the control of feeding as well as of reproduction, taught men the practice of raping

[59] Ivi., 119.
[60] Ivi., 113.
[61] Ibid.
[62] King, "Ecology,", 21.
[63] Ivi., 19.

women.[64] Certainly the terms used for agricultural practices (plowing, raping, furrowing, sowing seed) are often the ones used for male violence against women or male-centered, female-as-object sexual language. De Beauvoir notes that Adam "fertilizes [Eve] as he owns and fertilizes the soil, and through her he makes all nature his realm."[65] Ortner impactfully explores how women's participation in the cultural process–such as the raising of children or domestic cooking–are considered low levels of function, yet the culturally constructed "higher levels" of the same functions, such as with university schooling or haute cuisine, are restricted to the male realm and considered superior.[66] The same pattern is visible in agri-culture, wherein natural lands–even if "food" is available upon them–are inferiorized in comparison to human-tended lands, which are given value through human (akin to culture in Ortner's example) intervention. I argue, thus, that the dominations of nature, women, and the body, which are mutually reinforcing,[67] originate from the agri-cultural belief that humans are distinct from and superior to nature. I reiterate that we are all natural beings; as such, the apparent essential connection to nature is Otherized from the self–crucially, whether it is in the form of essentialized "nature," the body, women, or animals. Ultimately humans, fearing the radical nonduality of true natural existence *and* the female-coded nature/body/Other, are trapped in a cycle of self-hatred and Other-hatred, attempting to deny what is real by suffocating embodied experiences and striving for what is impossible, a totally transcendent self and other devoid of all natural connection. In the ultimate expression of agri-culture, an idealized human is wholly independent from nature in all its manifestations. Food oppression, thus has its roots in agri-culture, as does first food oppression, oppression of women,

[64] Elizabeth Fisher, *Woman's Creation: Sexual Evolution and the Shaping of Society*. (Garden City, N .Y .: Doubleday, 1979).
[65] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. H.M. Parshley (London: Jonathan Cape, 1956): 170.
[66] Ortner, "Is Female,"19-20.
[67] King, "Ecology," 18.

oppression of animals, factory farming, deforestation, food apartheid, birth injustice, and countless other forms of oppressive relations within patriarchal agriculture; it is impossible, therefore, to radically challenge these oppressions without annihilating the dualistic perceptions of life that are enshrined within agri-culture, and embracing a unitive–though not unitary existence.

## 2. DIRECTIONS

Having examined the origins of patriarchal agri-cultural philosophy, we now come to the varied manifestations of this philosophy in today's cultural story as well as the movements and directions taken in response to the consequences of this philosophy. To clarify, as agri-culture posits that humans are distinct from and superior to nature, with some "nature" being inherently inferior and thus needing human control to reach full potential, and with other "nature" being inherently "uncontrollable," paradoxes arise simply from the fact that humans are natural beings. How can one be superior to or distinct from oneself? How does one relate to one's own body or other bodies if they are seen as inherently controllable or uncontrollable? I examine four unique directions (and their implications) that have been posed as a response to this paradox of agri-cultural existence.

The first direction I explore is the second-wave feminist goal of transcendence, which manifests as a denial of immanence[68] and a praising of the realm of culture in opposition to nature. This furthers the nature/human disconnect on a personal or bodily level. Human, in this case, is expanded by proponents of transcendence to include women, though often at the expense of non-hegemonic women, animals, or nature. That is, the belief that humans are superior to nature is not questioned but rather reframed to include some women, who must deny their connection to nature via somatophobia so that they may embrace and be embraced by the mind.

The second is the external institutionalized denial of embodied experiences, which furthers the nature/civilized human disconnect on a societal or legal level. As oppression operates within the patriarchal system, it serves to hide Others. Thus a specific kind of human remains superior to nature, as manifestations of nature are simply denied. Somatophobia features here as well, with

[68] King, "Ecology," 21.

laws and marketing campaigns directed at bodily sexuality, perceived animalism, and racialized notions of nature.

The third evokes the notion of control and progress within agricultural philosophy by always seeking to improve manners of being, living, and eating. The body, nature, and thus those who embody the body or nature are seen as inherently inferior and thus amenable to, and in need of, human control. Finally, progress away from nature (much like transcendence) is specifically done so through the use of human-created technology or matters of thinking which are assumed infallible (as they are human-generated). Psychophilia abounds in this direction.

In the final case, I explore the intersection of each of these directions, wherein human totally transcends and dominates Nature/Other and becomes the idealized self. Natural ways of living are replaced with human-created simulacra which mask reality altogether. In response to the question of how one can be superior to or distinct from oneself as a natural being, this response simply denies the original truth that humans are natural beings. As King notes, this requires a profound forgetting of nature[69] and the marginalization and oppression of the embodied manifestations of nature.

### 2.1. Transcendence, Escapism, Control, and Denial

Denial engenders escapism. That is, oppression denies the possibility for an embodied, embedded life; and individuals living the effects of existing in/as a body that is derogated by society may direct such societally-constructed hatred inwards, resulting in feelings of shame or guilt that are not internally generated but appear as such. One pathway to liberation from these feelings, thus, may be to escape the hated body by denying it from oneself, rather than critiquing

[69] Ivi., 22.

the social and political philosophies that engender such somatophobia. As we are our bodies, escapism results in both internal disembodiment and external disdain for those who appear to epitomize or embody the hated natural or animal body. Not all individuals are equally able to deny the hated aspects of the/ir body/ies; transcendence comes more easily to some than others[70] and most often at the expense of others.[71]

I begin with an overview of transcendence, the avenue towards women's liberation posed by some second-wave feminists such as de Beauvoir, Friedan and Firestone. I then examine how this societally-induced and internally-focused direction manifests today: firstly, I discuss the denial of a connection to one's own body; secondly, I discuss the attempts to cease or control one's bodily acts–specifically eating and feeding–in efforts to distance oneself from the negative perceptions of the body, especially as women have long been identified with not only the body but specifically the acts of the/ir body/ies.[72] Thirdly, I explore the relationship between human animals and non-human animals. Within each section, I examine external denial of the body, or social, governmental, and institutional attempts to remove the body (which represents and is represented by Others) from daily hegemonic life.

### 2.1.1. *Transcendence of the Body and Acts of the Body*

In *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir calls for transcendence to "prevail over immanence."[73] Transcendence in an agri-cultural context may be defined as the human act of rising above the natural world to a higher plane of existence, often called "culture." King identifies this

[70] Field 53-54, citing M. Mellor, *Feminism and ecology* (Cambridge, MA: Polity, 1997).
[71] Spelman, "Woman," 120-122, 127.
[72] Ivi., 110.
[73] Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 153.

as specifically a culture that is "based on the increasing domination of nature."[74] de Beauvoir's concept of transcendence focuses on the realm of men as the realm of culture, and opposes this to the immanence of Nature "in which the soul is imprisoned."[75] Liberation for women, to de Beauvoir, thus follows when women join men in transcending Nature. What engenders this freeing? De Beauvoir's writing reveals two notions of how transcendence may prevail over immanence: the first occurs when a woman has "emancipated herself from nature,"[76] meaning her body; the second follows when she, or "humanity," has mastered the bodily acts that are perceived as being the source of her oppression under patriarchy. Pregnancy, birth, and breastfeeding are of special significance within second-wave feminism; they are considered oppressive by de Beauvoir and Firestone not solely because they take place within oppressive patriarchal agri-culture but also because they are seen as inherently "barbaric"[77] and painful, and thus signal the inherently inferior female body as the thing to leave behind and control, just as the inherently inferior nature should be and must be dominated under agri-culture. "Artificial insemination," de Beauvoir writes, "completes the evolutionary advance that will enable humanity to *master* [emphasis mine] reproductive function."[78] Firestone bluntly states that pregnancy is a "deformation of the body."[79] In this view, woman is the hated body, is the acts of her body, and is the Other; thus denying the body or the acts of the body will create the illusion of transcendence. De Beauvoir's words mirror those of Plato; we see the same somatophobia and the same desire to free the mind from the body in his writing, wherein the body is ontologized not as a neutral zone in which the mind resides but rather as an untrained or malicious creature that actively prevents the mind or soul from

[74] King, "Ecology," 21.
[75] Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 163.
[76] Ivi., 142.
[77] Firestone, *The Dialect of Sex*, (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1970): 198.
[78] Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 142.
[79] Firestone, *The Dialect of Sex*, 198.

transcending to the realm of culture. Yet while Plato holds up women as embodying the conceptual body and categorizes women as inferior, de Beauvoir holds up the female body itself and suggests that women move beyond it. Why is that? As the patriarchal association of women to the hated and feared body does contribute to the exclusion of women from the cultural realm,[80] it is not difficult to understand why the idea of transcending the body–and specifically the female body–is attractive to second-wave feminists. As Adrienne Rich points out, "[w]e have been perceived for too many centuries as pure Nature, exploited and raped like the earth and the solar system; small wonder if we not try to become Culture: pure spirit, mind."[81]

Spelman rightfully asks "[I]s the way to avoid oppression to…insist that woman not be seen as connected to her body at all?"[82] Further, which women are able to deny immanence, and at whose expense? That is, for a woman to criticize the patriarchal oppression of her body (which under patriarchy is identified with her) by denying her body "nature" merely redirects hatred and oppression back towards women's bodies (including her own), as well as onto other subordinate groups who cannot deny their bodies as easily.[83] Bodies, as Spelman notes, are always particular bodies.[84] Acts of the body cannot be ceased or transcended without repercussions–though exactly where these repercussions land is dependent on positionality. Mellor and Griffin both identify the "illusion of transcendence"[85] as being based on the sexual division of labor. That is, men are more easily able to deny the notion that they are natural by avoiding work coded as immanent through its association with the body (such as cleaning) or by designating women's acts as immanent.[86]

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[80] Field, "Body," 39.
[81] Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born*: *Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (New York: Norton, 1976): 285.
[82] Spelman, "Woman," 123.
[83] Ivi., 127.
[84] Ivi., 128.
[85] Field, "Body," 53, citing Mellor, "Feminism," and Susan Griffin, "Made from this earth: An anthology of writings," (New York: Harper & Row, 1982).
[86] Mellor, "Feminism."

