

TOWARD CORNOTOLOGY

By

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A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

American Studies – Doctor of Philosophy

2013

ABSTRACT

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My dissertation appears at the interstices of the relatively recent explosion of cross-disciplinary and more popular talk about twenty-first century US agriculture. Whilst interdisciplinary scholarly and more commercial texts, including film representations, seek to expose a myriad of issues related to conventional-industrial agriculture and its central driver, commodity corn monocropping, I contend that many of these works also put forth a *particular* geography of US agriculture as inveterately geographically bifurcated a deleterious *global*, conventional-industrial agricultural harvest-through-consumption paradigm, set against a purportedly more healthful organic, and often increasingly *local*, alternative. My project thus seeks to examine, through the lens of post-structuralist geography, today's most readily available and widely accepted imaginary of US agriculture as both divided global-local and mapped with accordant values. In due course, I craft and propose a post-structuralist geography ethic, ever mindful of proposals for integrating the best agricultural *tools* available today, for likewise reading and representing US foodways beyond divisive mappings; for moving *toward assemblage* of agricultural discourse and representation.

In order to perform such an analysis, my dissertation first outlines the location and function of what I argue is the most significant geographical imaginary available for understanding American agriculture through time and across geography: agrarianism. Through the lens of relational geographical precepts, I set-up the project's central rubric for understanding the shape and function of American agrarian discourse from inception through the mid-twentieth

century. Thereby, my dissertation can explore the most popular geographical imaginary of US agriculture that has come to the fore since WWII, i.e., *neagrarianism*. I contend that the new agrarianism, while in no way unrelated to American agrarianism through space-time, even so has been most notably and particularly reconfigured and proposed over the last thirty years by popular agrarian, Wendell Berry. Now, neoagrarianism continues to proliferate through a diverse set of writings and representations which nevertheless manage to forward a rather uniform imaginary of global-local division, and associated principles and critiques, wildly popularized and disseminated by writers like Michael Pollan. Not just in writing and discourse, by the close of the dissertation I also perform analysis of how the new agrarianism extends into other popular texts, namely the documentary film. I consider the flourishing of popular new agrarian documentaries; how the singular media of documentary, when spatialized through a neoagrarian imaginary, *can* inculcate significant *material* food spectatorships, performances and projects which, given their pervasive influence on debates surrounding consumer choice and US food labeling law, require more scholarly treatment. Ultimately, it is through such extended, post-structuralist geography analysis of the preeminent imaginary of US agriculture, altogether oriented by and informative of interdisciplinary US agriculture, cultural studies and geography scholarships, that my dissertation presents and reviews the central tenants of a novel *quasi-agrarian* proposal for reading and representation. *Quasi-agrarianism* seeks a confrontation and revision of how we imagine, see and perform American food geographies today.

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To my mother (1943-2008)—for teaching me when to leave a burning building

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have been lucky with support and mentors throughout my career, but never more so than during my time at Michigan State University. For much of that time I have worked with Dr. Stephen Rachman, Dr. Cynthia Simmons and Dr. Jeffrey Charnley... I could never adequately thank you, Dr. Rachman, for all that you have inspired in my work and life more generally. My sincerest gratitude for all your time and attention during my years in *American Studies* at MSU exceeds the one inch margins. Likewise, to the incomparable Dr. Simmons: you are a profoundly inspirational geographer who is just *all over* this project. Ever thank you for your attention and kindness, intellectual verve and patience with all aspects of my life and work. Last but not least, thank you to Dr. Jeffrey Charnley. Our travels over the last five summers through *Europa* with students learning about *The War* have immeasurably influenced both my life and work—forever. It continues to be a truly rewarding experience to know and work with all of you. Thank you.

I would also like to thank Dr. Laurie Thorp, Dr. Kyle Powys Whyte, Dr. Neal Fortin and Dr. Laura Julier. Thank you, Dr. Thorp, for your advice and direction from very early on in the project through its completion. Your reviews, kindness and humor have been invaluable. Thank you, also, to Dr. Whyte. I cannot express my gratitude for your willingness to contribute to the committee, and ever with such highly useful recommendations. A very special thank you goes out to Dr. Neal Fortin for so patiently reviewing my earliest understandings of GE food labeling and absolutely inspiring me to continue on with my project. And, as ever thank you to the fierce and fabulous Dr. Julier: your encouragement and critique of my teaching, as well as our many

other talks and dinners, will be a highlight of my time at MSU. I could not have completed the current project without all of your involvement.

Actually, instructors and professors have often served as like a second family since I began my first degree quite young. Many of you as early as fifteen years ago spent time auditing various ideas which have informed the current project. I would not have been able to contribute this scholarship without the past and present attention and support of Mr. John Hunsaker, Mrs. K. Johnson, Mrs. Allison Alison, Mrs. Donley Payne, Mr. Rob Kineer, Ms. Julie Mock, Dr. C. Patrick Hotle, Dr. Ruth Ellen Porter, Dr. Alison Milburn, Dr. Priya Kumar, Dr. Ed Folsom, Dr. Claire Sponsler, Dr. Rudy Kuenzli, Dr. Anne Wallis, Dr. John Lowe and Dr. Shelly Campo... Thank you here as well to Dr. H. Louise Davis for inspiring me to make some connections very early on which in part lead to the current project.

There is also a memorable collection of professional acquaintances and professors, particularly through the last few years, who, by either example or performance compelled me to make significant changes in both my life and career paths. That list includes: Mr. Dustin Hellberg and Mr. Martin Göransson; Dr. Carolyn Kane, Dr. Ruedi Kuenzli, Dr. Nanette Barkey and Dr. Helena Skinstad; Dr. Dorothy Smith; and at MSU, Dr. Ann Larabee, Dr. Lisa Fine and Dr. Arthur Versluis. Thank you all for your various contributions.

Thank you also goes out to singer-songwriter, Richard Buckner, for reconfiguring my self-and-world relationships and/because of *The Hill*. There are too many other influences of this kind to mention, but as a person who might make a lot of social noise whilst remaining rather solitary when it matters most, I must say (quoting Yeats), to *We that have done and thought, That have thought and done, Must ramble, and thin out...* thank you: Russel Nye, Pearl Jam, *National Public Radio* (N.P.R.), Simone de Beauvoir, *The Deadwood*, Norman Finkelstein,

cacti, *Office Français de l'Immigration et de l'Intégration*, Errol Morris, *The World's Only Corn Palace*, F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Tattooed Countess*, Ukraine, *Peanut Barrel*, Wendell Berry, *Great River Hospice*, Weird Al Yancovic, Michael Specter, *Live! From Prairie Lights*, Lemony Snicket, R.E.M., Donna Haraway, *Band of Brothers*, John Irving, Henri Lefebvre, *The Three Investigators Series*, James McWilliams, *A Thousand Acres*, epigenetics, The Kingdom of Jordan, *Tomorrow's Table*, Doreen Massey, James Carroll, *Dave's Foxhead*, Warren Loper, *Mairie de Vitry-sur-Seine*, Beyoncé, diffraction, *The Iowa State Fair*, Justin Timberlake, lacunae, *The University of Iowa Department of Cardiothoracic Surgery* and Werner Herzog—and of course, perhaps above all others, Bruno Latour. The artistry of William, Chloe and Nigel Hinson has been profoundly impactful, particularly with the generation of an *always already absent present* Figure. And yes, with a nice bottle of Cabernet actually I *would eat in vitro meat*.

For countless hours talking through theory, its applications and pitfalls, with tenacity, humor and integrity (before finally getting out of my apartment) I thank the incandescently brilliant Andrew Lettow. I have fond memories of the vibrancy and support of Brittany Tullis and Suzanne Foggia at this point as well. To the ever consummate scholar, Natalie Graham: it is toward *your* standards of intellectuality and humanity I contribute this project. If only we all could take so little and give so fully with as much grace and wisdom... I dare to *imagine* such geographies: if only. Thank you, Natalie, for that *place* in the present.

My dear older sisters, who survived the acreage with sarcasm, decency and caring attention, have been the support system of my life and work entire. I could never write an acknowledgement commensurate your contributions, particularly your investment through those certain times of loss, regret, redemption and death; for allowance of your homes (along with your brother-husbands) throughout my complex travel schedule over the course of the last few years.

Now I only hope that this project can enlighten you of your profound influence as sardonic, albeit *always* kind, responsible and above all, persevering *Iowa farm women*—even if there may be less gravel where we all might tread into the future. I will always find you both *out there* for you are ever *in here*. Thank you, Dori and Beth: exemplary women, the real loves of my life.

To my father, the Major Dick Winters of the *food wars*. I am ineffably humbled by you literally *every day*. What an incomparable man—may you outlast us all with your humility, dazzling wit, cyborg heart and seemingly implausible ability to wholly *regenerate no matter what*... To the family farm, to (GE) commodity corn, to thinking *what could have been* and what *continues*—dad, you *are: hope*.

Finally, with much love and respect, I write to my husband, Marc. What a remarkable *throwntogetherness* of the world that has continued to shape every last aspect of my *place on earth* every day... We know where we are. There are other tales to tell within and of your beautifully troubled green eyes and ineffably complex carriage. For now, I understand your accented parables. Thank you.

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CHAPTER ONE

How We Think About Corn Matters

I am standing on the front porch of our rural Iowa commodity corn farm, which today is inputting 100% *genetically engineered* (GE)¹ seed. See, my father has been commodity corn and soybean farming for over forty years. His ~500 acres are situated around the rural Southeastern Iowa homestead's perfectly groomed lawns and red-hued/ tin-roofed outbuildings, which once served for a thirty-year middling cattle operation. He also farms ~500-600 additional mixed owned/ rented acreage spread throughout the rural farming community where I grew-up with my two older sisters. The crops and cattle operation he took-over with nothing but debt in the late 1960s simply pales in comparison to the owned, wealthy and well-invested, custom-farmed commodity crop operation today, nothing short of a complex network of laborers, grain buyers, seed/agro chemical retailers, insurance agents, lawyers, and the USDA, to name just a few. Given the years following the turbulent decade of foreclosures and restructuring of the 1980s Midwestern US CornBelt,² the former cattle operation remains evident now from the

¹ *Genetic engineering* techniques are strictly grouped in what is delimited the US conventional-industrial agricultural paradigm, to which I turn my attention shortly. For now, I am referring to GE like this. GE is not the *sum* of conventional methods—and actually *not a farming method at all* (Ronald and Adamchak, 2008, p. x). For now, GE is a modern plant modification technique being *utilized* by *most* conventional-industrial farmers in the US today. Though not at all *disconnected* from *traditional* plant breeding techniques, GE can be distinguished from orthodox hybridization in that GE allows interspecies gene transfer from “*any* other species, even those from animals” (original emphasis; p. x); and, whilst traditional plant breeding mixes a lot of different genes together at one time, GE more carefully controls the introduction of only one or more genes with clear functions at one time (p. x). GE returns often throughout the project.

² The *CornBelt* commonly refers to the major commodity corn contributors of the concatenated Midwestern CornBelt states. Iowa leads the nation in commodity corn production, along with Nebraska, Illinois, and Minnesota accounting for more than half of total national commodity

front porch only in the form of its *absence*, being, foremost, the no less immaculate outbuildings with repainted corn silos nevertheless lacking the odor and sound of cattle; and the strained grasses still recovering from the original fence lines. The fences have been long-since removed in order to put grazing fields under cultivation for commodity crops, once in annual rotation between corn and soybeans, but by now mostly devoted to the growing of (GE) commodity corn. Without a doubt, the difficulty of continuing a family-based cattle operation given the massive *Confined Animal Feeding Operations* (CAFOs) today dominating the industry—not unlike what has happened likewise with pork and chicken production—intermixed with twenty-first century commodity corn prices have been the central motivation for the latter shifts in landscaping and allotment which have resulted in multiple additional fields of commodity corn that only recently appeared on the landscape. In fact, there is so much commodity corn growing around the family farmstead today that walking on a dirt road that cuts through two fields near the end of its growing cycle is an experience that lends credence to the appeal of annual *corn mazes*... Remember a terrified family who became lost in such a lush maze of giant, identical corn plants—a disorienting, *otherworldly* experience unburdened in a frantic 911 call like this: “We thought this would be fun. Instead it’s a nightmare. I don’t know what made us do this. It was daytime when we came in... This is the first time. Never again” (“‘I Am Really Scared’: Family Lost in Corn Maize Calls 911 for Help,” 2011). All of these verdant nonhumans are

corn. The latter geographically linked states, in descending order of contribution to the national percentage, are as follows: 1) Iowa, national corn production leader for over fourteen years, producing more corn *than some countries* upon ~13.9 million acres (farmable acres dedicated of 30.7 million acres); 2) Illinois; 3) Nebraska; 4) Minnesota; 5) Indiana; 6) Kansas; 7) South Dakota; 8) Ohio; 9) Missouri; 10) Wisconsin; and finally, 11) Michigan, at 2.6 million acres, accounting for 10.6% of state agricultural value, but only ~2% of national percentage (USDA, 2010). Other states contribute minimally to the national percentage, and are located throughout the contiguous US, which is why the CornBelt came to be known as the linked, major contributors (see the USDA website at, www.usda.gov).

overseen by my now semi-retired father (along with his *John Deere* collared *Shih-Tzu*, Clint Eastwood) from his ‘farm office’ which looks strikingly like a kitchen table situated before two ‘picture windows’ at once revealing/ concealing his King (GE) *Corndom*. And, when I stand on the front porch of our rural Iowa commodity corn farm, which today is inputting 100% GE commodity corn seed, I can imagine the complex space-time humans and nonhumans have had to traverse since the first domestication of *teosinte*, eventually (re)producing one of the most versatile and complex cereal crops of the *New World*, *Zea mays*, or *maize*... becoming now, at least in the most pervasive and persuasive imaginaries of twenty-first century US agriculture, a *maze* of biotechnoscience, global markets, *pink slime*, CAFOs, patents, human morbidity, ecological decline and—*terror*.

What I see before me is just one family (GE) *Corndom* contributor to the US conventional-industrial production³ of commodity corn,⁴ now sprawling upwards of 92 million

³ The phrases “conventional” and “organic”/ “industrial” and “alternative” as they will be used throughout the project are all highly problematic terms that the project works to illuminate. Here, the phrases denote the predominant categories of US agriculture, commonly opposed, categorized and understood in these terms.

So, when deploying these terms for the rest of the project, I am referencing, one, conventional-industrial agriculture as a “*catch-all term* used to describe diverse farming methods” (*my emphasis*; Ronald & Adamchak, 2008, p. x). Methods can actually range from the more intensive application of synthetic pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers for higher yields on a cyclical, annual basis (short-term); to the limited use of chemicals toward a more long-term, ecologically beneficial farming (p. x). Most commonly, however, in anyway substantial conventional-industrial farming operations, especially for commodity crops, utilize the latest agri-technologies—utilization which only became intensified through the marked consolidation of conventional-industrial farming modes into large, specialized monocropping operations. Such *palatial* production intensification through consolidation is often described thus as ““better farming through chemistry”” (Ronald and Adamchak, 2008, p. 13-14). GE is usually grouped here.

Two, when I use the phrase *organic* agri-cultures I mean, “‘*better farming through biology*’ because they are based on using living organisms rather than synthetic chemicals... [organic farming] *avoids or largely excludes* the use of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides” (*my emphasis*; p. 13; x). Therefore, the conceptualized alternative methods of organic agriculture are generally seen as “an ecologically-based farming” (Ronald & Adamchak, 2008, p. x) that

planted acres.⁵ The sheer density of the latter at times ten-foot, thirty-inch rowed twenty-first century *corn country* verisimilitude is comprised of yields never before of conceived... *Never before of conceived* means the last decade has seen the largest corn crops in human history, beyond 10 billion bushels on average, with the largest in 2009 exceeding 13.1 billion—that means more than 332 million metric tons of corn (USDA), an excess of ~169 million metric tons over the next country leader, China; and about 180 million metric tons more than the rest of the 10-ten corn-producers of the world combined [(Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAOSTATS), 2011)]. Such monolithic tonnage of corn emanates not only from the acreage put under cultivation, but also the bushels per acre, which have been steadily rising to

limits/reduces and/or excludes not only synthetic inputs but also irrigation through reliance instead on “crop rotation, cover crops, compost, and mechanical cultivation... to maintain soil productivity and fertility, to supply plant nutrients, and to control weeds, insects and other pests” (p. x). Fundamentally, organic methods encompass mixing crops; mixing crops and livestock; and managing weeds through an as cross-pollinated collection of physical, mechanical, biological or various chemical strategies which *limit* and/or *exclude* the application of synthetics.

⁴ I want to clarify from this point on that this project focuses on *corn* as contextualized by US conventional-industrial agriculture through space-time; and, likewise, *commodity corn*. The highest percentage of corn within the US today is devoted to *commodities*, which, as a primary agricultural product, like other commodities, can be bought and sold. *Commodity corn* is often cited as a “field crop,” one of other crops not falling under the category of fruits or vegetables, including cotton and hay, which are all grown for other agricultural purposes. This last distinction is somewhat contrasted varieties of “field corn,” which in common language often refers to corn grown almost exclusively for livestock feed, but can reference corn grown for agricultural purposes as well. Today, over 98% of the corn production in the US is field corn (see *Iowa Corn Growers Association*, 2013, at, www.iowacorn.org). Either commodity or field corn is the corn varieties to which I am referring throughout the project. Also, not only will I be predominantly referring to commodity corn, I want to reiterate that I will be using the *state* of *Iowa’s* commodity corn production as my primary “field” of statistical and other forms of interest, as I did above, not only because Iowa leads the nation in corn production for well over a decade, but also because I grew-up on an Iowa family commodity corn farm.

⁵ *Planted* acreage does not equal *harvested* acres given various elements, like poor weather. The highest planted acreage in the twenty-first century was in 2007, totaling 93,527,000. The highest harvested acreage was the same year, though totaling 86,520,000 (USDA).

reach upwards of 182 bu./ acre in the last decade. To put this number in perspective, at the turn of the twentieth century a farmer was lucky to yield 23.8 bu./ acre. Bushels-per-acre did not even break the one hundreds until 1978, at 101 (USDA). About thirty years later (~2009) easily marks the largest corn crop in human history, first in terms of its 164.7 bu./ acre, and then for its total of 13.1 billion bushels. Such exceptional commodity corn surplus can also characterize US Midwestern states like Iowa, central to the CornBelt and US corn production with just over 3,045,000 rural and urban population and ~30.7 farmable acres. Iowa leads the nation in not only the production of soybeans, hogs, and pigs,⁶ but commodity corn, which has accounted for 13.9 million harvested acres of the total farmable acreage to alone contribute about 35% of the state's total agricultural receipts—its top agricultural commodity, when at its highest, easily exceeding a dollar value of nine billion (USDA). The twenty-first century saw more commodity corn grown in Iowa than ever before.

Altogether, the ten-foot, thirty-inch rowed *corn country* verisimilitude of identical, lush, and much sturdier plants capable of such high yields having been annually (re)produced through significant advances in *biotechnoscience*,⁷ esp., GE, can be considered the hallmark of a global

⁶ Pigs are immature hogs weighing less than 125 pounds (USDA).

⁷ The word *biotechnoscience/ biotechnoscientific* will be used throughout the project to reference the extreme advances of the age of biology, pulling together strains of once more distanced disciplines to instead (re)create biological, technological, and varied other scientific treatments, processes, industries, machines, plants, foods—global warming inasmuch as drones—and countless other (non)humans of *amodern assemblages* (postulates expounded upon in Chapter Two). The recombinant term is intended to encompass these last while indicating that the boundary between Society and Nature, rather human and nonhuman (respectively mapped agency and structure, place and space, and many other apropos bifurcations addressed in a later section) has been *always already* thoroughly breeched. The works of Haraway (1991; 1992; 1997) Latour (1993; 2004), Murdoch (1997; 2006) will be particularly useful in more fully delineating and analyzing interinfluential constructions of the age of biology, advanced engineering and technology.

conventional-industrial monocultural agricultural paradigm responsible for a superabundant US food supply and *relatively low cost of food*;⁸ domination of international trade, mostly with the world's most populous nation, as well as a producer of more than half of the world's pork, China;⁹ and ignoble downtrends in general public health (particularly of Americans with the least access and fewest options) as well as ecological vigor—to name just two.

Commencing my project from the front porch of my family's 100% GE commodity *Corndom* today, where rustles the monstrosly biotechnoscientific, natural and engineered, incredibly complex and vastly networked phenomena of commodity corn plants' life and death demands at once a translation and articulation of the multiple and varied geographical imaginaries of twenty-first century US agriculture which come to life behind my eyes, overlaying the same *cornscape* before me. US (GE) commodity corn production has been firmly placed at the center of increasingly contentious appraisals of the US conventional-industrial system for well over a century. Few other species of American plant have commanded so much

⁸ “A relatively low cost of food” means that for a number of different reasons, US food prices have been relatively stable over the past twenty years, with prices increasing on average (2.5-3%) just below the rate of inflation and can continue to remain as such irrespective of, for instance, commodity corn prices. Actually, retail food prices have, with prices increasing an average of 3% per year from 1987 through 2007, just below the rate of inflation. It's noteworthy that these mostly modest conditions of US food price changes are contrasted those throughout other parts of the world, which on average consumes a less *processed* diet than Americans and those of other *industrialized* countries, so the food prices of many of these countries are more closely tied to both domestic and global commodity prices. That makes sense also when noting that the US products with the most volatile prices are *fresh* foods, like eggs, fruit and vegetables—those foods more generally consumed in the contrasted countries; and more generally sold, today, by organic producers (USDA). The *relatively low cost of food* is commonly presented as the justification for the current conventional-industrial cropping mode and its monolithic surplus, which receives further treatment throughout the project.

⁹ In spite of complex *domestic* motivators, a significant impetus for the relatively high US surplus of commodity corn—steadily increasing for well over fifty years—has always been international trade, particularly today with China.

scholarly, critical and popular attention for so long.¹⁰ Though knowledge about this and prominent other plant's most fundamental characteristics, such as progenitors, cultivation and domestication, was described as "scandalous" half a century ago,¹¹ scholarly and more popular geographical imaginaries, evaluations, representations and protests about and over the US conventional-industrial paradigm and its most significant (GE) commodity corn driver, in the last decade especially, seem to have grown in number, size and terror almost as profoundly as corn's own tolerances, sturdiness, and heavily subsidized acreages; as well as to have grown together.

How has scholarship and popular representation moved from *scandalous ignorance* of a plant to the supposed *common knowledge* that that same, particularly conventional-industrial (GE) commodity corn plant is fueling transnational capitalist agricultural destruction all over the world? One of the, if not the, seminal contributor to *King Corn*'s twenty-first century *celebrity* as *food and commodity, part and parcel* of the end of civilization via a (GE) conventional-industrial agriculture run rampant especially through the US Midwestern CornBelt, is undoubtedly the prolific, award-winning, best-selling journalist, author, professor, US corn journalist extraordinaire and omnivore icon, Michael Pollan. Even Marion Nestle (2010) concurs here, when describing her "astonishment" at the "number and range of [non-academic] books about food issues produced each year, a phenomenon..." (p. 163), noting that "one of two

¹⁰ The notion that this particular American cereal is the leading crop of scholarly debate is drawn from Heiser (1979) in the context of disagreement about the progenitors, domestication and cultivation of some New World plants. This last debate became rather heated in the 1970s, when new archaeological findings became available in terms of Mesoamerican agriculture. Although multiple aspects of the US agriculture have been heavily debated, I merely point out here that commodity cropping, particularly of corn, interconnects with most aspects of the US system, past to present.

¹¹ Heiser (1979) quoted Edgar Anderson (1952) in *Plants, Man and Life*, on the, as he writes, "'scandalous condition' of our knowledge of the origin of cultivated plants" (p. 309).

leading US advocates for food system reform, along with Alice Waters” (p. 163) is none other than the *extraordinarily popular* Michael Pollan. If *The Botany of Desire: A Plant’s Eye-view of the World* (2002), which, in its oftentimes more interdisciplinary, science and cultural studies focus on shifting human relationships with apples, tulips, marijuana and potatoes, brought his specific view of a complexly inextricable reciprocal interconnection of society and nature to the forefront of moderate to radical food revolutionary ideology alike, *The Omnivore’s Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals* (2006) was the congealing of a veritable *cult of new agrarian personality* that has entailed lead-narrator roles in at least two large studio food documentaries, as well as head-advisor role on about two others—films which Nestle further concludes can reach masses of “non-readers and are worth serious critical attention in their own right as instigators of food advocacy” (p. 164). For instance, Pollan’s voice gently wafts through the aisles of a supermarket in the opening moments of the massively popular new documentary from *Magnolia Pictures, Participant Media and River Road Entertainment, Food, Inc.* (2008), directed by Robert Kenner. *Food, Inc.* spatializes a kind of Eric Schlosser (2001), *Fast Food Nation*, meets Pollan’s *Dilemma’s* imaginary of US agriculture today. *King Corn* (2008) by Director Aaron Woolf, and starring co-writers, producers Curt Ellis and Ian Cheney, is a lesser funded, but no less heavily Pollan-influenced film about the same *cornscape* before me—though so directly referencing the Pollan imaginary as to actually spatialize it and call it, *King*. The point here is that Pollan is clearly a leading popular/ized voice in US food system reform, responsible for crafting a *particular* geographical imaginary of specifically *Iowa* conventional-industrial, GE *cornscapes* with which everyone in the US today—interested in a corn plant here or there, or *where their food comes from*—must reckon.

Still, one cannot mention Michael Pollan without citing Wendell Berry. Even Pollan claims in the introduction of the new Wendell Berry (2009) collection, *Bringing It To The Table: On Farming and Food* that the reason so many people are *finally talking about food* (and the innumerable issues of conventional-industrial agriculture) is because of the contributions of the wildly prolific and popular professor, poet, farmer and *prophet*, Wendell Berry. Neoagrarian/Catholic distributist Carlson (2008), concurs, writing that the *rebirth of agrarianism* in the US today is mostly owed Berry's ruminations, what others have called a profoundly straightforward "worldview... the countervailing idea to industrialism" (p. 14), i.e., a treatise on the virtue of family farming in all its many small manifestations, generally set opposed the (GE) commodity *cornscapes* of BIG, global agribusiness. Also remarking on Berry's humanistic approach to reattaching people to the soil, neoagrarian land-use specialist, Eric Freyfogle (2001) [editor of popular essay collection, *The New Agrarianism*] asserts that "agrarian ways and virtues are resurging in American culture" (p. 14) because of Wendell Berry. Ultimately, Carlson (2008) contends that, today, "the farming future may not lie with the consolidators, speculators, and agribusiness. Rather, it may lie with the resurrection of a family-centered agriculture" (p. 14) in no small part due to the various contributions of the farmer and poet himself. Though requiring further qualification throughout the pages to follow, Berry unquestionably has had a profound influence on some of the strongest and most pervasive twenty-first century imaginaries of US conventional-industrial agriculture. Many of his views are drawn from in other works exploring conventional-industrial agriculture's paramount commodity facilitator, and decrying corn as at its most devious a global industrial food's impure co-conspirator of all things agri-chemicals turned GE: the principle biotechnoscience advancement responsible for the corn-based

monocultural agri-culture inhaling US acreage, and really the international commodity crop market, today.

Michael Pollan's geographical imaginary, like that of most *neagrarianism* to be presented throughout the project, adopts the seductive Berry geographical imaginary to (re)produce a highly influential story of a *post geography* world, where massive commodity GE *cornscapes* are a progressive, seemingly unfettered, global government-corporate tyranny seeking the destruction of full ecological health of all humans and nonhumans with nothing but unreal, unnatural, biotechnoscientific practices and "food"; for nothing but short-term profits.

While these are perhaps the *most* popular geographical imaginaries of US agriculture, they are not the only available among the heavy cross-traffic of "food talk" also heavily apparent throughout the academy today. US agriculture, particularly its conventional-industrial paradigm, has been studied from a multitude of historical, sociological, agri-/macro-economic, environmental, foodways, and policy perspectives, to name a few, for well over a century. Notably, the conventional-industrial paradigm has been regularly critiqued over the last few decades given, first, well-known and documented environmental impacts correlated with such agricultural practices all over the world; and, second, the relatively recent explosion of organic agriculture, *alternative foodways*, *sustainability*, and likened local/ism efforts, studies, and discourses, which, in some institutions, have even become no less than academic disciplines. The last fifteen years situates a broader social *food movement* and a gathering academic discipline denoted as, *food studies*. Said discipline has endeavored to bring together the humanities, social sciences and foodways scholarship—from food systems (production) to food culture (consumption), encompassing gastronomy, culinary history and *slow food*—just to name a few. Providing some sort of comprehensive overview of relative food studies and talk, or of

the stand-alone, time-tested disciplines of agri-food research, like rural sociology, agricultural economics, and just seemingly countless others, could comprise a book-long treatment and not entirely the works inculcating my project's objective anyway.

My point here is that among all the cross-pollinated, more or less interdisciplinary dialogues about food, I can *(re)vision*¹² another kind of *cross-pollination*—like a cross-*Pollanination*. A geographical imaginary has begun to emerge from many of this interrelated food focused works that *also* forwards, confirms and/or (re)creates discourse about the *bifurcation* of US foodways. In doing so, said formulations shift the foci to *organic* agriculture geographies as, specifically, *alternative* constructs—then often offered as the *only* alternative constructs to the conventional-industrial system today. What has also become clearer through my (re)vision is that critical, or at least complete historical, cultural and geographical critique of organics with its attendant and multiple set of aligned/ not, affiliated/ not food systems localization micro-groups has been instituted much less; rather, organics, in all its various manifestations today, has been receiving far less critical attention than the so-called tragedy of industrial agriculture—and especially when it comes to concretizing the efficacy of *food systems*

¹² This seemingly simple term has a profoundly complex set of references critical to my project. First, at the most basic level, the term plays on the word/ meaning of *revision*, as in to edit and/or rewrite a text. Bracketing the '(re)' locates the simultaneous meaning of *revision*, meaning to 'see' *again*, endlessly, as in the case of editing a text or really even reconsidering various aspects of living in the world, etc., i.e., to *revise* via *re-seeing*. The first and most often referenced applicators of such simultaneous usage comes from Adrienne Rich, *second-wave feminist* driver who proclaimed in the well-known essay, "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision" (1972), that, "Re-vision—the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of enter-ing an old text from a new critical direction—for women more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival. Until we can understand the assumptions in which we are drenched we cannot know ourselves" (p. 18). I propose (re)vision—preferring the parenthetical for implication of continuation, repetition, reproduction—in light of Rich, though taking her notion of *re-entering a text* in a profoundly differentiated direction related to post-structuralist geographical delimitation moving toward a more *diffractional reflexivity*, later introduced through the works of Haraway (1991; 1997), Thrift (1997; 1999; 2000), and Rose (1997a; 1997b), to name a few.

localization to combat the safety and/or purity concerns of GE development, the US regulatory structure of GE food products, and likewise so forth. Apparently, my (re)vision has company.

Various scholars, incl. David Goodman (2002), with DuPuis (2002), and Michael Goodman (2007; 2008), argue that an *en masse* shift in agri-food related scholarship has occurred, citing the move away from the historically more privileged agricultural *production* foci and toward contemporary food *consumption* and its politics (as related to a broader critical theoretical turn in the academy). They argue that the result has been a relatively recent explosion of consumer and food quality oriented studies (drawn from Goodman, 2002), only giving rise to another problem gestured to above: for (re)enjoining the separate worlds of production and consumption, many works have relied on the implicit global-local, or regional-local, binary—with production comprising the more global sphere, contrasted then with a more local consumption experience. Like this, these authors suggest that this increasingly influential move into political food quality topics can too often uncritically wed the local with quality, opposed then to the global, itself predictably indicative of the industrial, and implicitly thus of lesser quality. Ultimately, analytical frameworks intent on more efficaciously interfacing these complex production/consumption fields have instead given rise to an equally problematic geographical binary: the local versus the global.

Drawing from the work of Sonnino and Marsden (2006), in this *new*, and highly influential geographical imaginary and turn to quality, it seems that quality has been deployed most frequently to signify the foodways' research turn away from the global conventional-industrial system (p. 183); and the turn to the more local/ist production and consumption schemes purportedly raising and selling, with the least food mileage, the most natural food simply because their practices are productions can be seen as anything and everything that the

conventional-industrial system is *not* (p. 185), i.e., *not* agri-chemicals and, today, *not* GE based. Others argue that this last means that an *uncritical localism* has come to the fore (Allen, 2008; Born & Purcell, 2006). *Uncritical localism* can also have coordinate, unqualified conceptions of regional, an implied geographical orientation that would have an interinfluential relation with the scale of the local, but is left instead either a vague conceptualization; or, worse, a particular conceptualization that allows for the local construct to appear lacking in any, even relatively minor, violations of social justice (Kneafsey, 2010), i.e., utopian production and consumption. Others call this *the local trap* (Born & Purcell, 2006); and/ or, *unreflexive localism* (DuPuis & Goodman, 2005; Hinrichs, 2003). If the social, political, economic, and so forth relations, processes and trajectories of, chiefly here, production and consumption through which and whereby the local and its highly relative quality continually (re)territorializes in the first place are glossed or even ignored, then it begs many questions about the full conceptualization of agri foodways and politics today, namely: is the local and quality basically anything that the conventional system is *not* (Sonnino & Marsden, 2006, p. 185)? Asks Allen (2010), “no one can deny that local food is good food” (p. 295), but is that really the most important issue?

Many critics charge that given uncritical consumption foci of agri-food research, in lieu of following an ethic of integrative frameworks and network assemblage that connects both agri-cultures, as well as full harvest-through-consumption thinking in a number of different cross-disciplinary registers, the analysis of US agriculture has become, in many ways, imbalanced, probably more accurately cited as *divided*, between the global, or conventional-industrial food; and the local, in all its myriad manifestations. Regardless, so escalates the proliferation of projects agricultural historian James McWilliams’ (2009), *Just Food: Where Locavores Get It Wrong and How We Can Truly Eat*, names, the *locavore approach* (p. 2). He delineates the

latter as entailing a vast array of community-centered, *do it yourself* kind of food systems localization projects involving both farmers and consumers, all working together to build stronger, healthier families, communities and larger environments. To name just a few, the latter includes *farmers' markets*, *Community-Supported Agriculture* (CSAs), *FoodSheds* and *100-mile diets*.¹³

Even a small slice of today's proliferation of popular and more scholarly geographical representations of US agriculture and/or GE commodity *cornscapes*, including those of Michael Pollan, the new agrarianism and Wendell Berry, documentary films and agri-food studies, can illuminate the congealing of a predominant imaginary of US agriculture—that often runs like this. Conventional-industrial agriculture, of which *King Corn*'s dual celebrity as *food and commodity* is assuredly part and parcel, is the *tragedy*, and/or *crisis* responsible for massive ecological degradation and decline, pervasive human morbidity and mortality—a more or less *terrifying* agricultural *cornscape*. Like this, the conventional-industrial is altogether counterpoised the benefits of alternative agri-food networks which, given the locavore revolution, are almost as abundant as corn's own propagation, and more or less imagined as retreats into much slower food... and why not? Is it not an *enough and good/ enough* set of lenses for (re)considering our rural Iowa commodity corn farm, which today is inputting 100%

¹³ *FoodSheds* can be connected with CSAs in terms of attempting to provide a locale's food through stakeholders in local acreages and organic agricultural practices. Likewise, the related concept of the *100-mile diet* would mean that a group, or individual, consumes foods from only within a 100-mile radius of home. All of these projects are interconnected, more or less lasting. See generally, *The 100-Mile Diet: A Year of Local Eating* (2007), the title of a nonfiction book by Canadian writers Smith and MacKinnon which popularized FoodSheds and 100-mile diets for many. The authors restricted their diet to food grown within a 100-mile radius of their home for one year. The writers chronicle the ups and downs of their diet. Their work shares much with popular American novelist and essayist Barbara Kingsolver's (2007) book about her own family's one-year 100-mile diet, called, *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*.

(GE) commodity corn seed? Without question, critiques of so-called conventional-industrial agriculture more generally, and its programming cropping paradigm which commodity corn is a significant part, are by no means entirely unfounded. The current conventional-industrial system, as it works today, is largely disadvantageous to farmers; in some qualified ways, by the time and in what form its typically processed products reach consumers,¹⁴ is detrimental for general human health; and unquestionably damaging to the environment. *Why not* imagine US agriculture through these largely similar perspectives?

I mean, even my own family displays many literal and figurative scars of an *honest day's agricultural work with one's hands*, of the US conventional-industrial agricultural paradigm—what I understand now meant to my father as the most meaningful, historical as well as useful, human, *American work* : the work of agri-culture... outside from sunrise to sunset, without reprieve from one day; month; year; decade to the next; a life of work that meant death and/of plants, of hopes—of *utopian dreams*. I understand now that he could have a hand at the hoe; a hand upon a tractor's wheel; a hand mixed-up in a combine's reluctant engine; a hand pushing the needle of antibiotics into as reluctant cattle force-fed commodity corn silage; and a hand marking a commodity corn buyer's spreadsheet, all through cycles of seasons, bad habits, disappointment, other rage(s) and just too little profit to be a secure livable wage with three daughters in need of orthodontics—and amidst a collapsing agricultural economy marring the Midwest through the 1980s, the heavy consolidation of family farms thereafter accompanied by the increasingly heavy-hand of agribusiness shaping all market participation, federal subsidization and selection of all farmers' tools and practices—only because of a kind of self-

¹⁴ I will use the word *consumers* to describe food eating citizenry, but this of course is not an *innocent* term. Fully discouraging the term is beyond the scope of the current project. See generally Goodman & Goodman (2007). For a cogent parallel in the shift in terminology of *health* consumers as well, see generally Bishop et al. (2011).

assured perspective wrought of a historical, heavily persuasive and undoubtedly American representation, moreover what Jager (2004) calls, “our secular theology”: Jeffersonian ideals of a democracy built upon the virtuous work of distributed rural smallholders... that rural American families *feed the world*; that rural family farming is *virtuous* in its independence and self-reliance—really human *worth* itself, *what people are for*—no matter what it takes/ even if that took a younger man’s drink; even if that took his own wife, our mother.