Griffin argues this clearly: "When a man is hungry, a woman prepares the meal. When he defecates, a woman cleans the toilet. Thus, a man can live his whole life with a disdain for the simple needs of the human body, and for the labour[sic] needed to sustain that body."[87] Yet both Field and Spelman draw attention to how certain women are also able to deny immanence through race and class[88] as well as the corresponding fact that "certain women have had their 'bodily needs' looked after by other women."[89] Spelman notes that Friedan's avenue to liberation similarly requires a dissociation from the question of who will perform the negatively-coded bodily tasks that a liberated woman can't be bothered with.[90] That is, where do these tasks go? If they are placed in the realm of scientific agri-culture, as de Beauvoir and Firestone propose, what consequences does this have for the women who are identified with conquerable, inferior nature? Consider that artificial insemination, which de Beauvoir upholds as an "evolutionary advance" that benefits women, has its origins in the rape of an unconscious, unknowing woman.[91] Additionally, though Firestone stresses that the scientific developments of fertility control and artificial reproduction can be misused as tools of capitalism and imperialism,[92] she nonetheless champions them as an avenue towards liberation from oppression. Again, we ask, liberation for whom? The "Father of Modern Gynecology," J. Marion Sims, conducted many of his inhumane experiments on enslaved black women,[93] a fact that is hidden in his commendable title. Thus, a redefinition of human to include some women in the human vs. nature dualism does not, and will not ever be a pathway to

[87] Griffin, "Made from this earth," 15.
[88] See below, Acts of the Body. Certain women are culturally associated with nature.
[89] Field, "Body," 54.
[90] Spelman, "Woman," 122.
[91] Genea Corea, *The Mother Machine: Reproductive Technologies from Artificial Insemination to Artificial Wombs* (New York : Harper & Row, 1985): 12.
[92] Firestone, *The Dialect of Sex*, 196, 197, 200.
[93] Monica Christmas, "#SayHerName: Should Obstetrics and Gynecology Reckon with the Legacy of JM Sims?" *Reprod Sci*. 2021 Nov;28(11):3282-3284. doi: 10.1007/s43032-021-00567-6.

liberation for all women; rather, it results in perpetuating agri-cultural oppressions of women, nature, and the body–especially for those who cannot so easily transcend the immanent body.

### 2.1.2. *Denying Immanence through Controlling Acts of the Body*

Agriculture divides nature into two categories to which control is fundamental. Either land is easily tendable, or it is ultimately conquerable. This has severe implications for the natural body and the essentialized Other, which are thus perceived to be easily controllable or ultimately conquerable. Spelman notes that women have long been associated with bodily functions[94] that appear to signal an inherent inferiority and thus are used to justify subordination to men/culture. Denial of these acts may likewise appear as a valid route for transcending this subordination. I explore two bodily acts, eating and breastfeeding, and the denials and control thereof as well as the resulting personal disembodiment and external reinforced oppression of women, women's bodies, and all that is identified with nature.

#### 2.1.2.1. *Eating*

Transcending the natural body may manifest as the regulation or cessation of eating as a method to disembody oneself *or* to distance oneself from women/the body which is coded as female. Eating is a culturally-constructed act underwritten by a biological necessity. As Visser notes, because we must eat, we make food "more than itself."[95] It is precisely this biological necessity that makes eating subject to intense agri-cultural oppression and regulation. Returning to the concept of "civility," we are reminded that certain foods signal superiority over others and over nature. It is not just the act of eating these foods but also the ways in which they are eaten–

[94] Spelman, *Woman*, 110.
[95] Margaret Visser, *The Rituals of Dinner* (Harper Collins e-book, originally published 1991): *Introduction*.

the manner of eating, the amount eaten, the sharing, the exclusion…each of these actions or inactions is taken to be indicative of a person's character–that is, their essential existence. Are you what you eat, and vice versa? The common phrase suggests that existence is moldable to human control; that is, if you are what you eat, then your "choice" over food dictates who you are. The shaping of the socially constructed body, thus, appears internalized and under the mind's control; it further serves to pathologize the "non-normative" body or "unhealthy" food choices, which itself are hegemonically constructed narratives, as personal failings. Pollan's rules for food exemplify this: he instructs us not to eat anything our grandmothers wouldn't have recognized,[96] and thus applies his hegemonic positionality onto us (and our grandmothers), while similarly implicitly suggesting that making "healthy" choices about what to eat is a simple, rational choice that is free to everyone.[97] Thus, he cannot fathom why a personal individual would not follow these rules except if there was an inherent personal failing of nature. I speculate, of course; Pollan did not say this latter statement. Yet the narrative of "free choice" becomes especially relevant when we explore the external, or institutional denial of embodied, embedded experiences, as such a narrative not only denies the reality of oppression but also perpetuates agricultural notions that the natural world is ultimately controllable and equally accessible for human use, neither of which are true.

#### 2.1.2.2. *Anorexia*

Anorexia is particularly significant for what it reveals about notions of control as opposed to the failed racialized and animalized body. Anorexia, a disorder characterized by restricted food intake, weight loss, and a distorted body view, is primarily regarded as a disorder "of the body

[96] Michael Pollan, *Food Rules: An Eater's Manual* (New York: Penguin Group, 2009): 7.
[97] Alison Hope Alkon and Julian Agyeman, *Cultivating Food Justice: Race, Class, and Sustainability* (MIT Press, 2011):3.

image."[98] This does not fully address the social and cultural origins of such a philosophy and rather creates a sense that those suffering from anorexia are vain and self-preoccupied. Fuchs proposes that anorexia is a conflict of embodiment wherein the anorexic patient views herself as split from her body's dependency and uncontrollable nature, particularly "its hunger and femininity."[99] Though he concludes that this desire to be in total control of and distinct from the body is a "narcissistic triumph"[100] and thus only directs blame back at the patient herself, his analysis is relevant and fascinating when explored in relation to agri-culture.

Control is a fundamental aspect both of agriculture and of anorexia; in the first case, it is certain forms of nature that are taken under human control and improved, with the "uncontrollable" lands fetishized and inferiorized. In the second case it is the body that must be kept "under rigid control"[101] by the mind; the fallen body is thus described as "betray[ing] me,"[102] or the Self, and is similarly subject to fetishization as an uncontrollable Other. This "relationship" is also apparent in racist portrayals of "savage" humans as uncontrollable "appetitive multitudes."[103] Prior to control, however, comes the necessary split between human/nature and mind/body; as I mention prior, it is difficult to believe in the domination of nature if one's self is nature. A desire by anorectics to "get out" of the body is echoed in Fuchs' paper.[104] If the mind succeeds in transcending the body, euphoria follows:

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[98] Fuchs, "The disappearing body," 109.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Ibid.
[101] Louise Kaplan, *Adolescence: The farewell to childhood* (New York, Simon and Schuster: 1984): 278.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Spelman, "Woman," 113.
[104] Fuchs, citing A. R. Lucas et al., "50-Year Trends in the Incidence of Anorexia Nervosa in Rochester, Minn.: A Population-Based Study," The American Journal of Psychiatry 148, no. 7 (July 1991): 917–22, https://doi.org/10.1176/ajp.148.7.917.

> "I could control myself! I could do without! I was strong! I really enjoyed watching the others eat and seeing how it made them weaker and weaker in my eyes—those who were otherwise so strong. Yes, not only did they become weaker, they were suddenly worse people than me. Unlike me, they needed something as primitive as food. They were not in control of themselves, they lacked control. They were greedy, they were like wild, run-down animals that pounced on something to eat. Not eating was my strength alone, and no one could take it away from me."[105]

Notice, further, how others who are unable to transcend the body's physicality or to control nature are conceived of as weaker and worse. Thus, the acts of the body take the place of the body; both are inferiorized as uncontrollable. It is essential to note that the primary portrayal of eating disorders, as well as anorexia specifically, is an emaciated white girl.[106] Clancy examines how early writings on anorexia upheld notions of civility and food moralism;[107] that is, how ideas about self-restraint and discipline became tied specifically to notions of whiteness and civility.[108] Anorexia symbolically functioned to perpetuate narratives of control and white femininity in conjunction with the degradation of black women,[109] who were portrayed as embodying a lack of self-control, or as Strings writes, a "fat black woman as 'savage' and 'barbarous."[110] If the body's physicality overcomes the mind, self-hatred and somatophobia become intertwined, though the body is conceived of as a hated other:

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[105] Ibid., citing M. Gerlinghoff, Backmund H, Mai N, *Magersucht. Auseinandersetzung mit einer Krankheit*, Translated T.F., Psychologie Verlags Union, München Weinheim (1988): 62.
[106] Erin Clancy, "The Fantasy of Anorexia: Historical Entanglements of Evolutionary Thought, Food Restriction, and Curative Imaginaries," Catalyst: Feminism, Theory, Technoscience 10, no. 1 (May 27, 2024): 6. https://doi.org/10.28968/cftt.v10i2.39395.
[107] Ibid.
[108] E. Melanie DuPuis, *Dangerous Digestion: The Politics of American Dietary Advice* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015): 18.
[109] Clancy, "The Fantasy," 6.
[110] Sabrina Strings, *Fearing the Black Body: The Racial Origins of Fat Phobia*. (New York: NYU Press, 2019): 211.