Although having a truly life-threatening colon cancer history in her immediate family my mother lived out what would be the rest of her life without ever having such cancer, and most importantly here, *no* statistically proven predisposition to ovarian cancer. Yet on February 14, 2008, my mother died of ovarian cancer less than four months out from diagnosis. Of course, we know the problem with making any causative connections to cancers beyond genetic and lifestyle predispositions—as we are all well aware since *Silent Spring* was published (before Carson died of breast cancer, of course, in 1962)—is that they are difficult, if not impossible, to *prove*... even if my mother, a strong, vibrant woman under the age of 65, never had a single predisposing factor to said cancer other than having ovaries: not every *woman* dies of *ovarian* cancer. I have been compelled from time to time since, standing on the front porch of our Iowa family *cornscape*, to ruminate upon those here who *do*. Ovarian cancer has been shown to have high statistical correlative significance with Atrazine herbicide, one of the Triazine herbicides including Cyanazine and Simazine. These herbicides are proven endocrine disruptors, directly linked to cancers of the breast and ovaries in women, although today are still classified as only *possible* human carcinogens. Nevertheless, that classification was enough to pass their full ban across Europe (Steingraber, 1998). Yet, as of 2002, Atrazine continued to be spread over 2/3 of all cornfields in the US. Through the last five years’ largest corn crops in modern history, even

taking into consideration the most recent 2012 drought conditions, corn has been the highest, at ~70.000 acres, land cover category of our family farm county. Atrazine was spread over 85% of Iowa cornfields last year alone (USDA). *Why not* imagine US agriculture through these largely similar perspectives of the global monster versus local, natural food?

I will never know beyond a reasonable doubt if the unimaginable market vacillations, inconceivable debts and risks, weather and habits as well as oftentimes dangerous practices of an undeniably highly problematic US conventional-industrial agricultural system through space-time took my father's life to the point of death anymore than they took my mother's life... What I know quite intimately is the question: *why not?* *Why not* go organic, even eat locally? In many of its innumerable forms, the material practices and discursive formations of the proposed *sustainable*, or *alternative agri-food networks*, namely denoted as *organic agriculture*, which together and "particularly vocal in its criticism" (Ronald & Adamchak, p. x) continues to provide by and large positive counteractions to many of the aspects listed or gestured toward by the latter personal account, particularly in terms of *deep ecological*¹⁵ health—for farmers, consumers, and the environment.

Still, proponents and proliferators of such intensely tempting imaginaries, where localism provisions not only good food, but the only hope, are more often meeting resistances from various writers seeking *in-between* places of now orthodox geographies. For instance, award-winning science journalist and writer, Michael Specter's (2010), *Denialism: How Irrational Thinking Harms the Planet and Threatens Our Lives*, argues that organics and various interrelated food activist and local/ist projects are more or less *in denial* about the strength of their own efforts to critique, displace and/ or even replace the conventional-industrial system,

¹⁵ The term *deep ecology* is purposefully used at this juncture to reference a contemporary ecological philosophy which inculcates many tenets of the *environmental movement*.

particularly when it comes to complete rejection of GE, and biotechnoscience more generally, both of which he argues could be utilized more efficaciously. Having inspired Specter's own work in no small way, geneticist and organic farmer, respective wife-husband co-authors, Pamela Ronald and Raoul Adamchak's (2008), *Tomorrow's Table: Organic Farming, Genetics, and the Future of Food*, make similar claims through their exploration of how a more efficacious "integration" of best agricultural practices from all tools available today—of natural systems agriculture, and/or organics, with the strengths of conventional-industrial agri-culture, which the authors indicate means, foremost, various (highly qualified) GE techniques and applications—should be the ethic with which we set *tomorrow's table*: an integration.

However, *integration* is not exactly the imaginary most readily available for (re)visioning the 100% GE commodity *cornscape* engulfing my father's front porch... Given the power-knowledge, pervasiveness and undeniably seductive popular and scholarly imaginaries and representations of US agriculture divided as a GE *maize maze nightmare* and a heavily proliferating organics industry and *locavore revolution*, it seems that our sprawling family GE *corndom* is—that *corn* is—a *battlefield*, i.e., the *food wars* (McWilliams, 2009, p. 5). Decidedly referential of the phrase, *culture wars*,¹⁶ McWilliams' term instead denotes that any sort of singular *US agriculture* can be seen to have become conspicuously split between two predominant groups with geographically accordant, and competing, material practices, popular to

¹⁶ The term deployed by McWilliams obviously evokes the *cola wars*—well, probably more so the *culture wars*. See generally Hunter's (1991) widely referenced text, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America*. I think that McWilliams' phraseology, *the food wars*, which I find to purposefully signal *the culture wars* debate, has less to do with posing an argument about whether American culture *should or can be* characterized by a deep division between supposedly *two moral universes* than to reference a very *common* perception of American cultural division that now can be utilized to more fully illuminate what he proposes has happened with American foodways, i.e., a deep, abiding divide between agricultures.

more scholarly discursive formations and representations, or *agri-cultures*:¹⁷ *conventional-industrial*, or the *global industrial* opposed *alternative agri-food networks*, most notably including *locavore projects*... An image brought to mind of virulent adversaries of the *conservative* conventional-industrial agri-culture Right *falling in line* with biotechnoscientific *rationales* and of the *liberal* organic agri-culture Left *falling in love* with emotional appeals to purity, quality and/or *naturalness*, each stockpiling their trenches with discursive weaponry of grand historical narratives, scientific data, rhetorical framing, representations, cultural myths, geographical imaginaries, personal observations and fears of *tragedies* and *crises* all the while with varied journalistic and other consent from either side of the seemingly inveterate dividing *front line* between conventional-industrial and alternative agricultures... a *No Man's Land* of (GE) commodity corn growing conspicuously in-between... As I said, this is a *powerful* imaginary—and even for me... But, is it (a) *just* (food) war?

Taken together, my interest in crafting a post-structuralist geographical project tracing multiple geographical imaginaries of our family's (GE) commodity *cornscape* was more or less steered to this specific imaginary of food wars. In generally, I was able to locate far fewer works, like those of McWilliams, Ronald and Adamchak, seeking a more efficacious *integration*, than a lot more arguments for, more or less, a post geography world—where the conventional-industrial paradigm has become so deregulated, so biotechnoscientific, so dangerous, unhealthy and terrifying with GE *Frankenfoods* that only organic naturalness, like in the form of food

¹⁷ Hyphenating agriculture, or *agri-culture*, intends to indicate the simultaneous interrelation of political, economic, social, cultural, agrarian, etc., formations with relative *material* agricultural practices. The phrase is used widely by a lot of different agriculture and food scholars and writers, incl. organic agriculture programs and environmental activist groups to illuminate that agricultural practices—or work with any *nature* per se—are both material and *cultural*. All in all, I will deploy *agri-culture* to acknowledge that material practices cannot be considered *outside* of multiple *discursive* formations—ranging from the structural to the personal—informing those *practices*, whether in social science research studies or farm operations.

systems localization projects, is the only hope, i.e., the food wars. Granted, the latter is just a geographical imaginary—rather, just a story—but it’s powerful story at that... and one that I, at some point and in some form every day, will eat; and one that others, at times in places *far, far away* from the place of my home, will eat as well. Actually, this imaginary and its various representations have the power-knowledge to shape ideas, ideologies, tactics, strategies and possibilities for the *future of food*. Ostensibly, what I found more generally is that no one constructs a geography or (re)creates a film depicting this imaginary of food wars, related to the overarching problematic geographical imaginary of modernity as a bifurcated world of society and nature, coordinate urban and rural, and today, global and local/ist, than the *new agrarians*.

Whether it is generally called neoagrarianism or not, one of the most popular geographical imaginaries and attendant value systems available today for understanding and, in turn, imagining US agriculture as both a *post geography* global GE tyranny as well as a thriving local/ist ethic for building stronger communities and whole healthful ecologies, is the various textual formations and representations of the new agrarianism. My mission, begun in a rural Iowa 100% GE *Corndom* and continuing in the following pages, is to deploy critical post-structuralist geography to explode the geographical imaginary of the new agrarianism, in terms of the much longer space-time network of American agrarianism(s); trace its originating and primary practitioners; and finally, appreciate its cultural and material impacts. In turn, I propose a shift in vision—of reading and representation—of American agriculture from agrarianism, *New* or *Old* (Worlds), to a critical *quasi-agrarianism*.

Toward Cornotology

My project can be first oriented to the previously cited quandaries of contemporary agri-food studies to date, mostly in terms of its frameworks which seek to address the dualism of agri-

cultures; and problematic conceptualizations of the local as related to those. Many in agri-food research argue that the shifts from production to consumption foci, as then tied to problematic geographies of the global and local, must be approached with interrelational, integrative geography theory-based perspectives that transcend easy categorization of production as global and consumption as local, lest consumption becomes ‘relocalization’ of a purportedly ‘placeless’ global industrial paradigm, thereby a professedly undeveloped relocalization capable of splitting otherwise connected agri-cultural realities yet again along food war lines. Agri-food studies mindful of this last division argues that a global and local binary is encumbered by questions of quality from the first instance, which is to say that the agricultural divide can be seen to result in an elision of the global with the most deleterious practices through space and time, including agrichemicals and GE; and the local with various concepts of naturalness, purity, and likewise so forth (drawn broadly from Sonnino & Marsden, 2006). By contrast, more relational geographies forward that there is no inherently natural or better food just because it may/not be more or less localized (also Allen, 2008). In this view, the meaning(s) of quality as tied to the, as complex, meaning(s), of localism are thus, never self-evident.

What *Toward Cornotology* seeks to do, certainly not wholly or decisively *unrelated* to the latter scholarly contributions about likened topics of American agriculture today, yet regardless somewhat *instead*, is to enter the agri-food *conversation already taking place* in terms of, here, relational *geography*, being, to understand how multiple space-time and place dimensions are situated with/ by multiple actants at any particular site along the harvest-through-consumption spectrum (Lockie & Kitto, 2000). Lockie and Kitto (2000),¹⁸ for example, draw

¹⁸ For a complete overview of such frameworks, and more relational geographical approaches taken in those, see Lockie and Kitto (2000). For fuller understanding of many of these

largely from the geographies of Bruno Latour when outlining a potential ethic for exploding problematic binary space and place thinking in agri-food studies. They use his work to challenge any *a priori*, thus essentialized, dichotomies of global and local, which they submit can too often uncritically coordinate ‘them’ and ‘us’ meanings of space, place, scale, *unnatural* and *natural*; and/ or propose that the *local* is ever somehow free of longer spatial trajectories. I am allied the authors’ call for relational, even Latourian specific, geography, mostly for its implication that if the binarism of global and local is dissolved in popular representation, then biotechnoscientific techniques, namely GE, of one side of the food wars could, if nothing else, receive a fuller treatment as also indicated in the previous mentioned works of Ronald and Adamchak and McWilliams. If not advocating for a full-on reconsideration, a more integrative ethic in the representation of conventional-industrial tools, including GE, can at least leave more open the negotiation of the best possible tools implemented for building a stronger US agri-culture which *will* continue to be co-constituted by *both* paradigms irrespective of localist resistance.

Even though also applying relational geographies, incl., those of Latour in some ways like the authors above, I nevertheless follow a divergent path. My goal is to trace the geographical imaginary of a highly divergent set of texts and representations. Which is to say, whilst many of my analyses and discussions nevertheless *speak to* the central issues of many of those agri-food studies oriented works, my Latour inspired analysis will focus on the highly differentiated texts of what I argue are the most significant geographical imaginaries and representations of US agriculture through space-time: American agrarianism(s). With such differentiated disciplinary and otherwise concerns related to the *world and the text*, my project

geography-based issues of power-knowledge in alternative food networks, see Maye, Holloway & Kneafsey (2007); Hinrichs & Lyson (2007).

thus sits rather uneasily with *agri-food research* proper; or within a vast array of likened cross-disciplinary scholarly production—even with some of the most promising *agri-food studies* frameworks while simultaneously drawing from and toward them. All told, I will leave the analysis of institutionalized agri-food related disciplinary histories, appropriate theoretical frameworks, features of particular inter-, intra- and/or disciplinary approaches, debates about production-consumption and quality turns and so forth to contemporary academicians and experts of innumerable, so designated, agri-food and foodways fields.

Perhaps more usefully here, then, what my project *will* do, rather, the conversation I will specifically enter is that of the seeming dearth of interdisciplinary, American Studies/ cultural studies oriented, post-structuralist geographical theorization of both the materiality and representation of US agriculture, particularly in terms whence the new agrarianism emanated through a divergent space-time; how it interprets and interinfluences the food wars; and, foremost, the interinfluence of the new agrarian imaginary of twenty-first century American foodways in popular texts and documentary film representations. The latter is most noteworthy given the immense popularity of the *food documentary* in American popular culture today. Again, taking a post-structuralist geographical ethic of theorization into the examination of such representations, interfaced material agricultural histories and realities through space-time, my exploration of how a select set of new agrarian representation functions as a powerful imaginary and representation of US agriculture, incl., issues of GE more generally, and especially as those apply to commodity corn, can fill a scholarly gap of interdisciplinary agri-food research and popular/ cultural studies oriented analysis of US agricultural representation. By its close, the project also seeks to illuminate the assemblage of *the world and the text*, as it were, evident in

how new agrarian representation can connect to material food wars formations, e.g., local/ist projects and the US GE food labeling debate.

When all is said and done, I know less about how to splice genes than I do about soil science. I will fail most egregiously to perform any quantitative or qualitative analysis of a specific set of agricultural practices, formations or discourses, and I really cannot engage a more enlightening US agricultural history or politics of *irradiation* beyond rehashing a lot of background information. Luckily, none of the latter is my mission. The mission of my relatively novel, highly interdisciplinary, *Toward Cornotology* project is to, first, trace predominant American agrarian geographical imaginaries through space-time in order to understand their *vision*, rather, how they *see* and value material US agricultural practices; and how such imaginaries inculcate the vision of food wars, particularly in terms of the new agrarian geographical imaginary, today. Essentially, my project is about vision, about *seeing*, and ultimately, about how we can (*re*)*vision* our geographical imaginaries and representations of US agricultural production and consumption, particularly in terms of commodity corn, through not *another*, representational theory or imaginary of just better binaries or evaluations, but a critical assemblage of imaginaries, the world and the text—what I call, *quasi-agrarianism*. I am compelled by my own family's GE *maize maze* of some bad weather, death and redemption inasmuch as by some of the most exciting critical geographical theory to date to argue that so far, American agrarianism(s) through space-time represents US agriculture as, on one hand, a global agri-biotechnoscience tyranny *space*; and, on the other hand, an organics, particularly locavore, *place* of redemption somehow discursively and materially severed from that global dimension. The latter can entail an *en masse* rejection of GE, particularly as applied to commodity corn; as well as an even grander, often concealed, denunciation of US commodity monocropping in

general. This last is of utmost concern when, inarguably, US (GE) commodity corn cropping so vital to the US and global economy, will continue whether more fully confronted or not; whether preferable or not to other agri-cultural discourse and systems. Like this, neoagrarianism fails to confront this twenty-first century biotechnoscientific US *cornscape* without attempts to purify its social nature hybridities, thereby often proliferating the weaknesses of GE tools and applications. I propose that we must enact a fully assembled, critical confrontational quasi-agrarian geographical reading and representation practice to release our *cornscapes* from predominantly post geography imaginaries of binaries, essentialism, wars, redemption, terror and retreat; that we need to move *toward cornotology*: a confrontational, accountable representation of assembled agri-cultural discourse and practice.

And, it is *only* in the way of quasi-agrarian implosion of society and nature, space-time and place, science and culture and so many more binaries heretofore, that I will explore how biotechnoscience, as in the case of qualified GE commodity corn forms and applications, for instance, can be *seen* as another set of practices to be assembled with other tools toward building a stronger food production paradigm. And, it is *only* in the way of quasi-agrarian implosion that I consider *assembling* the strengths of at least some perspectives on the advancements and applications of crop engineering technologies which, in continuing to develop through the twenty-first century, are becoming better understood, more manageable and thus promising for cross-pollinating with the strengths of organic agri-culture to altogether more fully account for and eventually overcome much of the past externalities of conventional-industrial agriculture often *engendered by biotechnoscience in the first place*—externalities, like climate change, that impacts an ever increasing population of those with the least access and power in places far distant from *home*. I do this, too, without defending the ends to which biotechnoscience has

been put in the fields of conventional agriculture to date, being mainly cheap, processed corn-based food products which can be correlated to extreme shifts in US public health over the last twenty years. And I do this, ultimately, to contend that until the food wars divide is thoroughly revealed for operating through problematic neoagrarian geographical imaginaries and representations, the strengths of biotechnological means *will only continue* to be put to some pretty awful monocultural ends. What I mean to say is that as long as the *grocery guerre* continues, the problems of conventional-industrial agriculture (which will never be denied throughout the project, particularly those associated with monocropping commodity corn) will be able to proliferate in their present form; and the strengths of biotechnology will continue to be dismissed wholesale as some kind of government colluded corporate conspiracy, or heartless dismissal of full ecological health. We need a perhaps less desirable, but nonetheless more accountable, appraisal.

So, from the front porch overlooking the 100% GE *cornscape* of our family farm today, moreover from the frontline of geographical imaginaries of food wars, I seek to cross-pollinate researches of the world and the text, cultural studies and (social) science studies, agri-food studies and geography, critical theory and post-structural geography: I move *toward cornotology* from social natural GE corn interstices... Actually, in terms of research paradigms and projects, Latour (1993) usefully argues that we *should* commence (nonmodern) investigations of social nature assemblages at some *liminal space between* bifurcation of society and nature. In the broadest strokes, *Toward Cornotology* intends to be a project located by and moving toward such assemblages. In that way, the project is not about the commodity corn plant *per se*, but rather, how it has been imagined and emplaced in a food war, and how it can be reconsidered through quasi-agrarian imaginaries and representations.

Chapter Outline

To make an argument for a critical quasi-agrarian (re)vision necessitates a multifaceted, and often interdisciplinary, project. As follows, I first contend that the central tenants of *neoagrarianism* appeared upon what now is a thoroughly American (GE) commodity *cornscape* long before the end of the twentieth century. In fact, Chapter Two seeks to illuminate how we can read particularly American agrarianism(s) imaginaries through a long and divergent space-time eventually networking the new agrarianism. To do so, I must set-up how agrarianism, in general, is a multifaceted concept with a complex tradition long predating its predominant American formations; far more than any simple definitional that is self-evident in the term, *agrarianism*. By way of Montmarquet (1989), I demonstrate that agrarianism should be thought of as a set of multiple noninnocent (also drawn from Gunder, 2006) discursive practices, i.e., agrarianism(s), which comprise thus an otherwise fuzzy concept that is as overflowing as it is empty. In fact, so ambiguous a concept too commonly left unqualified that reducing agrarianism to an essence is implausible. Albeit what I show to be a more *Representational* form of agrarianism draws its most orthodox meanings from the agrarian writings of ancient Greece and Rome, the many agrarian writings which appear thereafter, or *nonrepresentational agrarianism(s)*, must be *interfaced* with material agricultural practices through space-time in order to understand their particular relationship to the overarching Representation; as well as their own imaginary of the divergent space-time of the *New World*. Such necessary points of material and historical context are filled-out by agricultural historians Douglas (1969) and Hurt (1994; 2002). The central point is that enjoining the world and the text shows that a particularly *American* agricultural and agrarianism(s) interface, distinctive from other agrarianism(s), arose

through space-time; and has continued to have a roughly uniform modern geographical imaginary through space-time.

To fully illuminate the latter argument, Chapter Two presents post-structuralist, or relational, geography conceptualizations, of, for example, Doreen Massey (1994; 2005) and Bruno Latour (1993), particularly his modeling of the *meaning of modernity*. I apply their works to argue that through space-time, American agrarianism(s)'s geographical imaginary more or less functions as a *Work of Purification*, which basically means that the distinctly *modern* geographical imaginary of particularly American agrarianism(s), like other modern imaginaries, seeks to order and pattern an otherwise increasingly mixed-up world (i.e., the *Work of Translation*) by bifurcating society and nature. Doing so *purifies* nature, the modern transcendent referent for virtue and nobility discovered in categorically coordinate immanent life and work (rural tillers and tilling), of less desirable social trajectories, i.e., industrialization and commercialization, categorized thus as *citydwelling* and, through time, *urbanity*.

To evidence this claim, I provide examples of how, when the material reality of agricultural practices is interfaced with agrarianism(s)—particularly when social trajectories are *threatening* in their *hybridities* of society and nature in a massively industrializing nineteenth century US—nature, and rural life and work with/in nature, is discursively situated yet farther from society. The interface shifts through space-time, but modern American agrarianism(s) as a *Work of Purification* will spin roughly the same way, from Southern aristocratic agrarianism and more romantic expressions of the Antebellum Era; through *the Grange* of the late nineteenth century; to the later Southern agrarians between World Wars. All of these modern American agrarianism(s) *Work of Purification*, organized within the Latourian modeling, thereby provision less cadence or sanction of such hybrid agri-monsters than to accelerate their proliferation—a

proliferation represented in the new agrarian imaginary as ever more *terrifying* through space-time. In this light, it becomes less surprising that by the time of the 1930s, when *Twelve Southerners* take one of the most famous agrarian stands of all space-time, the US agriculture paradigm is swiftly becoming, and proliferating, a whole new set of monsters which the *Fugitive Poets' Work of Purification* also fails to confront.

All told, the goal of Chapter Two is to provide a veritable *how-to* guide for reading (with examples) modern American agrarianism(s)'s geographical imaginary through space-time; and how its function as a *Work of Purification* is carried through a comparable chaotic and critical time following World War Two (WWII)—a time marker for material and discursive developments which are really the central problematic of the project: the *new agrarian* geographical imaginary of US agriculture as an urban-rural turned global-local food wars continuing today.

Chapter Three thus enters the conversation by first presenting some *material* circumstances of the massive shift of US agriculture following WWII, which include both the rise of a global food regime; as well as a far more coherent organics agri-cultural alternative and its associated, but splintered-off, local/ism projects. The material conditions, however, are more or less divided in the food wars imaginary—an arguably postmodern, post geography geographical imaginary that functions through new agrarianism as a more sophisticated, but nevertheless (post)modern, American agrarian Purification regime. Meaning, Chapter Three ultimately sets-up the central contention that the new agrarianism also bifurcates the value of material agricultural practices by society and nature, in relation to the orthodox dichotomies of rural life exalted over/ versus an urban oriented, industrial commerciality, yet also in terms of a postmodern geographical mapping of the late twentieth through twenty-first centuries food wars,

being, global (urban/ society) and local (rural/ nature). Following WWII, the conventional-industrial agri-cultural paradigm, incl., its agri biotechnoscience and *Frankenfoods*, is ever more strictly removed/ or set opposite organic agri-culture and its local/ist projects.

On the whole, Chapter Three provides an overview of the salient aspects of material agricultural realities today and their subsequent geographical imaginaries, most notably that of food wars. I review key post-structuralist critique of (post)modern geographies, lending well to the reification of the conventional-industrial system, and its GE capabilities, as a global food regime; and likewise agri-food studies related critiques of *unreflexive localism* as a problematic imaginary of *difference* from and *deference* to said more or less terrifying global, placeless space. I contend here that no one “does” such a food wars imaginary more provocatively than the new agrarian *Work of Purification*—begun most ardently with the works of Wendell Berry.

Likewise, Chapter Four explores the key writings and formulations of Wendell Berry, a very influential writer whose seminal nonfiction works I, along with others, most notably, Michael Pollan, claim is the reason so many people are *finally talking about food...* and in a very particular way, I would add, of food wars: global food regimes versus local/ism. It is at this point that I consider how Wendell Berry can be seen as the progenitor of the new agrarianism. And, albeit acknowledging that Wendell Berry’s neoagrarianism perhaps has the best of intentions for people to (re)vision human interconnection with the environment, after examination of some of Berry’s most preeminent nonfiction writings (incl., 1977; 1990), I propose that that the author more generally pulls-out and reconfigures any number of agriculture-agrarianism(s) appraisals of many decades prior to allocate virtue and morality to not *just* US agriculture, but to only those of a particular agri-cultural persuasion, i.e., small, community-based, more natural, or organic, food systems localization practices.

I further contend that Berry's neoagrarianism has a problematic geographical imaginary of Purification derived from Southern agrarian distributist economics of the 1930s. For Berry, this last takes the guise of family farming with not only horses in rural Kentucky (literally and figuratively) but also through the rubric of *husbandry*, *housewifery*, moreover a reinvigoration of the household to provide first for the family farm, and then the family and community. Thereby, Berry's propositions can look far more like a 1930s treatise on 1930s social natural realities than a redress for the conventional-industrial system he otherwise reifies and dismisses as *a desert of vast technology*. Wendell Berry does not allow for the tools of biotechnoscience in his vision for the future, reproducing in turn book long treatments of how far we have fallen; how much conventional-industrial agriculture is *evil*; how *preindustrial* agriculture only has cultural and ecological coherence, i.e., a massive *retreat* into an increasingly particularized food systems localization—a *new agrarian* reversion that, as I will reflect on it, more usefully purifies local/ism than confronts or cadences the *Work of Translation*...

Many writers influenced less by a much longer American agrarian tradition than Wendell Berry's own reconfiguration of it can be seen to base their own neoagrarian perspectives from his work. Therefore, much of the new agrarian/ new populist/ new urbanist imaginary presents a rather uniform set of principles for right farming, living and eating, which altogether vary mostly in their characterization of global times (aligned conventional-industrial agri-culture) as more or less terrifying; and/or which strategies of food systems localization would best secure a better US food future. For these and other reasons I explore in-text, I contend that Wendell Berry's *geographical* imaginary, and the discourse of Wendell Berry ("Wendell Berry"), has real material and discursive power in the current food wars debate and must be examined likewise.

I seek to look at the resurgence of the new agrarianism in the constellation of Wendell Berry/ “Wendell Berry” in Chapter Five. I explore a diverse set of selected neoagrarianism to understand if and how they interpret, apply and float with/in the geographical imaginary of Wendell Berry’s works, and the countless many who continue to cite and ground their own writing in Berry’s propositions thereafter—what I also call the *Berry Prophecy Project*. I propose that instead of confronting the problems of the conventional-industrial today, neoagrarians manage to reify its problems by splitting agricultures in an imaginary of space versus place, mapped the global and local, respectively. They widely propose for a retreat into the place of home that, in the overarching dichotomized imaginary, regularly fails to be reflexive, contingent—what I will call, *outwardlooking*—in its impossible discursive severance from longer spatialized trajectories, like those of biotechnoscience. I demonstrate how these last retreats are fashioned, and to what degree/ not they confront twenty-first century agri-monsters, themselves more or less terrifying in neoagrarian representation, by situating the new agrarians along a spectrum of thinking delimited as the *Berry Prophecy Project* continuum: a critical tool of and for quasi-agrarian (re)vision which could be applied well beyond the current project. I position selected new agrarian works of fiction, nonfiction, memoirs, manuals and essay collections [incl., Freyfogle (2001); Hanson (1996); Kimbrell (2002); Kingsolver (2000; 2002); Logsdon (1995); and Wirzba (2002; 2003)] between two extremes of the continuum.

To fully illuminate and represent the function of the *Berry Prophecy Project* continuum, and greater significance as an analytical tool for fellow quasi-agrarians in the analysis of US agricultural representation, as well as for the generation of quasi-agrarian proposals, I also detail the *liminal in-between* of the absolutist poles of the continuum. Drawing further from the modeling and theorization of Latour (1993), I will provide description of the so-called, *Toward*

the *Cornotological Limen*—a place of confrontational, quasi-agrarian assemblage of both absolutist extremes of the *Berry Prophecy Project* continuum. Works traced to the *in-between* seek *assemblage* of poles, and, most importantly, society and nature, in their representations [incl., Manning (2004); McWilliams (2009); and Ronald and Adamchak (2008)].

Incidentally, the writings of Michael Pollan (2006; 2008) hold an especial position in the *Berry Prophecy Project*, not only for their high currency in a lot of popular US food talk today, but for their *particular* detailing of American commodity *cornscapes* so seductively as to overlay many other imaginaries of the same space-time—even my own. Chapter Six thus specifically details Pollan’s *cornography* (e.g., 2006) in light of not only the *Berry Prophecy Project*, but also in terms of his influence on popular new agrarian documentaries. Altogether, Michael Pollan is a strong advocate for a better US food system, and his work should not be discounted outright. I seek to understand Pollan’s depiction of commodity corn production and his conclusions in terms of Wendell Berry’s influence, the new agrarianism and documentary film.

Michael Pollan’s geographical imaginary is often spatialized in various new agrarian documentary representations, which altogether thus maintain great uniformity with the other new agrarian texts. Thus, continuing on into the realm of moving imagery, Chapter Six then briefly introduces documentary film as a differentiated representation in general, from one of its major theorists, Bill Nichols (1991; 1994; 2001); its predominant techniques; to critical perspectives of its audience, viewers and spectatorships. Next, I analyze the spatialization of *King Corn* (2008) by Director Aaron Woolf, and starring co-writers, producers Curt Ellis and Ian Cheney, as a case in point. I seek to show the influence of the new agrarian imaginary on *King Corn*’s imaginary and techniques; and thereby pinpoint where crucial quasi-agrarian analysis of documentary film

could continue, particularly in terms of the shaping of spectatorships I delineate through a construction called the *GE Corn Effect*.

Chapter Six next seeks to make the point that documentary representation has an *especial affect* in the world. The analysis of likewise representation could explore how such *new agrarian* representations have material impacts, connected to the veritable *Antietam* of the food wars to date: the battle for labeling of GE foods. Actually, I briefly consider how much of the resistance on the part of the GE food regulatory structure(s) to actually label the content of processed food can be connected to various media-based representations' framing, and clouding, of the issues so effectively as to have shut-down the conversation today. I argue that in such contexts, neoagrarianism can be seen to excite large sections of the American public to be more focused on and fighting over the difference between agri-cultures, veritably what's natural or unnatural (really thus, imaginaries of the global and local/ism) than on the ineffective *use* of GE technology—specifically in terms of commodity corn production today.

Finally, Chapter Seven pulls together and discusses the many strands of the *Toward Cornotological* project toward (re)presenting a critical quasi-agrarian reading and representation practice. Essentially, by its close, *Toward Cornotology* cautions that if problematic *non-relational* geographical imaginaries of modernity are left unaccounted for in new agrarian representations, *life as it is really lived* (Haraway, 1991, discussed later) can be nothing more than a fabricated (post)modernity—really a world of (food) war: the local-‘community’ home closed-off from a global/ized space-time urbanity of terrifying eco-rape. The quasi-agrarianism I propose seeks not to replace or displace the new agrarianism with another representational theory or set of evaluations of agriculture binarized along a food wars divide of global and local, but

instead explores how we can challenge assumptions coordinate of the predominant geographical imaginary of US agriculture today; and highlights why it *matters*.

How we think about corn matters.

CHAPTER TWO

Reading the Agriculture(s)-Agrarianism(s) Romance

The social relations of the past are used to legitimate a system that in reality works to destroy the world that created those relations in the first place. (Lipsitz, 1990, p. 72).¹⁹

Drawing from a collection of post-structuralist geographical thought, Chapter Two seeks to show how we can read the variant forms of American agrarianism(s) as a *modern purification regime*. I will provide brief examples of how this maneuver has functioned at various points of an interfaced American agricultural history. All told, the goal of Chapter Two is to provide a veritable *how-to* guide for reading (with examples) modern American agrarianism(s)'s geographical imaginary through space-time; and its function as a *Work of Purification*. This last will prove critical for likewise exploring, in the Chapters to follow, the geographical imaginary of neoagrarianism as a (post)modern *Work of Purification*.

Agrarianism/ agrarianism(s)

Montmarquet's (1989) important work, *The Idea of Agrarianism*, principally forwards that agrarianism, in whatever form, generally makes a "value judgment about the worth of agriculture and those who are involved in this activity" (p. viii). Now, whether that includes political-economic theorization on equitable land distribution or a romantic notion of rural life and work, altogether agrarianism generally exalts the superiority of both rural agricultural labor and rural citizenry over most other activities and workers (p. ix). Paul B. Thompson's (2008),

¹⁹ This quote by George Lipsitz (1990) references Jürgen Habermas, particularly his formulation of *legitimation crisis*.

“Agrarian Philosophy and Ecological Ethics,” puts the latter another way, writing that most agrarian approaches imagine that material practices taken-up in response to material features of the environment, like soil and climate, will (re)produce “corresponding differences in the norms, values and social institutions” (p. 529). What he calls a *dynamic triad* references then how agrarianism presumes that human-driven, or agricultural practices (agronomic), and *natural* changes of the environment are inextricable and mutable, shifting in response to one another as well as to the continually changing “*social* environment in which they are embedded” (*my emphasis*; p. 529), i.e., triadic *agronomic-social-natural*. Like this, agrarianism generally supposes across conceptualizations that *higher virtues*, like justice, reverence, temperance, etc., are bonded with practical work activities with the land, nature and environment—work activity seen to be closer to higher spirituality. Actually, “Agricultural work is a particularly fecund adaptive medium” (p. 530) for such an imaginary, because *virtue* of work *with* the land is *yields*, meaning yields in terms of (re)production of individuals as well as communities in sociocultural and biological terms (also in Montmarquet 1989, as referenced in Thompson, 2008, p. 530-31). Through various philosophical leaps of *embodiment* and *being*, morality is believed to be achieved through such physical labor in the natural world. The austere world of manual labor and the mastery required of a diverse skills set, and many more attributes likewise often characterizing agricultural activities with/in a more holy nature enlivens the farmer with a fuller independence and self-sufficiency, as well as a sense of identity, family, community and purpose in response to the processes and progressions of citydwelling, urbanity and, more recently, modern spaces (p. 530). Agrarianism(s) speaks to, or assesses the significance/ value(s) of, individuals and/ or social groups of said triadic agronomic-social-natural interplay with environments, mostly in terms of “corruption or strength of character” (p. 529).

Thompson stresses that agrarianism commands a robust meaning for many people, having many variations across a broad collection of agrarian thought. Likewise, Montmarquet (1989) submits that what is more accurately conceived of as a *polyglot* of multivalent judgments about agricultural activities and cultivators came to be enclosed *en masse* in a single term, *agrarianism* (p. vii-viii). Likewise, his text explores the highly polymorphous agrarian *idea* simultaneously encapsulating a diverse collection of classical and early modern political, economic, and social ideas and doctrines through diverse spatial and temporal dimensions, altogether dating back to classical Greece and Rome, and finally extending through time and across geography to the predominant agrarian formations of the early US. Together, these last co-constitute *the idea of agrarianism*.

So, the above definitions can be (re)c/si(gh)ted²⁰ as more like the *Representational* form of “agrarianism” while the agrarian idea is actually an ambiguous concept, more akin to a set of multifarious discursive practices than to a singular definition. To illuminate how agrarianism can maintain a modicum of consistency across delimitation while simultaneously implicating a whole set of variations, I can apply Gunder’s (2006) comparable thinking in an agricultural/ land development purview about the term sustainability, an ambiguous, or what he calls fuzzy, catch-all term (p. 211) that is as empty as it is overflowing of significations. Applying Lacanian

²⁰ I use this neologism to indicate that every knowledge is *situated knowledge*, or, an assemblage of space-time and place trajectories of geographical *sites*, human *sights* and discursive *cites* [i.e., (re)c/sigh)te, drawn from Haraway, (1991; 1997); Thrift (1997; 1999; 2000); and Rose (1997a; 1997b)]. Broken down, this highly useful terminology, *(re)c/sigh)te*, references a continual process, i.e., “(re),” of considering how various subject-object phenomena are always hooking-up with, or interinfluencing, one another. I return to this idea in a later section.

theory, Gunder outlines how sustainability, like the terms ethnicity and gender, for instance,²¹ is a master signifier. Drawing from his and comparable theoretical precepts, we can think of master signifiers as general, hegemonic, normative, essentialized or *transcendent* meanings, expectations—the *Representational* form of the term which could be thought of with a capital letter, *Sustainability*. The Representational signifier provisions a common label or identification, in this case accepted as an unassailable good, around which multiple and varied entities, often with competing and contradictory interests and practices that also vary greatly in their articulation of the term sustainability, can nevertheless collect to identify. The label allows thus for entities and subjects to understand their sense of organizational politics, core ideals, spiritual values, or, in the case of an individual, his/ her own more particular, articulated, immanent and performative identities in the world—more or less anchoring an organization’s, or person’s sense of self, as one who believes in, practices, adheres to and so forth, e.g., Sustainability, whilst, in effect, filling the general term with meanings apropos particular objectives. Somewhat contrarily, then, the Representational Sustainability can be thought of as an empty concept because the label only serves as a hegemonic norm to bring together a diverse set of innumerable, often competing and contradictory, particular and immanent narratives and discourse. Rendered thus unstable after all, the Representational label is also overflowing with multiple, *nonrepresentational meanings*—like a lower case, *sustainabilities*. These last significations are always referential of the Representational meaning, rather, within the constellation of the Representation, while remaining *absent* from its overarching delimitation because they continue to transform through

²¹ Ever mindful of Gunder’s formulation, which I draw from here as it appears in a critical/theoretical *agricultural* scholarship context, I nevertheless could reference innumerable other, often considered now classic, scholarships, on the function of representation as *overflowing* and *empty* concepts, e.g., in cultural studies, Roland Barthes’ (1972), *Mythologies*; in film studies, Teresa de Lauretis’ (1987), *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction*.

various discursive communities, social relations; as well as personal interactions, performances, and so forth. Nonrepresentational *sustainabilities* are thus transformative, present referents, and present also as absents, of, the representational *Sustainability*. These are not *mutually exclusive* categories, but a kind of *coherence of contradictions* (also drawn from de Lauretis, 1987).