> "I was disgusted with myself, with my stuffed body. I felt like a sex offender at the mercy of his instinct to rape someone. (…) The taste of rotten eggs rose in me. I imagined how everything in me must have gone into a process of decay."[111]

Fuchs also considers the loss of the female form as a desired consequence of anorexia. "I do not want to have the kind of body females have," says one anorectic.[112] This becomes specifically relevant when we consider, using Spelman's words, that bodies are always particular bodies. That is, hating one's own body because it is female rapidly results in hating female bodies or perceived essential traits of female bodies, which are thus taken as reasons to hate female bodies; this form of circular logic is similarly evident with hysteria, wherein the uterus is believed to be the perpetrator of illness/weakness/over-emotion, thus engendering a form of medical misogyny in which all women are believed to be sick simply for having uteri, or being sick *because* of having uteri, or because of being women. It is further interesting to consider the perception of women who have undergone hysterectomies in a society which values the production of a labor force but not the laboring body that "produces" it, showing particular disapproval when this potential for production has been negated. The anorectic body is non-menstruating, non-pregnant, non-mutating, unchangeable; at its most desirable it is non-womanly. Anorectics speak to the fear of a specifically female body in regards to softness, roundness, and sexuality.[113] "There is nothing soft, round…for all of eternity" in the desired body.[114] The "stuffed body"[115] which appears after a

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[111] Fuchs, citing A. Graf, *Die suppenkasperin*, Translated T.F., Geschichte einer Magersucht (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1985):49.
[112] H. Bruch, *The golden cage. The enigma of anorexia nervosa* (Vintage Books, New York, 1978):12.
[113] Fuchs, "The disappearing body," 111, citing Graf, *Die suppenkasperin*, 16; and S. Lena, *Auf Stelzen gehen*, Geschichte einer Magersucht, Psychiatrie-Verlag (Bonn, 2006): 93.
[114] A. Fechner, *Hungrige Zeiten*, Überleben mit Magersucht und Bulimie (Munich: Beck, 2007):173.
[115] Graf., *Die suppenkasperin*, 49.

binge is particularly hated. I draw parallels between this and the maternal body, whose "most striking characteristic is its mutability."[116] Ester, in *The Bell Jar*, fears the "enormous spider-fat stomach"[117] that obscures a pregnant woman's face and symbolically hides her identity. Is it the implied sexuality of women/the body that is feared? The change of the body? Or, crucially, the threatening nonduality that it represents? Hanson also writes that the maternal body is "leaky and permeable, losing mucous, blood and milk."[118] Returning to Vance's considerations of purity in regards to the wilderness, and the notions of cleanliness and sterility that underlie pesticides, food regulations, and private spaces, we also see how messiness becomes associated with the (female) body. The pregnant body, which comes as a result of sex or rape, may also symbolize male domination of women and thus misguidedly may represent immanence to be transcended. Firestone and de Beauvoir appear to hold this attitude. Dworkin vividly writes that "in the male sexual system, the pregnant woman ... shows her sexuality through her pregnancy. The display marks her as whore. Her belly is her sex. Her belly is proof that she has been used. Her belly is his phallic triumph."[119] To attempt to not have a sexual body by not having a body at all is thus perhaps one attempt to control the external perception of the female body as inherently sexual. I.e., if one does not have a perceivable body, they cannot *be* a body (which is inherently hated). I speak of this further in the section on gender neutrality and the breast; it is particularly the sexual connotations of the breast that lead to its stigmatization under patriarchy and thus contribute (among numerous other factors) to lowered breastfeeding rates. A woman who "exposes" herself

[116] Clare Hanson, "The Maternal Body," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Body in Literature*, ed. David Hillman and Ulrika Maude, 1st ed. (Cambridge University Press, 2015): 87. https://doi.org/10.1017/CCO9781107256668.007.
[117] Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), Chapter 6.
[118] Hanson, "Maternal," 87.
[119] Andrea Dworkin, *Pornography: Men Possessing Women* (New York: Penguin Group, 1981): 222.

is her breast, a perceived sexual organ; thus, she is sexual. To hide the breast hides that she "is" the breast/body/sexual/animal/natural.

What are the connections between male anorectics and agri-cultural notions of control? We could theorize that perhaps notions of control and separation would manifest parallelly, with male anorectics citing the growth in muscle mass that occurs with male puberty as the source of disembodiment. Yet Ali's interviews with male anorectics[120] reveal that it is, for at least these men, the association with the female body that is the source of their disorder. One interviewee, speaking about the onset of his anorexia, says that he'd "always considered [himself] to have somewhat of a womanly body" and specifically speaks of the presence of "love handles."[121] While Ali notes that his displeasure is with a specific body part,[122] he does not make the connection between the hated body and the hated female body that underlies the desire to control such a body. Another interviewee states that when he began to lose weight, his father remarked "only women should be this thin."[123] Interestingly, the mantra of "I'm not a girl, I don't get anorexia," was his internal response.[124] Women, then, whether being fat or thin, are relegated to the Other category, and men deny them/their bodies jointly. We may also consider the realm of space as connected to notions of body sovereignty–who is allowed to take up space, and who isn't? Who speaks, and who listens? Who feasts, large and loud? Who cooks, who grows, and who nurses?

#### 2.1.2.3. *Breastfeeding Metaphysics*

[120] Yaseen Ali, "Nourishing Hunger and Embodied Resistance: Men's Narratives of Eating Disorders," Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (2014).
[121] Ivi., 29.
[122] Ibid.
[123] Ivi., 44.
[124] Ibid.

Is breastfeeding transcendent or immanent? In describing her nursing experience, Demetrakopoulos uses the phrase "transcending downwards" to mean "psyche renewing and discovering itself by touching, diving into, being surrounded by the ground of being, matter/nature/mother."[125] Her description of nursing as "surround[ing] the female body"[126] echoes Bigwood's notion of phusical existence, wherein natural interaction, which takes place constantly, runs through humans.[127] Spretnak suggests that nursing "the extension of [a woman's] flesh to her breast" is a reminder that existence is unitive, not separate.[128] Yet a woman is easily consumed by the label of "mother," which is universal, and can have the effect of erasing her own personhood. Instead of being a woman who is a mother, she exists solely as a mother *to* her children, *for* her children. The term motherbaby, which is occasionally seen to describe the sense of nonduality between a mother and her baby, similarly collapses the boundaries both between mother/infant as well as woman/mother and woman/mother/self. Of course, these terms are not absolute labels; a mother is both herself as a woman and a mother at the same time; she was once a woman but not a mother, with the exact point of transition unclear; only sometimes is she the motherbaby. This is perhaps strong evidence *for* the nonduality of the universe–the ability to slip between named stages of existence without being exactly one sole unitary being separate from the rest of the universe.

[125] Stephanie Demetrakopoulos, "THE NURSING MOTHER AND FEMININE METAPHYSICS: An Essay on Embodiment," *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 65, no. 4 (1982): 432.
[126] Ibid.
[127] C. Bigwood, "Renaturalizing the body (with the help of Merleau-Ponty)," Hypatia 6(3) (1991).
[128] Spretnak, "Radical Nonduality," 430.

We are reminded that some women transcend their bodies more easily than others, or at least obtain the illusion of transcendence more easily. As Freeman,[129] Palmer,[130] Jung,[131] Blum,[132] and numerous other academic writers on motherhood and breastfeeding have noted, it is a "visual performance of mothering with the maternal body,"[133] and the perceptions of this act are racialized, classed, sexed, and gendered within the agri-cultural framework. Breastfeeding, which many have described as an embodied act, is thus subject to agri-cultural narratives about the body, the female body, and nature; which are in turn disseminated through media and ideological state apparatuses and contribute to "first food oppression."

"Nature," in regards to breastfeeding, has connotations that are racialized and classed; the body again bears the brunt of agri-cultural somatophobia. Whiteness and higher social/economic class seem to provide protection against essentialization of immanence; Jung describes breastfeeding as a "moral imperative" for hippies because of their connections to environmentalism, the "local food movement," and their criticism of formula companies;[134] Rodriguez-Garcia similarly writes that "interest in breastfeeding" is associated with all-natural or organic foods,[135] which signals a certain class of women who can afford such status markers. In contrast, we see Vance's analysis of the romanticized and yet inferiorized wildness echoed in Blum's discussion of how "nature rhetoric" led to the belief that Black women were naturally

[129] Andrea Freeman, *Skimmed: Breastfeeding, Race, and Injustice* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020).
[130] Gabrielle Palmer, *The Politics of Breastfeeding: When Breasts Are Bad for Business*, 3rd updated and rev. ed (London: Pinter & Martin, 2009).
[131] Courtney Jung, Lactivism: *How Feminists and Fundamentalists, Hippies and Yuppies, and Physicians and Politicians Made Breastfeeding Big Business and Bad Policy*, First edition, Women's Studies Politics (New York: Basic Books, 2015).
[132] Linda M. Blum, *At the Breast: Ideologies of Breastfeeding and Motherhood in the Contemporary United States* (Boston, Mass: Beacon Press, 1999).
[133] Cindy A. Stearns, "Breastfeeding and the Good Maternal Body," *Gender and Society* 13, no. 3 (1999): 308–9.
[134] Jung, *Lactivism*, 9.
[135] Rosalia Rodriguez-Garcia and Lara Frazier, "Cultural Paradoxes Relating to Sexuality and Breastfeeding," Journal of Human Lactation 11, no. 2 (June 1995): 112.

better breastfeeders than white women, who were "too civilized" to do so.[136] As Freeman notes, black women breastfeeding were depicted in National Geographic as "exotic" and "savage."[137] Thus, breastfeeding for white women was, at the time, an immanent act that could be transcended by passing it onto essentialized o/Others. Sexualized and racist tropes of black women, as well as the practice of exposing enslaved black women's bodies in public[138] or compelling them to do so,[139] contributed to the ontologization of the black body as immanent, a perception that influences breastfeeding disparities today. Yet for white women in the modern era, breastfeeding is perceived as a moral duty, one that when fulfilled allows for status and class-enhancement.[140] This is particularly relevant because it ties notions of bodily denial–in the form of the mother's own personal needs, which are sacrificed for her child's–to civility and whiteness, a form of "nature" that is ranked above immanent, bodily nature solely because of its association to whiteness. Interestingly, Stearns' discussion of "invisible breastfeeding mothers" suggests a form of transcending while immanent; as she writes: "women would speak with pride about no one even knowing what they were when, in fact, they were really breastfeeding."[141]

Lastly, writings and musings on transcendence are racialized. While for black women to nurse a white child brings up "the weight of [the] past,"[142] i.e., wet nursing; a "white woman giving totally to a black child" is perceived as "giving up of boundary" and "encompassing of other within self."[143] Again, we see that transcendence, or the illusion of transcendence, is only possible for

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[136] Blum, *At the Breast*, 14.
[137] Freeman, *Skimmed*, 2.
[138] Ivi., 90.
[139] Smithsonian Magazine and Cynthia Greenlee, "The Remarkable Untold Story of Sojourner Truth," Smithsonian Magazine, accessed September 24, 2024, https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/remarkable-untold-story-sojourner-truth-180983691/.
[140] Blum, *At the Breast*, 9.
[141] Stearns, "Breastfeeding," 313.
[142] Kim McLarin, *New York Times Magazine*, 1998, as cited in Blum, *At the Breast*.
[143] Patricia J. Williams, *The Alchemy of Race and Rights* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991): 226.

some hegemonic women; for those whose bodies are perceived of as too immanent and have been treated as inferior manifestations of controllable nature, resisting the narrative is difficult. As LaSha writes,

> "That a black woman's breasts, organs meant to grow and sustain the life of her own children, would be used as tools to grow the babies of white enslavers—babies who'd one day grow to be the enslavers of the same black women who had used their breasts to nourish them—was inconceivable to me."[144]

First food oppression, thus, has its roots in agri-cultural notions of the black body as natural and thus inferior and controllable by hegemony; and further, as something for white motherhood to transcend in her journey towards (patriarchal) culture, or civility.