The more such empty and overflowing concepts are deployed, the more they become veritable mysteries, rather, fuzzy, ambiguous and incomplete concepts (Gunder, 2006, p. 213). As a case in point, Gunder outlines how quantitative economic development in urban planning can be camped in the language of community sustainability (notably given the now *en masse* appeal of the term as an unassailable good) without having any mind to other notions of more qualitative meanings of community sustainability or even environmental or ecological sustainability, which would encompass the health and well-being of nonhumans as understood by other researchers who also adhere to the sustainability label.

Gunder's useful analysis shows how any "identity-bearing labels" (p. 211) are powerful and important for how groups and individuals understand personal, spiritual and intellectual truths, individual and common purpose—a sense of wholeness (p. 213). Notwithstanding, the import of the function cannot defeat the need for examining how such labels' "explanatory contents may be widely variable and subject to all sorts of diverse and contrary hegemonic enunciations. In this context, discourses are made to vie, often without success, to be the one dominant truth that gives the only possible meaning to our empty and ambiguous but contested terms of identification..." (p. 213). It is only in acknowledging the power of the *Representational* that Gunder proposes that sustainability is another fuzzy, ambiguous and incomplete concept (p. 213) that should be instead (re)located as a sundry set of discursive practices, ever encapsulated in a powerfully meaningful label and identification for particular

groups, individuals and concordant practices that demands articulation and/or qualification given every usage.

Application of Gunder's useful analysis to the term *agrarianism* can work to elucidate how the polyglot can be seen to function as a likewise fuzzy, to mean an at once Representational/ empty and nonrepresentational/overflowing, idea. Like this, Agrarianism can be seen to have a high political, economic, sociocultural, and so forth, function, to simultaneously hold many, often contradictory, meanings and values of material agricultural practices for different groups, individuals and their accordingly invested practices through time and a broad geography, which all, nevertheless, can adhere to the label of Agrarianism and Agrarian—the normative delimitations—by filling the term with whatever meanings apropos particular objectives all vying for that one dominant truth. To understand some kind of *Representational* significance of Agrarianism in this purview, being the general delimitation of presumptions about the superior worth of both rural agricultural labor and rural citizenry, one could explore various groups of writings and thinkers from throughout the Western intellectual tradition. Still, the *Representational* significance of Agrarianism draws foremost from the first assessments of the political, economic, social and cultural worth of the agricultural practices—what Montmarquet (1989) categorizes, from among others, as classical agrarianisms.

Representational Agrarianism

The first classical agrarianism grouping Montmarquet names is *aristocratic/nobility agrarianism*. It is comprised of social classical philosophy evident in the (noble) classical age, writings including the works of Socrates, Aristotle, Plato and the *Oeconomicus*; to Cicero and Cato, spanning Greek and Roman writings and philosophy ~fifth through last centuries before

the *Common Era* (CE).²² The component parts of agricultural practices were at that time, like everything else, valued as part of a *great chain of being*, detailed most thoroughly in *neoplatonic* philosophy and further modified in terms thereafter. The *great chain of being* stratified all matter and life as links in a sequence descendent from God, first; through the time of the middle ages, from a monarchy; and so forth. The hierarchal patterning of all human and nonhuman life forms could give order and meaning to the universe, an intrainplicating phenomena where all earthly and otherwise humans and nonhumans had their own link. Some sort of *aristocratic/nobility agrarianism* of this context perhaps not surprisingly views the ideal state to be a well-ordered city-state of likewise hierarchal linkage to nobility, to God, with agriculture and farmers the incalculable asset inculcating the idea(l) in both direct and indirect ways. Agriculture directly gave “political stability and economic prosperity” (p. 56) while, more indirectly, its farmers were “leadership class upon which it can call in time of crisis and whose existence, even in tranquil times, serve to *guarantee a sufficiently wide dispersal of power to avoid tyranny*” (*my emphasis*; p. 56).

However, spatialization of the state through hierarchal scales and distances, albeit thoroughly dependent upon, and aggrandizing, the agrarian, did not mean that the *ideal state* would be *entirely* agrarian. Although all humans and nonhumans had their place in the great chain, scalar social hierarchies relegated cultivation of intellectuality and associated virtues to the city-dwelling nobility (higher in their linkages), with intellect being the greatest wealth, and like this widely distributing lesser, though vital, wealth of agrarian virtue among the practices of

²² For a far more comprehensive and competent overview of the social organization and/ or writings, philosophical, agrarian or otherwise, of ancient Greece and Rome, see the oft cited, among others, James Montmarquet (1989), book, *The Idea of Agrarianism*; and Victor Hanson’s (1995), text, *The Other Greeks: The Family Farm and the Agrarian Roots of Western Civilization*.

multiple rural fighter-farmers for the state. Citydwelling-intellectuality and rural-farmer delimitation whilst interconnected in a great chain nevertheless secured what was seen as intrinsic value of birth right and stratified station, because the virtue of tilling was never extended to the farmers, a lower link, themselves. This last is to say that virtue of the rural station fostered larger values founding society: ethics and defense. The rural farmers could defend the society as leaders, managers and fighters, wealthy or not, quite nobly without ever becoming nobility secured by birth (p. 28-34). And, ultimately, agricultural work with the land could also be cultivated for its associated virtues for the intellectual development from afar by those who would never actually farm themselves. Taken together, the commanding beliefs of *aristocratic agrarianism*, as interfaced with material agricultural practices, are that one's station is a strong determinant of the value of one's life (Montmarquet, p. 38). It is celebratory of rural life as a vital link of an ideal state, where farmers could be noble in their service to the state most usefully without ever being able to become nobility themselves.

Another way to look at such agrarianism of the classical age beyond the most obvious *aristocratic/ nobility agrarian* expressions is by examining that same life and work of those farmer-fighters, or the *yeomanry*. Victor Hanson (1995) examines these 'other Greeks,' to mean the *yeoman's* work and life beyond nobility writings, through four hundred years of Greek social, political and military history presented throughout his work of the same name, *The Other Greeks: The Family Farm and the Agrarian Roots of Western Civilization*. Hanson argues that in looking beyond the nobility imaginary of the most popular agrarian writings finds a classical Grecian yeomanry station that more likely experienced great tension with the aristocracy (p. 106-124). Mostly, the yeomanry of *other* classical depictions were heroes, albeit ones desiring less duty *to*, than "freedom *from* [,] government and its excesses" (*original emphasis*; p. 67).

Montmarquet (1984) furthers this claim by citing Greek poetry as far back as Hesiod (active 750-650 BCE) through Roman writings like those of Virgil (last century BCE), which illustrate both an agricultural system and farmers to command a stronger place in a rural-citydwelling interconnection than proffered by the nobility writings, specifically given that farmholding was actually key to politics and citizenship: agriculture formed the basis for the Greek economy through the 4th century. Even before that, by the 5th century BCE, agriculture was far from *subsistence*, and metamorphosing into a more intensive, diverse agricultural practice which required agricultural expertise that eventually drove food stores to surpluses—surpluses further linked to the social environment, like the intellectuality/ leisure aspects of the timely aristocratic literatures mentioned above (p. 45; 54-62), altogether shaping political and military life.

And this last is why, on the whole, Hanson argues that exploration of the ‘man’ behind the yeoman is crucial for understanding the rise of the Greek city-state and its warfare; and an agrarian ideology (p. 124)—the one unifying institution that gave the early Greeks common ground, an agreed-on notion of constitutional government as well as the idea(l)s of the free citizen who nevertheless shared values, politics and war (p. 134). Said ideology was “expressed geographically in a patchwork of farms upon the landscape—and then ultimately preserved militarily” (p. 222): the polis and countryside alike depended on the competent army for continuance (p. 318). But really, agrarian ideology was embodied by the *self-armed, small farmer, hero-protector* of the Greek city-state (p. 347)—the “inward-looking, stodgy yeoman” (Hanson, p. 396), decisively neither aristocratic nor “impoverished peasant tied to subsistence agriculture” (p. 106; 86-89) and like this generally distrustful of the wealthy and the accumulation of wealth (p. 194). These self-armed, small farmers, “sole protectors of the evolving Greek city-state” (p. 347), nevertheless were seen to also possess coveted (alternative)

knowledges derived from working the soil (p. 67-69), likewise as feared for their fierce independence as revered for seeking only a balance, or perfect harmony from the rural life (p. 163-64). When the yeomanry based *hoplite* warfare collapsed, so did, “in the Greek mind, social, political, and economic prestige” (p. 348): the basis for classical agrarian *polis* was gone.

Hanson laments that the end of the classical autonomous *agrarian* city-state (p. 359) meant the end of “the idea of a free man... a recipient of the cultural dividend that arose from that matrix” (p. 396). For Hanson, most significantly arising from this loss is a greater diversity of the West, with a heavily intermixed economy and populations thereafter that together become the impetus for increasing gaps between wealth and poverty. Like this, the author contends that the diminished distribution of independent yeoman, living, working and fighting to defend a patchwork of homestead farms leaves less a legacy of equity for the West, to mean a sensible division between citydwelling and rural lives, than the increasing inevitability of a mass concentration of lands into the hands of a powerful few. Altogether, the yeoman of the early polis period from 700-480BCE would come to signify for many a kind of Representational *yeomanry agrarianism(s)* through centuries thereafter: the imaginary of a free, though lesser than in the classical form, smallholder, of, for instance, 15th through 17th century England, and, most significantly here, the British colonies of North America; as well as the independent rural smallholders, or family farmers, of the American Republic onward.

For now, besides the *yeoman/ry* with/in more *aristocratic* agrarian imaginings, perhaps the most salient Representational agrarianism dating to the classical age comes from Greek writers like Hesiod, Ovid and Theocritus; and Roman writers, incl. Virgil. Each sought to exalt rural life and work that still grounded the material reality of the age. What can be called, *romantic*, or *literary agrarianism*, is “one of the distinctive art forms of later Greek and Roman

civilization” (Montmarquet, 1989, p. 187). Though differing in form, literature, drama and poetry, for example; and specific content, whether narrowing-in on country life, deference to nature, or positioning citydwelling as a foil to all of these, many popular writers (re)created what are now orthodox pastoral conventions to narrow-in on the seemingly insignificant details and rhythms of a more humble rural life; how nature patterns those rhythms (p. 188-89). The peaceful country, often by contrast to city life, becomes a dream, a *utopia*: the perfect harmony of man and nature. This prominent convention can be thought of as a blending of more aristocratic and yeomanry ideals in the literature and poetry of agriculture (p. 183). Though *romantic agrarianism* is not limited to the pastoral form, this strain is arguably the most popular vehicle for representation of agriculture and rural life throughout the Western intellectual tradition (p. 188).

Taken together, the classical agrarianism(s) examples above are some of the most pervasive early Western evaluation of agriculture and rural life—what Fite (1962) cites as no less than the making of “a cult of farming and farm life” (p. 1204). While also highly varied, they can be seen as the orientating *Representational Agrarianism* of *agrarianism(s)*, a power-knowledge through space-time that could both exalt rural life and work in nature as more *virtuous*; as well as bring together many groups and communities around a singular *idea* of rural life and work to be literally and figuratively *defended* at all costs. The Agrarianism of the classical age is materially expressed by patchworks of yeoman farms, which Hanson (for better or worse) sees to define not only classical antiquity, but Western civilization—a material expression that, albeit emplacing all human and nonhuman life in stratified stations (e.g., *great chain of being*), nevertheless guaranteed a sufficiently *wide dispersal of power to avoid tyranny* (Montmarquet).

Suffice it to say, *wide dispersal of power* changes profoundly with the massive enclosures of private property in the centuries to follow, only inspiring profound changes in the meanings of society and nature inasmuch as those significations, while reaffirming various classical Agrarian idea(l)s, must shift in their own evaluation of a profoundly transforming material reality, i.e., the emergence of multiple *agrarianism(s)*. Meaning, whilst (re)producing some kind of *Representational* Agrarianism text, and/or adhering to some kind of Agrarian label, massive transformations of material land use through space and time had necessitated a more diverse *valuing* of agricultural labor and nature, proliferating thereby a decidedly *noninnocent*²³ polyglot of multiple agrarian ideas. Though taking different shapes through history and geography for various purposes, these agrarianism(s) are always referent of the geographical imaginary of *Representational* Agrarianism, remaining largely absent from its overarching signification, whilst retaining a powerful, meaningful and complex relationship with *material* reality.

As such, I argue that to understand the interplay of *Representational* and *nonrepresentational*, transcendent and immanent, general and particular, *Agrarianism* and *agrarianism(s)*, its variations must be situated, or interfaced, with any given set of co-eval spatial temporal realities and agricultural practices. By interfacing agrarianism(s) with material agricultural practices of particular space-times [a material-discursive, agriculture-agrarianism(s) *doublet*], we can trace—and most pertinently for this project—the first modern American agrarianism(s) as another set of *nonrepresentational* agrarian significations and functions within the constellation of *Representational Agrarianism*. Montmarquet's (1989), *The Idea of Agrarianism*, more or less also contends that the agrarianism *polyglot*, given its *fuzzy*

²³ I use this term in reference to Haraway's (1991; 1997) formulations of both reflexivity and *strong objectivity* as contingent, or *situated knowledges* which fail to be *innocent*, to mean *hegemonic*, or self-evident, Truths.

multiplicity, must be interfaced with particular materialities in order to understand its significations and larger social function; its discursive interplays of representational and nonrepresentational, transcendent and immanent, general and particular and likewise significances. Montmarquet's take is that agriculture and agrarianism are intrainplicating, rather, that they comprise an inextricable give-and-take evidenced throughout the Western intellectual tradition. The latter could not be more pronounced when various agrarianism(s) are drawn from for evaluation of the New World geography... or when material realities start to look something like a biotechnological, 'post-agricultural' society; like a material-discursive interface of food wars and neoagrarianism.

For now, the central point is that American *agrarianism(s)* must be considered as far less some kind of uniform philosophy, project, or movement commanding singular meanings through the space-time of the Republic. Regardless of its normative, or intended, singular signification, American agrarianism(s) first appears amidst profound material-discursive transformations—when that *great chain of being* intrainplicating a *wide dispersal of power to avoid tyranny* becomes more accurately articulated as *enclosed*, categorized and distributed as increasingly divided, *privatized* enclaves expressed in both material and discursive practices.

What *the Meaning of Modernity* Means for American Agriculture-Agrarianism(s)

Long before the seventeenth century, when Michel Foucault's (1970) widely referenced, *The Order of Things*, argues that classical systems of knowledge linking all of human and nonhuman life in a *great chain of being* became separated-out into conceptual grids (or *episteme*) which would constitute "knowledge," moreover how the world would come to be *known*: dichotomous categorizations, signifiers and representations... So, long before these advents of modern science, including biology, philology and political economy, would also birth 'Man' as

an impossibly objective subject/ivity defined against nature—what French philosopher of science, metaphysician, and lesser-known geographer, Bruno Latour (1993), likewise calls, *the meaning of modernity* (1991, p. 11; 13)—*Representational Agrarianism* had already begun to be tempered by a more *religious life*, evident as early as Augustus' works by the decline of the Roman Empire, fourth-fifth centuries, CE (Montmarquet, 1989); as well as by shifts in material land use. Of course, many writings, including medieval drama, continue to reflect the power of the classical *great chain's* hierarchy of social scales and stations. However, by this time, linkages were bending under the pressures of the aristocracy and the Church, (re)producing another kind of agrarianism(s) that mixed various aspects of both *aristocratic* and *yeomanry*—what Montmarquet calls, *religious agrarianism*. The latter valued agriculture as a service to God's collective land—a farm labor practice which could be honored thus as the dignity and spirituality of tilling, but, in great contrast to classical thinking, without honoring the laborer, the tiller, himself (p. 105-129). Actually, throughout the medieval period, the tiller would be honored less for his noble attributes than pitied for his lowly life of humble tilling (p. 34-38).

And like this, increasingly through the middle ages, ~9th through 15th centuries, the *yeomanry* political organization and imagery is more rightly characterized by feudalism. Granted, feudalism also structured society around relationships derived from the holding of land in exchange for service or labor. But it was a divergent material-discursive system in that the *King* was now answerable to another *link of the chain*, the *Pope*, together overseeing mercenary soldiers paid for service and a *pitiabile* peasant life. The equity of land distribution to *avoid tyranny* gradually diminished through the mass concentration of lands into the hands of few. In writings, the division between rural and citydwelling would become less than complementary links of a greater chain. Thus begins a distancing of citydwelling life from rurality, allowing

for the continued cultivation of the dignity of farm labor without having to hold any due penitence to cultivators themselves.

By the decline of the feudal system, and continuing through roughly Tudor England (~15th-early 17th century), the world of agricultural holdings was ever more differentiated from the material reality and milieu of the *classical* yeoman. A once collectively lived, social and political life, for the bettering of the city-state's agricultural wealth [perceived as really wealth itself, or *sociocultural* wealth (i.e., a *physiocracy*, Montmarquet, 1989, p. 45-52)] to be defended by the yeoman as thus a more *transcendent* entity from which he, and the rural countryside, was inextricable, becomes increasingly more enclosed by various maneuverings of the aristocracy and Church. Hedges marking property also marked social hierarchies, nesting scales from Church and State to peasantry, (p. 52). Not surprisingly, the yeoman, or middling middle farmer, would become more radicalized than ever by such vacillations of agricultural realities—and early modern rurality is just marred by rebellion and radicalism which would extend through the *Renaissance* (14th-17th century). Radicalization, however, came mostly through land distribution and ownership (p. 153-181), topics which the more *romantic* agrarianism would generally ignore in favor of a *utopian* rurality yet farther removed from citydwelling work and life.

Ultimately, the *private taking of the commons* escalated during the 16th century. This last can be seen as the initiation of what would become the modern era of deregulation and privatization of once common life and work; of wealth once transcendent, or inherent in the land, water, air, and so forth. Such massive enclosures of land distribution required in turn (re)creation of the meanings of wealth and value to be, instead, garnered through the rather

human-driven affair of enclosing the material world in hedges; or privatizing land for profit. The central point here is that material shifts were intrainfluential of a discursive world, and vice versa, patterning *the chain of being* into categorical enclosures—the discursive hedges, as it were, which Foucault (1970), illuminates as the three epistemological regions of the modern human sciences: 1) natural history (life); 2) the analysis of wealth (labor); and 3) general grammar (language), relative, respectively, to biology, (political) economics and philology. Interlocking, (re)productive one to the next, it is posited that these three power-knowledges in tandem become the *science* of human (un)consciousness; become the *Norms and Rules of all Being* (p. 357-87).

In Foucault's formulation, such classification/stratification system to separate and enclose meanings, separating out society from nature, of course has a *social* function: moral hegemony and dominant ideologies. For, Foucault argues that the emergent *logical order* of the world would have to appear *natural*, moreover requiring a necessary *amnesia of genesis*.²⁴ This last is to say that intersecting humanisms and rationalisms would grant modern man Cartesian position and duality in the order of things, being, and most usefully, the inability to think *about* his position—an *en masse* amnesia of how the world endlessly becomes (re)enclosed in categorical, geometrical, empirical, positivist, and so forth categorizations, thereby effectively concealing the social function of the “empirico-transcendental doublet” (p. 318): nonhuman nature seems just ‘naturally’ “out there,” or transcendental, to mean separate from humans. Such enclosure would need to be naturalized, and even performed on/through habituated bodies, thus *dispersed* more

²⁴ *Amnesia of genesis* is a highly useful phrase and theory, drawn from the work of Bourdieu (1984), called, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*. His enormously monumental ethnography of French culture and the bourgeoisie aesthetics and prestige locates his *habitus* formulation, which more or less considers how *contingent* truths become *naturalized* Truth—through spatial and *bodily* performances. *Amnesia of genesis* is required for such *disciplining*; for spaces and bodies to *function*.

and more seductively through the social order as the Truth in order to perpetuate that moral hegemony, dominant ideologies, and order... of things, people, worlds, difference. All together, the *order of things* would have to be forgotten, rather *purified* of its social function so that the social function (revealed through *disciplined* bodies, for example) could be served successfully.²⁵

Bruno Latour's largely comparable formulation of a modern classification/ stratification system—what he calls the *meaning of modernity* (1993, p. 11; 13)—spatializes Foucault's "empirico-transcendental doublet" as a bifurcated modern geography. He explicitly demonstrates separation of human and nonhuman worlds with his own excavation of the *Scientific Revolution*, seventeenth century. He interweaves the air pump-vacuum pump experimentation of, as a case in point, Boyle with Hobbes' political philosophy, to illuminate what became attributable ideology and what became attributable natural science (p. 35)... essentially, what is transcendent (nature's laws) and what is immanent (sociality/man) once again (p. 36). The latter dichotomizes *humans culture*, immanent empirical knowledge or subjects, politics and justice; and *nonhumans nature*, encompassing *objects*, things, science and technology (p. 13). Essentially, he argues, multifaceted systems of power-knowledge, so strikingly different from, as Foucault cites likewise, classical systems of knowledge (re)produces a complexly *modern* world into and through the first and second *Enlightenment* where *things* have become things-are-things-in-themselves, to mean transcendent in nature, or just *True*, beyond sociality, or beyond human subjects who can only discourse them in turn. In this

²⁵ The point here is that the *unnaturalness* of such abstraction must appear *natural*—again, like an *amnesia of genesis* (Bourdieu, 1984, above). This last not so incidentally would be the *panoptic* thesis of one of Foucault's most famous later genealogical explorations, *Discipline and Punish* (1975).

quagmire of paradoxical false-positives, modernity is regarded as a seeming synthesized whole: transcendent nature, so ‘out there,’ ‘above’ and infinitely remote it can be mobilized for immanent, rational sociality ‘in here,’ or ‘below,’ thus capable of changing social policies and laws while, simultaneously, in deference to the transcendent natural law ‘out there’ “to render its laws ineluctable, necessary, and absolute” (p. 37). In accordance with the Latourian take, since divinity had been sucked out with a microscope (invented circa 1590) and later, amidst the *Scientific Revolution*, a *telescope* (invented circa 1608) it seems God would be dead. However, modernity allowed for *God* to be called upon most contradictorily as a *transcendent-nature-clockmaker* and *immanently-social-grandfather*.

For now, this very general overview of *the meaning of modernity* finds an otherwise classical *world of a great chain as enclosed* into dichotomous categories whilst the land kept in common continues to be *enclosed* in material hedges. Such maneuvers of reduction, categorization, distinction and according separation, Latour argues, can be seen as purifications of an otherwise becoming, thus messy, interinfluencing world of subject-object, human and nonhuman assemblages, by allocating them out into opposed texts territories and, respective of the side of society (the social world and birth of ‘man’) and nature (the natural world and birth of the great ontological referent and foil of ‘man,’ ‘nature’): a resultant binary of society and nature and concordant meanings. It’s noteworthy that the material-discursive give-and-take of such thinking is not immediate or simple, or that I am applying Foucault or Latour to propose some kind of undemanding cause-and-effect relationship of agriculture and agrarianism in turn. The point is that these material-discursive assemblages can be cited in various evaluations of land, property, personhood and rights—some of which have held great command in the shaping of

what I argue is a particular, particularly modern, nonrepresentational agrarianism(s): *American agrarianism(s)*.

Which is to say, agrarianism(s), which had always transformed in interface with the material world, continues to shift in register in the context of the *meaning of modernity*, becoming at times even more akin to “technical treatises” (Montmarquet, p. 183) on agricultural practices, land distribution and property. Take for instance, first, John Locke’s *Two Treatise on Government*, specifically the second with focus on civilized society based on natural rights and protection of property. Locke’s work comes to the fore in this high *enclosure* context (late 17th century, early *Age of Reason*). Not surprisingly in this space-time context, *enclosure*, in terms of land ownership and ownership of land product/ions, i.e., (re)considerations of property in its meanings, values and appropriate use(s),²⁶ are his paramount foci. Locke proposes a utilitarian philosophy of natural rights and property rights, forwarding that natural rights *precede* government, and/ or other enclosures, and thus limit the power-knowledge of those (re)territorializations of both ‘man’ and land... However, he forwards, just because *God* delivered the world *in common*, does not imply clear intent that it was supposed to stay that way. Thus, utilitarianism, with its plays of transcendence/ immanence and their respective values—

²⁶ Montmarquet (1989) effectively notes, if one were to read only mid-nineteenth Marxist accounts of this time, s/he would think that by the time of the *Enlightenment*, agriculture could no longer be distinguished from any other form of production, with the farmer the same as any other worker, and *agrarian radicalism* nothing more than *a class struggle*... the rural, in general, *barbaric* (p. 171-76): this couldn’t be any more inaccurate. Montmarquet reasonably claims that agrarian radicalism of the time, which contended *enclosure* of wider distribution of ownership, should be regarded instead as an embryonic “*democratic radicalism*” (*original emphasis*; p. 178). My project is more or less at odds with Marxist reductions and attempts to show instead that agriculture-agrarianism is a material-discursive *geographical* struggle, with *class* constituting only one trajectory of a complex co-eval multiplicity.

intrinsic/ natural and labor-use value—forwards that enclosure is not inherently evil if intended for rational, utilitarian use.

Incidentally, many scholars have contended that in Locke, as applied later by Jefferson, we can see an argument for the enclosure of all life and meaning for utility, really economic-political fare, which would ensure the total trampling of the small farmer in favor of the large. Montmarquet (1989) counters (p. 72-86) that the treatise fails to be a *defense* of the poor *or* a *vilification* of the aristocracy (p. 86). He argues that Locke is seeking an “enough and good” distribution only, no more or less than a more pragmatic argument favoring neither large landholdings nor the peasant poor (p. 83). Montmarquet continues that Locke sees either of those social categories as *beside the point*, and actually more unnecessary tension than his central thesis, which is to defend property’s “productivity and its rights; of the value of work” (p. 86), and illuminate “the futility of sectarian quarrelling” (p. 86). Either way, Locke’s *utilitarianism*, generally advocating an *enough and good* distribution of property, signals a shift, in the context of modernity, in what is and would be considered and (re)combined as useful *agrarianism(s)* insights for the burgeoning American republic.

Given the *latter shift in register*, markedly differentiated modern *romantic agrarian* nevertheless transforms through likened space-time as well. Instead of (re)visioning more pragmatic agrarianism(s), however, many writings of this strain become increasingly more pessimistic in their contemplation of what was happening to material nature with increasing privatization and later industrialization, ever preferring instead the discursive, more ideal, utopian nature of conventions past (p. 184). Romantic agrarianism’s notion of the rhythms of rural life and nature interinfluential of citydwelling would, instead, see enclosure as a violation of nature, thus discursively moving nature and some vision of small farms further away from it

for preservation. Though clearly erroneous in the material reality of agriculture of the time, in such an imaginary nature could thus serve as a place untouched by large land enclosures for individual profit; a place for farmers to nobly toil closer to its rhythms and striving to figure how best to live and work in fuller accordance with those, i.e., the art and practice of farming not entangled in some kind of *chain* interconnecting their rural lives and work in a collective goal, but, and preferably, summarily distanced from it—and all the more virtuous for it.

In early modern romantic agrarianism(s), nature becomes less an integrative force of the common good or goal than a removed place for the incomparable individual profit of enlightenment. Distanciated pristine nature comes to serve the interests of the writer—be it nostalgia, memory, mourning, rebirth, or exaltation. And it is in this way of distanciating nature, not the pastoral, that romantic agrarianism subsists as a “new popular aesthetic which located the world of passionate feeling not in medieval castle or renaissance palace but rather in the cottage, on the soil of common life... A small farm, as it were, a book on which man’s emotional life was written” (drawn from MacLean, in Montmarquet, 1989, p. 203)—an extremely influential agrarianism for centuries, particularly through the Romantic period of English literature and poetry of the second half of the eighteenth century; particularly for the nascent American Republic.

Taken together, *Representational Agrarianism*, when interfaced agricultural practices, must encapsulate more and more meanings of land and land use, the *value* of such maneuvers and how they *should be* evaluated, through space-time; through shifts to what can be called *the meaning of modernity*. This is precisely the context in which American agrarianism(s), interfaced an especial *New World* geography, can be understood: a *modern* (re)combination of various classical agrarianism(s), (re)configuring through the massive material-discursive

enclosures of the *Old World* turned *New World* modernity, to ever distance, through space-time, agricultural practices from co-eval materialities of nation-building, i.e., industrialization and commercialization. The agrarianism(s) bifurcation of citydwelling and rurality can be utilized in new ways to ever *purify* rural life and work with/in nature—the widely distributed family farm—to serve as a *New Republic's* more virtuous, transcendental force: *our secular theology* (also Jager, 2004)... especially for increasingly *unvirtuous* immanent practices of nation-building, including everything from genocide, slavery, to industrialization, commercialization, patriarchy and rural poverty.

Modern American Agrarianism(s)

Through the *colonial years* before the revolution, when the US was under the control of the Crown, land was still controlled via a tenure system of transgenerational, transcontinental landed gentry. Land tenure would continue that way mostly through 17th and 18th centuries. The meaning of that system, however, would continue to shift given transition in the *purpose* of the land enclosures to that of a more greatly concretized market-oriented trajectory of profitable agriculture beyond subsistence (Hurt, 1994, p. 35-78). Though ties to Europe fostered the development of the subsistence economy to a more market-oriented paradigm, which it enjoyed at home mostly through enclosure and peasantry, including its own slaves, even before that the supposedly pure subsistence farms of the New World Native American experience (Hurt, p. 3-34) had already been delimited both materially, for corn production, for example; and discursively, which is to say, by inheritance structures through the matrilineal line that nevertheless informed the meanings of ownership/ use of communal lands (p. 25-28). As gift or inheritance based, once communal lands enter into negotiation with the earliest white settlers (p.

30). Also, the initial biotechnology (or, early *genetic tinkering* and plant hybridization)²⁷ meant that even by the 16th century corn could be produced for food, feed and burgeoning market-oriented agriculture economy (p. 32) that was increasing its land shares through a concurrently increasing population. By the seventeenth century, settlers were fleeing the declining European feudal system. Many wanted to become independent smallholders in the *New World*. Supposedly small subsistence-only farms were already exporting *surplus*, no less, grain, for example, to Europe by the 18th century.

The main point here is that, given the material-discursive shifts outlined heretofore, the first New World farmers were an interesting mix of tillers concerned not only, or simply, with communal lands and subsistence. The available land was being enclosed into smaller units distributed through rural smallholders—seen as a more virtuous affair given the virtue of nature and farmers’ work with/in it that foremost required the unvirtuous enclosure, to mean detention and eradication of Native populations—including everything from their agricultural practices to their cosmologies and oral cultures, to name a few, for economic gain (p. 32-35). Ostensibly, US agriculture was moving well beyond subsistence oriented activities under the guidance of family farm stewards to bartering in a primitive, but no less, commercial system; acquiring more land to surplus beyond self-sustenance; and perceiving commerciality as a goal. As Hurt clarifies, eventually and, “Above all, farmers who sought commercial production to profit from local, regional, and international markets, no matter what access or commitment to a market economy

²⁷ For a comprehensive take of agriculture, food stores and the rise of civilizations unevenly across the world, see Jared Diamond’s (2005) groundbreaking work, *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies*. For scholarly treatment of the transition of *hunting and gathering* to agriculture in terms of *genetic tinkering*, see Blumler et al. (1991); Doebley, Gaut and Smith (2006).

might be, carried the ‘culture of capitalism’ into the countryside” (p. 104). Large-scale planters shared this vision, which was really an early modern capitalist ideology of land use transplanted through the Old World landed gentry. All told, with the mix of landed gentry, Native Americans, indentured servants, African slaves and colonial farmers, the earliest New World rural life was a brutish patriarchal affair in a web of *natural* cycles of wealth, power, and the environment which required a kind of political-economic system that could develop a manufacturing and commerce, trade and industry (that *mentalité*) checked and balanced by some sort of agrarian idea(l); that could meet such challenges of a New World.

This last is to say, some kind of seamless transplantation of Old World agricultural system, and interrelated agrarianism(s), into the New World would become increasingly more untenable through space-time for a number of different reasons specific to geography and interfaced *meaning of modernity*. First, leaving the land in some sort of *common*, materially and discursively, was implausible given the enormity of the New World geography. Inasmuch as a large-scale was untenable, peasantry-based systems were even less controllable because of the enormous amounts of arable lands that were not subject to feudalist system, or excessive taxation. Luckily, by the late 17th century, early *Age of Reason*, Locke, among others, had already proclaimed that *God* had not intended nature to *remain* in common, anyway... Certainly such enclosures of lands and meanings were drawn from similar enclosures of the vast European commons (Douglas, 1969). Early on in the New World, this last would look like plantation slavery with a more classical aristocratic agrarianism evaluation—both of which would be *worked out* in due course through the nineteenth century. The point here is that the enormous land mass of highly variegated arability, climate, and so forth meant that large-scale forms of agricultural production (for the whole country beyond the south), or other material and discursive

land organization schema, was less plausible. A political-economic land management scheme was needed in-between large farms and peasantry—a formation that could, through the material-discursive value of work, compel independent tillers to develop all the arable space and still report-back about the progress through local units to a larger representational schema.

Ostensibly, a particularly New World agrarian vision, more or less utopian, was needed—a new, secular theology that could purify the work of dispersed smallholders with/in nature of the co-eval necessity of developing sectors of manufacturing and commerce.

By the end of the 18th century (~1790), over 95% of the American Republic was categorized as rural, anyway, with most of the population actually living and working on family farms. This meant of course that very few cities had high populations, so manufacturing and commerce was not yet the overriding context (Fite, 1962). What undoubtedly was more pressing was configuring some kind of moral-political legitimacy of developing the new modern democracy toward such objectives. In the context of substantial social, philosophical, scientific and technological developments continuing through that time, ~ late 18th century, as shown before in the works of Foucault (1970) and Latour (1993), this last would come not from the Crown or even a *Crown of thorns*. For, such forms of *transcendence* had become complicated by the overarching developments of a bifurcated *modernity*. Third US president (1801-1809), Thomas Jefferson was center stage by this time, holding a soiled *hoe* (invented circa 5th mill. BC) in one fist and a copy of his *Life and Moral Teachings of Jesus of Nazareth* (~1819) in the other, admonishing that lest we forget *for all time* that, to be *Christian* and *American* are not the same, to *till the soil*, and be *American*, shall be.

As many see it, even though all of the founding fathers were strong agrarians, there was perhaps no more passionate or influential agrarian, stronger proponent of the *modern American agrarian utopia* or agricultural fundamentalist of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century than Jefferson—a thoughtful agrarian, who in Fite’s view, “not only described the economy in which he lived, but he also expressed his own emotional attachment to the soil” (p. 1204). In the beginning, Jefferson was decidedly less concerned with the actual economy of agriculture than he was with the idea(l)s and morality as imparted by neoclassical agrarian thought on property, individualism and so forth; and how they could be applied to speak to the material circumstances of his lifetime. Like this, Jefferson is rather emblematic of the earliest American agrarianism, moreover, of the beliefs that democracy should be built through the most valuable Americans: distributed, to mean thus *independent*, rural smallholding citizens—those who had the most invested interests in maintaining the liberty and interests of the country. In Jefferson’s estimation, the small, independent yeoman husbandman/tiller of the soil was a *surer bet* than the perverted institution of religion for basing American individualism and unbridling the *leave it alone* laissez-faire approach to a massive land mass to cultivate and develop. Nonhuman nature ‘naturally’ transcendental, separate from imminent, or social, beings, fabricating empirical power-knowledges to enclose nature into both private property and meanings necessary for making that selfsame act of enclosure, or tilling—a virtuous undertaking—could better ground a new democracy than any sort of Old World agricultural system and agrarian treatise... God was most usefully available as a transcendent-nature-clockmaker or immanent-social-grandfather in times of crisis, who, like the best government governs least, so governed *least*. Actually, Jeffersonian agrarianism considered agriculture to be some kind of purification of the government and likewise industrial and commercial development goals—the checks and

balances of national virtuosity as other, less than virtuous measures were continually taken-up in the name of nation and democracy: the other, often violent, advents of New World modernity...

All told, legitimacy, authentication, rather, *virtue* for the nascent, modern American agrarian democratic utopia nation, to mean “*independence, self-reliance, and the importance of community and common purpose... an integral part of American moral and political life; an equivalent of the public good*” (Hurt, 2002, p. 172-73), would commence in the new Republic with something of an *aristocratic* agrarianism of landed gentry. Yet, since *agrarianism(s)* cannot be displaced from *material* agricultural practices through time, the earliest modern American agrarianism(s) idea(l)s were particular to a highly variegated geography, thus materially differentiated, modern Republic. The interfaced agrarianism(s) in turn would come not from a commonality rooted in miracles and resurrection, but in agriculture; from rural family farm at once materially-discursively separated from the less virtuous urbanism of commerciality whilst always (re)collected with/in it, under a central, federal authority: the new political-economic in the form of *democracy* (Montmarquet, 1989, p. 87). Discursively severed thus from centers of commerce developing more conspicuously as time went on, rural life and work could provision a “high moral character exemplified by honesty, integrity, and reliability” (Fite, 1962, p. 1203) likewise for the *agrarian* democracy *entire*: rural virtue *and* urban commerce, a *more perfect union*, or what we can think of as a kind of originating, recombinant Jeffersonian *American agrarianism*—as *modern* as democracy itself (also Montmarquet, 1989).