### 2.1.3. *Erasure of the Body Specific*

What is the standard human? How does gender or race neutrality/blindness affect policy, legislation, and oppression? This is subtly distinct from overt racism or overt misogyny but is no less critical as a topic of focus. As Freeman notes, modern marketing connects ideal Black parenting with formula use, and breastfeeding, but specifically *white* breastfeeding, with ideal parenting.[145] Through the lack of portrayals of Black women breastfeeding, the connection between whiteness, civility, and transcendence is strengthened; it is only some women, thus, who

[144] LaSha, "Choosing Not to Breastfeed Was My Revolutionary Act," Blogging while Black (blog), Kinfolk Kollective, January 21, 2016, http://kinfolkkol lective.com/2016/01/21/choosing-not-to-breastfeed-was-my-revolutionary-act.
[145] Freeman, *Skimmed*, 4.

appear to transcend immanence through breastfeeding, for others, breastfeeding (and the failure thereof) are both conceived of as essential failures of an essentially natural, inferior body.

Yet I wish to also speak to the exclusion of certain women, or women altogether from public health campaigns, particularly in the form of forced gender neutrality. Gender neutrality is often misequated with gender equality, when in reality gender equality must exist before gender neutrality can be effectively and truly neutral. That is, because maleness or men are considered the default, removing the woman/Other category without actually doing the work to reframe what the default category means merely results in a removal of the perception of the Other. Terms such as "female professor" and "female doctor" do Other the woman relative to the default "professor," but simply removing the term "female" does nothing to address the fact that the default perception of the word "professor" is a male professor, or that academia is highly skewed towards patriarchal tradition. A similar trend exists in medicine where the push for gender neutrality has greatly preceded that for gender equality. This is most clearly symbolized by the use of the word "chestfeeding" and the existence of "gender-neutral" parenting handbooks which Henriksson and Rubertsson have masterfully critiqued.[146] In rejecting breastfeeding as "irrelevant" and "constraining" for mothers and as "alienating" for fathers,[147] these handbooks deny the body on several levels: the mother is split from her body, which is a meddlesome thing keeping her/her mind from freedom; her body/women's bodies are also subconsciously denied through the upholding of patriarchal narratives of control, as the father is seen as entitled not only to her body– which he cannot "have" if the infant "has" it–but also to the infant's nourishment, which the government/authors assume can be replaced with science/male "creative" power, aka. formula

[146] Helena Wahlström Henriksson and Christine Rubertsson, "Bodies Get in the Way: Breastfeeding and Gender Equality in Swedish Handbooks for New Parents," NORA - Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research 29, no. 4 (October 2, 2021): 330–42, https://doi.org/10.1080/08038740.2021.1888791.
[147] Ivi., 330.

feeding or bottle feeding (which requires pumping). Breastfeeding is taken, thus, not as an embodied act but rather a bodily chore that is entirely optional, preferably avoidable, and even alienating to fathers–putting male desires for control over the very beneficial (for both the mother and infant as well as the father) act of embodied breastfeeding. I am not advocating for there to be no use of gender-neutral language or gender-inclusive language. However, simply erasing the female body in an effort to be neutral does not further equality and in fact relegates the woman back to the invisible space.

Secondly, the use of the word "chestfeeding" has been proposed to replace or be used alongside "breastfeeding" in medical situations.[148] "Chestfeeding" stigmatizes and sexualizes the word breast, which, while being identified as a female "term" or "part," is part of both the male and female bodies. As such, using the word "breast" does not implicitly suggest the body to which that breast belongs is female. The use of "chest," however, erases the reality of the body completely. Karhu, in writing of the "cultural construction of feminised[sic] body fluids…that are considered shameful and dirty"[149] as one such argument for gender-neutrality in lactation/nursing, prioritizes the ideal of gender neutrality without actually addressing the fact that it is specifically women and women's bodies that are hated under patriarchy for their "leakiness," sexuality, and messiness *through* the essentialism of women's bodies. Rodriguez-Garcia similarly notes that the clashing of sexuality and motherhood (which only are oppositional under patriarchy, not in reality) may lead to internalized embarrassment over the body.[150] Implicitly, Karhu suggests that these transgender parents deny the reality of their bodies and uphold patriarchal beliefs about women's bodies. We cannot redefine a word without doing the work to deconstruct *why* we are redefining

[148] Such as in the NHS: https://www.nuh.nhs.uk/breastchest-feeding-support-for-staff/.
[149] Sanna Karhu, "Chapter 8 Ecofeminist Critique of the Milk Industry: From Mammal Mothers to Biocapitalist Bovines" (Brill, 2023), https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004679375_010.
[150] Rodriguez-Garcia and Frazier, "Cultural Paradoxes," 112.

it. We cannot separate the breast or the act of breastfeeding from the female body until we address the fact that we wish to do so because this act of the female body and the female body itself is stigmatized. Further, as Dettwyler notes, it is the breast–as split from the woman–that is considered intrinsically sexual;[151] such a perception of the body as disjointed, with one part (the breast) being the target of public hatred, may lead to the same notions of transcending the specifically female body and a resulting disembodied breast. Or, quite simply, it may result in the cessation of breastfeeding altogether. As such, the belief that one should transcend the female body due to its culturally-constructed immanence–through erasure thereof–does nothing to question the underlying philosophy that has created such a notion, and indeed only increases the somatophobic misogyny present in societal perceptions of breastfeeding.

### 2.1.4. *Connection to Nature and "Animals"*

Can we "transcend our 'mammalian connection'"?[152] The desire to escape from the socially constructed feared body may manifest as the conception of such a body as natural–in this case, animal–and thus result in a denial of a connection to animal nature itself. The body is only a partial receiver of this hatred; rather, it is the animal-human connection that is hated and denied, as well as animals themselves. The hatreds are often untangleable. As an example, Rodriguez-Garcia refers to breasts as "mammalian fetters"[153]; we cannot tell whether it is the breast, the mammalian connection, or the woman that is the target of her derogation. It must be said that comparisons between women and non-human animals[154] such as other mammals are not inherently oppressive.

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[151] Kathrine A. Dettwyler, "Sexuality and Breastfeeding," *Journal of Human Lactation* 11, no. 4 (December 1, 1995): 263–263, https://doi.org/10.1177/089033449501100408.
[152] Rodriguez-Garcia., 111.
[153] Ibid.
[154] Women *are* animals, as are men, but I struggle with a term that encompasses "non-human animals" without, as "non-human animals" does, centering humans.

We are animals. Of course, in a culture that values denial of animality (and emphasizes mind over body), to be compared to an animal is rarely positive and, as Adams has masterfully pointed out, our society often "animalizes women and sexualizes and feminizes animals."[155] Both are thus subjugated not because of an inherent inferiority but because of an assumed inherent inferiority that is perpetuated in agri-culture. Relevant is Fisher's argument that the domestication of animals taught men the practice of raping women,[156] as this epitomizes the mutually reinforcing domination of women, nature, and the body as it manifests on a physical level. Yet such domination is also symbolic, cemented in the cultural record as pornographized livestock, consumed women, meat without a body. I first address the pornographization of animals and women as meat and vice versa, then address the physical exploitation and commodification of cows, women, and milk.

#### 2.1.4.1. *Pornography of Meat*

"We serve the best meat in town," reads an ad for The Hustler.[157] Above the words is an illustration of a nude woman. On a separate Hustler ad, a naked woman dives into a meat grinder.[158] "What's your cut?" reads a third ad depicting a naked woman on her—its—knees, sections of her body carefully labeled: rump, loin, rib, round.[159] She, or it, smiles at the viewer. None of these women—these sexualized slabs of meat—are truly women, merely cruel representations thereof. In the minds of the modern-day consumer, women and food–which is already removed from the living animal to become an object–have become one. Marketing and media are conduits by which

[155] Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, 4.
[156] Elizabeth Fisher, *Woman's Creation*.
[157] Adams, *Pornography of Meat*, 11.
[158] Ivi., 51.
[159] See the cover of *The Sexual Politics of Meat*.

information benefitting the hegemony is given particular meaning[160]—as such, misogynistic and sexualized food marketing is neither innocent nor "playful" and "pleasurable" as Dejmanee argues.[161] Sexual imagery in food advertising has a clear effect on a consumer's psyche and emotions, shaping their beliefs about the world.[162] The likening of women to animal, which implies objectification *and* edibility on a massive, impersonal level is intended to instill a set of vicious beliefs even beyond the "normal" sexualization of women and animals. Within pornography, the woman is solely body–and an animalistic body at that; within agriculture, the animal is solely body. This does not threaten the human/nature dualism; rather, these cultural-symbolic portrayals and denigrations of animal, woman, and body function to perpetuate agri-cultural narratives of essentially inferior and consumable *nature* altogether.

#### 2.1.4.2. *Cows, Humans, Nature*

Cows are of particular focus in feminist discussions of animals, women, and food. Adams' *The Pornography of Meat* contains numerous depictions of sexualized cows and cow-ified women.[163] Corea's *The Mother Machine* examines how the artificial reproductive technologies that were posited by de Beauvoir and Firestone as liberating in fact have roots in the exploitation of women and cows.[164] Gaard draws together various perspectives on milk in her piece "Toward a Feminist Postcolonial Milk Studies,"[165] where she speaks to milk and the contexts in which it appears. She emphasizes the need for a critical framework that draws together the varied uses of

[160] David Croteau, *Media/society*: Technology, Industries, Content, and Users (2000): 168
[161] Tisha Dejmanee, "'Food Porn' as Postfeminist Play: Digital Femininity and the Female Body on Food Blogs," Television & New Media 17 (December 9, 2015), https://doi.org/10.1177/1527476415615944.
[162] Stephen Poon, "The Function of Sexual Imagery and Visual Seduction in Food Advertising," International Journal of Advances in Social Science and Humanities 4 (March 1, 2016): 22–27.
[163] Carol Adams, *Pornography of Meat*, examples pp. 1, 85, 86, 254.
[164] Corea, *The Mother Machine*.
[165] Greta Gaard, "Toward a Feminist Postcolonial Milk Studies," American Quarterly 65, no. 3 (2013): 595–618.

milk, and suggests its grounding in feminism.[166] I suggest that agri-culture underlies the culture of milk–as it is necessarily procured from humans, animals, or nature in other forms; in the former case, consumption threatens the separation of human/animal, yet in the latter two cases, drinking non-human animal milk (or plant-based milk) upholds the superiority of human life over nature, which I shall further explore.

To speak first of the consumption of dairy milk, such a "pervasive availability"[167] marks agri-culture's "triumph over nature."[168] DePuis notes that cows require nine months gestation and "ample pasture" before they can produce milk,[169] yet fresh cow's milk is available in store year round. The fact that most of us would not consider the perpetual availability of cow's milk to be unusual signals how deeply entrenched agri-cultural philosophy is in our culture; that is, the total and complete human access to nature is a given, as is the human ability to *control* nature–both in the form of the cow and her hormonal cycle. Interestingly, milk consumption also perpetuates a human/nature separation in the form of civilized/savage–which I note again are outdated terms. That is, because only a few, mostly white populations are lactose tolerant, yet lactose *intolerance* is pathologized, it is effectively nonwhite populations that are inferiorized for their perceived bodily, or natural failings. DePuis further speaks of the "perfect whiteness" of milk with the white body that can digest it.[170] She quotes a history of milk from 1933 in which the high consumption of milk, butter, and cheese are proposed to be the reason for the physical and mental superiority of the Aryans.[171] Again, the consumption of cow's milk becomes part of a larger philosophy: it symbolizes agri-cultural control over cows (nature), agri-cultural control over nature (the

[166] Ivi., 595.
[167] Ivi., 597.
[168] Peter Atkins, *Liquid Materialities: A History of Milk, Science and the Law* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2010): xi.
[169] E. Melanie DuPuis, *Natures Perfect Food: How Milk Became America's Drink* (New York: New York University Press, 2002): 28-29.
[170] Ivi., 8, 11.
[171] Ivi., 117-118.

hormonal cycle of cows), and agri-cultural human superiority over the body. Within each of these dualisms the human "right" to freely access and oppress nature is upheld.

What of the consumption of human milk? It is often described as the "perfect food," yet it is not generally considered a food by most adults. I emphasize this in relation to Ortner's male/female culture/nature paradigm, in which women are considered under patriarchy as producing or creating lower-level versions (natural versions) of objects or acts, while the same acts performed by men are considered higher-level.[172] That is, while women feed infants for years at a time and do produce a wonderful, specialized food from their bodies, it is inferiorized in relation to "actual food," or in fact even when compared to patriarchally-created formula. For an adult to consume breastmilk, much in the same way human flesh is taboo, radically challenges notions of Self/Other and Eater/Eaten. However, when the consumption of breast milk is taken in an agri-cultural lens–that is, as a product of an industrialized mother–it interestingly leads to a strengthening of the human/animal divide. Sietsema, in discussing the commodification of breast milk cheese, upholds this human/animal divide in his vehement response:

> "[w]omen are not farm animals. Human-breast-milk cheese casts them in that role. There is nothing 'ethical' about milking humans. What woman would consent to being milked for the culinary pleasure of others, unless strapped for cash? The natural result of this happening on a large scale is the exploitation of poor mothers, who will be tempted to sell milk and feed their babies formula."[173]

[172] Ortner, "Is Female,"19-20.
[173] Robert Sietsema, "Five Reasons Why Manufacturing Human Breast Milk Cheese Is Disgusting," Village Voice Blogs, February 27, 201 1, http://blogs.villagevoice.com/forkintheroad/201 l/02/five_reasons_wh.php

Gaard aptly asks: "If eating women's breast milk 'feels like cannibalism,' what does it feel like to eat other females' milk? And what does it feel like to be a farm animal?'"[174] There are indeed issues of exploitation in regards to the market-based use of women's milk; however, in placing women and farm animals opposite one another, Sietsama upholds the dualistic framework and concludes that women, who he includes under the heading of human, are unlike animals and to be considered as such would be demeaning to these women. We cannot address the industrialization of the mother without addressing her counterpart and we must also ask *why* the comparison between human mother and cow mother produces feelings of disgust. Why does Sietsema believe manufacturing cheese from human breast milk is disgusting? For one, he believes "there is something fundamentally disgusting about it. This is human instinct talking."[175] Secondly, he claims that breastmilk was "formulated" for the youngest babies and not for adult humans.[176] Again, we see women's creations as relegated to the "inferior" or not-yet-developed part of humanity; reserved for adults is "real food." Breast milk, thus, and the women who produce it, are jointly derogated.

Gaard uses the term "mammal mothers" in the hopes of creating empathy for cow mothers, who she compares to human mothers experiencing feelings of disembodiment. Mothers who pump their breast milk often refer to themselves as dairy cows hooked up to a milking machine. In comparing herself to an industrialized, non-embodied creature that is taken as free use under agri-culture, the human mother speaks to her own fears and feelings of disillusionment and disembodiment. She does not want to be used for her milk. Or, to clearly outline the barbaric dairy industry, she does not want her child ripped away from her, for her body to be pumped with

[174] Gaard, "Postcolonial," 602.
[175] Sietsema, "Five Reasons."
[176] Ibid.

hormones for months, years, solely to produce milk for *human* consumption. She is "locked in…human captivity."[177] It makes sense, thus, for the human mother to simply deny the animal connection, and emphasize her "humanness" in relation to the cow's animalness–as this is seen as its inherently servile existence. Yet Gaard's use of the word "mammal mothers" to attempt to connect human mothers and cow mothers is interesting particularly in that it upholds the human/nature dualism by framing her call to our empathy in anthropocentric terms; that is, while it is a useful starting point to criticize the treatment of animals in the industrial system, it does not challenge the tendency to view things from a self/Other perspective. Field emphasizes the need to respect non-human nature without feeling threatened by it.[178] Simply put, our fears may lead us to reject the troubling comparison altogether, resulting in further attempts to escape the aspects of animality we view in ourselves. What happens, then, of the industrialized animal, doubly inferiorized, and exploited all the same?

### 2.2. Institutionalized Oppression (Hiding Others)

"It is possible to be alienated from our bodies not only by pretending or wishing they weren't there," writes Rich, "but also by being 'incarcerated in them."[179] That is, agri-culture as an institution functions to deny and erase embodied experiences, trapping individuals in their socially-feared and hated bodies. Unfortunately, it is beyond the scope of this paper to speak to the totality of oppression under agri-culture, as it is inherently oppressive and thus functions to generate innumerable laws, rules, structures, institutions, and normative standards of behavior that further its dominance. Instead, I choose to focus specifically on food oppression and specifically

[177] Gaard, "Postcolonial," 613.
[178] Field, "Body," 50.
[179] Rich, *Of Woman Born*, 13.

*first food* oppression. Food oppression refers to the institutional, systemic, food-related action or policy that physically debilitates a socially marginalized group; first food oppression is the aforementioned action in regards to breastmilk and formula. I expand upon my previous discussion of breastfeeding as transcendent and examine how agri-cultural philosophy manifests as institutionalized or systemic oppression of women and the first foods they create; later, I examine formula.

Firstly, it is important to note that even the language of food oppression is inherently agri-cultural in suggesting that nature is inherently fallible. "Food swamps" and "food deserts," which are oft-used terms in food justice, perpetuate the notion that oppression is not created by humans, and keep us from addressing the actual causes of oppression.[180] "Food apartheid," in contrast, speaks to the active hegemonic role in food oppression,[181] and allows for the uncovering of the agri-cultural philosophy that underlies such oppression. Returning to first food oppression, however, Freeman notes that even breastmilk, which is often portrayed as the antithesis of Big Formula,[182] is not immune to the pervasive and systematized oppression in agri-culture.[183] She outlines the relationship between the US government and the formula industry that serves to capitalize on infants and parents, or rather, the formula industry's influence on the US government and the resulting food oppression.[184]

Freeman touches on the narratives of choice in regards to human consumption of milk,[185] which I hope to explore further in relation to formula. Choice rhetoric is often weaponized against legitimate critiques of the formula industry. "Formula feeding was the best decision I could have

[180] "Food Apartheid: Racialized Access to Healthy Affordable Food," April 2, 2021, https://www.nrdc.org/bio/nina-sevilla/food-apartheid-racialized-access-healthy-affordable-food.
[181] Ibid.
[182] See Jung, *Lactivism*, 9, and Rodriguez-Garcia, "Cultural Paradoxes," 112.
[183] Freeman, *Skimmed*, 8.
[184] Ibid.
[185] Ibid.