This particularly modern American agrarian imaginary cannot be reduced to an *economics treatise* for the agricultural development of the US (Douglas, 1969). Undoubtedly, industry and commerce are factors of utmost concern, but the interesting mix and plays of agrarian meanings can also be seen as a complex *utopian* expression holding together thinking

on inalienable rights, individualism, civil liberties, popular *self-government* and agriculture as the “basis of human virtue... a way of life that enabled men to reach the nobility of character for which he was intended” (p. 2-16). The modern American agrarianism polyglot had moments of classical *yeomanry*, landed aristocracy and slavery, eventual *utilitarian* (re)considerations of private property, as well as *romantic* utopian visions eventually tempered by the advents of subject/ivity and enlightenment. Without the systems in place that worked to eventually enclose the commons; without the problematic beliefs in land as either a collective gift of God or monarchy, American agrarianism emplaces immanent *and* transcendent virtue in the, “soil, in the people who tilled it, and in the institutions which grew out of the rural way of life” (Fite, 1962, p. 1204). Such agrarianism(s) had *precedence*, at least what could be (re)configured out of the ancients, and then mixed with new notions of private property and romantic enlightenment to situate the more virtuous checks and balances. Moreover, an “alliance of agrarianism and democracy” (Hurt, 1994, p. 73) was like divinity, or at least the “social, economic, and political superiority of rural citizenry” (p. 73), *without divinity* proper—and particular to the New World (drawn from Douglas, 1969, p. viii). These all were powerful substitution with staying power—*our secular theology* (Jager, 2004, p. ix). Actually, Jager’s (2004) book, *The Fate of Family Farming: Variations on an American Idea*, continues the *family farm* idea(l)s of modern American agrarianism(s) has ever since served as the nation’s “mythic bedrock—historical, social, moral, economic—on which rested all, or nearly all, other institutions... our national origins, our history, our literary cultures” (p. ix- x). *Small wonder* the American agrarian imaginary has held such “a firm grip upon the minds and emotions of Americans throughout their entire history” (Fite, p. 1203); and continues to do so today in its most seductive, neoagrarian formations....

Therefore, from the beginning, on one hand the predominant modern American agrarianism is much more than a political-economic thesis. There is much more to the *story* of the early American Republic of rural smallholders than a linear capitalist trajectory, commercial economics of industrial transition, or class struggle. It can only be understood in an agriculture-agrarianism(s) interface of material practicality of frontier development; and a set of discursive practices which inculcated that development with meanings, the most idealistic being virtue, the best of virtue being natural rights, i.e., individualism... a *cult*, which, when forwarded with the proper material development, is rather political-economic after all, i.e., liberalism, *laissez-faire*. On the other hand, the earliest modern American agrarianism formation was no simple matter of families, responsible stewardship and respect for material land use and virtue in productive work. Though other forms of capitals, including the spiritual and emotional, were no doubt powerful and motivational in their agricultural practices, denying other goals, like those of industry and commerce in favor of more virtuous objectives, tidies up the complexities of the material circumstance and recombinant agrarianism(s). Actually, and in the words of Hurt (1994), the “belief that farming is the best way of life and the most important economic endeavor... [that] also implies that farmers willfully sought to avoid commercial agriculture and preferred a ‘moral economy’ in which they produced for subsistence rather than the market and economic gain...” (p. 72) is an inaccurate reading of material agricultural practices; of American history. As shown prior, interfacing agriculture-agrarianism(s) finds that *Representational Agrarianism* was thoroughly diluted by the advent of the New World through the blending of classical agrarian thought with pronouncement of property enclosures; as well as of agriculture and *commerce* (Montmarquet, p. 90) in the US well before the Industrial Revolution—a ‘commercial *mentalité*’ fomenting even throughout the early national period as well (Hurt, 1994).

If we first (re)vision modern American agrarianism as such a multifarious assemblage of material-discursive, *Old Representational* and *New nonrepresentational* Worlds like this, I contend that we can also (re)vision particularly American agrarianism(s) through a longer space-time, even through to what I call today's neoagrarianism, as, foremost, problematic modern geographical imaginaries that organize and categorize the world in terms of a divided society and nature, and coordinate meanings of space and place, transcendence and immanence, God and commerce—or, what I call, in drawing from Bruno Latour (1993), a (post)modern purification regime.

Modern American Agrarianism(s) as a *Work of Purification*

Bruno Latour (1993) actually maps out *the meaning of modernity* in a figure he calls, *Purification and Translation* (see p. 11). His figure can be applied for understanding how the duality of society and nature *functions* in and as a *geographical imaginary* of space, time, place and scale. I can use his model likewise to understand American agrarianism(s) as a modern geographical imaginary through space-time; as well as how that imaginary functions as a *Work of Purification*.

To depict the *meaning of modernity*, Latour's figure has an upper and lower half. He cites the upper half as the work of modernity, being, the *Work of Purification* (see p. 11). The *Work of Purification* means that the modern bifurcation of subjects and objects, namely their relegation to coordinate categorizations of *humans culture* and *nonhumans nature*, can be thought of as a *purification* of the continuous process of subject-object, material-discursive, hybridization. This dichotomous separation, or *Work of Purification*, is symbolized by two solid lined circles with a line between them. The line between the two circles, being the two poles of modernity, symbolizes, in the words of Latour, the *first dichotomy*. The horizontal line between

the *upper* and *lower* halves signifies the *second dichotomy*. Moving downward thus, the bottom half of his figure, called, the *Work of Translation* (see p. 11), is comprised of a continuous line that both bends through itself and branches out. The line is intended to indicate that that there is *no separation* or dichotomy-making lines and circles dividing *society* and *nature* in an *amodern* imaginary. Therefore, the bottom half signifies a network, or relational, imaginary, marked only by continuation—where the circles of *humans culture* and *nonhumans nature* of the *Work of Purification* would be imagined as mediating, translating, articulating and intratransferring competencies, i.e., as an *assemblage*. The proliferation of *hybrid actants* (again, those *excited through the Work of Translation*) continues below the (second) dichotomizing line separating the lower half from the upper half *Work of Purification*. I will better detail much of this terminology shortly. For now, as Latour critically clarifies, the upper and lower halves *signify* how the modern imaginary *assumes* the upper and lower halves are space-boxes that *interact*, instead of transforming in a continual process of co-constitution. Latour announces that so long as we continue to consider these two, or *Work of Purification* and *Work of Translation*, as separate, dichotomized systems instead of as simultaneous, coeval multiplicities of social natural assemblage, then, he writes, “we are truly modern—that is, we willing subscribe to the critical project, even though that project is developed only through the proliferations of hybrids *down below*” (*my emphasis*; p. 11).

I first want to focus first on the upper half *Work of Purification*, for this is the modern imaginary in which I imagine modern American agrarianism(s). Relational, or post-structuralist, geographers,²⁸ who, unlike structuralist geographers, resist *taming of the spatial in the textual*,²⁹

²⁸ It perhaps goes without saying at this point that *space and place thinking* is widely dissimilar, and not *applied* the same way to the same *realms* (disciplines) equally. For relational space-place thinking today, see any number of writers included heretofore. For a very general

as evident in the works of Derek Gregory (1994) and Doreen Massey (2005) (among many others) can be applied here to fill-out the *geographical* implications of Latour's *Work of Purification*. Moreover, I will overview critical geography which explores how the power-knowledge of modernity dichotomizing society and nature is likewise a *geographical* delimitation of bifurcated space and place, respectively, thus assumed to be separate, seemingly *permanent* formations which draw meaning through their distancing and differentiation; as well as how the *modern* imaginary assumes their dichotomous categories interact through time.

Derek Gregory's (1994), *Geographical Imaginaries*, which also draws from Foucault's *The Order of Things*, (re)visions the *meaning of modernity* as a problematic geographical imaginary enclosing all space into grids, binarizing *containers* of space with coordinate meanings. Like others, he argues that this last maneuver is the result of shifts in beliefs in the rational human observer who could capture and enclose the world through objective *vision/visualization*—what he denotes as, *ocularcentrism* (p. 15-16). A long history of likewise *ocularcentric* geographies removed *time* from spatial anamnesis, thereby (re)creating and

overview of space and place, see Hubbard, Kitchin and Valentine's (2004), *Key Thinkers on Space and Place*.

²⁹ To reiterate, there are limitations to cultural studies oriented critique in terms of the *text*, hence in terms geography. As I write in-text, Massey (2005) argues that such conceptualization of the text, space-time and place, lacks “full engagement with external relatedness” (p. 52), i.e., the material, space-time and place dimensionality through which the text is co-constituted. Some theorists may not go far enough; or way *too far*, in their formulation of the *world and the text*, as in the case of Derrida (1976); or even de Certeau (1984). To illuminate this charge that, in attempting to leave the *prison-house of structuralist meanings* by arguing for the *slipperiness* of signification, representation and even *linguistic play*, many of the theorists with “post” before their formulations (i.e., postmodern, post-structuralist), or adherents of deconstruction, can go *too far* with/in the *text*, as it were, and away from *external relatedness*, Massey takes on deconstruction in her Chapter, “The Horizontalities of Deconstruction.” Incidentally, said Chapter is from where I drew the name for the current project. All of these last are the most complex theoretical issues of representation and signifying practices, as well as related definitional and disciplinary concerns and cultures.

naturalizing space as separated box-topographies³⁰ in which separated events *happen*—a space-box geographical imaginary that has, in his terminology, *enframed* the world since the dawning of modernity. The seeming naturalness of this abstraction maneuver to *tame the world* into tidy meanings and signification of *nation*, for instance, is best represented by his formulation, *world-as-exhibition*. The phraseology, drawing from *L'Exposition Universelle*, the centennial celebration of the French Revolution, or the Paris *World's Fair*, of 1889, for exemplification (p. 38), draws attention to how occularcentric geographical imaginaries reduce an otherwise messy world, or a *nation*, into tidy, closed boxes of significations, i.e., *all the world's a fair*... Running Latour's *Work of Purification* through Gregory's world-as-exhibition locates two opposed, inert space-boxes, or circles relative to society and nature, but also to space and place.

In *For Space*, renowned relational geographer Doreen Massey (2005) critically reviews these common and theoretical presuppositions about modernity and accordant space and place thinking. The central problematic cited above, and reinvigorated in Massey's book, is that if time is removed from space, i.e., the *world-as-exhibition*, coordinate meanings of space and, specifically, *place*, lack dynamism; and are imagined to interact and move in ways relative to binary thinking. Her relational perspective thus examines space as, instead, the neologism, "space-time" (2005, p. 269), meaning, that space is "integral to the production of history, and thus to the possibility of politics, just as the temporal is to geography" (p. 269). Space-time is

³⁰ *The map is not the territory*... Like the map, *topography* refers to a geographical imaginary rendering space as an unchanging box of coordinated, contained surfaces mappable as points, lines and contours. Topography can be contrasted *topology* (like the territory) which, as opposed to surfaces, refers to *relations between relations*, i.e., the process of spatial emergences through relational complexity underneath spatial forms. Drawing from Murdoch (2006), a fuller imaginary of space and place would combine: 1) typography with, 2) typology; and, 3) *materials/resources* as their network flows decimate easy dualisms of space, place, scale and so forth.

endlessly “in process... never closed, a simultaneity of stories-so-far [or *trajectories*]... neither a *container* for always-already constituted identities nor a *completed closure* of holism” (*my emphasis*; p. 9-12). As an open process only *so far*, space-time is irreducible to binary thinking, continually (re)constituted through a multiplicity of trajectories in interrelations. In this way, Massey argues, space-time is heterogeneous (p. 105), more like a “sphere of the possibility of the existence of multiplicity” (p. 105).

Given relational formulation of space-time, Massey is able to develop further theorization of how *place* is often differentiated from space-time. Meaning, accepting space as dynamic space-time where multiple trajectories continually hook-up to (re)produce various geographical formations has often meant that place has become locked as space-time’s *dialectical* opposite. Against a more dynamic space-time, place becomes too often positioned as an oppositional formation, imagined likewise as the timeless, inert, nostalgic and unchanging formation with long internalized histories.³¹ Massey’s work seeks to liberate *the place of home* from its home, rather, from its more inert and unchanging complementarity to a dynamic spatial world. She does this because such a binarized imaginary has many coordinate, highly problematic significations, not the least of which is gender and rurality. For instance, Massey (1994) shows how the place of home has been traditionally envisioned as the feminine complement to a dynamic, masculine spatial world, especially the more those longer spatial trajectories are seen to be threatening its domestic order. Likewise in such imaginaries, place would also be coupled as the less dynamic rurality and nature of a citydwelling turned urban life of politics, economics,

³¹ For additional, more classic, relational views of *place*, see, among many others, Agnew (2005) in, “Space: Place,” a geographer most known for his work with place in, *Place and politics: The Geographical Mediation of State and Society* (1987); and/ or Amin (2002; 2004; even Pred (1984), mostly on Giddens (1984). Noted anthropologist and political ecology-oriented theorist Escobar’s (2001) article on the *glocal* would be illuminative here.

industry and commerce. Although through space-time, gendered and scalar space-time and place might be seen to interact and/ or synthesize, the basis of this bifurcated and gendered imaginary remains unaltered and even more profoundly problematic: space has no place, and place lacks spatial trajectories, moreover, place is (re)visioned as the nostalgic, feminine home, or rural/ nature complement somehow free of any spatial, or social, trajectories, and particularly when those are seen as threatening.

Obviously, there have been major modifications of the most rigid space and place thinking through various *structuralist*, Marxist and/ or dialectical (in all its myriad forms),³² deconstructive and/or, as I show later, *trialectical* geographical conceptualizations through space-time. However, as Massey argues, structural thinking can remain *nonrelational* in salient ways which have had profound implications for both space and place in terms of *scale*; and also how space-time and place—like the two circles depicting the *Work of Purification* in the upper half of the Latourian model—are likewise imagined to interact. Basically, various structuralist geographical imaginaries, in attempting to free space from the *world-as-exhibition*, conceive of geography as a *surface* landscape (re)produced by multiple trajectories underlying it. So, the landscape would have many *surface* entities which manifest as the sum of those underlying processes, and like this (re)produce space and place in terms of scales. Granted, scalar thinking is a step beyond imagining space and place as just rigidly opposed enclosures, but it is still problematic in terms of bifurcating, signifying and even gendering space and place.

Actually, scales are *tricky*, for they are a seductive, dialectical (re)formulation of space and place as multiple containers replete thus with imagined sizes, distances, boundaries. They

³² For a now classical dialectical take on Lefebvre (1991) and place, see Merrifield (1993), in, “Place and space: A Lefebvrian reconciliation.” Any number of relational geographers presented throughout the Chapter take-on dialectical space, place and scale thinking, and could be consulted for further delineation.

are nested arborescently, which is to say, in a hierarchy, moving from the largest scale, which would be global, encapsulating then the continental, followed by national, organizing the regional, the local, and so forth finding eventually, again, home, identities, the body (place). Granted, scales can be more or less connected, or even interactive, than rigid binarisms—they can even seem to dialectically synthesize thus, or *jump scales*. Yet, scale is a *trick*:³³ it's *better than* bifurcated boxes of meanings, but still a structuralist imaginary, regardless, that might vie for formations synthesizing and jumping but never seeks to destabilize what the formations were imagined to be before such interactions: *essentialized* formations, meaning, True scales. The latter is imperative for thinking about the modern geographical imaginary because the smallest scale, seen to be the household, would be connected to, but still separate from, the larger coordinates, or levels, nesting down from the national, regional, urban, to the rural, home, body and so forth, instead of as continually (re)created through the relations of those supposedly larger spaces. This last would mean that place is left the scale of the household, and fails to fully impact and co-constitute social and political identities which are not confined to the small-scale. Again, even if such conceptualizations see scales as interacting, jumping across spatial scales, the scalar arguments simply lay layers *on top of preexisting* notions of space and place such as these, i.e., palimpsests.

In terms of how bifurcated and nested space and place are seen to interact, scale remains a highly political and powerful delimitation (also Marston, 2000), mostly in its coordinate constructions of linear time and causation. The larger implications here are that, one, scalar

³³ For a dialectical views of scale, see the rather infamous Cox (1998) piece, “Spaces of Dependence, Spaces of Engagement and the Politics of Scale, or: Looking for Local Politics.” There are innumerable relational geographical counters to this perspective. For a *direct* counter to Cox, see political geographer Marston’s (2000), “The Social Construction of Scale”; or, Amin (2004), in, ‘Regions unbound’: Towards a New Politics of Place.”

thinking organizes and can categorize phenomena under central/marginal demarcations, respectively, i.e., in a phrase, *core-to-margin*. Core-to-margin imaginaries infuse such thinking about space, place and scale as distances, implicating power of privilege as difference. Basically, core-to-margin spatialization accounts for mapping ‘here’ and ‘there,’ moreover to mean ‘us’ and ‘them,’ respectively, upon, for instance, society and nature, space and place. Scales of community, family or place of home are imagined as marginal identities of a more dynamic space—‘here,’ or ‘us’ removed from ‘there,’ or ‘them.’ Another problem here is that the power-knowledge of space-‘them’ can appear threatening to place-‘us’—as if trajectories directed from the core will impact the margin only as the core intends; as if place has no embodied aspects of its own, lacking politics, culture, skills, means or even interest in interpreting and applying any spatialized trajectories other than what is intended by the core, i.e., incapable of acting in any other way than what is expected, or in the role of *resistance* (Hones & Leyda, 2005).³⁴

A *billiard ball* conceptualization of the natural world comes to mind here, where two coherent systems linearly interact to produce an event (Massey, 2005, p. 72-73). Massey formulates that these two spatial, scalar *billiard balls* of space and place merely *start and stop*, presumably (dialectically) occasionally hitting each other. Such billiard ball imaginaries turn space into time (in lieu of her space-time), conceiving of space to be like a place-less force of power-knowledge and change. In terms of Latour’s model, nonhumans nature, like place, would always be locked in a *reactive* state prior to the recurrent hook-ups of such spatial forces,

³⁴ Notably, scalar distribution and linear causation remains a sticky issue in terms of its attendant power and resistance—issues confronted in the article by human geographer Susan Smith (1999) in, “The Cultural Politics of Difference.”

indicating yet again that place would only be *synthesized* as the timeless, to mean traditional or nostalgic, opposite of space.

The major problem, of course, with imaginaries of the scalar big-to-small, as well as inside/outside which maps “us”/“them” as core-to-margin formations locked in billiard ball interactions is that longer spatial trajectories become linear time slices, where some trajectories, like politics, economics, cultural trends and so forth, dominate all other trajectories. This means that place, materially-discursively positioned as smaller scales lacking time, can only be imagined in one of two ways. One, place is “waiting” for spatial cues and signals, for it is otherwise out of touch, jet-lagged, or *behind the times* when it comes to larger political, economic, sociocultural shifts and transformations— notions that will be remedied “in time” when “they” *catch-up*. This last is a common *neo liberal imaginary* of the *West* and *the rest* of the world, for instance—I will illuminate this point later on in terms of the food wars. Or, two—and most importantly for understanding the geographical imaginary of American agrarianism(s) at this juncture—dominant spatial forces of politics, economics, industry, commerce, culture and so forth are so causal, so absolute, and placeless they can appear as *terrifying* trajectories *threatening* place, in terms of its communities, families, homes or even purer, more virtuous, embodied *marginal* knowledges *closer to nature*. Given various imaginaries, such forces must be resisted, or retreated from in the opposing place of home. None of this is submitted to say that power-knowledge and information and so forth *never* somewhat flows core-to-margin, but it is to argue that modern American agrarian imaginaries as a *Work of Purification* can be seen to reify the imaginary of the locked scalar place, and its associated aspects, like community, tradition, domestic order and nature, if longer spatial trajectories are seen to be threatening its values; its home. Like this, the place of home becomes a place for retreat from any

developments of dynamic space-time, particularly those deemed less desirable, or less virtuous, than those seen to comprise the opposed home retreat in a rural nature.

Taken together, this is how I would characterize the *Work of Purification*, the upper half the *Latourian* model. In general, the core-to-margin and cause-and-effect imaginary of bifurcated, scalar society and nature interaction remains a decidedly powerful *Work of Purification*. It imagines the longest spatializations as dynamic forces lacking any history, tradition, community—lacking place; and smaller places as retreats at the margin, and like this, closer to nature—as safer places of traditions, communities and more virtuous practices than what are imagined to be flattening, really terrifying social trajectories that lack such places, and really any concern for the margin. This highly provocative modern geographical imaginary serves a very useful purpose: to *tame the world* (also Massey, 2005), or, the dynamism of space and place as otherwise relational, co-constitutive forces. Though grids and representations have increasingly less to do with *life as it is really lived*, such core-to-margin, billiard ball imaginaries are *tricky*. They really do seem True... especially when it comes to the idealized, romanticized, mythologized, symbolic, pastoral place or home of the American family farm. In highly persuasive ways, it does seem like place should be seen, or imagined, as some kind of retreat from citydwelling, later urban turned global spatial formations and attendant trajectories, and most certainly when space-time seems to become an increasingly terrifying abstract *desert of desserts* through the end of the twenty-first century. But, that's the precisely the problem.

Bringing it all together, I argue that American agrarianism(s) since the dawning of the Republic has functioned as a modern *Work of Purification*. If emplaced in the Latourian model's upper half, which has been further delineated through the lens of likewise critical relational geographical theorization, I contend that from the beginning of its 'tradition', American

agrarianism has been a modern geographical imaginary that has continually served a powerful function: to purify nature, or rural life and work with/in nature, of multiple trajectories of industry and commerce it bifurcates and categorizes as the forces of an oppositional society. Utilizing the Latourian model, we can see the many dichotomies of modern American agrarianism(s): *the text* (society, *agrarianism*) and *the world* (nature, agricultural practice). These last can be further mapped citydwelling (space) and rurality (place), respectively. We know that the earliest American agrarianism(s), interfaced a enormous frontier and recombinant of various classical, neoclassical and modern thought, was the salient imaginary of a widely distributed rural life and work of innumerable tillers diligently tilling not for God but for self, family and nation. Like this, the earliest Jeffersonian utopian agrarian bifurcation distanced nature from dynamic citydwelling space of industry and commerce to safeguard rurality's virtue and ethics. A more virtuous rural life and work could thus serve as checks and balances—Jefferson's surer bet than government or God for likewise purifying a burgeoning new nation. An ever more strictly fixated idea(l) of the rural as the inert, virtuous and noble opposite closer to nature than the citydwelling space of industry and commerce emerges through space-time. Rurality, separated like this, loses time, eventually becoming, through a long network of American agrarianism(s) through time, a nostalgic retreat from a more dynamic urban space of industry and commerce.

However, modern American agrarianism's imaginary of purification and/ or *taming* of the dynamism of space and place—what was always already happening in the co-eval material world of the new nation—never actually *worked*, as it were, anymore in the rest of the world than it did in the early years of the Republic. The modern imaginary never *actually* purifies national hybridity of the social and natural, city and rural, forces and significations. Really, what was

always already happening in the co-eval material world of the new nation was progressive land development policy and eventual westward expansion (Douglas p. ix) which was requiring the agricultural sector—if it were to widely distribute the land mass and not keep any land, or thinking, in common—to take land *by any means necessary*, even if that meant the total implication of the forces of sociality otherwise discursively severed in agrarian discourse: genocide, patriarchy, industry and commerciality. Though agrarianism imagined that rurality, nature and tillers were at odds with social vices, processes and relations, the material reality of agriculture of this time can be far more accurately characterized as a mixed material-discursive landscape, or citydwelling and rural hybrid, of industry, commerce, international politics, virtues, independence, God and even war by the end of the colonial era. The modern American agrarian idea(l) purified this reality and proliferated an agrarian superpower on the world stage.

The Work of Purification Doesn't Actually Work

All told, *The Work of Purification* doesn't actually *work*; or, in the words of Latour, *we have never been modern*. In my application, modern American agrarianism(s), as a *Work of Purification*, attempts to tame the world through its endless shuttling between extremist, absolutist poles of society and nature. This last to-and-fro does indeed purify the world of society and nature, or social natural, hybrids, but only in terms of their representation. Like this, modern American agrarian *Work of Purification* of nature, and/ or of rural life and work of social trajectories really did nothing more than tame, which is to say, reduce and deny, in terms of the Latour model, the *Work of Translation down below*, being: a heavy *proliferation* of society and nature, or *social natural*, space and place, hybrids, of transcendence (a little God, government and/ or nature) and immanence (subjective man), materially expressed as an assembled material-

discursive landscape of plantations, virtue, smallholders, vice, native populations, industry and commerce.

Looking closer now at Latour's lower half modeled *Work of Translation*, it is important to understand, first, that this is not a different, opposed, or premodern space to unplug or retreat from the above *Work of Purification*. Rather, the way the model depicts modernity is that there is no closed notion of historical premodern, natures and cultures³⁵ somehow dichotomized from the upper half. Actually, Latour calls-out the demarcations of an(y) age, be it modern, or even postmodern, as the, 1) (false) triumph of categorization/ segmentation of (premodern) systems of knowledge—the invention of 'man' as subject of scientific power-knowledge; and the, 2) (true) failure of responding to those: naturalization, sociologization, and deconstruction (p. 3-5). Instead, and through additional relational geographical perspectives, the *Work of Translation* should be conceived of as an *amodern* perspective—a (re)vision, of the same space-time of society and nature in the modern imaginary. The *Work of Translation* is *interinfluential* of the *Work of Purification*, endlessly (re)constituting through said modern bifurcation inasmuch as it represents the endless proliferation of *social nature*, humans and nonhumans, collectives.

The point here is that the *Work of Translation* is a network imaginary of *relational* space and place. Space and place are dynamic co-constitutive c/si(gh)tes, inextricably and endlessly interrelated *in the making* of space-time. The *Work of Translation*, a change in vision, *from below* releases a modern world imprisoned in categorical enclosures; or, in the words of Donna Haraway (1991), *forces* bifurcated enclosures of society and nature, political and technical, human and nonhuman, unreal and real, unnatural and natural, and so forth to *implode* “into

³⁵ It is important to note that Latour (1993) is not advocating for *relativism per se*. He contends that the dichotomies of the *Work of Purification* have *never been* separated conceptualizations which can therefore be synthesized via *relativism*. See, *We Have Never Been Modern*.

materialized figurations that can only be *called life as it is really lived*” (my emphasis; p. 97).³⁶

Relational, or post-structuralist, formulations of space and place are geographies of such (re)vision, moreover critical analyses of how we see the world of human and nonhuman assemblages, i.e., , the social nature interface.

Whilst the *Work of Purification* asserts that space and place are more or less *permanent boxes* of inalterable meanings, rendering *place unaffected* by longer spatial trajectories through time, we can see in the *Work of Translation* that it is impossible to tell where society and nature, space and place, begin and end in terms of time blocks, scales and/ or other demarcations explored previously as the modern geographical imaginary. Post-structuralist geographies imagine space and place as translating one another in an intrainfluential, co-constitutive relation that is what Massey (2005) calls an *open process* (p. 105). Meaning, space and place continually remake each other on an everyday basis, continually (re)constituting through their various *interrelations*. Relational perspectives see spatial formations as more like *territorializations*, with varying degrees of power-knowledge and durability through time (also drawn from Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). The open, processual and relational territorialization of space and place via multiple social, natural and other spatial trajectories through time would mean that some spatial formations become more permanent than others. Some spatial relations can actually appear transient, while nevertheless simultaneously translating spatialized social and otherwise forces. All told, relational geographical perspectives argue that spatial territorializations are *continually* shifting and transforming given the interinfluences of various space-time and place trajectories. The latter means that any given spatial assemblage of society and nature, human and nonhuman, is open and becoming, or no more or less than its situatedness as a hook-up of multiscalar

³⁶ This phrase is used to indicate *situated* or *relational* approaches to *social nature* relations.

trajectories and only like this taking more or less durable shapes, i.e., a continual, relational process, thus *(re)territorialization*. Such relational understanding of (re)territorialization is perhaps best described in terms of *place*.

Relational *Work of Translation* imagines *place* as far more than some kind of *dialectical* opposite of space and time, or an immutable territorialization of nostalgia, tradition, history, or home. Massey's (1994; 2005) work disputes a nostalgic dialectical fixing of place as a "home" with a long, internalized history, set to complement a dynamic spatial *world*. Instead, place is imagined as a dynamic, co-constitutive force, what she demarcates as a "porous network" (1994, p. 187) of a whole host of spatialized social, political, and economic relations which, through time, endlessly (re)create place as the "lived reality of our daily lives" (1994, p. 187)—again, Donna Haraway's term, *life as it is really lived*. Place is a *c/si(gh)te* of chance meetings, accidental juxtapositions, or "throwntogetherness" (Massey, 2005, p. 149-162) of *multiple* spatialized trajectories which are continually interpreted, translated and assembled through *place-based* meanings and significations, including those formations of history, tradition, community, home and identity. Therefore within a nexus of spatial trajectories of trade, commerce, and culture, *place* is always transforming and transformative of *space*—the processes through which communities and individuals construct meanings, values, identities, and so forth, i.e., a *sense of place*. Altogether, as Massey deftly argues, place is simultaneously as shaped by, and co-constitutive of, dispersed spatialized social relations, globalization paradigms, politics, economics, history, culture, development strategies, and nonhuman ecology (p. 121) as it is through personal performances of family, gender, race, class and so many more so forth.

Imperative here is the concept of *place-basedness*. If place is co-constitutive and in-the-making, contesting and shaping as it is shaped by a dynamic space-time, then place is more

*outward*looking to the world than *backward*looking to an internally coherent history and consequently nostalgic home or retreat from spatial trajectories (Massey, 2005, p. 58-59). Each of these conceptualizations restores vibrancy to *place* locked in a modern geographical imaginary as an inert opposite only *backward*looking to stable, predetermined meanings and significations. Whereas modern geographies of purification would set place configurations, including community, traditions, or even gender, race and so forth identities, as defensibly stable, or *fixed*, identities which always maintain the same power and coherence through space and time, i.e., *place-bound*, relational perspectives revision place, instead, as *basing*—not *binding*—this sundry set of community and more personal performances of traditions, histories, identities. Place-based identities are *at once* embodied *and* in process, open, continually translated *through* hook-ups of space and place. Therefore, *place-basedness* is not an argument for limitless particularizing of identities; or that power is evenly distributed. Rather, various place-based significations and identities do not close-off at moments of ascription, or consent. Identities are *always already*³⁷ destabilized by spatialized social relations, which are always *in the making*, thereby explicable as *both* based and flowing. Their power is differentiated through one spatialized social and nature interrelation to the next—what Massey (1994) calls a *power geometry* through which place-based aspects are performed and understood. In this way, place is

³⁷ This italicized version of the phrase, *always already*, is deployed here, and will reappear throughout the project as such, via a relational geographical lens to merely indicate how any extant, or pure, structure or presence, like *identity*, is *also* already inhabited by other traces or tracks of forces and trajectories which are *not* preexisting, predetermined or essential to or in the present/ structure, i.e., referent of/ to but not present, thus an *absent present*. Moreover, any spatial formation, including *identity*, cannot be known *prior* to its situatedness; that any spatial formation, including identity, is continually re-constituted through, and co-constitutive of, various hook-ups of spatial trajectories. In these ways, spatial territorializations are *always already* inhabited by traces of spatial trajectories, rather, are re-constituted through their situatedness; and spatial territorializations continually re-constitute through their continuing situatedness with/in spatialized social natural relations (drawn from Spivak in a different context, see *Translator's Preface to Of Grammatology*, p. lxix).

liberated from its prison of dialectical opposition: it's not such a safe *retreat* after all. Place is inextricably, endlessly shaped by and shaping spatial trajectories as diverse and in process as global politics, regional governance; even personal performance and biology.

Another way to think about such relational proposals here is Donna Haraway's (1991)³⁸ *situated knowledges* theorization, which in many ways speaks to the *relational* insights of Massey (1994; 2005)—specifically on imagining relational landscapes beyond scalar distribution; that these categorical boundaries of society and nature, space-time and place, have no essence that can be known prior to their assemblage: they are always already thus thoroughly breached, or *fluid*. Every *situated knowledge* is a *(re)vision*, or a social natural assemblage of space-time and place trajectories of geographical *sites*, human *sights* and discursive *cites* [presented heretofore, i.e., (re)c/sigh)te, drawn from Haraway, (1991; 1997); Thrift (1997; 1999; 2000); and Rose (1997a; 1997b)]. *Reflexivity* is a tool, a *steering mechanism*, for such (re)c/si(gh)tation; for *(re)visioning* our geographical imaginaries, or how we think about space-time and place, and how these categories relate. Of course, not all reflexivity is created equally,³⁹ with some forms even working to reify the modern bifurcated categories that

³⁸ Not commonly thought of as a key thinker on space-time and place, nonetheless Donna Haraway (1991; 1992; 1997), in tracing the gendered roots of science in culture, from diverse perspectives, provides pertinent geographical theorization of feminism, science and/of knowledge production, technology, nature and culture. Her work has shaped many disciplines, most notably post-structuralist geography and its focus on the society/nature dualism.

³⁹ Examining *reflexivity* in-depth is largely outside the time and scope of this project, for it is as important as it is complex. *Reflexivity* is also a contentious topic. And, various writers on this are brought to mind here, including *structuration* theorization of Giddens (1984). But well beyond his classic argument, relational human geographer Rose (1997a; 1997b) shows that *ways of seeing*, or *vision*, via technologies of *reflexivities*, range *widely* and are not all created equally—which connects to Haraway's (1991) work as well. A more *diffractional* form of reflexivity, which is a *relational* approach to space and place than other forms, in many ways

(re)vision attempts to confront in the first instance. A more post-structuralist geographical conception of performative or *diffractional reflexivity* can (re)vision society and nature dichotomies as only *permanently partial*, or contingent, *situated knowledges*. Haraway's (re)vision of dialectical syntheses here challenges empirical objectivity, i.e., how we *see* and (re)produce the world.

What the foregoing relational perspectives of space and place illuminate thus of the Latourian model's lower half *Work of Translation* is that where space and place start and stop, or their scale, is situated—an open process of (re)territorialization. In these perspectives, scales have social meanings, but that doesn't portend they are predetermined, predefined or set (also Marston, 2000). Some kind of power struggle among imagined nested scales of the urban versus the rural, or later, global versus scales of the local, for instance, are merely structuralist perspectives of what is by far a more dynamic, spatialized world continually negotiating, translating and assembling a whole host of social and natural trajectories, and coordinate entities and meanings which are irreducible to scalar demarcations. Altogether, we can understand the *Work of Translation* as rendering scalar boundaries as imaginary modern boundaries, as imaginary as those between society and nature, subjects and objects. Since all of these are situated, partial, noninnocent knowledges, their boundaries remain, in the words of Haraway (1991), continuing *projects*.⁴⁰ Of course, these imaginaries command great power-knowledge in

indicates work by Judith Butler (1997), too, specifically her "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution." For the most part, I draw from Haraway for my formulations in-text.

⁴⁰ On the *situatedness* of power-knowledge, in terms of *post positivist* deconstruction of objectivity in the sciences, feminist geographer Rose (1997a) clarifies, "to deny this marking is to make false claims to universally applicable knowledge which subjugate other knowledges and their producers. Both [Harding and Haraway] prefer knowledges that are limited, specific and partial" (p. 307).

the world. Still, abstract and concrete, theory and practice, human and nonhuman (also Gerber, 1997) all boundaries are situated. They must be negotiated in *assemblage*.

(Re)visioning the *Work of Translation* down below as *always already* escaping from the *Work of Purification* above, brings to life a *nonmodern* imaginary ever mindful of post-structuralist geographies, like Massey's relational space and place; and Haraway's *situated knowledges*. Still, a *nonmodern* imaginary is precisely Latour's (1993; 2004) own *actor-network* (re)vision of modernity,⁴¹ told through the length, not scale, of situated collectives, or assemblages of human and nonhuman *actants*—what he further delimits as *quasi-objects*.

Network thinking is quite similar to relational human geography in that each imaginary challenges landscapes as scalar distributions of hierarchies, or up/down enclosures. Instead, network imaginaries (re)vision humans, nonhumans, including nonmachine nonhumans, as dispersed, (re)territorializing as *collectives of allied* (not reducible to the other) human and nonhuman actants. Thus, any story of networked collectives of actants—the way through which space-time and place endlessly take shape—is told through length, not distributed nested scales, sizes, or distances. As lengths thus, networks would always be a two-way flow lacking start and stop points of scales, time(s) (like premodern, modern, and postmodern); and linear billiard ball, or core-to-margin movements. Altogether then, the *Work of Translation* means scales and times interinterpret, co-constitute, each other—in effect, spiraling together (p. 75). Some network

⁴¹ *Toward Cornotology* is not a specified *actor-network theory* project in any stretch of the imagination. See Jonathan Murdoch's (2006), *Post-Structuralist Geography* for an example of the latter in terms of the *slow food movement* in Europe. Anyway, it is noted that "actor-network theory" is phraseology Latour has since dropped since it weds his theorizations to representational theories, or *metatheory/metanarrative*. Instead, he writes that his approach is best described as an irreducible *infralanguage* (what he sees *all* language to be) of routes, network topologies, associationalities, and so forth, otherwise rendered invisible through purification.

curves (time periods, history) are closer (regardless of however many centuries past) at any given moment of hook-up; and one society circle would fail to hit, in a linear, causal way through time, another nature circle and (re)produce an event. In terms of networks' length instead of scales and billiard balls, Latour summates "'local' and 'global' work well for surfaces and geometry, but not for networks and topology" (p. 119). We can apply such thinking to rural and urban as well.