made for my family," writes Cobb-Barston.[186] And certainly, for *some* mothers, formula feeding is necessary. Yet this conception of infant feeding as being a *personal* choice, and therefore arguing that personal feelings of shame and guilt for formula feeding are a legitimate reason to argue that breastfeeding isn't the "right choice for every mother and every child,"[187] has implications far beyond the personal level. Promotion of formula feeding has a disproportionately negative impact on communities already targeted by formula imperialism. For white mothers such as Cobb-Barston, however, asserting white mothers' right to formula feed is of utmost importance, regardless of how increased access and promotion of formula feeding will affect women who do *not* have a choice. As Blum points out, when white mothers were portrayed as too delicate or too civilized to breastfeed, this led to the development of "better" breast milk alternatives for those white women.[188] When notions of good motherhood became tied to white breastfeeding, however, support for breastfeeding was (and still is) primarily reserved for white mothers.[189] In contrast, formula marketing is disproportionately pushed upon Black mothers,[190] denying them even the illusion of a free choice that Cobb-Barston assumes should be implicit in motherhood. Further, the idea of "choosing between" two methods of feeding implies their similarity, when in reality one is produced by the body, and the other is produced in an attempt to replicate and undermine it. Palmer's *The Politics of Breastfeeding* is an incredible exposé of formula colonialism and the greed hidden in media portrayals of formula; she asserts that "baby milk companies are not philanthropic organisations[sic] but commercial enterprises."[191] Yet through weaponization of

[186] Suzanne Michaels Cobb-Barston, *Bottled up: How the Way We Feed Babies Has Come to Define Motherhood, and Why It Shouldn't* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012): Introduction.
[187] Ivi., Introduction.
[188] Blum, *At the Breast*, 14.
[189] Jennifer N. Lind et al., "Racial Disparities in Access to Maternity Care Practices That Support Breastfeeding—United States, 2011," *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 63, no. 33 (August 2014): 725–28.
[190] Freeman, *Skimmed*, 55.
[191] Palmer, *Politics of Breastfeeding*, 26.

choice or personal feelings–which I emphasize are in fact internalizations of agri-cultural bodily-hatred–formula companies rake in innumerable profits. Regardless of whether a mother "chooses" to formula feed or has it forced upon her, the formula company profits. "It is in their interests that women find it hard to breastfeed," writes Palmer.[192] As such, first food oppression is not merely commercial, cultural, or legislative. It is mutually reinforced through institutions, systems, cultural beliefs, social "norms," laws, and internalized notions of agri-culture; and yet such coinciding oppression is, paradoxically, twisted to appear empowering–as Henriksson and Rubertsson note in their discussion of Swedish parenting handbooks.[193] I reiterate that formula is a commodity produced to make money *both* for formula companies and governmental institutions, which are intertwined.[194]

### 2.2.1. *"Helpful" Legislation*

The analysis by Gimenez and Shattuck on food justice movements is useful in deconstructing and critiquing current frameworks for dealing with oppressive agri-cultural notions of the body and nature.[195] The paper categorizes the various trends within global food movements as Neoliberal, Reformist, Progressive, and Radical, and discusses each approach to the food crisis, which I argue is underwritten by agri-culture. Most useful and relevant is the analysis of the Neoliberal trend, which is characterized by a faith in the power of technology, a desire for efficiency, expansion of global markets, and engagement from philanthropic capitalism.[196] As I

[192] Ibid.
[193] Henriksson and Rubertsson, "Bodies."
[194] Freeman's discussion of WIC is useful for understanding the links between formula companies and the US government: *Skimmed*, pp. 55-57.
[195] Eric Holt Giménez and Annie Shattuck, "Food Crises, Food Regimes and Food Movements: Rumblings of Reform or Tides of Transformation?," The Journal of Peasant Studies 38, no. 1 (2011): 109–44, https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2010.538578.
[196] Ivi., 118-119.

shall explore, formula is neoliberalism's response to the supposed fallacy of breastfeeding. That is, the act of breastfeeding may be seen as an impediment to worker efficiency; formula presents a solution. When combined with the socio-cultural perceptions of breastfeeding as immanent, these factors may be enough to contribute to the cessation of breastfeeding. One neoliberal solution, thus, is the Reasonable Break Time provision of the Affordable Care Act, which mandates that workplaces with more than fifty employees must provide rooms for lactation and time for expressing milk.[197] While seemingly a positive attempt to ensure that mothers can combine work with infant care, the act falls short of providing true solutions for breastfeeding mothers. Boyer's analysis discusses the limitations of such an act, particularly that breaks are not paid, meaning that the women who are able to "choose" to take said breaks will be of socio-economic classes that can afford to do so. [198] Notably, for these women, the choice is not between breastfeeding and bottle feeding but rather between working and bottle feeding; that is, infants may not be brought to work in a large majority of cases. Mothers must pump and store milk for later, which reduces the advantages associated with breastfeeding and creates further ambivalence over the "choice" to use formula or breastfeed. It is easy to see how a working mother may choose the convenience of formula, especially when pumping may be relegated to a non-private or unclean, unsafe location, or when the time needed for pumping appears to cost far more than its perceived benefit.[199] As Boyer argues, because such a solution has been provided, there is less impetus to provide future legislation that more effectively addresses working motherhood and lactation.[200] Yet these impediments to embodiment, which are portrayed not as failings of the system but of personal

[197] "Fact Sheet #73: Break Time for Nursing Mothers under the FLSA," DOL, accessed September 25, 2024, https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/fact-sheets/73-flsa-break-time-nursing-mothers.
[198]Kate Boyer, "Neoliberal motherhood": Workplace lactation and changing conceptions of working motherhood in the contemporary US,. *Feminist Theory* 15(3), (2014): 269-288.
[199] Freeman, *Skimmed*, 130.
[200] Boyer, "Neoliberal," 282.

failings, are precisely what engenders a specific manifestation of agri-cultural notions of control: a growing faith in technology, combined with the insidious marketing of such technology as superior to nature and as a cure-all for the inevitable failing of nature.

### 2.3. Faith in Science as All-Knowing

With growing technologization as well as acceptance of and dependence on such technology, the scientific mind has discovered how to *improve* the body, much like the agricultural processes that sought to improve upon the natural world's creation of food. This may be done so through integration of technology into bodily processes, or through the adoption of "scientifically-based" rituals that operate on the assumption that these bodily processes are inherently flawed–that is, because they are part of the inherently faulty body–and must be corrected through the rational scientific mind. Yet we must ask: who are the mechanics? Who writes the manuals? And who are most frequently the targets of such "improvements"? Bodily knowledge is not universal nor unrelated to the context in which it is developed.[201] Illness is a social construct, as is health; they are readily used to suppress behavior or identities that are considered deviant or pose a threat to hegemony. "No doctor…can ever lose sight of the fact that the mind of woman is always threatened with danger from the reverberations of her physiological emergencies," writes Almroth Wright.[202] Woman, thus, is her body and is faulty because she is her body; her body is faulty because it is a woman's body. Thus, she must be taught how to exist in the "right" way, which is

[201] Blum, "Breast," 2.
[202] Almroth Wright, "The Unexpurgated Case Against Woman Suffrage/Letter on Militant Hysteria," The Times, March 28, 1919, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Unexpurgated_Case_Against_Woman_Suffrage/Letter_on_Militant_Hysteria

antithetical to the essentialized "natural" way. This is extrapolated from and influences the domination of agri-cultural nature.

### 2.3.1. *Eating the Right Way*

Theories about "proper" eating have abounded for likely as long as humans have been eating. This may manifest as an unwavering faith in scientific experts, who are perceived to be more knowledgeable about the body than those living in one. Food *control*, however, is generally at the center of such theories, reflecting the underlying notion that it is not any specific body that must be controlled, but the unruly, natural one. In pathologizing nature, thus, experts maintain their superiority as well as control of the narrative–that is, how could an inherently faulty individual's complaints be taken seriously? The treatment of eating disorders often perpetuates patterns of control, reliance on numbers, and does little to fix problems of disembodiment that arise. The concept of "intuitive eating," which was developed as a method to treat disordered eating, emphasizes listening to one's own hunger and trusting it.[203] The process of "learning to eat intuitively"[204] perpetuates the mind/body split; that is, when an individual intuitively eats, it is the mind that cedes control of the body. "I've given myself permission to enjoy it," says one participant in Barraclough's study on intuitive eating.[205] The body is still perceived as another creature, a hungry one that has been denied. More seriously, naming "intuitive eating" as distinct from "eating" does not allow the individual to simply exist within nature–they are now defined as a pathologized being. That is, ten years down the road, how does one identify between "intuitive

[203] Emma Louise Barraclough et al., "Learning to Eat Intuitively: A Qualitative Exploration of the Experience of Mid-Age Women," Health Psychology Open 6, no. 1 (February 1, 2019): 2055102918824064, https://doi.org/10.1177/2055102918824064.
[204] Ibid.
[205] Ivi., 4.

eating" and "regular eating"? In speaking of his choice to follow the intuitive eating "model," one male anorectic in Ali's paper scientizes the act of eating. "I'll implement it," he says.[206] In speaking of the act of eating not as an embodied experience but rather as an innovative method of living, trust is restored in the "rational mind"'s ability to heal the body as a form of machinery. In this way, blame of the personal body (which is the natural body) is simply transposed onto nature for being inherently inferior and thus needing a guiding, human-created model to function properly.

### 2.4. Faith in the Products of Science: Formula as Simulacra of Breast Milk

Can the natural body be transcended completely? In Plato's time, this perhaps was unthinkable; even fifty years ago, a complete removal of the natural body and subsequent "freeing" of the mind was only possible in science fiction. Yet in extreme circumstances wherein agri-cultural notions of distancing and control are wholly accepted, the patriarchal agri-scientist, believing himself superior to all forms of nature, seeks to replace nature entirely with objects of his own creation, which in his mind are godly. His "horror at [his] dependence on the maternal body"[207] develops into a fetishization of the maternal creative power; he desires to be like her, to reproduce himself.[208] He labors within the sterile laboratories, producing distilled nutrient-shakes. These technological innovations are his babies. He is the Father of Formula, of Food, of Nutrition, of Mothering as Fathering.

I examine two creations that epitomize the agri-cultural desire to be completely independent from and superior to the natural world, innovations that totally deny a connection to animality, to the body, to women, and to nature. They are entirely human-created and exist as

[206] Ali, "Nourishing," 50.
[207] Hanson, *The Maternal Body*, 95.
[208] Not to reproduce, but to reproduce himself.

symbols of mankind's intelligence; their names are indicative of agri-cultural self-superiority: formula and food replacements.