In every situated assemblage of society and nature, space and place, the trajectories, or competencies, of any given human and nonhuman actant are *intertransferred within* the collectives, which, in terms of geography, would mean various spatialized trajectories *intertransfer* competencies with place-based understandings of community, home and even self identity. Some of these competencies might be more durable through time, like national development paradigms or a sense of community tradition, whilst others are emergent and transient. Such essences or *permanences*, with/in Latour's nonmodern proposals (themselves far and away beyond any socialism and naturalism theorizations otherwise proposed), are *always already* mediated and translated through the continuing assemblage of networked actants. For Latour, all immanence is continually (re)defining, (re)presenting through human and nonhuman interrelations. Meaning, there can be no reducible essences known prior (p. 128) to the assemblage. And that is the main point here: the *Work of Translation* should be thought of as a collective, or assemblage, of human and nonhuman actants which, situated, continually translate, mediate and articulate. Latour calls such assembled *social natural* actant hybrids, *quasi-objects*.

Latour's *quasi-object* terminology calls out how unaccountable works of semiotics, social theory, and dialectics, among others, have been in continually positioning objects to be either *empty*, and thus receptacles into which all meaning is passively dumped (social science); or so

full of agency that they control and overpower all others, i.e., through consumerism (various reifications). Objects are either always too weak or too strong for a society which is characterized then in the same way: in terms of the shifting strength of the object (p. 52-53). Therefore, Latour's *quasi-objects* are no more *arbitrary receptacles* than they are simple *intermediaries*, or *passive* conductors merely accumulating layers⁴² for or through dialectal syntheses. In this way, quasi-objects are not merely *reacting to causes*, either. They always *(re)territorialize* through the processes of mediation and translation. The *intertransference*, mediation and translation of competencies of *lively quasi-objects* comprise what Latour calls the *infralanguage* of an endless and relational process of assemblages. Quasi-objects are nothing more or less than *always already in-between* the *(re)territorialization* of *social natural* assemblages—the *weaving of morphisms*. In a play of modern oppositions by Latour, *quasi-objects* are *real as nature, narrated as discourse, collective as society, existential as being social natural* actants (p. 55). In this way, quasi-objects can be thought of as what Haraway delimits as *cyborgs*, or *monsters*. Haraway's cyborg metaphor⁴³ can be seen to speak to relational human and nonhuman, material and semiotic meetings; to such quasi-objects. Quasi-objects, and ever in accordance with the work of Serres (2007), quasi-subjects (in Latour, 1993, p. 51), of the *Work of Translation* are hybrids of society and nature; and proliferate just outside of the *Work of Purification*... rather, just outside of control.

⁴² I want to reiterate here that Latour's *quasi-objects* are not passive reductions to human subjectivities, but *actants* of the assemblage, and in that situatedness, possess some form of what Haraway (1997) calls through *situated knowledge* theorization, *agential realism*. As Serres (2007) notes as well, *intersubjectivity* comes through quasi-objects, for they translate/mediate and *mark as they are marked by quasi-subject* relations. *Quasi-objects* are actants, *active* in a fuller, *nonmodern* democracy—but in modernity, are *underrepresented*.

⁴³ See Haraway's now classic 1991 work for *cyborg* theorization. The *permanent partiality* of the *cyborg* is really a political metaphor that is in no way exactly *the same* as the quasi-object.

All modern *Work of Purification* attempts to split an assemblage of worlds, and like this does more to accelerate quasi-object proliferation than provide what Latour sees as cadence, or *accountability*—what he delimits as, a “parliament of things” (p. 138-145), or a fuller *democracy* of people and things (or, *perishable things*) which can provide necessary *representation* of quasi-objects. Undeniably, the many ways of such hybridity are complex. Exploring, explaining the intratransference of space and place competencies will always be, in substantial ways, *outside of control*—meaning, always in the making, unknowable and thus unknowably *dangerous* (p. 318-319). Ever in the line of Massey, Haraway, and even Castree and Braun’s (2001) text, *Social Nature: Theory, Practice, and Politics*, the social nature breach and assemblages of human and nonhuman actants, quasi-objects or monsters will always be in the making, an *open story-so-far* (Massey, 2005)—even dangerous social-natural boundary projects. But, as Latour sees it, instead of purifying the at times threatening monsters, we should commence our analyses with quasi-objects so that we may, eventually, “slow down, reorient and *regulate the proliferation of monsters* by representing their existence officially” (*my emphasis*; p. 12). We must *move toward*, or *confront*, these assemblages in our imaginaries; in our analyses, through a *Nonmodern Constitution* (p. 12).

More or less, a *Nonmodern Constitution* is what post-structuralist geographer Jonathan Murdoch (2006) calls an *eco-subjective* form of (re)vision accountable to “subjects *and objects* in ecological alignments” (*my emphasis*; p. 191). Murdoch argues here that since humans can categorize the natural world, though are ever enmeshed within heterogeneous relations of our natural world, we must be *responsible* for our ecological embeddedness and act in accordance with that embeddedness without denying the power of subject/ivity. Arguing that “humans hold reflexive capacities that set them apart in some way from other entities” (p. 191) in no way

suggests passivity or dispensability on the part of the nonhuman. Instead, eco-subjectivity is an “ecological steering mechanism” for how humans should be more accountable for their situatedness with/in “natures and societies, humans and nonhumans, knowledges and materials, singularities and multiplicities, territories and relations” (p. 198), which is to say, within a human-nonhuman assemblage.

A Cornotological Application

Having reviewed the central tenants of my *patchworked* theoretical geography approach to understanding the function of agrarianism(s) in a specifically American context through space-time, a few points of clarification on the application of, specifically, Donna Haraway’s and Bruno Latour’s work, is necessary here, first in terms of spatial contributions and/ or relational geography; and second in terms of my own project’s contentious foci.

Donna Haraway’s formulations have many orientations, but her works have also been widely reviewed and received as key thinking on space and place. Actually, in the context of current geography, her work can be thought of as powerfully shaping thinking on such negotiations of boundaries between those aspects attributed either sociality or nature. She offers relational human geography often pointed challenges to dualistic and ontological categorizations, particularly in terms of her *cyborg*, or hybrids of humans and technologies—what she often cites as *implosions* of dualisms carried through her later works (e.g., 1997) only with an even wider range of *nonhuman* actants’ negotiation of highly complex material-semiotic relationships and assemblages. Haraway’s contributions are considered and applied in the current project through the perspective of relational geography’s more general engagement with what economic and cultural geographer, Nigel Thrift (1996), for instance, calls “non-representational theory,” moreover, “simulated reconceptualizations of nature, culture, agency and ethical community”

(Holloway, 2004, p. 171). Holloway (2004) continues that, for Haraway, conventional, or simplified binary categorization of otherwise assembled actants must be transcended with analyses capable of confronting and naming the interpenetration of the social and natural, or what Haraway (1997) elsewhere calls a proliferation of “sticky threads,” i.e., “sticky economic, technical, political, organic, historical, mythic, and textual threads” (p. 68). Haraway argues that these last must be understood through the *implosion* of dualistic categories so that technoscience can be (re)visioned as a *heterogeneous and continual construction* implicative and co-constitutive of the social and natural, human and nonhuman (p. 68). The point here is that Haraway’s key insights have been extrapolated and applied in the field of relational geography toward likewise understanding of complex objects and representations which often also draw on discourses of globalization, biotechnoscience and so forth. Meaning, her thinking can be drawn upon to explore the active intrainfluence of human and nonhuman actants—in this case, for example, of human/ social agricultural practices and nonhuman/ nature, like commodity corn plants. Application of her contributions in the field of relational geography can similarly enlighten of the situatedness of entities as well as spatial formations, whose boundaries cannot be known prior to their negotiations—what Holloway analyzes as a “ethical community” (p. 171), which is to say, an ethics of *spatial emergence* shaped by (re)vision of diffractive reflexivity in lieu of an *aspatial morality* or representational, being more transparent, theory, of reflexivity (p. 171).

Overall, Haraway’s vision and imaginary of bifurcations of and boundaries between the social and natural, human and nonhuman, as well as that of biotechnoscience and culture, without reduction to or reliance upon preexisting, or representational, theorization or categorization, has been powerful and significant for relational geographers (Holloway, p. 172).

Castree and Braun (2001), for instance, draw liberally from Haraway in configuring theory, practice and politics of the *social-nature interface* in and for the field of geography today, gesturing toward much of her thinking by presenting many writers who challenge not only nature as an effect of discursive practices, but how society and nature as spatial formations have too often been divided in geographical thinking and talk through time. Too many works, they contend, have categorically cordoned-off the nonhuman world with particular distances and dimensions in an effort to not only *construct* nature to likewise particular ends, but usually for equally as specific social and ecological reasons and effects (p. xi). Essentially, it is through the post-structuralist lens of *the social nature interface*, and *far more* than some kind of *explicit* Haraway theorization of agricultural imaginaries or any other *topical* foci at hand (for instance, GE commodity corn production), that I also take-up much of her useful configurations and terminology to first explore popular geographical imaginaries and representations of US agriculture which can bifurcate society and nature, space and place, as the deeply meaningful distinctions of global and local; and to ultimately raise questions about the limitations of conventional, agrarian imaginaries and representations for guiding our performances through *sticky* twenty-first agricultural realities, incl., issues of naturalness, purity, risk and biotechnoscience...

The overarching ethic of the current project is that society and nature cannot be imagined or represented as existing *before* or outside of a situated negotiation, or complex assemblage, which is why a relational geographical perspective extrapolating from the works of Haraway on cyborgs and situated knowledges, as well as from Bruno Latour's infamous quasi-object assemblages, is most applicable here. Likewise, I am also applying much of Latour's thinking, terminology and even diagramming of culture and nature, human and nonhuman actants, as well

as their continual assemblage and intratransference, as it has been well and widely received, adapted and applied throughout post-structuralist, or relational, geography—including that of Castree and Braun’s (2001) *social natural interface* theorization. These authors see Latour’s work as set opposed ‘modern’ geographical thought, rather, the “nature-society dichotomy” (p. 211)—an applied usage that they believe excites conceptualization of *socionatural imbrications* (p. 211), being theorizations of culture and nature which Jonathan Murdoch (2006) likewise goes to great lengths to detail and maneuver through the lens of post-structuralist geography in his book of the same name, *Post-Structuralist Geography*. Chiefly, Latour’s work is vital for relational geographical delineation of spatial (re)territorializations of human and nonhuman actants through time beyond Euclidean concepts of space and time, moreover conventional, reductive binarisms.

In fact, Laurier (2004) argues that Latour’s work is crucial for relational geographical theorization of the *social-nature* assemblage to be more like a *democracy* of human and nonhuman quasi-object actants each and all *with the right to act* (p. 203). An extension of social agency, rights and obligations to quasi-objects, in the view of relational social nature theory, means that there fails to be a *wedge* between social action on one side and some kind of pure, natural order on the other. In such a conception, quasi-objects, or in the case of my project, plants and food/ products, fail to have some kind of categorical difference as those which are made (social) and those which are natural (nature). Instead, relational geographical analysis which applies Latourian precepts seeks to understand how the social and natural, much like that of *structure-agency*—a central problematic of much geographical thinking through space-time—are no more than (re)territorializing formations and actants of a continual negotiation ever more pronounced with every quasi-object emergence and proliferation that goes unrepresented.

Ostensibly, Latour's work, esp., *We Have Never Been Modern*, broadly overviewed above [and being the work that Laurier argues gained the theorist *his widest audience in geography* (p. 203)] has been so widely received and applied by a vast array of geographers because his assemblages encompass and represent all manner of *perishable things*, particularly those actants historically reduced in geography and mapmaking to dichotomous Euclidean spatializations of society and nature space-boxes (also Murdoch, 2006).

It is worth noting that the widespread acceptance of this particular, and often cited to be, *most polemical* Latour book (Laurier, 2004, p. 203) in relational geography—and to reiterate, the book from which I drew most of my own illuminations of the function of American agrarianism through space-time—does not mean to imply in turn that the theorist has not had to spend a considerable amount of time elsewhere responding to critiques. Mostly, by the turn of the current century, Latour continued on with his contention (e.g., 1999) that the act of not only driving a *wedge* between human and nonhuman worlds in the first place, but the theoretical and otherwise tools used to *glue them back together again*, i.e., 'empirical sensibility,' or what Latour sees as no more than 'political insensibility' (p. 127), continues to spatialize the natural world, and nonhumans, as 'out there' (p. 122-123). He summates, "No scrutiny of nature can be carried out if we first believe in nature as the obvious background of all our assumptions about it" (p. 128). This is a problem of vision—how we see—and in turn, to geographers, a problem of space, place, time, scale and so forth, all of which Latour gestures toward yet again in his later books (e.g., *Politics of Nature*, 2004) as *political* issues requiring the enactment of fuller democratic representation of *things*.

Which is to say, Latour (2004) continues on with his defense of the amodern, as well as his proposals for the end of the society and nature dichotomy, and proposes a new, collective

constitution that *carefully naturalizes, that is, socializes*, ‘external nature’ “right here... right inside the expanding collective” (p. 127). As follows, Latour articulates that quasi-objects must be more fully represented by a human and nonhuman collective; that nothing must be left of neither the *old metaphysics of nature* (p. 127) nor of “essences and identities” (p. 184): “it is time to house it [nature] finally in a civil way by building it a definitive dwelling place and offering it not the simple slogan of the early democracies—‘No taxation without representation’—but a riskier and more ambitious maxim—‘No reality without representation’” (p. 127). In Latour’s assemblage, the *Parliament of Things*, the differences that make a difference, relies less on essentialism, empiricism, absolute facts and distinctions from other value systems than the representation of quasi-objects, the capability of their absorption and the lessons drawn from their rejection. In such a collective thus, science is not a system of absolutes presented by outside experts, but instead *multinaturalism* (see p. 245), being, “a science conceived as ways of socializing nonhumans” (p. 235) that functions like a diplomacy, with flexible diplomats, open to experimentation and always lending themselves “to this work of negotiation” (p. 217), “which will determine whether *the sciences are at war or at peace*” (*my emphasis*; p. 235). Though often debated, Latour remains more or less consistent in his basic contentions about society and nature since *We Have Never Been Modern*—and has been all the more drawn from by relational geographers for it. His contributions will appear again throughout the project. Still, what is crucial here is that his propositions, as applied by relational geographers to explore the social-nature interface, enlighten my project of a guide not for thinking through my specific topical foci *per se* (though commodity corn is *most aptly* delimited as a quasi-object to be sure), but for moving from bifurcation *toward* quasi-object assemblages, where not just representation, but *in*

what way representation, absorption and rejection becomes the difference that makes a difference between, perhaps we could say, (food) *war and peace*?

As I arrive yet again to the American food wars—a veritable GE *cornscape* in rural Iowa—my exploration, interpretation and challenge to the most salient geographical imaginary of US agriculture today would not be possible without a relational geographical lens, and one that itself relies most assuredly on various extrapolation from application of these key theorists. Although I would argue that such application is not exactly indirect, or in a manner of speaking, *in the spirit* of these authors, it remains important to illuminate yet again that I am working these works as they have been (re)visioned through relational geographical theorization of the social-nature interface; and more so for what such exciting reconfigurations have and can reproduce in terms of our (re)vision of imaginaries and representations through space-time than for some kind of specific Harawayian or Latourian take on American agriculture and/ or genetic engineering in foodways. The latter, whilst necessitating clarification perhaps, is by no means uncommon when we consider that thinking about geography, so differentiated across the field as well as other disciplines through space-time, has *always* liberally pulled from multiple, often theoretical and philosophical thinkers and writers to discourse the world in terms of its spatialization, rather, its spatial organization, including binaries of society and nature, space and place, and also those of *spacing*, scales and distances. These last territorializations of course gather a whole host of loaded meanings through space-time, especially those in relation to imaginaries of the US food wars: the *global* conventional-industrial, paradigm, incl., biotechnoscience; and organics and food systems *localization*, for instance.

All told, navigating through the more or less specific texts of American agriculture requires less a *direct* application of theorists (whose works can often lack specific points of

analysis) than *further adaptation* of their thinking to perform a relational geographical analysis of a more or less specified mission and topic: to discourse the interinfluence of social nature as it appears in various imaginaries and representations of US agriculture; and to look toward representations, and building representations, which acknowledge interimplication *without wedges*, which is to say, that can *map* commodity corn plants as more social natural quasi-objects—actants—of vast and complex assemblages networking through various centuries and places of the American Republic.

That being said, as I will now show via various examples of American agrarianism(s) through space-time, the *Work of Translation eco-subjectivity* introduced above whilst appearing as an agrarian imaginary could not be more at odds with the modern American agrarianism(s) *Work of Purification*. Though taking many forms through space-time, the altogether American agrarianism(s) *Work of Purification* does much more to proliferate quasi-objects without proper representation down below than ever more eco-subjectively account for them...

Don't Fear the Mechanical Reaper?: Utopia, Retreat and Twelve Southerners

Even by the *Antebellum years* (~1815-1860), *the machine* was making its way through *the garden*.⁴⁴ Heavy industrialization and commercialization of US agriculture taken-up in the name of the originating Jeffersonian agrarian democracy had already begun to move the nation away from that very idea(l). Of course, much of the country remains oriented by and to agriculture, as farmers or landholders, with the agricultural economy in the forms of small farms and plantations alike continuing to produce much of the nation's wealth. But, the nineteenth

⁴⁴ I am referencing the foundational American Studies work by Leo Marx (1964), *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*. My project has far more divergences from than similarities with the Marx work, which should nevertheless still be referenced here. See Kuklick (1972) and Decker (1992a; 1992b) for some problems with the *myth-symbol-image* school of humanism which speak to said differences between Marx's and the current project's formulations.

century provides some strong examples of the American agrarian(s) *Work of Purification*. This last is mostly because, by that time, Jeffersonian agrarianism had been first actualized in policies which were, as Headlee's (1991), *The Political Economy of the Family Farm: The Agrarian roots of American Capitalism*, shows, were widely distributing land in a more less *egalitarian* way. But such *egalitarian* distribution was *progressive* as well. Distributing small family landowning farmers obviously required upgrades in (re)production to *maintain* the material-discursive idea(l) of distribution. This is how Headlee first cites the *alliance* of the *agrarian class structure* with *industrial capitalism*, rather, the markedly escalated adoption of mechanization by family farmers in order to maintain their smallholdings. The proliferating hybridity of industrial, commercial US agriculture even by the antebellum period would become a major force of the transition to capitalism. For now, the hybrid agricultural-industrial economy was (re)territorializing a likewise widely variegated, heavily hybridized and increasingly volatile landscape: greater mechanized and therefore commercial drivers toward surplus; and more clearly demarcated regions, with the American yeomanry, or middling middle family farmers, characterizing the North, increasing the shipping of increased grain production with the Erie Canal (completed ~1825); and the large-scale landed Old World *aristocratic* plantations typifying the South (Douglas, 1969; Hurt, 1994).

Since family farms were pressured to upgrade to maintain landholdings without being able to run at a loss, or restructure their labor pool of family, many were compelled to increase output through mechanization (Headlee, 1991, p. 5). One of the strongest examples of how farms could remain family-, not wage-labor, -based while capable of (over)producing cheap raw materials and products to maintain landholdings was the horse-drawn mechanical reaper of the ~1830s: one of the most vital agricultural innovations until World War One (WWI) (p. 5). The

latter spurred production without overtly impacting other aspects of the *family*-based agricultural paradigm, giving family farmers great incentives to adopt diffused innovations (p. 82-123). The latter set the stage for quick diffusion and adoption of agricultural technologies thereafter.

Actually, the shifting family farm structure for most of the 19th century thereafter finds almost total adoption of diffused technological innovations, which through time would allow for farm expansion, greater output (surplus) and market participation toward eventual (legendary) surplus without overly altering the family base with wage laborers (p. 37). Like this, opposed to it or not, family farms nevertheless served many of the requirements for heavy industrialization of the nation.

Granted, not all farms were the same. Differences between farms by size, technological capacity, economic gains and even cultural perspectives were becoming clearer through time. But, with the “‘one man, one farm’ consistently breeched” (p. 29), whether big or small, most family farms were becoming more like a “commercial unit” (Douglas, 1969, p. 57). Even at the medium commercial level, these farms could become wildly productive for industry because their family base lacked industry constraints (Headlee, 1991, p. 178). Eventually, agriculture could provide the cheap raw materials and products necessary for constituting domestic surplus as well as participation in the foreign export market—implicating an industrial capitalist *hybrid* of long-term goals and agrarian visions for nation-building; technologies, industries and commerciality; short-term profits, poverty and prosperity. If there ever was a more responsible stewardship to be discovered, by even the mid-nineteenth century American agriculture, the supposedly least industrial enterprise of our secular theology, being the rural family farm, had become pivotal for the growth of an industrial-corporate powerbroker on the world stage.

Really, the Jeffersonian agrarian utopia had set in motion *the machine* long before. As early as 1816, Jefferson was forced to modify his agrarian views a bit, professing that the manufacturer should be placed by the side of the agriculturalist (Fite, 1962, p. 1205). Various other pronouncements of the time indicated that material reality of the Republic was turning “boldly to urbanism and industrialism” (p. 38). *Agricultural fundamentalism* shifted focus to agricultural *economics*, with commercial land development objectives its main goals (Douglas, 1969; Hurt, 1994). Likewise, family farms were contending all the time with a great deal of larger speculators converging upon the frontier (Douglas, 1969; Fite, 1962). With larger, more mechanized and commercial farms, the status of agriculture as the most virtuous rural practice had been lowered in the minds of some people (Fite, 1964). However, modern American agrarianism(s) *Work of Purification* resurges in such space-times. For instance, while farmers were commercializing and industrializing their enterprises to stay afloat, contributing to the development of the nation in ways swiftly moving the country *away from* its founding agrarian idea(l)s, seventh president, Andrew Jackson (1829-1837), as well as other governmental leaders of the time, were publically reifying classical agrarianism(s). They did a much better job of repeating agrarian idea(l)s than countering the few claims to the contrary that farmers were the most “independent, content, useful, honorable, healthy” citizens, above all “possessing a greater love of man and God than citydwellers” (Fite, 1962, p. 1206); than addressing how to best regulate, whether in representation or federal policy, the *monster in the garden*. Essentially, the more removed from the founding agrarian imaginary of distributed rural citizens-of-nature, the more that imaginary was brought to bear on the urban commercial and industrial development necessary to secure and expand a newly independent Republic *as a* Republic of distributed rural

smallholders in the first place. Proliferates thus are some interesting modern American agrarianism(s) imaginaries; and more or less terrifying quasi-objects.

Southern Aristocratic Agrarianism

By the time of the American Civil War, perhaps the *strongest* modern agrarian voices are those which American agriculture-agrarianism history would rather leave in the Old World whence they came. Obviously, the rice and tobacco based brutish Southern US slavery plantation and sharecropping system dating back to the Virginian and New England colonies of the 17th century could not have more obviously contrasted any agrarian democratic vision of widely disbursed landholdings. Not to mention, by the time of the Civil War, aristocratic agrarians of the Southern plantations were controlling the federal government, including Congress and legislation, through landholdings made ever larger because they did not have the constraints of a family base—they could resist adoption of nonhuman mechanization. Great estates, implicating republican control and plenty of human labor with no incentives to engage the Northern agrarian vision of widely distributed farming citizenry (Douglas, 1969; Headlee 1991; Hurt, 1994) had to be disbanded.

The more romantic, New World version of aristocratic agrarianism imagined, not unlike Jefferson's vision, anyway, that the farmer was the lifeblood of human civilization, the body politic, whose freedom, patriotism and virtue opposed industrialization; and could purify the degenerate citydwellers (Fite, 1962). The difference between idea(l)s, of course, comes in that aristocratic agrarians thought farmers should mean Southern aristocratic plantation owners. They remained both suspicious of Northern hybridity, also called democracy; and angry at fellow Virginian planter elite, slave owner (at least before reconsidering the institution through his later life, even supporting the *Transatlantic Slave trade Ban* in 1808) and first president to propose

Indian Removal, Jefferson's democratic agrarian utopian formulation that had become quite political and industrial after all. Actually, they thought his supposedly agrarian democracy was *wholly* political, and like this threatening their (Old) world worn traditions (Montmarquet, 1989). In this modern American agrarianism(s) imaginary, such *gentry* places, with traditions, identities and inalienable rights, were *place-bound* to the South and against the North. Their tyrannies were seen to be preferable to those of the central federal authority, or worse yet, some sort of democratic majority where most of the middling middle farmers wanted, or so the southerner agrarians believed, nothing more than complete industrialization and market participation (p. 55). If Jeffersonian *Work of Purification* unleashed the quasi-objects of agriculture and industry—the nascent beginnings of a capitalist system rooted not in an opposed sociality, but in a social natural hybrid—then this Southern *place* was a timeless *retreat* into long-term traditions, provisioning stability and virtue no matter what terrifying hybrids of human and nonhuman it was also proliferating all the while, i.e., human slavery. Incalculable social-cultural, civil/human rights violations were not seen by the southerners, and/or seen as only a landed right far less terrifying than what distributed democracy would take.

In most ways, the Civil War dismantled (legalized) slavery in the US much like the phasing out of feudalism unbound the serfdoms the New World. However, inasmuch as it was fought over anything else, the Civil War can also be imagined as a conflict fought over the *meaning of modernity*, rather, over Old and New World agrarian visions. *Both* American agrarianism(s) *Work of Purification*, whether forwarding that more virtuous life and work in rural nature (Northern yeomanry) should be separated sociality, or that a God given right to nature should also be separated from the trajectories of sociality (Southern plantations),

regardless proliferated social natural hybrids—a proliferation which escalates without the truly terrifying fetters of the *Great Estates*.

Indeed, by the end of the century, the government had established the *Department of Agriculture* to better facilitate the continuing transformation of now greater allotments of the rural countryside through land distribution policies, university based researches, and extension services for the diffusion of such advances (Hurt, 1994; Douglas). These last allowed for farmers, massively migrating to the US Midwest, for instance, to begin shifting production into easily producible, storable, portable and thus surplus-ready grains. With the western prairies and Great Plains to be all but settled, the predominant urban-rural US agricultural hybrid model *for all time* was coming into fruition (Hurt, 1994; Douglas).

The Grange

Ever in interface with such massive shifts of agriculture, (re)territorializing hybrids which could appear quite chaotic and terrifying on the rural countryside by end of the nineteenth century, other American agrarianism(s) *Work of Purification* also seek to unplug, or look back to tradition and stability than outward to social natural human-nonhuman machines. Though for different reasons than the Southern aristocrats, the *Work of Purification* is comparable. Meaning, when outside, associated to be urban, trajectories, are seen to be threatening the place of the rural family farm, its place is reified as a retreat. This last is how we can understand another example of American agrarianism(s) of a comparable space-time, though in the Northeastern US. NE farmers can be seen as the American yeoman/ry having conquered Southern tyranny in defense of their own place. Such resistance continues for many NE farmers following the war, only then against the increasing industrialization and commercialization of their distributed agrarian utopias. NE farmers were not simply compliant assenters to the industrial-capitalist trajectories

that were becoming necessary to maintain their operations (Summerhill, 2005, p. 2-3).⁴⁵

Essentially, the preeminent concern of many US family farmers (re)positioned in this space-time was not how to revel in their short-term profit built prosperity, but how to manage the operational and familial stress of maintaining their distributed allotments, which is to say, working-out how to sustain and increase landholdings, thus balance debt, without destroying, through debt and necessary intensification in commercialization and industrialization the family farm and its domestic ordering upon which their operations were based; upon which the spirit of the agrarian democracy entire was based. A more virtuous and noble work in nature had to be purified, in fact, moved so *out there* as to be removed from those very forces of industrialization and commercialization the yeoman/ry continued to take-up all the while.

Ostensibly, the demands of NE farming and landownership (here in the case of hops production) necessitated a mixed-crop farm strategy, which meant an as mixed-gender family labor strategy on many farms. The latter was both seen to ensure prosperity in a shifting economic climate, as well as something to be reviled for transforming the domestic order. Like this, the traditional domestic order of the family farm already under strain by an industry competing for workers from the rural countryside, lead to the real set of concerns about the intermixing of urban and rural forces: strains and changes in marriages and families, threatening

⁴⁵ Agrarian responses of this time and geography are, obviously, highly contrasted the *aristocratic* tradition of the US South. In the NE US, farmers had to meet the federal policy, judicial, and political-economic driven demands by far and away more industrial system by the end of the century. I offer a very brief overview of *The Grange* whilst refusing to essentialize the context or movement to economic history. Too many variables of region, tradition, production, war, religion, racism and agrarian values mixing Jeffersonian ideals with a new family order are involved in even this one *moment* of hook-up to merely credit a *class struggle*. For much more on this and other aspects, see any number of works presented heretofore, incl. Douglas, Hurt; as well as Summerhill's (2005), *Harvest of Dissent: Agrarianism in Nineteenth-Century New York*.

in turn traditional farm and household labor configurations. As many saw it, this last was reason *enough* to purify their family farms of urban trajectories, not to mention the credit and debt issues accumulating as well (Summerhill, 2005). Although it had always been difficult for farmers to unite around a singular address of their grievances given geography, geography oriented difference in operations, and geography oriented difference in opinion about industrialization and commercialization, many sought to organize nonetheless around these issues in a “kind of frantic defense of agriculture and the purported virtues of farm life” (Fite, 1969, p. 1211).

One of the first predominant social organizations bringing together US farmers after the Civil War was called, *The National Grange of the Order of Patrons of Husbandry*, or *the Grange*. *The Grange* served as a “cultural, educational, social, and, on local levels, an economic alliance of farmers” (Montmarquet, 1989, p. 228), a place where family farmers could come together to redress what many saw as an affront to their political, economic, and social well-being. Rarely studied for its effects outside of the Midwest, many assume that from its inception, the *Grange Movement* was a secretive Greek and Roman society of abstruse rituals and/ or meant to serve only large-scale farmers (p. 194-95). Again, *Grangers*, particularly in the NE US, were deeply connected to the market, but more or less imagined this last as a greater threat to their republican agrarian goals and family farm structure than an absolute good. That’s why the Grange brought the whole farm family together with others under comparable strains to address issues and share information on topics about rural life and work, like establishing free rural mail delivery, regulatory rates at grain elevators, and better cropping strategies. Discussions could also address proper gender roles, parenting and temperance—another *terrifying* aspect of citydwelling life intruding upon their rural smallholdings. Though

organizing something of a third-party contention along the way, the *Granger* legacy has far less to do with a formal agrarian electoral insurgency than with multiple efforts to preserve a conservative and traditional rural family farmholding of coordinate gender life and work complementarities—the real “republican virtue” (p. 216) they saw to be “the foundation of America’s social and political well-being” (p. 216). All told, some kind of resistance to the forces they believed were newly intruding upon their smallholdings was as conservative and traditional as their rural, white, protestant perspective of the family farm and home, its operational spheres gendered feminine and masculine, respectively.

The Granger *Work of Purification* was more like a tightening of rural order in the face of corporate expansion, political corruption, as well migrant/ immigrant agricultural labor paradigm that expanded along with it. Summerhill (2005) concludes that, although “deeply involved with the market and equally troubled by its implications, Grangers did their best to strip away the worst features of the capitalist system and secure space within if *for the family farm to succeed as the economic and social foundation of rural life*” (my emphasis; p. 219). They believed that a more strictly delimited rural life and work would “protect them from the forces that they identified as the most dangerous to their livelihoods” (p. 219) since *politics* alone could, or would, not, cadence the economic vacillations they saw as corrupting their rural values, and were even contributing to them. Nonelectoral strategies, again focused on purifying the family farm of the trajectories and techniques which they continued to take-up regardless toward securing their family farms, seemed like the obvious option for adequate representation.

Albeit the *Grange* would command some influence on national politics and laws at various times, even forwarding many idea(l)s that would inculcate and shape many *populist* and *progressive* era initiatives, altogether their efforts remained particularly of and for their

(re)creation of some kind of local order in and of the countryside—for the reduction of hybrid complexity to simplified boxes of bifurcated meaning (or *world-as-exhibition*), like to rural and urban, their farms then being the most local rurality... thus, a *purification* of hybridity. These and likened efforts of the constellation of factors at the time were limited, conservative, racist, nationalist—less violent than slavery though perhaps no more so in its tyranny and rather tyrannical reduction of coeval multiplicity to a bifurcation of urban and rural, rendering the latter thus a more manageable place-bound sphere of meaning where virtuosity is discoverable through the life and work of the particularly ordered family farm with/in nature. A safer and purer retreat somehow untouched by larger forces meant that the *power geometry* of, especially, the farm(ing) women, expected to carry-out innumerable tasks of the domestic home and farm operation toward maintaining that traditional order amidst the larger changes situating that family farming paradigm in the first place, would be denied. What is provisioned for confronting such power geometries is perhaps local order, but really a more backwardlooking, place-bound nonelectoral politics—what can be understood in many ways as a nascent form of more *unreflexive local/ism* evident today.

Transcendentalism

Even taking the *Grange* into consideration, still no American agrarianism(s) of this particular space-time more greatly distanciates nature from sociality than romantic agrarianism. Granted, the medium had come a long way since the classical pastoral form given the ~late 18th century work of, for instance, William Wordsworth's (1789) *Lyrical Ballads* (in Montmarquet, 1989). But certainly in gestures to Wordsworth's sentiments, transcendentalism, an intellectual and literary movement of American writers who likewise deliberated on the seemingly insignificant details of everyday life, particularly on rural life and work, forwarded that there

exists a spiritual state that “transcends” material conditions, mostly recognized through one’s relationship to *nature*. In this view, society and its institutions, including organized religion and political parties, can corrupt the purity of individuals—beliefs shared by the *Grangers* as well. Transcendental principles are seen not to be based upon or falsifiable by sensuous experience, but derived from the inner spiritual or mental essence of the human and nature. A nature-based spirituality, or intuition, instead of religion, can transcend the especially industrial momentum of the material reality of the time. Given the particular space-time, transcendentalism moves nature even further *out there*, meaning, further separated from, urban industrial realities, thereby provisioning necessary virtue lost in other spheres of life; a place of retreat from urbanity, industrialism; and/or a place for immanent, social-personal rebirth.

The writers Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau are inarguably the most famous among those who could be organized by transcendentalism. Yet, their writings present two differentiated views on nature which remain critical components of American agrarianism(s) for all time. Whilst interconnected, Jager (2004) sees Emerson as a Jeffersonian-like idealist who found virtue in *everything* (p. 17), especially in the American woodlot—a spiritual *promise* for America (p. 21). Emerson proffers a kind of BIG spirituality, or really any, spirituality, garnering greater intuition from *above the fray*. Like this, argues Montmarquet, in Emerson, “the *agrarian idea* of the *special* character of farming is overcome in the general rout of Nature and Spirit” (*my emphasis*; p. 225). To be sure, Emerson did *exalt* farming above all others, though in a fantastical way that has very little to do with agriculture after all, writing that farming has “in all eyes its ancient charm, as standing nearest to God, the first cause” (in Fite, 1962, p. 1204). Overall, however, nature is just so *out there* to be *everywhere* a teacher, a sustainer of life—an idea(l) for spiritual rebirth.

Thoreau's transcendental views are like a contrastable *small* spirituality, gathering its intuitions *with/in the fray*. This last is what Jager (2004) credits Thoreau's darker pessimistic take on farming he may not have participated in a real way, either, but observed around him in the material world (p. 23). Essentially, argues Montmarquet (1989), Thoreau does not find virtue to be *self-evident* in the tiller. It must be *cultivated*, like the soil—an experiential farming for livelihood. Cultivation of virtue could come through confronting and experiencing nature as a part of the larger social experience; through physical and spiritual farming in the context of the urban-rural complex (p. 226). In this way, Thoreau's works hybridize the social and natural in a sense of self in the world more than Emerson's only superficially interconnected *chain of being* because they acknowledge at once immanent reality interconnected with that transcendent nature. To be sure, Thoreau more complexly locates transcendence in the rural cabin, signifying an escape from society, freedom from restriction, and a sense of plenty.

There are many points to interrelate about these mid-to late nineteenth examples of the American agrarian *Work of Purification*, moving from the Southern aristocrats (romantic) to the Grange (yeoman/ry) and transcendentalism (romantic). For example, Montmarquet (1989) usefully interconnects the *Granger* movement with popular romantic transcendental views. Sure, Montmarquet (1989) notes, both transcendental writers “enjoyed a social and an economic stability which contrasts sharply with the lot of the American farmer in the decades following the civil war” (p. 227). Still, like the *Grangers*, each writer more or less attempts to (re)vision the changing landscape of their context, how it differed from agrarian dreams, and what nature/ rural life and work could even mean on the transforming landscape: a place of retreat, intuition, and freedom both ‘above’ and in the path of dramatic transformations of long-term nation-building to short-term profits. The point is, whether nature or rural family farm, or both as rural life and

work with/in nature, the discursive counterpoint of the dynamic times was furthered to be a distanced, rural, inherently thus more natural, place—whether a retreat into nature for enlightenment, freedom from restriction or cultivation of virtue; or a retreat into a place-bound family farm, signifying the safety and purity of a long internal history and the domestic order discursively severed from all other trajectories co-constituting it all the while. Already, these various American agrarianism(s) *Work of Purification* failed to provision a cadence of a terrifying urban-natural(ized) agri-monster.

Twelve Southerners

Through the space-time connecting *Grangers* to twelve (poetically) enraged writers of the most turbulent region of the *New Deal* era, the material US agricultural landscape undergoes profound transformations.... certainly not halted by any kind of effective farmers' organization. Although *Grangers* gained greater prominence in the national arena through the Plains States based populist movement of the ~last decade of the nineteenth century, a time of farm oriented protests unmatched in American history, Douglas argues that the collective populist pattern of action, entailing various goals informing the legislative efforts of the progressives of both major parties through the next century, were nonetheless "too narrow to be effective" (p. 87). Montmarquet (1989) relates that the plausible reason for the latter is that the underpinning agrarian ideals reifying the family farm as rural *retreat*, like those of the *Grange*, would have a hard line to toe in an era looking less and less like some kind of Jeffersonian agrarian utopia (p. 229). Still, the latter didn't ensure that when any kind of overt influence of the Grange declines by the turn of the twentieth century, other farm organizations and groups marking the progressive era would provision much else. The later *Farmer's Alliance* and *Populist Party* (Hurt, 1994) were seen by many as ineffectual in the long run. This inability, oftentimes

unwillingness, even perceived *indifference* (Dahlinger, 1913) of farmers to come together was at least in part why the proliferation of industrial, corporate forms escalated through the *Progressive Era* of the late 19th century and the first decades of the next (p. 165-220).

What it comes down to is that the great *farm fight* of this time had little to do with responsible stewardship. It was about which measures were needed to create *parity* between agriculture and the industry it drew from for its own subsistence and development (Douglas, 1969), i.e., short-term prosperity. Rural populist interests shaped progressive efforts, and progressive “development of science and its application through education and technology” (p. 112) informed the rural populist vision for strengthening agriculture to be on par with industry (Douglas, 1969; Hurt, 1994). Although advances in industry, mechanization, science and technology secured general improvement of rural standards of living and the conservation of public lands, in terms of agriculture they also necessitated an unprecedented expansion of both the reach of the federal government and the corporate form.

In fact, the previous *laissez-faire* government approach to the development of an agrarian democracy was further motivated to transition into direct agricultural extension, providing necessary services but also *intervention*. Hurt (1994) expands on this last, citing these years as critical for understanding the government’s nascent alliance with, and eventual regulation of, all aspects of rural life and work. It started with new government policies and agencies of this space-time, like the USDA, disseminating agri-technoscience through extension services, research and education. These did not (yet) manage agricultural supply, but extended research to increase production, educate the farm population, and diffuse research-based solutions and aid, like plant technology, esp., hybrid corn. Likewise agri-research advances and diffusion are the beginning of a production paradigm which could surplus, ever misbalance cost and price, as well

as, along with other factors, lead to catastrophes like the *Dust Bowl* (~1935-1938)—advents which only required yet more and more direct federal intervention.

So, in the first decades of the twentieth century, US agriculture is becoming a monstrous, urban-rural, industrial-corporate agricultural paradigm for which government services sought, in these various venues, to put on par with other industry, i.e., parity, meaning to bring agriculture, via federal farm policy, into parity with the prices of other industries; and, eventually, to create parities of target prices. And, really, agriculture's business capacity was in need of parity just to keep up. For, not coincidentally, this space-time marks the expansion of the corporate form. By WWI, corporations had increased in number, size and dominance of all industry, evident foremost in the railroad, where Dahlinger (1913) saw industrial and commercial life so closely woven that *evil* was made of both (p. 36). However, parity, (re)created through a new corporate-government-industrial nexus mostly via its new technological capacities, incl. that of hybrid seeds, meant that the post-WWI years were plagued by inadequate prices due to the overproduction and land related farm mortgage indebtedness.

This last is why by the end of WWI, a corn-wheat-cotton 'farm bloc,' or group of both democratic and republican members of congress from related regions, demanded that the federal government intervene in the blossoming crisis. Subsequently, so many far-reaching regulatory measures and marketplace solutions were taken and adopted that, along with the *Great Depression* and *Dust Bowl*, which more or less (re)created by the *hybridization* of all these trajectories in the first place (Douglas, 1969), it only took weeks for farm policies to command the focus of Franklin D. Roosevelt's (FDR) administration. FDR's administrative policy for agriculture, the *Agricultural Adjustment Act* (AAA) of 1933 (and its amendments, though largely unchanged, in 1938, that would then remain mostly in place through the 1990s), would regulate

acreage reduction through payments to limit production, in crops as well as livestock. Those who participated could not afford to do otherwise with the commodity prices reaching the lowest lows (Hurt, 1994, p. 289-90). Actually, the *New Deal* administration saved the whole of American agriculture from utter annihilation. It also set the federal government on a new course of intervention and regulation that would intervene at *all* points of the idea(l) of distributed, independent famers through present day. This course would eventually find the independent American family farmer, in turn, becoming increasingly dependent upon government aid, in the form of commodity loans and price supports, less and less to turn even a short-term profit than to merely break even, especially by century's end. Thus, what began as saving both the small and large family farms in a time of crisis, through the short-term focused policies, mostly meant that only the "efficient, capital-intensive, and large-scale farmers" (p. 287) would survive in the long-term since they could ever garner and apply federal assistance most efficiently and effectively to intensify overproduction once crisis abated as time went on. Actually, the chemical era bolstering and bolstered by large-scale farmers more or less begins with these strokes of the pen.

For all the industrialization, incorporation and increasing chemicalization of agriculture to supposedly save them, family farms were generally still family-based. They might have looked more and more like businesses, but the reality remained that family-based operations were less elastic than other commercial enterprises, which meant that farms found it difficult to run at a loss. They couldn't exactly fire their own family members, or change the weather. So, what was once the family-oriented inelasticity that could promote the growth of industrial agriculture by necessitating mechanization to make-up for its family-base of labor becomes one of the most salient factors in *destroying* them—ever amidst the industrial and otherwise actions extended to save them—as well as the environment. By 1935, the number of US farms peaked at

6.8 million. From that point on, decline in the number of rural family smallholdings became the normative trend. Larger segments of the farm population would be forced out of farming, and especially across the divested South, where the highest rates of poverty in the nation continued regardless of Southerners attempts to diversify production. The environment was already showing scars from the *agri-monster* no matter what federal policy attempted to do.

Perhaps not surprisingly then, amidst this chaos and crisis between World Wars is mapped one of the strongest American romantic agrarianism(s) expressions since transcendentalism, entitled, *I'll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition*—what Montmarquet (1989) calls a, “distinctly Southern agrarian tradition, based on Jeffersonian rejection of industry but adding a love of the Old South...” (p. 203). Though obviously highly differentiated through space-time, the literary dissent of the *Vanderbilt Poets* (of *Vanderbilt University*, Nashville, Tennessee), otherwise known as the *Fugitive Agrarians*, can still be presented as another American agrarianism(s) *Work of Purification*. From the Southern aristocrats to NE US *Grangers* and transcendentalists, when facing a time of relative chaos or crisis all modern American agrarianism(s) seek to purify place as a backwardlooking home, or retreat: nostalgic and ordered in its own social relations, thereby purer, and/ or safer, in nature; in its discursive separation from longer spatial trajectories of federal-corporate agri-monsters. This could not be more obvious in the Twelve Southerner's title implication, either: the Southern agrarian dissent was standing firmly in the place-bound retreat of the Old South. Like this, Montmarquet argues, just like the agrarians who came before, their agrarian principles would also prove “practically futile” (p. 203-204) in their attempt to redress the industrialization, corporatization and regulation of agriculture.

For instance, albeit the writers include perspectives from education to economics to base some claims, the largely anti-North, anti-industrial (anti-industrial science) collection encompasses mostly standpoints on aesthetics (p. 204), i.e., the preservation of the Southern cultural traditions. They see Southern tradition to ward-off the *servility of labor* (re)created through the above context of massive industrial democratic development (p. 205). In the Poets' perspective, the independence that had come from owning and farming one's own land had become exploited for industrial corporate interests after the Civil War. For a necessary *transcendent* spiritual force to base America's redemption, with some yeoman/ry and some transcendentalism the *Fugitive Agrarians* look not up to God, or any other suspicious mediating institution, being religion or government, but rather, to the culture of (Southern) Man, thus to tillers with/in nature... Tate's contribution to the *Fugitive Agrarians*' collection clarifies articulates this unease religion and reification of Southern tradition when he discusses "horses and history" (p. 169). He argues that religion is wholly irrational. His more rational answer is that a Jeffersonian democracy was wholly political, leaving little else for the self to reside than in a political form. As Tate sees it, the Southern vision of what Jefferson intended presents the most choate body of doctrine—what he calls, the *Whole Horse*. It posits that spirituality, rather a more *transcendental* force of the Southern agrarian past, or tradition, (like a confederate spirituality), can better cadence *en masse* industrial materialism of the Northern US than politics, a federal regulatory structure, or even a democracy. The latter is how nature is imagined as transcendence yet again—though for the Southerners, with a twist: when looking down to the soil of tillers, they are looking for confederate dead. Actually, Montmarquet writes, the *Fugitive Agrarians* seemed to care "more about the dead (and their capture through memory and meditation) than about the soil and its life" (p. 210).

The *whole horse* is a highly problematic geographical imaginary, like all comparable American agrarianism(s) *Work of Purification*, seeking solace in nature as a transcendent force (here, more like confederate spirituality), for immanent circumstances of escalating industrialization and mechanization of agriculture. Rather in keeping with American agrarianism(s) *Work of Purification* through space-time, the latter bifurcation locks place as retreat, only here, as in the Old South. The poets defend a Southern way of life that probably never existed, but should have, or could have, as they see it, if it wasn't for the technological dehumanization advocated by Northern industrial materialism (or, if the North had not won the Civil War). Without running backward into the plantation, the collection remains backwardlooking in its place-bound politics.

By the time of the *Fugitive Agrarians'* (1936) sequel, *Who Owns America?: A New Declaration of Independence*, collected by editors Agar and Tate, the writers therein indeed attempted, through critique of the material industrial agri-monster, to delimit what that *New Declaration* should be. Hence, they shift in orientation from more romantic propositions to a broadly engaged, *Southern agrarian distributist economics* (re)consideration. Because the *Fugitive Agrarians* earlier revealed unease with religion without dismissing it entirely, mixed with a desire to find a way out of dehumanizing materialism toward a spiritually-engaged whole life, distributist economics makes sense as the next direction—with a few adjustments for *local color*.

The economic theory *distributism* can be credited the works of Hilaire Belloc and G.K. Chesterton. Distributism is not based upon new notions, but rather some of the oldest Catholic teachings that had prevailed in Europe for centuries before. The theory conceives of a *way out* of many material political-economic, capitalist and otherwise related circumstances most usefully

without reverting to socialism or communism. “An Essay on the Restoration of Property” (1936), sequel to Belloc’s essay collection, *The Way Out* (1938), outlines the economic theory of distributism. As a Catholic realist, following the natural law tradition of the Church regarding the question of property, Belloc advocates for a society based on distributed economic power, not on monopoly and concentrated power brokers. This last would entail the end of *wicked* communism, *wicked* wage-laboring/ proletariat depleting labor and social life in general (through socialism as well), and *wicked* capitalism (1938). *Distributist* economics seeks to actualize the end of these short-term fixated systems through (re)distributing property and power toward long-term human freedom, spirituality and health. He calls distributism thus, *the ‘third way’*. The material expression of distributism would lack large-scale producers and peasantry, fostering instead distributed smallholders (p. 76-84); charitable community shareholding, being artisans who are protected not by corporate charters, but guilds’ charters—with no large-scale product/ion (61; 73; 1938, p. 111-152); and, the end of the common banking system of loan and debt (1936, p. 97-99). Taken together, Belloc argues that freedom of labor and life on/ with one’s own property realizes an individual’s human dignity. Any economic freedom garnered through any other materialist philosophy driving socialism, communism or, especially, capitalism (1936) is not actually freedom since these systems inherently rely on *wage slavery* to operate. The author finally warns that if we do not follow these Catholic teachings, we will all be dehumanized by the *servile state*.

At this point, distributism’s *third-way* can look like a *Work of Translation*, rather, a hybrid blend of social nature, at least a blending of different systems that is just *better than bifurcation*. The problem with the *third-way* geographical imaginary is that it (re)creates a *third-*

space,⁴⁶ which isn't a *Work of Translation*, or hybridity, at all. Instead, it is merely another term that fails to destabilize the first terms (like capitalism, socialism, communism); and either synthesizes them to create another term, i.e., *trialectics*; or sets itself to the side of them, i.e., a *third space*, thereby perpetuating a signification system that remains defined by what it is *not*, i.e., *not* capitalism, socialism or communism. The *third-way*, or *third-space* is not an assemblage, and really, just a better, but still, structuralist, form of the same problematic modern geographical imaginary of Purification. The *Work of Translation*, for instance, does not *discover* fixed spaces or places waiting to be synthesized before assemblage. They are assemblage, *open*, *in the making*, no more or less than *open stories so far*. Since *thirling* is so seductively similar to post-structuralist formulation, with its *third-space* appearing as hybridity, it can be taken for better geographical thinking. I contend that trialectics is *better than boxes*, to mean, *better than* grossly distancing space-boxes. But the total misconception, and the mal-application that can arise from trialectics, have immeasurable consequences. In this case, a merely more complex *third-space* still serves as a retreat from supposedly terrifying times, be those one hundred or one year(s) ago. Distributism's *thirling* is another *Work of Purification*, and one adapted too well by the Southern agrarians for their economic revolt, *Who Owns America* (1936): an *en masse* indictment of the American system of enterprise (p. 26) that simply imagines that we all be (re)distributed into, preferably *Southern, third-space* enclaves.

⁴⁶ To get out of the dialectical trap, many theorists like Lefebvre (1991), Soja (1996), even Agnew (2005) and Entrikin (1991) submit seemingly endlessly *triadic* concepts—an as problematic *thirling*, or *third-space*—that merely reifies the opposition *by retreating from it*... Massey (2005) sees *thirling*,” or “trialectics,” or whatever triadic conceptualizations as a way to get out of structuralists' *prison-house* structures without destabilizing them. For more work on how dialectics, and certainly *thirling*, fails to meet the challenges of space and place, see any number of works presented here, incl.: Castree and Braun (2001); Haraway (1991; 1997); Latour (1993; 2004); Massey (1994; 2005); Murdoch (1997; 2006); Rose (1997a; 1997b). These last all refuse to tame the spatial into an easy synthesis, or third term.

Who Owns America? goes a long way in illuminating how, by the late 1930s, the US was a *servile state*. By the 1930s, the corporate form was already considered a *tyranny*, violating human rights and eviscerating social justice (p. 48-49). With private property all but gone (p. 66), evident in various examples of the Southern sharecropping system destroying the Southern yeoman (p. 166-168), the truly *Jeffersonian* belief in enough government regulation so as to *stop people from hurting each other* (p. 91) had been forsaken for the immorality of corporate *persons*. Indictments go even revolutionary by co-editor Agar's section (p. 94)... at least in the form of peaceful reform (p. 99). Foremost, he contends, that only land (re)distribution can defeat the unaccountable tyrannies of corporations (p. 107; 133) and trickle-down, *laissez-faire*, deregulated free trade through open borders (p. 135; 144-146). In fact, widely (re)distributed property is the only real form of freedom offered in the text. To the writers, such redistribution means the breakdown of corporations' *false* efficiency (p. 185), which had made them the new American *aristocracy* (p. 209). The breakdown of monopolies, restriction of growth, antitrust laws and so forth could (re)distribute the short-term takings of the corporate form which was creating a wage-earning, dehumanizing, *servile state* in turn. What is most important here in terms of the Southern adoption of distributism is that *agriculture* figures in as one of the last mainstays of private property. Though allied with the rise of that very circumstance, they argue that rural smallholders must be protected from further incorporation: rural life and work, delimited in particular ways very briefly overviewed here, would serve as the last bastion of virtue.

Generally speaking, the sequel collection is unquestionably a work of distributism. Even Belloc submits an essay, which closes the text, reminding of *servile state* and calling for a *third-space* ever purified of its evil. However, I argue that the book is a *Southern agrarian* distributist

economics statement not only because it is far more engaged with the material reality than the previous poetry of revolt, but because the Southerners had thoroughly dismissed mediating institutions, like religion, long ago. What the two *Fugitive Agrarian* works effectively do thus is establish *distributism* in terms not of Catholic realism, but *Southern agrarianism*—to mean that not God or government, but the more transcendental force of the Southern agrarian past, or tradition (like a confederate spirituality) should compel distributism. Like this, the *New Declaration* can (re)distribute place-bound homes, divorced from longer spatialized trajectories of corporate governance, but with a twist. Instead of *Catholic* ideals and charity for transcendent force, they look to the confederate dead, i.e., the soil and its tillers, being, the life and work with/in nature of the (re)distributed rural family farm—just as Jefferson had intended. Like this, *Southern agrarian distributist economics* comes not only replete with problematic geographical imaginaries of nationalism, regionalism, philosophies of science, history; and especially, race-class-gender, but it provisions only a *third-space*. Their work does not seek to confront or cadence the agri-monsters, but instead, retreat into—and (re)distribute other retreats of—privatized enclaves of what they see to be the last bastions of virtue: rural family farms and Southern ideals. The latter isn't a *Work of Translation*, merely a more sophisticated *Work of Purification* that instead of just bifurcating the world by society and nature, bifurcates the world society and nature and then... retreats through a third-way, into a third-space, of synthesis of the two terms with virtue based in Southern ideals, i.e., confederate dead. For what does the breakdown of monopolies, restriction of growth, antitrust laws and so forth look like in the world of the *Twelve Southerners* who have already presented a treatise on complete disdain for any trajectories or mediating institutions of the North—a total suspicion of democracy? Civil War?: perhaps, and more likely, *food war*. And, food war will rage while the most popular and prolific

Southern agrarian to date toils his privatized, rural horse-powered cottage farm enclave just to the *human limit*, or at least, to the *Mason Dixon line*.

Simply put, *Southern agrarian distributist economics* and *third-spacing* is apparently an *enough and good whole* for fellow Southerner, Kentuckian, Wendell Berry, to harness for an entire new generation of agrarians quite a few decades later into divergent, though not unrelated, *terrifying* times. Though confronted with a world of quasi-objects that can at times truly terrify, mystify and put even the most self aware cyborg at unease, the latter overview of the Twelve Southerners' work is a central component of the new agrarianism at the pen of Wendell Berry—which, as I will attempt to show, is one of the most salient (post)modern geographical imaginaries of US agriculture today, somewhat bafflingly continuing to ground its ethic of confrontation: *Southern agrarian distributist economics third-space* of the 1930s.

From World Wars to *Food Wars*

I have briefly overviewed modern American agrarianism(s) as a *Work of Purification*; how modern American agrarianism(s) *Work of Purification* might greatly shift in its responses to equally as transformative terrifying spatial trajectories, perhaps varying in its characterizations and apropos reactions to the terror from one space-time to the next—even adding a trialectical third term—but the bifurcating force of these expressions more or less remains the same. Whether in a plantation, *the Grange*, *life in the woods* or Southern agrarian soils of confederate dead, in times of relative crisis, American agrarianism(s) from the first instance has continually played with a modern society and nature, space and place, transcendence and immanence bifurcation to, above all, reign-in short-term profit monsters with what are seen as longer-term belief systems bound to places like those of immanent social order, nostalgia, tradition and/ or home (ex. Grangers and/ or Southern tradition); or a variously (re)visioned transcendent power.

God, or at least relatively transcendent entities, likes nature, confederate spirituality, and/or government in the form of New Deal regulations, all seem to be ritually tapped in times of chaos or crisis.⁴⁷ Across agrarianism(s), the *Work of Purification* does far more to demonize and dismiss some of the most promising works of the *Work of Translation* than to actualize confrontation, which is to say, than to name and democratically represent the hybridizing and multiple material and discursive realities of US agriculture through space-time. Its proliferation of social natural hybridities without fuller cadence or accountability has done little more than irresponsibly threaten both society and nature in turn, most pronouncedly in a global food regime coming to the fore following WWII.

Given that hyper-versions of monsters were already apparent, but most assuredly by the 1980s, when the world would be imagined to be losing geography to speed-up and flattening—a (post)modern globalization imaginary—it should not be surprising that another American agrarianism(s) *Work of Purification* would be submitted, ever in line with those submitted here. When facing a terrifying urbanity turned terrifying global food regime of monsters never before of conceived, Wendell Berry will also set a forth a *new agrarian* project, albeit in a new way for a theoretically (post)modern world... whose geographical imaginary remains mostly as ineffectual as the *Work of Purification* from which it *particularly* draws, at least in terms of confronting a thoroughly social natural world in the ways described.

Essentially, a *Nonmodern Constitution*, or such thinking on *eco-subjective* cadence or accountability for bold and terrifying, promising and *happening* alike cyborg-monster proliferation through the world, is precisely what American agrarianism(s) as a *Work of*

⁴⁷ See Winders (2009) for formulation of a *double movement* of *class, state and market* (p. 204-205) that comparably orients US agriculture to the *transcendence* of federal regulation: a *push* for regulation when *things are bad* and a *pull-back* from regulation when *things are good*.

Purification from its inception, but certainly in its *neoagrarian* forms today, has decidedly failed to actualize, thereby failing to confront what Montmarquet calls the central American agriculture-agrarianism(s) boundary project for all time:

how to reconcile *rural individualism* and independence with the need for *concerted* action and *reform*, *how to reconcile science with tradition and the feeling for nature*, how to reconcile the *excitement* for the large-scale development with a proper *conservative* regard for *traditional* ways; and perhaps, most perplexingly, how to reconcile the simplicity and naturalness of the traditional rural life with the need to *make its tasks lighter and more acceptable to the average person*. (my emphasis; p. 234).

What the (post)modern American agrarianism(s) *Work of Purification* has most effectively accomplished is proliferation of some complexly dangerous agri-monsters... Although this imaginary fails to materialize in reality outside of the power-knowledge of discourse, hence why *we have never been modern*, it is a powerful and useful imaginary nonetheless for denying quasi-objects. Purifying hybridity has never effectively cadenced monstrous monster proliferation—it actually accelerates them.

Reading the world and the text, the *agriculture* and (new) *agrarianism(s)* *bromance* in the Chapters to follow (re)c/si(gh)tes more than one *story*. Some involve fragmented rural families, identities; environmental pollution and Global revolutions. Some involve truly terrifying CAFOs and their *e. coli*, as well as social natural GE corn plants which can agentically kill predators. But monsters, and accountability, can also afford unimagined politics and possibilities—it just depends on our imaginaries, our vision: our capacities for representation. The following Chapters seek to illuminate a critical (re)vision, reading and representation

practice which moves *toward* confrontation of monsters which both terrify and dare us to accept the responsibility and exciting possibilities of the social natural, (non)human world. It just matters how we *see* it: *how we think about space matters* (Massey, 2005)—*how we think about corn matters*. This last is the crux of the post-structuralist geographical orientation taken in the *reading* of the *agriculture-agrarian bromance* hereupon, though with my own twist on an older formulation. If the *meaning of modernity* implicates a problematic division between what can be, when applied through relational geography, society and nature, space and place; and if I can show the function of American agrarianism(s) as mappable such problematic dichotomization and function as a *Work of Purification* in turn, then perhaps, in a manner of speaking, we have been no more *agrarian* than we have ever been *modern*, rather, that it is only in these ways that *we have never been* agrarian. Quasi-agrarians thus, quasi-agrarianism seeks a more democratic reading and representation of US agriculture.

CHAPTER THREE

(Eating a Story of) *Food Wars*:

A Global Food Regime and a Locavore Sensibility

The great uncertainty of all data in war is a peculiar difficulty, because all action must, to a certain extent, be planned in a mere twilight, which in addition not infrequently—like the effect of a fog or moonlight—gives to things exaggerated dimensions and unnatural appearance. (From *On War*, Carl Phillipp Gottfried von Clausewitz, 1832)

Chapter Two attempts to show how modern American agrarianism(s) can be mapped as a *Work of Purification* when interfaced with agricultural practices through space-time. To understand the new kind of (post)modern American agrarianism(s) *Work of Purification* that I argue emerges by the 1980s, predominantly given the works of *new agrarian* prophet, Wendell Berry, the material agricultural context—most popularly imagined as food wars—of the decades following WWII must be dually (re)considered. Ostensibly, if the Civil War was fought over competing American agrarianism(s) idea(l) (inasmuch as anything else) the food wars which emerge after WWII can also be seen to be fought over geographical imaginaries of material US agricultural practices. In this line, Chapter Three first outlines the predominant material circumstances often referent the geographical imaginary of food wars: a conventional-industrial global food regime and an oppositional organic agri-culture, which eventually encompasses what has been called a *locavore revolution*. Thereafter, I present the most significant (post)modern geographical imaginaries of these twenty-first century US agricultural realities and their central

problematics, thereby introducing the new agrarianism as the perhaps the strongest, and most problematic, *Work of Purification* among them.

Better Farming through Chemistry: The Proliferation of a Global Food Regime

The material landscape of the predominant US agricultural paradigm had become more or less cyclical since the late nineteenth century, with rural life and work culled out of depression through increases in production and price, as well as the deployment, diffusion, and adoption of increasingly sophisticated mechanizations, sciences and technologies; only to return to a state of more or less depression given these last forces through WWI. The deep reach of government intervention strategies through the *New Deal* administration and WWII years attempted to balance the industrial corporate form of and for the short-term with long-term policy initiatives that would make agriculture an enterprise *on par*, as well as less volatile. And, in various macrostructural appraisals of US agriculture, the latter was successful. Following WWII, these trajectories came together with multiple others of chemical industries, science and technology; bad weather/ droughts; and the farm(er) (Hurt, 1994) to (re)territorialize only the most efficient farms and yet another *golden age* of agriculture. With subsequent recoveries and evolving government policy changes following total economic fall-out of agriculture through the 1980s, the *golden age* can be seen to have more or less ensured that increased demand for agri-products was met, and exceeded, by gradually fewer, heavily federally subsidized and biotechnoscientifically advanced, large-scale farms with a farm income higher than ever before and capable of ensuring a sturdy dominance of the US agricultural sectors of the West, Great Plains, Midwest, South and Northeast; a *relatively low cost of food*; as well as eventual US command of the transnational agri-food economy (Gardner, 2002).

However, this so-called new *golden age* can also be imagined to have set in motion the no less heavy industrial weeding of the family farm population, taking any last(ing) vestige of the modern American agrarian idea(l) right along with it. Foremost, in the few decades immediately preceding and following *The War*, federal policies attempted to address several issues related to such high productivity and resultant surplus, including increased soil erosion, falling agricultural prices and low labor costs. But through the decades after WWII, *New Deal* agricultural policy of supply management, including mostly parity of prices, surplus control, soil conservation, and agricultural economic stabilization, had become rather inert (Douglas, 1969), with post-WWII advances in agri-technologies, favoring what Douglas calls the “agricultural elite” (p. 165). Meaning, the largest and most efficient producers could afford the technologies and expand while the rest were pushed out. The progressively more delicate balance of *supply and demand* interconnected with the equality of distributed family farm holdings was obviously beginning to tip as well (Hurt, 1994, p. 309-323). By the 1950s, agricultural realities could be characterized as overproduction and surplus, higher farm prices, and, due to that very science and technology that had brought the farmer out of the extreme vacillations of the *New Deal* years, higher input costs. Plus, the unevenness of price to cost was apparent in the diffusion of agri innovations, which were not uniform through the country’s many agricultural regions (p. 325). All things considered, the *golden age* also situates the beginning of the great costs of, and a growing general anxiety about, such success: the end of the widely distributed family farms; and an *out there* nature already showing the scars of its predominant agri-cultural paradigm’s sundry set of largely chemical based practices. ...

Really, federal management, in tandem with increased mechanical capacities and synthetic, fossil-fuel driven agri-chemicals change the whole agriculture-agrarianism(s) story

after WWII. Fossil-fuel derived nitrogen fertilizers encouraged the specialization of farm regions in federal *program crops* (corn, cotton, wheat and soybeans) inasmuch as federal supply management rewarded the inputting of these crops. Increasingly intensive agri-chemical and hybridization input favored the shift, albeit gradual, nonetheless out of the mixed-crops and livestock, etc., diversity once marking smaller farms, and into intensive annual inputting of one (program) crop, usually with decreasing rotation, called *monoculture*. Intensely fossil fuel-based mechanization of hyper-consolidated, large-scale monocultural enterprises would gradually escalate chemical inputs (often needed to account for ecological changes due to those selfsame chemical inputs, thus so-called the *chemical treadmill*) as well as application of available advances in biotechnology. The largest monocroppers were awarded ever more by the federal system.

The point here is that trajectories of federal policy, regulation and agri-biotechnoscience had become thoroughly intrainfluencing and self-perpetuating, continually (re)producing a veritable *power geometry* of the relatively smaller family farms. If an operation failed to participate in the heavily government intervened, increasingly technoscientific agricultural practices, it would be dissolved like the pests and weeds. Under the strain of weathering the weather, the balance of input costs against the price for any given commodity (i.e., *cost-price squeeze*) would mean that greater input was necessary for operations to stay afloat. Resultant surplus only pulls the price back down, spurring annual overproduction of commodity crops that fosters farm inequality and so on. Commodity corn prices for almost a century⁴⁸ are perhaps the

⁴⁸ 2007 saw record or near-record prices for corn and other food and feed grains, increasing to (an *annual* price of) \$3.40/ bushel, which also ensured an increase in commodity corn production necessary to reach the highest corn crop in 2009. For a look at the historically low corn price, showing little change since the great Depression until the current century, all the while defying the *law of supply and demand* in terms of surplus, see the USDA website at, www.usda.gov.

strongest example of this power geometry, which obviously has nothing to do with the law of supply and demand. Only the largest farms can (over)produce the most given their greater ability to purchase land and the latest equipment, agrichemical and seed (hybrids and later GE) technologies and so forth, whilst securing greater federal monies only to further skew the prices of the commodities and increasing the buying power of powerful agribusinesses (Hurt, 1994; 2002). Eventually, *the squeeze* would favor and foster the growth of only the largest farms and an increasingly more powerful and merged agribusiness culture.

To help maintain such a tenuous position on the land, the relatively smaller farmers increasingly came to rely on, not just augment their operations with, the federal government (Hurt, 1994; 2002). However, by the turn of the current century, federal regulation had basically repealed the AAA policies for the first time since the 1930s, ending price supports and production controls, “allowing farmers to grow any commodity, in any amount, and on any portion of their land” (Winders, 2009, p. 2); in effect, unleashing a less regulated *free-play*, to mean a free marketer trajectory, of agriculture.⁴⁹ Quasi-free market agriculture, turned loose from the decoupling of program crops from supply management, met falling export prices and egregious (more unfettered) overproduction (p. 198): a massive *failure* fostering the growth of the largest large-scale farms, the best equipped to (over)produce efficaciously with the most advanced technologies from within the deregulation. For, the resultant safety net of consequent legislation unsurprisingly provided more incentives for the large-scale farmers to, yet again, overproduce on

⁴⁹ For understanding the *Rural Investment Act* of 2002, in relation to the 1996 *Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act* (FAIR), known informally as the *Freedom to Farm Act*, see, among many others, Gardner (2002); Hurt (2002); and/ or Winders (2009).

land already *in* production and receive larger than ever payments in turn (p. 170).⁵⁰ All told, policies and regulations have (re)created a *double movement* of the free market and restriction, or *push-and-pull capitalism* (Winders, 2009), like plays of transcendence/ immanence, ever since.

Ultimately, any *equitable* social classes of agriculture were long gone (Headlee, 1991) by the 1980s, with noticeable gaps between large- and middle-to-small scale farms becoming the rule more than an unfortunate externality of material agricultural practices by the turn of the twenty-first century. What arguably started as the *laissez-faire system* of the independent yeomanry of Jeffersonian Republic is today's federally regulated, legislated, consulted, directed, etc., conventional-industrial agricultural system of large-scale farms. Without question, federal supply management schema facilitated, along with mechanization, agri-chemicals and biotechnology, the transition to large-scale farming in the decades following WWII—only becoming more *pronounced* in doing so by the end of the century. Federal regulatory policy and agri biotechnoscience development, diffusion and adoption today—still taken in the name of saving a wide distribution of family farmers whilst over half of all subsidies go to less than 10% of farmers—looks far more like a neoliberal market-oriented strategy for creating new markets for commodities, both here and abroad, than a regulatory/ interventionist policy (Winders, 2009; Hurt, 2002). More than two thirds of the remaining distributed, rural smallholders of the originating modern American agrarian democracy—all that hope and promise at the turn of the twentieth century—though at times lucrative profit-driven commercial units, for the relatively smaller farmers agriculture has been more generally becoming instead little more than a risky

⁵⁰ For now, it becomes clear that, since the 1930s, through economic fall-out of the 1980s, federal supply management has interminably intervened at all points in the affairs of American farmers, from the family farm, to the rural community, To understand federal supply management through history, see, among many others, Hurt (1994; 2002); or, Winders (2009).

financial liability to abandon altogether or sustain with yet more stressful, and gender mediated, strategies.

Dissolved, squeezed out—large-scale production means a decreased population and outmigration rates have been high with every new cornfield planted *fencerow to fencerow* since the 1980s.⁵¹ What's more, the relatively smaller family farms which choose to *stay the course* have become increasingly poor, contextualized by depleted, once thriving, rural agricultural communities as well (Douglas, 1969, p. 165). The kind of resiliency required to stay has meant a complete (re)configuration of farm income—shifted even exclusively to off-farm work, incl. nonfarm income, or *pluriactivity* (Lobao & Meyer, 2001). Pluriactivity, defined almost a century ago as *part-time farming*, now also means that a farm subsists based on a range of multiple, varietal jobholdings (many non-agricultural based), including, among others, additional business ventures taken-up from the farm, and financial investments in local grain elevators, ethanol plants, and so forth (Bessant, 2004). Pluriactivity has arguably become less a strategy of marginalized or inefficient operations than the now normative mode of family-based agriculture utilized specifically toward maintaining the family farm operation. By the farm crisis of the 1980s, off-(-or non-) farm work made-up over 70% of farm income. At the turn of the current century, it has been estimated that over 90% of family farms rely on it (Godwin, et al., 1991; Lobao & Meyer, 2001). And since the 1980s, what's consistent across a broad international literature is that most off- and non- farm work taken-up strictly for income to bolster the operation, just as in centuries past (e.g., the *Grangers'* resistance of a nevertheless more and more requisite mixed-gender farm labor strategy) is highly mediated by gender, which is to say,

⁵¹ A well-worn phrase used by Earl Butz, the Secretary of the USDA under Nixon, to call for rural commodity grain smallholders to plant corn to surplus.

by the farm women (for example, Australia: see Alston, 1995, and Grace & Lennie, 1998; Canada: see Kubik & Moore, 2005; Finland: see Silvasti, 2003; UK: see Bennett, 2004; Meyer & Lobao, 2003). In the US specifically, women's off-(-or non)farm work has increased more than two times that of males since the late 1970s. By the 1980s, farm(ing) women were seeking employment at the rate of "nonfarm" women. Although various family members, including male head operators, can augment the farm income, men's off-farm work is either more closely tied to the operation, or commonly taken-up toward shifting out of family farming altogether (Lobao & Meyer; Pfeffer & Gilbert, 1991). The *power geometry* of gendered pluriactivity of US family farms remaining on the landscape has become only mildly tolerable, and barely tenable. Many studies demonstrate such strain resulting in the dilapidation of most rural communities, and the fragmentation of rural families and (family) farmworkers' own family farming identities.

Combining all of the foregoing gives light to an agricultural landscape depleting since its 6.8 million peak in ~1935 and a twenty-first century where the farm population now comprises less than approximately 2% of national population statistics by occupation (and only about two percent live on the farms where they work) [United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) *Demographics*, 2012], which is about 2.2 million farms (Hurt, 2002), with the smallest percentage being the largest farms producing well over half of all agricultural products.⁵²

Today, the US farm population at its lowest, oldest and severely split between ever *smaller* small farms (Hurt, 2002, p. 168); and even *larger* large mega farms (which of course means, essentially, the end of the diversity of farm production in the specialization of technologies and outputs per mega farm) (Gardner, 2002, p. 48-65). Large farms are just simply smaller farm

⁵² For such murky demarcations, see the USDA website, www.usda.gov; and/or, the "Structure and Finances of U.S. Farms: 2005 Family Farm Report" (2005).

counterparts, either. Instead, they are highly specialized, mechanized, consolidated, monoculture-oriented commercial powerhouses, which, commanding the smallest percentage of the overall farm population, generate more than \$250 thousand in annual sales. The largest growing sector holds over three quarters of all agricultural lands and (re)produce most agricultural products (p. 66). Obviously, the latter landscape strikingly opposes the governing principles of agriculture and democracy at the dawning of US history. For those American rural smallholders who stay the course, their continuance is tempered and fragmented—serving today as more like an excuse upon which lobbies can stake their claims for the increased federal funding that, in turn, dissolves them.