### 2.4.1. *Formula*

Physically, formula is created upon the assertions that the natural world (which includes the female body) is fallible, completely knowable, and subject to the human laws of science, which are all-powerful and inherently superior. Formula–a word that evokes ideas of scientists in labs–was invented by Justus von Liebig in the late nineteenth century as "the perfect infant food,"[209] consisting of cow's milk, pea flour, malt flour, wheat flour, and bicarbonate of potash. This was thought to be the "very same ingredients as in mother's milk."[210] What inspired Liebig's invention? It is clear when viewed through an agri-cultural lens: women, being naturally inferior to men, understandably could not create the perfect infant food through their bodies. To admit the superiority of breast milk would directly contradict the patriarchal agri-cultural narrative that nature/the female body is inherently flawed. As such, formula is posited as a cure-all for the presupposed inferiority of the natural world: natural disasters, infant feeding "problems" that are actually just pathologized normal infant behaviors,[211] and biology (which is female biology). Yet such a perceived inferiority of the natural world manifests differently in different bodies; that is, between white mothers and black mothers. As Blum notes, portrayals of white mothers as civilized, but too civilized to breastfeed coincided with racist stereotypes of black mothers as naturally "good" –i.e., primitive–breastfeeders.[212] In the first instance, nature in the form of the white female

[209] Palmer, *The Politics*, 192.
[210] Jack Cecil Drummond, *The Englishman's Food* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1958).
[211] Freeman, *Skimmed*, 74; citing Nina Bernstein, "Placing the Blame in an Infant's Death; Mother Faces Trial after Baby Dies from Lack of Breast Milk," New York Times, March 15, 1999, B1.
[212] Blum, *At the Breast*, 14.

body is inferiorized for its delicacy and need of patriarchal control; in the second, nature in the form of the black female body is inferiorized for its "wildness." As she notes, this perception led to better breastmilk substitutes for white mothers, and no support for African American mothers.[213] In *Skimmed*, however, Freeman examines how a reversal of portrayals–that is, a depiction of breastfeeding as inherent to white motherhood, and formula feeding as inherent to black motherhood–compounded the lack of institutional and social support for black mothers.[214] Spelman's reminder that bodies are specific rings especially true: which/whose bodies are considered "worthy" of agri-cultural and patriarchal, paternalistic "control" is racialized and classed.

Returning to formula, we are met with a paradox of agri-culture: formula, despite being a human invention–and thus supposing itself to be superior to nature–it is incredibly fallible. Liebig's formula was not an adequate substitute for mother's milk, and infants had problems digesting it.[215] Failure did not deter Liebig, as is evidenced by the fact that the formula industry is still claiming to contain the same ingredients as mother's milk, even claiming to "offer the best nutrition medical science has to offer."[216] Today, formula is no more "perfect," and as Palmer explores, is subject to the wicked, profit-driven motives of imperialist capitalism–which is underwritten by agri-cultural philosophies of "improving" the production of the natural world.

What is it about formula that makes it so glamorous? It is precisely the medical connection that makes formula so appealing, as the biomedical system asserts its own superiority in diagnosing and fixing the inherently faulty female body, alleviating the fears it has created. How could breast

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[213] Ibid.
[214] Freeman, *Skimmed*.
[215] Palmer, *The Politics*, 192
[216] A.J. Schuman, "A concise history of infant formula," *Contemporary Pediatrics* (2003): 193. https://www.contemporarypediatrics.com/view/concise-history-infant-formula-twists-andturns-included

milk, being only a simple mixture of fat, protein, and carbohydrates, be *better* than the lab-created recipe that can be studied and improved? Further, how could mothers know how to mother? An ad for Poop-Cee feeding bottles claims that "For a mother to feed her baby like this every four hours just isn't convenient," and assures mothers that "mothers know they can trust Poop-Cee…And millions of mothers…can't be wrong."[217] Palmer further provides a preliminary list of what she refers to as "artificial feeding mishaps" in formula, which include, for example, various vitamin deficiencies or additives.[218] In 1983, for example, Similac and Isomil were found to contain carcinogens.[219] Perhaps the most well-known "mishap" was the case of Nestle, wherein the company, using saleswomen costumed as "milk nurses," knowingly exploited mothers who could and should have breastfed for free, leading to the deaths of their infants.[220] Formula industries are hand-in-hand with imperialist governments; together, they function to systematically erase Others.

Metaphysically, formula was created as a replacement for breastmilk, though one that not only served to undermine women's breastfeeding but also to assert that breastfeeding is *only* about milk. This is untrue and reduces women to what they can produce, and similarly only views mothering as a sacrificial act, rather than an interdependent one: breastfeeding involves more than the production of milk; it is formulated specifically for each infant, and the act of breastfeeding confers benefits upon both the mother and the infant through physical connection, spiritual connection, and a shared sense of self/other. Thus, formula replaces not only breast milk, but also the sense of nonduality that is apparent in breastfeeding. The mother, seen only for her breast and what it/she can produce, is replaced by a bottle and a product. Formula, thus is an untrue representation of breast milk; it is a simulacrum, and in purporting to be akin to or even superior

[217] Palmer, 231.
[218] Ivi., 306-307.
[219] Ivi., 308.
[220] Ivi., 228-237.

to breastmilk, furthers the idea that human-created inventions are distinct from and superior to nature–whether "nature" is woman, body, or food.

### 2.5. Soylent as Patriarchal Formula: The End of Food (Nature, Women)

Soylent, and food replacements as a category, are perhaps the ultimate agri-cultural artifacts; I examine these products in regards to each of the aforementioned agri-cultural directions: transcending immanence, institutional oppression of Others, and unwavering faith in science, as well as the culmination thereof: an existence in which human is totally, wholly distinct from and superior to physical, conceptual, and original nature. A food replacement, ontologically, is not food; it is created in direct opposition to nature/food. Yet, it is often consumed as a food is, begging the question of when a food *is* a food and when it isn't. Secondly, such foods/not-foods are claimed to be "'everything your body needs'"[221] and thus symbolize the human superiority over nature–in producing "better" food, for one, and also that the body's hungry physicality can be transcended through the inventions of the mind. Finally, meal replacements, in symbolically serving as adult formula (which replaces breastmilk), in turn symbolize a replacement of natural origins–the maternal body, or even the Earth. If one does not need the body at all, or nature at all, then human has fulfilled the ultimate principle of agriculture: that human is totally, completely superior to nature in all regards, and thus any consequences of humanity's actions against nature do not matter, for they are beneath such a transcendent human. The only Creator he believes in, thus, is himself; he possesses the power to create, sustain, and end life.

#### 2.5.1. *Transcending the Natural Body*

[221] Lizzie Widdicombe, "The End of Food," The New Yorker, May 5, 2014, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/05/12/the-end-of-food.

Rhinehart, the founder of Soylent, cites his "resent[ment of] the fact that he had to eat at all" as inspiration for the creation of Soylent.[222] Rather than criticize his working conditions or the larger framework of food oppression, Rhinehart turns his disillusionment inwards and identifies not *his* body as the problem, but rather both the separate natural body and the natural world for producing the "burden" of food.[223] Silicon Valley, a name that suggests a meshing of nature *and* technology, created the concept of "lifehacking," which Widdicomb defines as "tricks to streamline the obligations of daily life" in order to create time for more desirable activities.[224] This not only places certain functions of life–eating, sleeping–into an undesirable category to be improved upon, but also assumes that these activities aren't desirable in the first place. That is, we can't appreciate food for what it is–we either have to avoid it or we have to improve upon it. Nature, similarly, cannot exist without human notions of usage being applied to it–again, these categories of "controllable" or "uncontrollable" (but inevitably controllable) are both inferiorized. In addition, eating and sleeping are conceptualized as time-sinks simply because they are antithetical to the rigidly structured constructed world. As Palmer notes, the mechanization and need for time structure that are inherent to industrialism bled into beliefs about infant feeding and sleeping, leading doctors to rant that "foolish unlearned women," who were not feeding on schedule–as babies do not have an inherent feeding or sleeping schedule–were in charge of infant care.[225] Rhinehart's attitudes towards his own body as unable to conform to the constructed industrialized world reflect the same philosophy of culture over nature; it is never human culture that is taken as the problem.

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[222] Lizzie Widdicombe, "The End of Food," *The New Yorker*, May 5, 2014, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/05/12/the-end-of-food.
[223] Ibid.
[224] Ibid.
[225] Palmer, *Politics of Breastfeeding*, 41-42.

### 2.5.2. *Faith in the Scientific Mind*

Acts of the body, which are taken as proof of the body's immanent, demanding physicality, are thus transcended through the "mind's" conceptions of the body's needs. "'I was starving," said Rhinehart, speaking of his attempts to optimize his "real" food diet; his response was not to learn through his body but rather to treat the problem as one of "raw chemicals."[226] It is not enough to not eat, or to rigidly control one's diet; rather, Rhinehart began with the "thirty-five nutrients required for survival."[227] This is remarkably similar to the development of formula in that it presupposed breastfeeding to be solely about the milk, disregarding the bodily aspect of such an act. In this way, the female body's inferiority could be denied and hidden. Soylent presupposes the act of eating to be not about the food–which itself is a symbol of culture, art, nature, and love–but about the individual nutrients. As such, the gluttonous physicality of *eating* itself can be hidden and denied, creating new notions of food moralism that transcend the typical ideas of self-restraint and "clean eating." Beyond the agri-cultural notion of civility as controlling the Earth through agri-cultural practices, thus, comes wholly *knowing* the Earth even beyond itself, so much so that it can be distilled down into simple, raw components and perpetually improved upon, with complete unwavering faith in human notions of such progress.

As the connection to nature always persists, it must continually be denied. What happens when life, simply put, bubbles over? Field poignantly writes that "illness is one of the surest ways to remind ourselves of our immanence."[228] It is through sickness that we experience our boundaries through our bodies, learning how to respect nature and not derogate it. Yet Rhinehart, when

[226] Widdicomb, "The End of Food."
[227] Ibid.
[228] Field, "Body," 54-55.

presented with his body's rejection of an early form of Soylent (in the form of "sharp pains"[229]) merely doubled down. Under agri-culture, control of nature is taken as a given; as such, to admit humans are natural beings and depend on nature, further, is unfathomable.