Such developments since WWII have transformed American agriculture, and really American society and culture *en masse*, for all time. Following WWII, US agriculture has been situated by innumerable research from a multitude of economic, sociological, and policy perspectives, to name a few, to have endured a massive restructuring. Many have gone as far as to say that North American farming has been in a state of on-and-off again crisis for more like 75 years. What has greater uniformity across these innumerable disciplines located the world over, producing innumerable volumes of largely structural level examinations, theorizations, and explanations of the agricultural crisis in the developed world,⁵³ is that since WWII, US agriculture has experienced, and continues to (mis)manage the *great agricultural transition* (among others, see Bessant, 2007; Gardner, 2002; Gillespie, Lyson & Harper, 1994; Hurt, 2002; Lobao & Meyer, 2001; Pyle, 2005). The phrase implicates nonfamily, monocultural farms inputting program crops and playing a more deregulated, free market oriented approach to

⁵³ Questions remain about *how* to consider the transitions of material US agriculture from a more or less *family*-based institution to an agribusiness-driven, large-scale enterprise. See, among many others, Lasley, Leistritz, Lobao, & Meyer (1995); Lobao & Meyer (2001).

agricultural product/ion shifted most ardently to commodity development in lieu of rural development by the turn of current century (Hurt, 2002; Winders, 2009); as well as the development, diffusion and application of agri-technologies,⁵⁴ specifically agri-chemicals, which through time have worked to dominate and control agriculture through mega agribusiness⁵⁵ and ever larger, nonfamily farms and factory farming. These salient trajectories would continually (re)produce a highly productive, *productivist*⁵⁶ US harvest-through-consumption model which, recombinant, we can more or less today recognize as the food wars' side of conventional-industrial by the end of the *doomsday decade*, 1970s—a phrase drawn from Ehrlich (1968) and deployed by environmentalists to describe the decade when *the environment* finally became a pervasive agenda for advocacy and policies given the intense agri-chemicals of this more strongly delimited *conventional-industrial* agri-cultural paradigm.

For, what began to accompany *the great agricultural transition* by the end of the 1970s has been a truly indefensible taxing of the land with voluminous amounts of nitrogen; taxing of

⁵⁴ For various examples of massive technological and otherwise changes of agriculture post-WWII, see Gardner (2002); and/or Hurt (1994; 2002).

⁵⁵ Mega corporations, like *Cargill*, *Monsanto*, and *ADM* are also transnational conglomerates involving seed developers, incl. *DeKalb* and *Asgrow*. Major mergers only make the corporations more influential in all aspects of US agriculture (see, “NCGA to growers: Respect the Refuge,” 2008; and/ or “Ground Rules for Refuge,” 2007). For extended discussion of mega agribusiness, see, among others, Hurt (2002).

⁵⁶ Here I have indicated Trauger's (2004) work and yet another common phrase, and distinction, of conventional farming from the organic/ alternative: *productivist*. These farming operations have an at least *clearer*, or more *overt*, profit-based trajectory, and as such must deploy high mechanization and synthetic chemical input for operations at times totally monocropping commodity products.

the air with carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide;⁵⁷ taxing of the water, whether in aquifers, rivers or potable water with nitrates left from massive acreages of program crops, like commodity corn; taxing of massive segments of the population with the most limited means and options with processed food products indisputably related to health incidences, like obesity, and related conditions, namely diabetes; and finally, the oftentimes invisible externality of agricultural statistics, the taxing of rural communities with the foreclosure of numerous farms, many of which had been family operations for generations. As organic farmer and contributor to *Tomorrow's Table* (2008), Ronald Adamchak, rightly observes of the impacts, “such strain pushes the limits of human adaptation and raises questions of how willing communities are to tolerate environmental degradation... It’s cheaper for that system than changing the farming system... But *it’s kind of crazy*” (*my emphasis*; in Voosen, 2010). That *kind of crazy*, hyper-chemicalized, mechanized, traditionally hybridized, subsidized and consolidated system is the *first* reason we see the superabundant monoculture of commodity corn growing today by obviously less distributed rural communities of graying smallholders than by a bell curve almost completely skewed to large nonfamily farms fairly characterized, among other perceptions to be sure, as employees of mega agribusinesses.

And, not really surprisingly, the landscape of conventional agriculture that began to take shape after WWII became what is most recognized, and vilified, today, as the *kind of crazy* system easily and often aligned with having no views or values outside those of broader visions of *global* free market capitalism that pillages without cadence—given its productivist progression through the Midwestern US CornBelt to be sure, but more so globally thereafter with what would come to be known as the *Green Revolution*. The *Green Revolution* is more or less

⁵⁷ The comparative percentage of such emissions from organic agriculture is a point of contention, noted later.

the massive diffusion of conventional-industrial research, development, and technology (i.e., pesticides and herbicides, with hybrid seed practices toward monoculture) through the so-called *developing* world (drawn from Goodman & Watts, 1997) solely, some argue, for creating a global market for mega agribusiness products. In many writings and reviews, the not-so-Green diffusion was starting to look more like Western *war on the rest of the world—on nature*. Given the long reach of US-based agribusiness, and the tendency of the US to use the foreign market as a dumping ground for commodity surplus, many argue that conventional-industrial US agriculture today, which really became a major power player in international markets and even cycling around the globe with said *revolution*, is the keystone of what is more accurately called a *global agri-food regime* (drawn from Goodman & Watts, 1997), being a system less regulated and thereby able to transgress national borders to co-constitute wild international market vacillations. These last have had profound implications for farmers and rural communities, consumers, and environment all over the world (Winders, 2009). Federal intervention continues to forcefully shapes these scales of class, region, national, world political-economic and market trajectories, mostly due to pressure from congressional agri-lobbies (for reasons obviously ulterior to food shortage). But, domestic US conventional-industrial surplus has meant a distinctive Western-American face of global trade and market (p. 136).⁵⁸ Free market principles, though continually (re)visioned and kept in check at least domestically by agricultural supply management policies, have nonetheless continued to drastically alter agri-food systems the world over through the twenty-first century.

⁵⁸ Winders (2009) notes that those who received food aid in the 1950s-1960s became *our best customers* in the 1990s, creating something like a post-*Fordist*, post-WWII *food regime* that fits nicely in *the flexible accumulation*, transnational, deregulated, free-market, mega-merged corporate capitalism culture of the 1990s (p. 158).

Perhaps not surprisingly then, US agriculture today, a conventional-industrial paradigm turned global agri-food regime, is easily imagined as an American agrarian utopia turned terrifying, postmodern dystopia of transnational mega-merged agribusiness. No one reifies such a (post)modern imaginary more seductively than the *new agrarians*.

Better Farming through Biology: A Greener Counter Revolution

Roughly along the same timeline, *organic agri-culture*, the central figure of the larger *alternative agri-food system* of today, gains greater momentum in material practices as well as environmental discourses. Organic farming methods, and intertwined socio-cultural principles most notably aligned with the *environmental movement*, continued to gather an impressive legion of advocates and activists throughout the US through the 1960s and 1970s. Although constituting less than three percent of the dwindling farming numbers today (Ronald & Adamchak, p. x), organics' relatively tiny amount of innumerable and varying rural and urban, farming and not, constituents alike, were becoming a mighty, and mightily rising voice which, ever since, has almost drown out any critiques of its own perspectives while effectively posing a counter to the conventional-industrial agri-culture system. This last is not to imply that US organic farming is no more than a *reaction/ary* platform. Since organic farming methods have become almost inextricable from its methodologies, being both "very ancient as well as modern and scientific" (Sligh, 2002, p. 273) mostly due its contributions by "indigenous peoples" (p. 273), the network is far longer and diverse than new and/ or reaction/ary. Nevertheless, one cannot deny many formulations of US organic agri-culture as long-term thinking *responsive* not only to the preservation of longer networks of farming knowledges, techniques, practices and biodiversity, but, again, to what is often characterized as the agri-culture, and global ecological

destruction, deployed and driven by the other, conventional-industrial side.⁵⁹ The conceptualized alternative methods of organic agriculture are generally seen as “an ecologically-based farming” (Ronald & Adamchak, 2008, p. x). In fact, what arguably *deeply* differentiates the foundational, or an almost ideal, form, of organics ecology from conventional forms (in terms of methods as proposed by seminal organics works) is its orientation in the “ecological and the biological” (p. 31). Organic agri-cultures fundamentally (purports to) operate then through the technologies “of the living” (p. 32), or nature, highly contrasted the real and portrayed *death of nature* at the till and sprayer of conventional-industrial agriculture.

Perennial polyculture,⁶⁰ as well as other perspectives oriented to organic agri-culture, was undoubtedly interconnected with the environmental movement early on, a movement itself related to *naturalism* of the turn of the twentieth century. Such environmental minded projects continued to accumulate attention and both federal and private funding when WWII ended with a nuclear boom. Actually, by the 1950s, the *antinuclear movement* had emerged as well. Its presence and advocates had strong connections with the growth of the environmental movement. Such care for the environment, under attack by both nuclear and agri-chemical contamination, seemed to naturally lead into organization of a more organic, or sustainable, US agricultural paradigm. And, we can see some kind of more or less organized US-based organic agriculture

⁵⁹ Interestingly, even former president of the *California Certified Organic Farmers*, Ronald Adamchak, recently characterized organic agriculture this way. He claims that he saw firsthand how, “Organic agriculture has been from the start *a reaction to the problems generated by conventional agriculture*... Organic farming came about as a response to the... overuse of chemicals on conventional farms” (*my emphasis*; in Voosen, 2010; Ronald and Adamchak, 2008, p. 13).

⁶⁰ All in all, the organic systems plausibly closest to the latter are *natural systems agriculture*, otherwise known as *perennial polyculture* (see generally *The Land Institute* at www.landinstitute.org).

come to the fore in the 1960s with various, heavily documented cases of environmental and species decline, as well as agrichemical harm to farmworkers. These well evidenced points are a few examples of countless many which situate the 1970s as the *doomsday decade*, a decade of truly global awareness of a far vaster array of environmental issues—an awareness which only increased.⁶¹ The 1970s was a decade, in effect, setting the stage for the continuing environmental movement in the form of international treaties, national agreements, as well as domestic social groups and NGOs, utilizing more or less radical tactics, with which food activism is commonly aligned thereafter (drawn from Hays, 2000).⁶²

Still, a mushrooming organic agri-culture/ movement⁶³ in the US was coming together in the same post-WWII decades that conventional-industrial agriculture more greatly consolidates and (chemically) intensifies. Although the *environmental movement* had been on the American landscape for some time prior to these critical decades, for a number of reasons it would take much more time for an organic agri-cultural network to really take shape, especially in terms of

⁶¹ Examples of *doomsday* legislation include: President Richard Nixon's signing of the *National Environmental Policy Act* (NEPA) in 1969; the first ever *Earth Day* in 1970; amendments to the *Clean Air Act* and *Clean Water Act*, including many other federal regulatory measures and environmental legislation passed between 1972 and 1976, bookended by thirty-five countries signing the first international air-pollution agreement in 1979. See, among many others, Hays (2000), *A History of Environmental Politics since 1945*.

⁶² Into present day, NGOs and various food activist groups continue to support such century-long *environmentalist* measures, including, *Greenpeace*, *Friends of the Earth* (FOE) and *Earth First!* Including the obviously long and complex environmental movement network in full, as connected to agriculture, is beyond the scope of the current project. See, among many others, Hays (2000), *A History of Environmental Politics since 1945*.

⁶³ Any detail included from this point on, as in the case of the environmental movement, is only intended to be exemplary, and not much more beyond a limited overview of the embryonic form of a vast and complex organic agriculture/ social movement, tied to the aforementioned ever larger *environmental movement*.

its solidification as a plausible alternative to the strongly criticized conventional-industrial system. At any rate, the organic agricultural paradigm is more or less oriented to similar objectives of environmental conservation and preservation, though emanating from differentiated idea(l)s, including those of Sir Albert Howard, an English botanist who is often named the progenitor of modern organic farming *biodynamics*⁶⁴ in the Western world; and *whole systems* thinking, apparent in US-based organics treatise of Jerome I. Rodale by the late 1940s. In addition to major players in the East, like the eventual *Rodale Institute* (a highly organized organics advocate today) the west coast would become a strong force in the *environmental movement* via Washington and Oregon. Actually, California would become by far and away one of the most forceful state leaders of the national organic movement, where, among many others, the also often cited Alan Chadwick, an outspoken environmentalist, strongly influenced the first student organic farming coops in the 1960s (Ronald & Adamchak, 2008). The state would come to house one of the first *certified* organic farmers' organizations in the 1970s, inspiring the creation of others across the country. By 1979, *California Certified Organic Farmers* (CCOF) would succeed in securing the first US state legislation defining organic standards (Sligh, 2002).

Regardless of its longer network assemblage with the environmental movement and seminal organic writings and projects, US organic farming was first recognized as a subsistence-based form of farming for hobbyists with limited niche markets *within* the predominant conventional-industrial agricultural system. In addition to those labels, many critics were generating far less positive appraisals by the 1960s, often citing organics as “fringe and hippie farming, if not downright countercultural” (Sligh, 2002, p. 273) considering some significant

⁶⁴ For exploration of the founding organics principles in terms of *Biodynamics*, see, among others, Goodman & Goodman (2007); Ronald and Adamchak (2008); and/ or Sligh (2002).

movements taken by such agriculturalists at the time, i.e., the so-called *hippies getting off the grid*, what is normally called the *back to the land* movement of the late 1960s. So, by the doomsday decade, if nothing else it was arrantly clear that in order for organic agriculture to gain credence in the US as a plausible alternative agricultural system, nevertheless founded upon indigenous ideas and influences, incl. going *back to the land*, a larger social movement mainstreaming the countercultural was necessary. And, the latter is precisely the context that emerges, rather, the radical political climate of the 1960s and 1970s. The context provided necessary and sufficient conditions for ecological sustainability minded organic activists to amass a more clearly defined “social and ecological critique of industrial agriculture and the giants of American agribusiness” (p. 6)—a discursive version of the material, *back to the land* retreat into rural, organically-based and locally owned and supported agricultural production schemes that also continued throughout the era. Goodman and Goodman’s (2007) astute evaluation continues that, altogether, rather unexpectedly the “disparate assortment of romantics, hippies, and peaceniks” (p. 4) were effectively able, through a “classic process of innovation embedded in learning-by-doing and informal mechanisms of knowledge transmission” (p. 4), to engender a cooperative urban food system replete with natural stores which marketed organic produce, as well as “novel forms of governance” for regulating the products through local farm organizations (p. 4). They even purchased land for fostering rural, subsistence-based agricultural communes.

Becoming a more legitimate voice through organization and proliferation, generally speaking the 1970s would become the watershed decade for the development of organic agriculture/ movement. By then, many conventional-industrial family farmers and farm workers came to see organics as a pragmatic alternative to industrial agriculture (Sligh, 2002). Problems

of US agri-chemicals, like DDT, had been strongly evidenced whilst conventional-industrial agriculture continued to foster a growing global food chain linked to the tyrannical control of consolidated agribusinesses. Domestic evidence and fears seemed to become emergent global realities with the advent of the *Green Revolution*. Altogether, organic manuals, institutes and think tanks; a diverse array of social movements; urban food coops and even rural farming communes; and many local to state-level organic farmer organizations from either coast proliferated throughout the *doomsday decade*. State legislation had come together to define uniform standards for organic production, and an organic certification program was established that could verify particular practices—the first of its kind (p. 275).

All things considered, by the doomsday decade US agriculture is divided. On one side is the conventional-industrial agriculture, rather *better monocultural agriculture through chemistry*. On the other side is organic agri-culture, a *better farming through biology*, moreover a positive perennial polyculture-based practice that strikingly *counters* the chemistry of a gradually more chemicalized enterprise no less than diffused throughout the world. Even at this juncture the food wars imaginary seems to be a *natural*—perhaps a *just* war to end all conventional-industrial wars on (non)human nature...

The Genetics of a *Global Food Regime*

The original demarcation line drawn between the two agri-cultural formations was mostly based upon mounting agri-chemical inputs. However, the avoidance or utter elimination of pesticides and herbicides, so really the use of chemicals in organic farming, becomes a cloudier issue through time.⁶⁵ Ever regarding factors such as agri chemicals, or even *pluriactivity* and price controls to be sure, still *the* major driver of the food wars imaginary, represented most

⁶⁵ See generally, *Organic Crop Improvement Association* (www.ocia.org) for standards today.

ardently by the new agrarianism today, has undoubtedly become the inclusion/ exclusion of biotechnoscience—meaning, GE, from its processes, seeds to gene ownership and patenting. Depending on the point of view, if nothing else, GE becomes more widely operationalized in conventional-industrial agriculture through the 1980s; and banned in organic agri-culture production at the turn of the twenty-first century.

The transition of the family farm to a global food regime has prompted, inasmuch as it has been continually interinfluenced by, GE. Actually, GE has become the hallmark identifier of the conventional-industrial agriculture in the twenty-first century, particularly when it comes to its central plant celebrity, commodity corn. Yet, GE is not the sum of conventional methods—and actually not a farming method at all (Ronald and Adamchak, 2008, p. x). GE is a modern plant modification technique being utilized by most of conventional farmers in the US today. Though it is easy to imagine GE to be totally disconnected from traditional plant breeding, many contend that such older and newer techniques, while highly differentiated, are nonetheless varietal (re)territorializations of the selfsame network.

To reiterate, GE can be distinguished from orthodox hybridizing techniques in two basic ways. The first is that while traditional plant breeding is limited to intraspecies gene transfer, rather between two closely related species, GE allows interspecies gene transfer from “*any* other species, even those from animals... genetic engineering creates a cast potential for crop alteration” (original emphasis; p. x). Second, traditional plant breeding mixes a lot of different genes together at one time, whereas GE more carefully controls the introduction of only one or more genes with clear functions at one time (p. x). The technology has been used to increase yields above any expectation, augmenting other biotechnoscientific efforts since WWII to engender the abnormally robust acreages of Midwestern CornBelt spaces, like Iowa—like this

engendering innumerable problematic issues with the environment, including cross-pollination with non-GE fields (among other points I return to shortly) while simultaneously, in many cases, (re)producing more food on less land with far fewer pounds of chemical inputs. Obviously, in what constellation the techniques should be regarded, as well as their strengths and weaknesses, remain some of the hottest points of debate on the divided twenty-first century *cornscape*.

GE became far more researched, understood and applied through the 1970s. At that time, older hybridization techniques were capitalized upon with more sophisticated means of interconnecting both *phenotypes*, or the observable characteristics of a plant; and *genotypes*, to mean the underlying but unobservable changes in the chromosomal characteristics of commodity plants. Traditional plant hybridization relies on using “selection pressures to choose the plants with the best characteristics for the following year’s seed stock” (Miller & Conko, 2004, p. 5), i.e., the arrangement of the “natural” conjugality, or hybridization, of two selected plants of the same species or closely related varieties (p. 5). Even by the turn of the twentieth century, crosses between different but related species became increasingly more possible. Wide transfers, another form of hybridization still preceding *recombinant DNA* (rDNA) techniques coming into use in the 1970s, became plausible through time, too. And, eventually, genera boundaries, or “organizational groupings within families of organisms, comprising many species” (p. 5), could be transgressed, and thousands of genes could be introduced into crop plants. The clarification here is that traditional plant breeding seeks changes in phenotypes. But any *phenotypic* changes have always already drawn from/ indicated *genotypic* changes even if those cannot be known/ seen, i.e., absent. Genetic changes have *already* occurred even with the most rudimentary forms of hybridization. They were just as *unknown* to the earliest agriculturalists, and even biologists, as they are to traditional hybridization practitioners, being mostly organic producers, who widely

use plant hybridization today (p. 3). All told, orthodox plant hybridization is a set of techniques that more or less imprecisely mixes together various genes of altogether unknown characteristics to produce desired genetic mutations (and thus unintended genetic mutations in the process as well) (p. 6). Hybridization thus *reveals* desired phenotypes while *concealing* genotypic modification but, in specified cases, is generally accepted to be safe. Essentially, then, this last is where GE could be seen to *consider and encompass* orthodox tools of plant hybridization in its array of total techniques, and, overall, interconnected with traditional plant breeding... yet is generally accepted to be unsafe.

Actually, today, relatively imprecise hybridization has accounted for thousands of crop varieties, called “first generation” (F1) crops, which of course are the breeding basis for many thousand more plants (p. 6)—mostly without any opposition, or really even scrutiny. *Wide cross hybrids* of more traditional, or standard plant hybridizing techniques, are the most familiar and widely consumed varieties of fruits and vegetables. In fact, over 2,200 mutation-bred varieties of common conventional crops, including corn, have been introduced over the last fifty years—so many that practically *all* common produce consumed today could be considered as *genetically modified organisms* since, to reiterate, genetic modification is the absent presence of phenotypic change. Still, the latter, more or less *brutish* imprecision of genetic modification which occurs with orthodox plant breeding/ hybridization, practiced widely by organic agriculturalists, is rarely even a footnote in works far more likely decrying GE to be new, risky and above all, unsafe.

To understand the shift of the food wars from questions of agri-chemical science into the fabricated terror of biotechnoscience is to confront difficult questions about what to believe when it comes to, first, the biotechnology timeline. If one believes that GE is part of an array of

orthodox plant hybridization, then s/he would consider biotechnology to be a full suite of techniques dating to the first genetic tinkering of the dawning of agriculture ~10,000 years ago. At that time, *automatic* and/or *deliberate* plant domestication nevertheless genetically altered progenitor species so as to eventually (re)produce, through cultivation, an altered form of the plant that in some ways met human needs. The most common commodity crops we know today are expressions of thousands of years of such domestication and cultivation cycles. In this more social natural, a relational perspective of space and place, natural plants are *always already* social natural plants because they have been modified by humans and, so much so in many cases, they have become entirely reliant on human intervention for continuation of desired or even fundamental expressions (Blumler et al., 1991, p. 24; Doebley, Gaut & Smith, 2006, p. 1308-1309). Though in the beginning a nascent trial-and-error process, genetic tinkering obviously became far more sophisticated through time. Such tinkering is how biotechnology could be considered: as beginning with agriculture, a noninnocent intervention in the natural world many thousands of years ago. The genetic modifications which facilitated agriculture, resultant sedentism and human civilizations ever since has been an unending human and nonhuman, or society and nature, translation and negotiation. Agriculture is (re)produced by, and (re)produces natural, *always already* social, plants. However, this last is an issue of geographical imaginary; of how we think about space... If one believes that GE is not part of an array of orthodox plant hybridization, then the science appears new, risky and above all, unsafe.

Regardless of whether one believes that biotechnology encompasses practices with routes leading thousands of years, the term *biotechnology* itself generally now signals “the use of living organisms to create consumer or industrial products” (p. 3); and is firmly tethered to the global food regime versus the organic alternative. Its usage in the US today is not too far removed from

its varied deployment throughout the last century, signifying the “application of a wide range of scientific techniques to the modification and improvement of plants, animals, and microorganisms that are of economic importance” (Persley & Siedow, 1999, p. 1).

Biotechnology generally references thus highly overlapping fields of the most sophisticated technologies of applied biology and microbiology that develop byproducts using living organisms and bioprocesses for a wide range of other advanced science fields, like medicine, pharmaceuticals, engineering and technology, but more certainly today and pertinent here, the previously delimited global food regime and its commodity cropping mode. Ultimately, and even according to the USDA, the application of these techniques is what *first* definitively opposes organics.

Second, although many can see techniques of the biotechnology spectrum, from hybridization to GE, as producing genetically *modified* organisms differentiated only by precision, the GE debate and panic also arises from the homogenization of all advanced biotechnology techniques, which of course now extends to incorporate the newest developments of GE, incl. *genomics*⁶⁶ and bioengineering. Though each of the latter biotechnology forms carry different meanings across science, law, consumer, and federal regulatory structures (Miller & Conko, 2004, p. 3) they can be too quickly homogenized and regarded with the same apprehension, or even dismissed outright as a new technology that is hard to control, in that way unpredictable, and therefore largely out of control—or worse, a grave mystery terms of how the techniques will contaminate fields earmarked for food production not utilizing the techniques,

⁶⁶ Genomics, and its associated fields, like comparative genomics, functional genomics, and so forth, is the branch of molecular biology that examines the structures, functions, evolution and interactions of genes, as well as the mapping of genomes (or the entirety of an organism’s genetic material) (Drawn broadly from Specter, 2010).

and/or affect consumers when applied to commodity crops ultimately earmarked for food products (drawn broadly from Miller & Conko, 2004). Such contention implicitly and more explicitly as time goes on, fully excludes orthodox plant hybridization from its GE rejection. Traditional hybridization—concealing the very genotypic changes more precisely revealed with later genetic engineering—has seemingly become partitioned-off as a different technique; or the *safe set* of the grand tool box. Essentially, while one can make a reasonable argument that “selecting and hybridizing plants with desirable traits in order to retain and exaggerate them” (p. 3) is the basis of both the earliest techniques and the most advanced of present day; or from centuries old methods to ferment grain for alcohol as early as 6000 BCE, to the infusion of genes which bolster both weed and pest resistances toward creating monocultures with growth and yields never before of conceived, most dialogue on this and related points has completely shut down. Put simply, biotechnology can be cited as a broad spectrum of ancient and new processes (Miller & Conko, 2004)—not unlike how organic farming is often delineated as at once ancient and modern, extending back many thousands of years. Biotechnology can also be called a global tyranny for the same reasons.

For now, the most important point here is what such differences in GE perspectives signify in terms of the *geographical* imaginary of food wars... Fast-forwarding a bit to situate the recognition of Austrian Monk Gregor Mendel’s mid-nineteenth century work with pea plants at the turn of twentieth century, and then moving through what would come to form the foundation of modern genetics thereafter with the description of the DNA *double helix* by Watson and Crick in the mid-1950s, eventually locates the biotechnological techniques of the early the 1970s that involve recombinant DNA, or *rDNA*, technology. *rDNA* technology allows for more direct and precise gene-splicing techniques, rather “genetic improvement at the

molecular level” (p. 3; 5). *Doomsday decade* scientists located ways to shift DNA between both related, and more unrelated, organisms (Persley & Siedow, 1999, p. 1). *Transgenic* approaches, thus, though relying on older plant breeding techniques, would utilize *rDNA* technology. The latter encompasses those processes through which a DNA segment of “nearly any organism, including plants, animals, bacteria, or viruses” (p. 1) can be spliced with another organism’s DNA. The resultant plant, genetically engineered with genes from the same, or another species, or transgene, are thus *transgenic plants*.⁶⁷ For all intents and purposes, transgenic plants can be accepted as appearing along a continuum of genetic modification toward improvement of growth and resistances, with the latest rDNA techniques in that way offering “*more precise, better understood, and more predictable ways* to modify genetic material than was possible with conventional biotechnology” (*my emphasis*; Miller & Conko, 2004, p. 8-9). If contextualized in such ways, bioengineering can also be accepted as a highly specialized, arguably more controllable, single gene identification and transfer: “a greatly refined” (Miller & Conko, p. 6)

⁶⁷ There is a high variety of interchangeable terms here, from *bioengineered* to *genetically engineered* and *transgenic* (Burchett, 2001, p. 173; 183). *Genetically-modified organism* (GMO) is a demarcation that refers to the use of rDNA to modify, or transform an organism, itself frequently thereafter referred to as a *GMO* (Persley & Siedow, 1999, p. 2). *GMO* is common shorthand, along with *GM* to indicate *genetically engineered* plants. I prefer *engineered* to *modified* given that my relational perspective finds that practically *all* cultivated food crops have been *modified* in some either major or minor way through traditional plant breeding techniques that bolster and/or eliminate unwanted traits. In that way, *engineered* is most accurate to differentiate the most advanced forms of biotechnology (Mcinerney et al., 2004, p. 70; Lerner, 2007, p. 1005) for my project. So, I intend to use *GE* as opposed to *GM*, using the abbreviation *GEO* as necessary. Notably, not all *GEOs* involve inter-species transfers. Changes at the molecular level can now be *more precise* because the breeder knows precisely which genes have been transitioned, gained or lost (Persley & Siedow, 1999, p. 2-3), whether that means intra- or inter-species transfers. *Genetically engineered crops* refer to those which, “contain genes that are artificially inserted instead of the organism acquiring them through sexual means” (Wu, 2004, p. 715-716). Again, those are to be distinguished from older techniques for hybridizing plant varieties. *Genetically engineered food*, or *GE food*, includes those foods which are derived from, or contain components whose varietal percentages derive from, genetic engineering (Burchett, 2001, p. 183).

scientific progression of the *first generation (F1) hybrid*.⁶⁸ And, these biotechnoscientific advances purportedly allow for not only an endless array of medicinal and commercial applications, but also for gaining a deeper understanding of the mechanisms of genetics (p. 9). Yet again, if one believes that GE is not part of an array of orthodox plant hybridization, then the science appears new, risky and above all, unsafe.

With resistance ever accumulating on the horizon, bioengineering developments continued to escalate in various fields, incl., medicine and pharmacology, over the next thirty years. By the time of the USDA's prohibition of GE in organics, 2000, they had also approved techniques of the most advanced biotechnoscience producing the first *rDNA*, or gene-spliced, slow-ripening tomato. Throughout the 1990s, what are called *First Generation (F1)* GE crops, including corn, soybeans, cotton and potatoes, were genetically engineered with "heightened resistance to certain insects and diseases, tolerance to herbicides, and longer shelf life" (Bratspies, 2003, p. 593-595; Miller & Conko, 2004, p. 8). The F1 GE crops did not *directly* express any changes in nutritional content, though subsequent generations would work to shape nutritional content as well.

By the end of this first decade of the current century, three generations of biotechnology had been inputted in the fields of US conventional-industrial agriculture. Far from comprising a monolithic GE, each generation presents their own set of concerns, as well as receives different public attention/ opinions. The first generation (F1), *agronomic*, is my primary concern when it comes to GE commodity corn. Agronomic refers to biotechnological changes which influence

⁶⁸ *First generation (F1) hybrids* should be distinguished from *F1 GE plants*. Again, traditional hybridization is a method of arranging the "natural" conjugality of plants so as to create breeds with particular traits, but is a *biotechnology* nonetheless. F1 GE plants refers to the first generation of plants not traditionally hybridized, but (re)produced via GE techniques.

the plant's resiliency, and resistances to drought, pests and weeds. Such F1 corn and soybeans dominate the US food supply. As follows, the second generation (F2) is engineered to shape end product quality, like taste, nutrition and longer shelf life. Third generation (F3) consists of plants engineered for industrial products, like plastics and cosmetics, as well as pharmaceuticals, like vaccines, antibodies, and other proteins (Wu, 2004, p. 718). F1 GE was originally the most pervasively inputted, largely ignored and/ or *accepted* form of GE.

In fact, approval for commercial cultivation of more than 60 different F1 GE gene-spliced plant varieties which exhibited this range of traits was granted with little pause. Indisputably, commodity corn commanded a starring role early on, particularly in its most common, analyzed and debated form, the F1 GE crop, *Bacillus thuringiensis*, or *Bt*. *Bt* commodity corn is engineered for growth and resistances with an endotoxin to destroy the stomach cells of the corn borer larvae. F1 *Bt* corn is genetically modified to release *cry 1A*, an endotoxin, in three ways: 1) by pollen during detasseling; 2) by root; and 3) by plant residues (Zwahlen et al., 2003, p. 1077). The widely approved *Bt* version for *both* human and animal consumption was first commercialized in the US in 1996, integrated with “commodity food systems without any segregation” (Wu, 2004, p. 717). This is due to general regard for F1 as, “*substantially equivalent* to existing varieties” (Owen, 2000, p. 765), meaning it has been deemed *safe to eat* by the *Federal Food and Drug Administration* (FDA). Likewise, the introduction of commercial *Bt* was largely *ignored* by food industry as well as consumers in North America through its first years of production, a time when, at least publically, the *process* of biotechnology was less stressed than its *products*, which were seen to be largely equivalent to existing varieties (Smyth et al., 2002a, p. 537- 542; Smyth et al., 2002b)—all points of real and imagined concerns tied to

the biotechnology *process versus products* regulatory contention aggravating the *food wars* imaginary.

What such rather pan acceptance of this particular kind of F1 agronomic GE has looked like, in tandem with other aspects of a highly consolidated conventional-industrial agriculture presented before, is an explosion of *all federal program crops*, including wheat, rice, soybeans, cotton and, of course, corn. The US leads the world in GE crop input, commanding half of world GE input (Miller & Conko, 2004). And, the star of this monocultural paradigm only *heightened* with GE is the commodity corn plant, in all its verdant superabundance-to-surplus glory. The years from 2003 to the present are actually watershed GE corn years. As of 2003, 40% of all US corn was the latest GE biotechnology created to increase yield. A year later, 46% of all corn grown in the US was a gene-spliced variety (p. 8). Today, domestic GE corn input has exceeded 85%, (re)creating ten-foot, thirty-inch rowed *corn country* verisimilitudes of identical, lush, and much sturdier plants capable of such high yields due first to synthetic chemicals and other agri-technologies, and now, GE. GE can be considered the strongest, fastest growing biotechnoscientific way to surplus corn for innumerable purposes within the current US conventional-industrial agricultural paradigm turned global food regime—which is why more than soybeans and cotton, commodity corn is the key GE commodity crop.

And, at this point, the latter, rather how—to what end—the GE is being used, can be (re)visioned as the real tragedy, the actual crisis, of conventional-industrial US agriculture gone global to date. Ostensibly, transgenic plants have a very real *capacity*, anyway, for engendering crop productivity with higher yields for less than the input cost of traditional pesticide/herbicide use (Persley & Siedow, 1999, p. 3). This last economic argument nevertheless has real world impacts, for the abandonment of countless pounds of synthetic chemical inputs by farmers

already in a cost-price bind in the greater context of consolidated, large-scale conventional-industrial agriculture. *Bt* corn, for instance, releases the toxin other farmers spray on the plants themselves. *Bt* is actually a commonly used *organic* insecticide, rather a way to biologically (instead of chemically) control insects through bacteria. *Bt* thus falls into the purview of combining agricultures through *biocontrol*, a myriad of solutions for insects and weeds based in organic, thus, *biology* over *chemistry* (Ronald & Adamchak, p. 34-35). In such ways, many argue that genetically engineering crops can thus decrease dependence on the proverbial *chemical treadmill* which has lead to *en masse* depletion of ecosystems and biodiversity cited above. Crop rotation and land/natural resource conservation can become a higher priority while the low cost food supply can be continued. Additionally, second and third generation GE corn can be used to explore output variations (second), and industrial, nutraceutical, and pharmaceutical (third) ventures, as suggested prior. According to the USDA, some 2.5 million pounds of pesticides have been *already* forgone with the introduction of GE technologies (in Specter, 2010, p. 131). And, perhaps most importantly for complicating the oversimplified *food wars* template, geneticist Ronald shows that GE corn benefits childbearing women. Since certain birth defects increase the more mycotoxin-contaminated corn is consumed, and such toxin is destroyed by particular GE corn, women living in countries who mostly consume GE corn have lower rates of such birth defects—no small issue, by the way, for women living in corn-tortilla based foodways, like Mexico (Ronald & Adamchak, 2008, p. 72).

However, farmers who could be *weeding out* agri-chemicals through the GE technology instead have far too often failed to curb their *chemical treadmill* addiction because of their intensely complex orientation in a constellation of trajectories (re)territorializing as the *global food regime*, and because of this failure, the most promising aspects of GE, from its timeline and

characteristics which can be networked with traditional plant breeding, have been more easily dismissed wholesale as new, risky and unsafe. Farmers continue to augment an already immense GE shaped commodity corn surplus with agri-chemicals in order to, cyclically, overproduce corn to make-up for the *coast-price squeeze*; to turn a profit (an endless *cycle* outlined in Hurt, 2002). Essentially, it is reasonably argued that the current conventional-industrial *misuses* of rather promising aspects of various GE technology is the problem, not some sort of inherent, even so-called sinister nature of the technology itself.

What is forwarded here is that not all applied genetic engineering tools have the same objectives; or should be passively accepted. In a (re)vision which attempts to challenge and revision a *modern* geographical imaginary which bifurcates the world, and thus agricultural paradigms and attendant discourses, as conventional-industrial, or global, versus the organic paradigm, including increasingly *local*, projects, GE *can* be imagined as another form of genetic modification in a vast collection of techniques without reducing all genetic modification to the *same* category of genetic transfers and potential risks; and thus to dismiss it, or by extension, all of agi and related biotechnoscience as a *global* monster. The objectives to which genetic engineering is continually put is the real tragedy, the actual crisis, that could be better understood and cadenced if the technology could be decoupled from the fabricated conventional-industrial side of the as problematic food wars division in the first place. In the words of Specter (2010): “genetic engineering has promised more than it can, or at least has, delivered” (p. 117). Rhetorical climate aside for the moment, further comment is required on what has been *accomplished* with GE through the conventional-industrial cropping paradigm, which is really the strongest impetus for the food wars imaginary, and often more than the science *per se*: an at

once deadly *desert of desserts* that remains an inarguably toxic reality of American conventional-industrial agriculture, as well as society and culture more generally.

A (GE) Commodity Corn *Desert of Desserts*

Although GE soybeans have been inputted more widely and for longer than commodity corn, GE technology can be used to surplus an already mountainous corn surplus so that farmers can attempt to turn some sort of profit. Subsequently, because of the surplus, the buying power of major agribusinesses, i.e., corn processors, increases... again related to the violations of supply and demand which surplus creates in the first place (like a *perpetual motion global food regime machine*). Like this proliferates cheap foodstuffs to suffuse the market. Essentially, GE corn is not being implemented to save a webbed human-nonhuman environment. It is being used for political-economic ends by both mega corporations and farmers, with notable consequences for all human and nonhuman life. All told, *more* corn will be grown, as opposed to less, given the “efficiency” of the GE seed, and much of it in still tandem with agri-chemicals—instead of finally working them out of the conventional equation—to recuperate profits lost with input costs leading up to the corn price boon.