### 2.5.3. *Systematic Soylent*

Soylent, being an agri-cultural product, furthers the needs of agri-culture. Rhinehart's response to criticism that Soylent was the "end of food," as Widdicomb writes,[230] maintains the subject/object duality. He describes a future where we have both "meals for utility and function" as well as those for "experience and socialization."[231] Of course, creating separate notions of a meal for work and a meal for community simply strengthens the concept of the good neoliberal worker–that is, if his "streamline[d]" meal is available, why would someone consume "regular" food, which he describes as a "burden"?[232] Yet beyond this, Rhinehart's conception subtly perpetuates the idea that while his framework for eating is about the nutrients, and the traditional framework is about experience, *both* are about seeing food as ends to a means–much like formula. Interestingly, the engineers that all subsist on Soylent spend their time talking about their Soylent formulas.[233] This is seen as working through a problem of optimization–an acceptable use of time–rather than an obsession with food (which would be a clearly immanent act), because Rhinehart clearly states that Soylent isn't a food, it's a "food substitute."[234] The scientization of the body, thus, makes it safe.

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[229] Widdicomb, "The End of Food."
[230] Ibid.
[231] Ibid.
[232] Ibid.
[233] Ibid.
[234] Ibid.

As a final note, Rhinehart inserts himself into food imperialist frameworks in suggesting that his invention is a cure-all to perceived failings of the natural world. Such a notion is also inherent to formula, which is portrayed as a philanthropic donation when foisted upon mothers in the name of international aid.[235] Rhinehart suggests that "'drop[ping] in a shipping container' of Soylent-producing algae" to malnourished villages would solve "mankind's oldest problem."[236] Similar strategies have been suggested by formula companies in times of crises;[237] i.e., the seemingly-altruistic donation that in fact endangers babies whose water sources are likely contaminated, whose bottles may not be safely sterilized, and whose immunity would benefit far more from breastfeeding support and promotion. It is almost too easy to criticize Rhinehart's statement, firstly for its ethnocentric bias, secondly for the devotion to his own godly creation, and thirdly for the suggestion that malnourishment, a byproduct of agri-cultural colonialism and imperialism, could be solved by further imperialism. It is also worth noting that in posing malnourishment as "mankind's oldest problem" for him to solve through increased technologization at the expense of local markets and producers, he perpetuates the notion that hunger is an inherent failing of nature, one that can and *must* be "fixed" through human control thereof. This is agri-cultural philosophy.

### 2.5.4. *An Ultimate Fetishization of Nature/Woman/Milk*

In the ultimate expression of agri-cultural philosophy, human is not a natural creation but a human one; that is, his origins are himself. His eroticization of his own dependence on the

[235] Palmer, *The Politics of Breastfeeding*, 226.
[236] Widdicomb, "The End of Food."
[237] See https://www.bobbieforchange.org.

maternal, natural body[238] becomes reality. He is infinitely "pliable and plastic,"[239] wholly moldable by culture. All acts of the body that would reveal it to be a natural body are denied. Returning again to the adage "you are what you eat," we must understand that eating is a culturally-constructed act. Under agri-culture, it signals "civility" or "savagery." Controlling the act of eating–what is eaten, where it takes place, and how it changes the body–is wholly intertwined with agri-cultural notions of separation from the Earth, from Other, and from the body. It is a natural truth that we all must eat, and we all must eat food. Through food, through first foods, and through nature, we are sustained, grown, nourished; in the end, we become food, transcending the boundaries of eater/eaten. And yet in the ultimate expression of agri-cultural domination of nature, food becomes not-food, a substitute for food, nature, body. Thus, if "you are what you eat," what is human? "I've been on [Soylent] for a year now, and pretty much everything you see is built out of Soylent," says Rhinehart.[240] To conceive of one's body as totally self-created and self-built denies the original truth of what it means to be human: he is, thus, distinct from human and nature, superior to humans who must eat nature, superior to humans who are born from and through nature. He is his own Creator, and he is his own creation.

[238] Hanson, "The Maternal Body," 95.
[239] E. Grosz, "Notes towards a corporeal feminism," Australian Feminist Studies, 5(Sum mer) (1987): 3.
[240] Widdicomb, "The End of Food."

## 3. NEW PATHS

Having dug to the roots of agri-culture, where can we plant the seeds of future food, environmental, and women's justice? I reiterate that humans are natural beings; as such, it is only through recognition of this fact and actual practice of deconstructing the dualistic thought implicit to our agri-culture that we may begin to conceive of new paths to existence–ones that are fully and freely embodied and embedded in the natural world as self *and* other, human *and* nature, culture *and* human. Duality is not bad, Spelman writes. It is hierarchy that is the issue, and the original hierarchy is that inherent to agri-culture. As such, I propose several paths, ones that challenge within agri-culture, and ones that un-earth it–that is, remove it from earth–altogether.

### 3.1. Within Agriculture

Reformist movements are those that work within the existing framework; while they do provide some areas of improvement, these are often limited to hegemonic individuals who have the freedom, or the illusion thereof, of choice. As an example, while legislation has sought to protect the act of breastfeeding in public, the dualism in such legislation (i.e., breastfeeding versus the public) perpetuates notions that breastfeeding should not be a public activity. Spaces for breastfeeding women may serve to marginalize them further, forcing them to hide themselves away in pods,[241] behind curtains, or in special rooms. While it is not the intended direction of such laws, it inevitably functions to remove breastfeeding from public spaces, and does nothing to counter the patriarchal "eroticism of the breast."[242]

[241] Sojourner Marable Grimmett, "Support Establishing Lactation Rooms in Public Places: Would You Eat in the Bathroom?," Married with Two Boys (blog), September 2, 2011, http://sojournermarablegrimmett.blogspot.com/2011/09 /support-establishing-lactation-rooms-in.html.
[242] Rodriguez-Garcia, "Cultural Paradoxes," 112.

Other directions that perhaps may prove more fruitful are those enshrine breastfeeding and breast milk within the protections of food as a human right. The right to safe, nutritious, and appropriate food is a major part of food justice movements.[243] In addressing solutions, it may prove useful to take elements of food justice movements that speak to sovereignty and discard others that do not address the sexed and gendered aspects of inequality. La Via Campesina, the international grassroots peasant movement, is one of the few movements that explicitly examine women's rights in relation to food sovereignty.[244] La Via Campesina prioritizes female activism and inclusion, giving power to the women most exploited by the patriarchal system, and emphasizing that "women peasant [sic] are women,"[245] addressing that there are specific and unique forms of violence suffered by peasant women at the hands of men, and highlighting that women across the world share a common bond in that they are women. Such an understanding of a common source of power is essential for female body integrity, especially in the face of patriarchy. In globalizing the struggle, women also globalize hope.[246] However, as Leach notes, and as critiques of ecofeminism often do, we must remain careful not to essentialize the woman-nature connection[247] and instead use essentialism strategically,[248] if at all.

### 3.2. A Profound Remembering

[243] Alkon and Aygeman, *Cultivating Food Justice*, 5.
[244] Rita Calvário & Annette Aurélie Desmarais, "The feminist dimensions of food sovereignty: insights from La Via Campesina's politics," *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 50:2 (2023): 641.
[245] La Via Campesina, "Women Peasant are Women: Understanding violence against rural women in Eastern and Southern Africa" 2023. https://viacampesina.org/en/women-peasant-arewomen-understanding-violence-against-rural-women-in-eastern-and-southern-africapublication-launched-in-mozambique/
[246] Ibid.
[247] Melissa Leach, "Earth Mother Myths and Other Ecofeminist Fables: How a Strategic Notion Rose and Fell," Development and Change 38, no. 1 (2007): 67–85, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7660.2007.00403.x.
[248] A term coined by Spivak, as explored by Raksha Pande, "Strategic Essentialism," in International Encyclopedia of Geography (John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2017), 1–6, https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118786352.wbieg1170.

If a "profound forgetting"[249] is essential for agri-culture, it is perhaps through a profound *remembering* that a pathway to true embodied, embedded existence may be earthed. When we think of ourselves as natural beings, borne from, nourished through, and returning to nature to be borne forth again–a true life cycle–our existence *as* radically nondualistic fundamentally threatens the oppressive agri-cultural hierarchies that rely on categorization of self/other to function. "Motherbaby" lets us reflect on our own singularity/duality. Bigwood's encouragement that these measures may seem "vulnerable, backward, inefficient, and use-less"[250] is relevant. Discomfort is not dangerous but rather teaches us to learn about our bodies in new ways, respecting the "soft boundaries" of "body-space"[251] while opening us up to "otherness."[252] Allen grounds us in encouraging that "staying in your body, accepting its discomforts, decayings, witherings, and blossomings"[253] is a path towards embodied, embedded living. Deconstructing the agri-cultural fears of nature, the body, and the Other begins with the self. Fixed boundaries become permeable, and we are one *with* nature, one *as* nature as it unfolds and grows. Nature is neither inferior nor distinct. The body is neither inferior nor distinct. However, as Spretnak notes, these "immersions into experiencing nonduality" do not create a unitary dimension of being.[254] Separateness is a crucial part of existence, and it is imperative that we learn to respect without fearing, understand without understanding, and know ourselves so that we may know others. What is our original nonduality? From which maternal body did we come– was it mother, self, or earth? How were we nourished, how do we feed? Nature is embodied in all of us; we are embedded in nature. When

[249] King, "Ecology," 22.
[250] Bigwood, "Renaturalizing," 103.
[251] Spretnak, "Radical Nonduality," 430.
[252] Bigwood, "Renaturalizing," 103.
[253] Field, "Body," 51; citing Paula Gunn Allen, "The woman I love is a planet: The planet I love is a tree," in *Reweaving the world: The emergence of ecofeminism* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1990): 52.
[254] Ibid.

agri-cultural philosophy is un-earthed, we are left with a totally embedded, embodied, and encompassing existence; that is, one that is unitive, natural, woman, milk, body, and free.

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*Kindled by the flames of women's untameable creative powers, I enchant, I see visions, I prepare to make miracles. And as I dream I whisper a promise to myself: I will live to see women's spirit sweep over the Earth like wildfire; untameable, cleansing, renewing, and awakening. I will live to see women walking hand in hand the world over. I will live for myself, I will live fully, and completely, and I will love fully, and completely. And I will dream.*

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