By the turn of the current century, heavy federal subsidization, mega agribusiness, and specifically biotechnoscience have continually cross-pollinated to (re)territorialize a global food regime with one main goal: to surplus cheap corn and increase the buying power of corn processors who can, through advanced techniques like *wetmilling* and *drymilling*, exploit corn for industrial purposes and cheap, edible processed corn byproducts, i.e., food, for humans and nonhumans alike; fuel, or *Ethanol*;⁶⁹ export; and/or for dumping on a global market demanding

⁶⁹ For various specifically Iowa corn-based and other issues related to *Ethanol*, see United States Energy Information Administration (EIA) *Renewable and Alternative Fuels*, 2012; Gallagher (2006); Ginder (2006); Wisner (2006).

more and more corn for various reasons, chief among those being animal feed.⁷⁰ Besides the feeding of animals, often in large CAFOs,⁷¹ requiring further biotechnoscientific capacities for ensuring food safety, like *irradiation*,⁷² the first predominant contribution of GE driven corn surplus, cheap corn and refinery capacities are “some forty-five thousand items in the average American supermarket and more than a quarter of them now contain corn” (Pollan, 2006, p. 19)—and Michael Pollan means from the toothpaste, diapers, batteries trash bags to the cosmetics and cleansers, the gloss on magazine covers and vegetables skins, all the way up to supermarket’s building materials. An American supermarket today is literally *comprised* of GE

⁷⁰ Take as a case in point the projected use for the annual 2011-2012 US commodity corn crop (see USDA website, at www.usda.gov). Of the estimated total projected ~13.2 billion bushels [which in reality yielded about 12.3 billion bushels (USDA)], most of the percentage either goes directly for animal feed, or will be processed for animal feed (and human food products, like *high-fructose corn syrup*, or HFCS). Even 14% earmarked for *export* will go to animal feed. Meaning, the largest export portion is headed for China to feed animals to meet their increased meat demand. If the latter stays on par with the current US intake of meat-based protein, they would require *24 billion bushels of corn per year* (Suderman, 2012, p. 28). Anyway, China already buys more than 60% of the annual US soybean crop, and projects that over the course of the next several years they will be purchasing more than 400 million bushels of US commodity corn. Twenty-first century Chinese demand has demanded US surplus, spiking corn prices for the first time in many decades, and driving rapid development of biotechnological products able to meet expectations without putting more acres under cultivation or exploding agrichemical inputs (p. 28)... Whether or not this is just an agricultural supply-demand bubble about to burst is just another major anxiety to throw on the ever growing *global food regime* externality landfill.

⁷¹ There is a litany of issues associated with the CAFO system, exploring which remains mostly beyond the current project. See, among others, Imhoff (2010).

⁷² *Irradiation* is the process whereby food is exposed to a controlled source of ionizing radiation. At this point, such a process is expectedly aligned the conventional-industrial side of the *food wars* divide and, as expectedly, is not without its *heated* controversy (Smith & Pillai, 2004). For an example of the latter, compare the irradiation information found at the *Organic Consumers Organization* website (<http://www.organicconsumers.org/irrad>) with Specter (2010).

cornscapes, from its prepackaged meals, soups, snacks, cake mixes, mayonnaise and “even vitamins” (p. 19); to its foundation and exterior walls.

Most infamously crowding the supermarket are those cheap, prepackaged and high-calorie foodstuffs, including monosodium glutamate (MSG), but most strikingly billions of pounds of *high-fructose corn syrup* (HFCS) (Lerner, 2007, p. 993). HFCS has become quite known through popular writings and other depictions for its various interconnections with the global food regime and public health—a toxic environment which, as a *power geometry*, can nevertheless be linked with a rapid increase of US adult obesity, and related morbidity and mortality, extending now to adolescent and children populations as well.⁷³ This last is, of course, also further interrelated with the school lunch program, and other programs targeting such populations, particularly those with the least access. Altogether, GE commodity corn is easily imagined as a terrifying (post)modern dystopia, a (food) *desert of real food*.⁷⁴ Given the foregoing description of US foodways as driving a global food regime, it seems certain to many that this complex set of issues will just cycle around from the West’s processing of surplus commodity corn to all of the rest of the world waiting to develop... our size?⁷⁵

⁷³ For innumerable analysis and statistics on this well-documented US public health landscape, see the *Center for Disease Control and Prevention* website (www.cdc.gov) website. For a varied collection of popular and otherwise work on the topic, see, among many others: Bray (2004); Braun (2012); Isganaitis & Lustig (2005); Muller, Schoonover & Wallinga (2007); Wylie-Rosett, Segal-Isaacson & Segal-Isaacson (2004).

⁷⁴ For understanding *food deserts*, see, among others, Cummins and Macintyre (2002); and/ or in the US specifically, the Economic Research Service (2009), USDA report to Congress, *Access to Affordable and Nutritious Foods: Measuring and Understanding Food Deserts and Their Consequences*.

⁷⁵ Type-2 is more or less on the rise in *developing* countries (Wylie-Rosett & Segal-Isaacson, 2004). Still, disease pathology will ever fail to be a *magic bullet*.

All of these massively studied phenomena of twenty-first century American foodways, offered here as illumination of what could easily be called a terrifying and terrifyingly global food regime of a mountainous commodity corn surplus, driven first by synthetic chemicals, and now too often in tandem with GE, have had and continue to have profound effects on seemingly all aspects of American food life, and inarguably thus broader society and culture. What is also clear here besides an arising (post)modern food wars imaginary of global food dystopia, is that without (re)vision of the GE driven paradigm—and with this endless food war—the strengths of biotechnoscience means will only continue to be put toward some rather awful *desserts* with *desert* consequences.

Large(r Than Ever) American *Butterflies* Under Threat

As if material-discursive desert of GE commodity corn desserts were not terrifying enough, GE, and specifically, certain *Bt*, corn, has also raised some noteworthy questions about its real and/or potential risks.⁷⁶ Albeit environmental impacts are as varied as the research which examines and positions them, unintended consequences of GE commodity corn input include, first, pollen cross-breeds, or gene transfers to weedy plants, which means weediness and/or or weed tolerance can result. *Bt* can lead to pesticide tolerances in insects as well (Persley & Siedow, 1999, p. 6; Owen, 2000, p.769). Also, herbicide resistance can be transferred to non-GE fields, creating not only weed problems, but unintended effects for non-GE, even certified organic, growers, like yield potential and contamination—a large problem when much profitability on the international market can come from non-GEO grain demarcation (Persley & Siedow, 1999, p. 6; Owen, 2000, p.769). Examples of various impacts on biodiversity, or

⁷⁶ The following text is an overview of the most common issues connected with GE, particularly with GE commodity corn. Presenting all issues connected with such a diverse technology is beyond the scope of the current project.

corruption of species' "genetic integrities" (Rich, 2004, p. 893), include morbidity and mortality rates in "nontarget soil organism" populations as diverse as earthworm species (Zwahlen et al., 2003), the highly-profiled *Monarch larvae* (Mcinerney et al., 2004), honeybees (Ludka, 2012), and various bird species (Persley & Siedow, p. 6), among others, which all can ingest transgenic corn pollen and detritus through various channels. On the whole, scientific studies on a range of real and potential *Bt* effects are by far and away more documented than they are conclusive. Notably, older, conventional-industrial synthetic herbicides and pesticides can be tied to all of the foregoing consequences, though actually in a far more impactful way (Belcher et al., 2005; Owen, 2000).⁷⁷ Regardless, *Bt* consequences continue to demand research and surveillance.

Obviously, many economic, regulatory and otherwise challenges have arisen amidst these charges, questioning how best to monitor and regulate greater ecological impacts, as well as how to effectively segregate, or *contain* GE input to GE fields (Smyth, 2002b, p. 541-542). *Purity* of non-GE fields is at the forefront of those. Though, again, many conventional-industrial synthetic herbicides and pesticides can lead to many unwanted social natural changes, such agri-chemical inputs still fail to impact, in the ways purported to occur with GE, non-GE fields and products, such as *organic* and even conventional-industrial agriculture which does not implement GE seed (Bullock, Desquilbet & 2000). This last is why segregation for "identity preservation" (IP) of non-GE crops is so important. Segregation is generally accomplished through *buffer zones*, a term which refers to the spatial arrangement of GE and non-GE crops, creating distances by

⁷⁷ These articles discuss general uses of GE *Bt* corn, and the potential for cross-field contamination. Many sources could be used here, but these are strong analytic summaries.

pasture, fields with other species, and so forth between GE and non-GE crop fields.⁷⁸ In addition to buffer zones, *refuge acreage* and out-rotation of GE corn helps keep the landscape purified of residual GE seeds, and contamination of non-GE fields and eventual products (McHughen & Smyth, 2008). But, for the most part, out-rotation is not happening as frequently as it should due to the current conventional-industrial program crop subsidy and commodity corn surplus context. So, some studies have found that system-wide cross-pollination of farmland by GE crops occurs regardless of the fabricated barriers (Belcher et al., 2005). GE corn is obviously more difficult to segregate during production, and notably more so, as well as expensive, after harvest (such as at elevators) (Belcher et al., 2005; Rich, 2004). Likewise, integration jeopardizes not only organic agricultural production, but the free decisions of those operating non-GE corn landscapes. On the whole, “loss of, or limited ability to produce certified non-GE crops has the potential to impose significant production and consumption externalities on producers, consumers and other downstream users” (Belcher et al., p. 338). Some cases of biotech patent holders taking regular, non-GE inputters to court because their fields exhibited traces of a patented product without acquiring the seeds in the first place (i.e., due to cross-pollination) understandably remain points of debate.

Purity, genetic integrity, *IP*—all of these are in some ways easily compromised, but remain fundamental to FDA regulation of GE food products based on *products-over-*

⁷⁸ Incidentally, another form of *buffer zone*, being *refuge acres*, come with hefty fines if GE inputters are found in violation of proper use dictates by the technology owners. The top Bt corn technology owners have teamed up with *Agriculture Biotechnology Stewardship Technical Committee* to ensure, oftentimes aggressively, the ethical inputting of their products, and larger insect/ weed management, which includes major checks-and-balances campaigns to monitor that growers are abiding by *refuge acre* recommendations and related *Environmental Protection* (see generally the *National Corn Growers Association* website).

processes.⁷⁹ There are high stakes in IP for organic producers, who must ensure, for instance, that organic meat producers are delivered non-GE grains.⁸⁰ But there are also lesser known, but comparable stakes, for the biotechnoscience patent holders and farmers who input their products. Responsible input of GE seeds is heavily monitored and regulated through fines. Though again, many claim that these companies care nothing for the safety of the inputter or larger ecological health, and therefore do not monitor the use of their products as thoroughly as they should, it begs the question: if these companies will take non-GE inputters through litigation when cross-pollination most likely cause their products to appear in non-GE fields, is it not most likely that they would be even *more closely* monitoring those who use their products—the gatekeepers thus to their bottom-line? Just as there are stakes for organics, there are high stakes in responsible, ethical use for progenitors of the technology, and its inputters, whether/ not that is sheer economic motivation.

⁷⁹ This phrase captures how GE food is regulated in the US, which is not by the *process* of GE—seen to be comparable to traditional plant hybridization techniques—but through the *substantial equivalence* of end GE food *products* to other, non-GE food products. All related regulatory oversight is drawn from the FDA, which acquires such authority for determining food labeling and safety, specifically here for GE food labeling requirements, under the *Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act* (FDCA). Via the FDCA, the FDA has been overseeing GE products for decades, most notably since human insulin was first commercialized (McHughen & Smyth, 2008, p. 7). Since the advent of rDNA use in the early 1970s, and through recent years of markedly increased GE corn input, the most important of several US governmental forces now involved in the coordinated regulatory framework of GE and GEO plant biotechnology have been the USDA; Environmental Protection Agency (EPA); and FDA. Many see this regulatory oversight to comprise a *patchwork* which does not effectively regulate GE. Labeling GE foods is a point of heated contention that I return to later. For now, and for the original statutes, see the federal regulatory document, “Statement of Policy: Foods Derived from New Plant Varieties,” (1992); for an overview of regulatory structures, *GRAS* and *substantial equivalence*, among other related topics, *see generally*: Baily (2005); Bratspies (2003); Kuiper et al. (2001); Lerner (2007); Marden (2003); McHughen & Smith (2008); and/ or Rich (2004).

⁸⁰ See *The Non-GMO Sourcebook* (2012) for guidelines.

Either way, the foregoing overview indicates some of the most central GE/ non-GE use issues of US agriculture today; as well as questions about how equitably such points are presented and addressed in popular imaginaries of US agriculture.

Besides IP, how the rather common failure of segregation can, or even does, impact *human* health through consumption of GE products is even more hotly contested. Among various concerns, the most high-profile are that toxins, or at least greater allergens, will enter the food supply. This last has the highest frequency of mention in GE crop analyses, as well as the GE food regulatory and labeling debate. Cumulative GE-related issues are not monitored in terms of the GE process, but in terms of GE-related end products under the FDA, who has statutory authority over GE foodstuffs. Still, the full impact of GE on any human health issues remains relatively unknown. There is a lot of animated rhetoric and speculation, of course, ranging from everything like GE is related to autism and immune-incompetency, but again, none of those charges have been conclusively proven. On one hand, the likelihood that any protein in a GE plant can or will be an allergen is generally considered to be comparable to the risk posed by other, hybridized plants, given that the GE approved for human consumption is seen to be, to date, as a more sophisticated process of traditional hybridization. And, it remains unclear how any such kind of supposed especial GE induced allergenicity could be extensively tested since a whole host of social natural factors for which would have to be controlled in any given general large-scale study (Rich, 2004). So, on the other hand, there are innumerable imaginable possibilities for the human harm potentiality of GE. How these two sides are imagined and represented is the central point of dissension and reasonable-to-fantastical concerns included here.

All things considered, *Bt* corn, approved or not for human consumption, to mean even that delivered through meat-based protein from corn-fed animals, often in the form of *pink slime*,⁸¹ has not been shown to conclusively impact human health in the short term. And, likewise, though unintended gene mutations have been proposed to thus, again, *cumulatively* impact the long-term health of general populations (Rich, 2004), such issues are practically impossible to categorically gauge—which, as reiterated here, can be differentiated from how they are *imagined*, presented and represented...

A lot of the concern about GE contamination and supposed human health impacts has come from various, noteworthy GE contamination events and claims. For instance, in late 2000, consumer-right-to-know and environmental groups [most notably, *Friends of Earth* (FOE)] detected rDNA from *Aventis*' first generation GE corn product, *StarLink*, approved only for animal feed not intended for human consumption, in *Taco Bell* taco shells. Their detection spurred a massive recall and claims of allergic reactions. Though the *contamination* could not be denied, and was aggressively followed-up by numerous government agencies, no allergenicity could be associated with the corn by independent researchers, the FDA or the CDC—even though they conducted a “gold standard,” double-blind, placebo-controlled, food-challenge (DBPCFC) *Bt* corn allergy study (Steven et al., 2003). Regardless, forty-four consumers complained of allergic reactions to the products only after what was called a *media firestorm*.

⁸¹ Obviously, not all GE commodity corn has been earmarked or targeted for human consumption. A lot of commodity corn, in general, is heavily processed for end food products, but most of it ends-up, in some way or another, in CAFOs. Given innumerable issues associated with CAFOs, some research tries to show that GE corn varieties for CAFOs can move down-wind and down-stream, plausibly contaminating an even larger area (for this and related disease pathology issues, see generally, McKenna, 2010). But the real issue of GE corn varieties for CAFOs is meat-based protein. Fears about the quality of CAFO meats can be tied most recently to the endless array of news stories on *Lean Finely Textured Beef* (LFTB), or a ground mixture of bovine waste trimmings referred to here which *turns pink* through the course of such treatment with ammonia, i.e., *pink slime* (see generally, Entis, 2012)

Albeit none of the claims could be verified by investigators and lead to no further inquiry, this incident would come to signify for many an interminably egregious GE threat to public health.

Soon after, in 2001, then Professor Igancio Chapela (with D. Quist, 2001) famously claimed that his research with a colleague showed “transgenic DNA introgressed into traditional Maize landraces in Oaxaca, Mexico”—the title of their work that basically proposed that *Bt* corn had contaminated, or polluted, pure Mexican maize varieties. Suffice it to say, the study would not withstand repeated attempts for extensive peer review publication since their results could not be verified or replicated (see generally, Christou, 2002). Not only was the report thoroughly discredited, but Chapela’s tenure at University of California, Berkley, would be initially denied (Miller & Conko, 2004, p. 68; 34-35). Nevertheless, this time, *Bt* corn, already a threat to public health by popularized accounts of obesity related to HFCS, and allergenicity related to *Starlink*, was now positioned as a threat to environmental health the world over. Soon the domestically driven, now international *Bt* offensive would bypass Mexico, and would not be limited to corn.

What seemed to come from the pages of Ehrlich, during the fall and winter of 2002-2003, with 2.5 million Africans from Zambia and Zimbabwe on the brink of starvation, US GE grain was locked in warehouses and kept from the affected populations because the grain was regarded as impure by at least the Zambian President, who related his concerns at a gathering of the United Nations (UN) by saying, “we would rather starve than get something *toxic*” (*my emphasis*; in Miller & Conko, 2004, p. 1). Though the GE grain was eventually “liberated” by the undernourished people (p. 1) (whilst *irradiated* grain remained, inexplicably, unquestionably accepted) the threat of GE crops to the health of humans and nonhumans alike had apparently come to be, in these high profile incidences, *worse* than the threat of *starvation*.

All of these cases have their most popularized, rudimentary claims for protest in the purported death of some monarch larvae at the end of the last century, when not coincidentally also began the approval for commercial cultivation of more than 60 different gene-spliced plant varieties. “Transgenic Pollen Harms Monarch Larvae,” a letter, published in *Nature* magazine in the Spring of 1999, presented findings from a small, preliminary study with inconclusive results about twenty-five monarch larvae that apparently died after ingesting *Bt* corn pollen. These findings should have required *extensive* research to make any statistical claims about GEO risks (Mcinerney et al., 2004, p. 63). Yet, in pages upon pages of popular media ranging from the *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal* to even the *Associated Press*, the study became “scientifically sound evidence” in lieu of preliminary ruminations (p. 63). In many reports, not only were the study results overstated, but US foodways had become a “deadly” environmental “crisis” (p. 64). At the forefront of the issue of quality of coverage and its rhetorical strategies was the quality of sources, first obviously with the study itself. What’s more, analysis of the coverage of the report as a “crisis” found that, “Journalists turned to activist groups for information” (p. 64) rather than reliable insight from academic, government, or food industry sources. Many argue that a preliminary study able to trigger a “ ‘frenzy’ of anti-biotech stories in the media” (Miller & Conko, 2004, p. 30) without full evidence and only the views of activists to bolster scientific claims was a public relations disaster from which those at the forefront of biotechnology research might never recover.

What may have been reasonable fears early on, related to the depletion of ecosystems, have been at times since, quite successfully blown out of all normal proportions in popular imaginaries and representation to equate GE, in all of its innumerable forms, to evidenced risks to all human and nonhuman health. The “crisis” of biotechnology had framed preliminary *Bt*

corn charges as, mostly inexplicably, sufficiently linked to not just Monarch butterflies, but, somehow, human mortality. This was an important replacement for acquiring more public, media, and regulatory power for food activists groups like FOE, who had led the charge and substitution: consumers were more likely to identify with elegantly fluttering, distinctively colorful, amazingly migratory butterflies... than larvae. And, as with the *Aventis StarLink* incident a few years later, *Bt* could then be presented as somehow *causal* of the biotech driven end of civilization—and not just because of commodity corn surplus processed into poor diets. The latter is the less sexy but certainly realer threat of the use of GE technology that, to date, receives far less attention in terms of concrete solutions than does oftentimes flamboyant rhetoric and representation of often nominally reasonable threats which nevertheless remain largely inconclusive in varietal research and scholarship. As it stands today, though more monarchs plausibly *get killed on the windshield of a car* than in the fields of GE corn (McWilliams, 2009, p. 83; 53-80) GE commodity corn has been popularly charged with placing not just various larvae and pure Mexican maize varieties, but somehow, larger than ever American butterflies-turned-humans under threat of extinction. Are such representations inspiring an *unruly and practical conversation* (drawn from Haraway in a different context; 1992, p. 304) about the future of American agriculture, esp. commodity corn production, which will continue one way or another; or more so effectively *dividing* the issue along lines of terror, threat and safety that GE can only continue to be generated and applied in a less accountable way?

A once ignored agricultural biotechnoscience, whose end products (not processes) remain regulated by *substantial equivalence* and *Generally Recognized as Safe* (GRAS), in many imaginaries has become, without any compromise or with little openness to the possibility of multiple social natural realities in the age of advanced biotechnoscience, little more than a deadly

affront on human-nonhuman health. Of course, it is always important to reemphasize that, at their base, the central concerns about agri-GE are quite reasonable. Basically, among many related issues, ranging from allergenicity to cross-pollination with organics, for instance, many argue that the most valuable technologies, seeds and genes will be further controlled and owned by the abovementioned agri-corporations who already control and own commercial seed production and agri-chemicals. Since patenting goes hand-in-hand with advanced development of biotechnoscience, many see even stricter corporate ownership and control of all of agricultural production, and really of all human and nonhuman life, coming in the form of global, megamerged corporate acquirement of patents (Ronald & Adamchak, 2008, p. 137-138). As is often the case with the food wars imaginary, however, the incredibly complex questions about twenty-first century biotechnoscience that has otherwise thoroughly penetrated all aspects of human and nonhuman life have been too regularly reduced in representations to denouncing, even calling for a total discontinuation of, GE application in foodways entire; to proposing that all of food production, in effect, races into the past ‘before’ the GE existed and progressed.

The foregoing issues tied to GE corn are reasonable on some level, but not statistically correlated and mostly indeterminate. Such determination cannot be set at the outset of marketing GE products, or for really years in the case of certain speculations. Many ways to address such issues here entailing a confrontation with the feasibility of various, qualified biotechnoscience developments in as particular and delimited cases and ways; and a reasonable dialogue about real possibilities for federal regulation in labeling with a shift into a fuller interpretation of *precaution*—all of which could also be more democratically represented in popular writings and documentaries, for instance—have oftentimes been usurped by far more popular imaginaries of *going organic*, and eventually, *going local*. The latter representations forward organics and

localism as the *only* safe alternatives for large(r than ever) American Butterflies under the threat of a terrifyingly (unlabeled) *pink slimed*, GE global food regime... Meanwhile, what will happen with the issue of GE commodity corn overproduction, which remains decidedly outside of such imaginaries, appraisals and representations?

Organics BIG and small: (Re)C/si(gh)ting Local/ism

Though arguably beginning as a *back to the land movement*, organics had become a far more mainstream agricultural paradigm by and through the doomsday decade (1970s). The latter has a lot to do with research and funding. Even though there had been a dearth of research solely devoted to organic agriculture until the 1980s (Ronald & Adamchak, 2008, p. 35), the extreme externalities of the increasingly global food regime prompted fuller exploration of the alternative organic agri-cultural paradigm—and not just by its relatively smaller set of practitioners and consumers. Organic agri-culture had come to the attention of many academic research institutions, as well as federal regulatory structures. Given its subsequent, glowingly positive academic and federal assessment, organic agriculture was to be taken seriously, which meant more funding and research paradigms by the mid-1980s, with a concurrent increase in organic certifiers. Given more conclusive evidences that conventional-industrial practices were in fact depleting whole ecosystems in the US and abroad, and further positive evaluations of organic agri-cultures, by the 1990s more organic programs would lobby and garner increased organic agricultural research funding (Sligh, 2002; Ronald & Adamchak, 2008).

Actually, precisely when biotechnology was beginning to market, via USDA approval, the first of the F1 GE crops, with the greater public and private funding and attention organic sales, public interest and support was on the rise throughout the 1990s (Ronald & Adamchak, 2008). For example, whereas before, state-level organic systems could not facilitate inter-state

and even international trade of the increasing organics market, *The Organic Foods Production Act* of 1990 facilitated uniformity of research, enforcement and standards of organic (re)production and products across state lines (Sligh, 2002). The organization of a state-based, turning country-wide, organic community, eventually provisioned the USDA a stronger role in setting standards... as long as the *National Organic Standards Board* (NOSB), a group of organic farm owners, operators, handlers and retailers, among others who reported on and represented consumer and environmental interests, could guide and temper their decisions and regulations by establishing a list of approved and prohibited substances for organic farming. The partnership between the USDA and NOSB also ensured that organics would become, at least geographically, more than local foodstuffs, thereby entering not only a phase of interstate, but, eventually, as of June of 2012, global trade with uniform standards.

Like this, organics would become the fastest growing agriculture sector by the turn of the current century, with millions of consumers who imagined/ were imagined to be rejecting all biotechnoscientific/ GE aspects of the global food regime in favor of a complete “ecological production management system” (Sligh, 2002, p. 277) and more natural, healthier products. At the same time, however, the formal, national and even international regulatory oversight and legitimacy, along with the interrelated rising popularity of organics, also made the agricultural paradigm a “brand” prime for co-option by a conventional-industrial agriculture-minded model. Continuing through the current century, many mainstream food companies, like *Monsanto* and *ADM*—major commodity corn processors—as well as *Dole* and *Heinz*, were attracted by the scientifically legitimate, and finally financially well-backed and consumer attractive, organic alternative and natural brand.

Likewise, by the end of the 1990s began the lobby to loosen the definition of the phrase “organic” in order to facilitate agribusinesses’ interests in the production and marketing of a *legitimate* and subsequently booming industry (Pollan, 2006, p. 154). The previous working partnership of USDA and NOSB was tested to the point of collapse when the USDA seemed to reward the attraction of corporations to the relatively new organic market by issuing rules for organic standards that contrasted the recommendations of the NOSB, most notably proposing to allow GE, irradiation and other industrial oriented processes to be considered *organic* practices. Although it has be argued that the USDA was most likely acting less in the interests of mega agribusiness and more on the assumption that organics would not want to be straddled with extensive regulatory red tape (p. 154), some 275, 000 organic proponents charged that the USDA was collusive with a conventional-industrial agri-food conspiracy, calling on the agency to follow the guidance of the NOSB and ensure that industrially processed food never would be labeled as organic (Sligh, 2002). The USDA recanted, and by 2000, the USDA’s *National Organic Program* overtly prohibited “the use of GE seed or other GE inputs” (Ronald & Adamchak, p. x)⁸² in organic agriculture. In order for food to be labeled *100% organic*,

The product must be produced and handled without the use of excluded methods including a variety of methods used to genetically modify organisms or influence their growth or development by means *that are not possible under natural conditions and processes and are not considered compatible with organic production*. Such methods include cell fusion, microencapsulation and macroencapsulation, and recombinant DNA technology... Such methods do *not*

⁸² For commentary on Section 205.105 of the *National Organic Program* standards, see commentary by Pamela Ronald (2008), plant geneticist and contributor to *Tomorrow’s Table*.

include the use of *traditional breeding, conjugation, fermentation, hybridization, in vitro fertilization, or tissue culture*. (my emphasis; in Ronald & Adamchak, 2006, p. 2)

Whether or not achieving 100% *purity*, in essence, *zero tolerance* for GE in organic (re)production is inherently *implausible*; or that permanently *removing* traditional plant breeding from the full suite of plant modification techniques, including GE, can be misguided in relational views of society, nature, culture and science, the mandate stuck. Forcing the USDA to reconsider its proposal was seen as a victory for organics—and a monolithic failure for those warring to end the food wars divide.

It is noteworthy here that the distinction, while not allowing GE crop varieties, *does not clarify tolerance levels of GE in organic products*, leaving far too many organics' consumers to believe that *100% organic* means *zero tolerance for GE* in organic products, which is simply not the case (p. 3). It goes without saying that achieving 100% *purity*—in essence, *zero tolerance*—for *any* agriculture product, GE based or not, is *impossible*. The USDA apparently acknowledges this last, in 2004 even ensuring that “no grower has ever lost certification due to the presence of GE products in their organic product” (p. 3). This last means that organic growers will not be automatically decertified if trace GE material is tested in their crops *if* its presence was neither intentional nor permissible with the configuration of the input—being that contamination prevention procedures like spatial separation, border rows, planting dates, maturity dates and so forth were instituted. All told, the ineffably complex formal differentiation of biotechnology, rather traditional plant hybridization, from recombinant DNA techniques, has been fervently applied to reify the food wars imaginary—and ever more so with what soon comes to pass.

The USDA's overt prohibition of the GE in organics did not exactly quell fears about a looming threat of corporate take-over of the wildly popular organic agri-culture. Many saw the already questionable *values* underpinning the USDA involvement in the organic standard dissension—or really any involvement by the USDA—as a threat to organic small-scale farming. Such resistance to institutional forces had its own lineage to popular works decrying formal research and funding institutions. With such pronouncements already entrenched, many within organics remained defiant that the priorities of the USDA, for example, would not, or perhaps, could not, speak, to the foundational discourses of organics and its vision of long-term sustainability so greatly contrastable conventional-industrial paradigmatic focus on the short-term bottom line. Thus, institutional researches, and subsequent federal regulation, were seen to potentially negatively impact the fuller sociocultural critique leveled by the organic movement.

Through an incredibly complex space-time, something like a split can be seen to have emerged between those who countered that academic research and federal funding for organics meant equitable public funding for the first time in a long history of agribusinesses serving as the “principle beneficiaries of public funds” (Goodman & Goodman, 2007, p. 6-7); and those who resisted all forms of organics' institutionalization or even nominal federal regulatory participation. Even reasonable advocacy for a larger-scale, institutional science-based organic agriculture was criticized by some for relinquishing a “more radical social critique and transformative politics” (p. 7) for a form of “alternative technologism” (p. 7)—just another “natural science discourse” (p. 7)—that merely sought to addend organics to the overriding global conventional-industrial, GE expansion initiatives (p. 7) without transforming the *rationalist* science discourse of university research, or the predominant US agricultural system, to a more sustainable, low-input or alternative agriculture (p. 7) in the first place. What emerges

out of this internal debate is not a stronger federal regulatory structure or more fully integrated university agri-research system that works to join together the strengths of both agricultures toward curbing the problems with the conventional-industrial mode, but rather an imaginary that conventional-industrial, and really any form of assimilating the two paradigms, should be bypassed in favor of choosing among an enormously diverse, and rather confusing, array, of what was becoming a more strongly differentiated *alternative food system* by BIG and small, or local/ist.

For now, the debate over the “organic” brand and related marketing strategies to differentiate organic agri-cultural based foods from conventional-industrial foodstuffs; how big and funded was too BIG; and what organic can even mean in light of the latter gets even murkier with new federal organic standards approved in 2001. Albeit prohibiting GE seed or other inputs since 2000, the new standards permitted a list of agricultural practices, additives and *synthetics* which many disagreed about (Pollan, 2006, p. 156; 157). The year 2012 finds a greater uniformity of solidified federal organic standards for mostly a BIG organics industry. Likewise, BIG organics remain the fastest growing sector of US foodways. Actually, according to the *Organic Trade Organization*, the twenty-first century finds a BIG organic industry up 12%, or \$12.4 billion in 2011, meaning BIG organics are now worth over \$29.3 billion (Chang, 2012). Clearly, *if they can afford it*, given that BIG organics can cost well over 25% higher, on average, than their conventional-industrial counterparts depending on the crop and the time of year (Nepach, 2012), many consumers seem more willing to pay more for, and buy more, purportedly *higher quality* organic foods than ever before. Indeed, the high price premium seems to spur on a particular portion of the consumer market. *Whole Foods Market* stock, for instance, “rallied 40.6% year-to-date, almost three times the gain in the S&P 500” (Nepach, 2012).

To stay BIG, BIG organics has had to get bigger. The BIG organic industry has had to continue to expand its market, taking measures which some argue increasingly resemble the conventional-industrial paradigm in terms of the size of its farms for crops or animal production, processing facilities, migrant workers and management/ ownership schemes oftentimes lead by conventional-industrial megafarmers; as well as the sale of its products at major supermarket chains loaded otherwise with highly questionable conventional-industrial products (Pollan, 2006, p. 151; 158). Obviously, the latter has spawned mixed and incomplete research and results about whether the *environmental footprint* of BIG organic farming absolutely contrasts conventional-industrial methods.⁸³ In fact, research focused on BIG organics' exclusion of synthetic chemicals in favor of *natural* chemicals and pesticides and their effect on the soil, as well as *how much* soil/ acreage is required for organic production; *the food miles* (or the distance between agricultural production and consumer purchase/ consumption) of BIG organic products and their largely only *nominally* "organic" distribution schema that can be by far and away more reflective of the conventional-industrial supply chain; organic animal confinement facilities; the amount of fossil fuels utilized for organic production; the real nutritional difference of the products; and its

⁸³ For one example of the complexity of the latter arguments, see the interesting exchange of James McWilliams (2010), introduced prior for his work *Just Food* (2009); and the often cited, though rarely challenged, *Rodale Institute*. The *Soil Association*, an organic food and farming organization ally of the *Rodale Institute* based in the UK, directed by well-known and outspoken conventional-industrial agriculture critic, Peter Melchett, sparked the debate [see, McWilliams, 2010, retrieved from: <http://www.freakonomics.com/2010/06/02/organic-agriculture-a-solution-to-global-warming>; and the response from, *The Organic Consumer's Association*, retrieved from: <http://www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article>]. It's noteworthy that McWilliams' attempt to simply challenge what is too often accepted as *conventional wisdom* about organic agriculture in no way suggests that organic agriculture lacks very clear advantages to conventional-industrial methods, notably in its approach to top soil. His work provisions an opportunity, not denouncement, to argue that, when it comes to the size of organic production (which the *Institute* doesn't address), we need to "think beyond the organic vs. conventional divide"—a point well taken here but completely ignored, and even disdained otherwise, by *Rodale*.

relatively exorbitant cost to the consumers with the least access and in the greatest need have yet to demonstrate some kind of an unqualified, or elementally fuller, *healthfulness* for everyone (p. 166). There are no simple answers as to BIG organics' superiority and worth when compared to conventional-industrial products (p. 176). As Pollan articulates the immediate differences, obviously even BIG organic production has *enough* of a differentiated approach to production, chemicals, federal funding and so forth that, as it stands today, without question various scales of organic controls are more beneficial than conventional-industrial counterparts from input to consumption (Pollan, p. 182). Others are not so kind. In the words of Schnell (2007), for example, "Large-scale corporate organic growers often adopt many of the destructive methods of industrial agriculture, dependence on fossil fuel and exploitative labor relations chief among them, beneath a Potemkin veneer of sustainability, thereby undermining attempts to create a truly sustainable food system" (p. 551).

What is far more certain is that BIG organics, while undoubtedly closer to *natural systems* agriculture than agribusiness driven, conventional-industrial, agriculture, nevertheless seem to find the conventional-industrial logics more "ineluctable than the logic of natural systems" (Pollan, 2006, p. 151). Essentially, BIG organics' displacement of conventional-industrial goals with its difference, more or less, in various methods, fails to be a *replacement* of conventional-industrial principles—called by some then the metamorphosis from an *oppositional* organic model to an *alternative* agri-culture (Goodman & Goodman, 2007, p. 9) that loses both its ambition to transform global food into truly sustainable local production paradigm as well as its more "militant politics of justice" (p. 9) for consumers the world over, i.e., an alternative option of an alternative, international Market, thus an alternative to the conventional-industrial one which *remains* central. In effect, BIG organics displacement as opposed replacement of the

rationale of conventional-industrial agriculture's chemical-based system of agribusiness tyranny with just another, even if better, version, of production on a large scale has been seen by many as a failure to secure any real, lasting change in terms of establishing a wholly holistic food ecology.

So, the USDA regulatory *capture*, *conventionalization*, or scientific legitimization, standardization and institutionalization of BIG organics, interconnected with national distribution of BIG organic products, the increasing popularity of a brand in the face of GE backlash, and its own somehow simultaneously *local/ natural* and *global* diffusion⁸⁴ has been seen to compel “politicized organic imaginaries to the margins” (Goodman & Goodman, 2007, p. 3), or at least, “to other, more *localized* arenas” (*my emphasis*; p. 4). And, the margin often works to situate organic groups ever identifying with organic practices, but imagined as separated from the increasing “accommodation with neo-liberal discourse” (p. 8) of BIG *organics*. Goodman and Goodman (2007) present an overview of organics’ fracturing into particularized *food systems localization* schemes in the purview of *alternative food networks* (AFNs). AFNs are “the dominant framings and eco-social imaginaries articulated by social movements, academics and other civil society actors promoting sustainable agriculture *and* localized food systems” (*my emphasis*; p. 1). In that way, AFNs entail a plethora of organic sustainability projects, from the BIG to the small, or most local. Simply put, local/ism has arguably exploded via the transformation in the imaginaries of the larger organic agri-cultural and sustainability movement. This last is why local/ism is widely accepted as the most socially progressive “eco-social

⁸⁴ US organic standards became recognized and accredited within *Europa*, beginning June 01, 2012. For understanding how the highly interconnected historical-philosophical underpinnings and organic practices of *Europa* and US organics have remained separated by standards and certification, see recent coverage on the growth of US organics, incl., Fromartz (2006); and/ or Aubrey & Charles (2012).

project” (p. 9) and politics—assuming something like “talismanic importance among food activists in the US” (p. 9). So, the once choice between agricultures has become quite complicated, now located among BIG organics, which uses the small organics distinction for marketing natural, or local products somehow global at the same time; and small, to mean, local/ist, organics, which uses the popularity generated by BIG production to pull-in increasing legions of locavores to its farms.

What has been largely delimited today as “agrarian localist discourses” (Goodman & Goodman, 2007, p. 10), or a *locavore* “food revolution” (McWilliams, 2009, p. 2) is part of AFNs situated opposed the conventional-industrial *agri-food system* (Goodman & Goodman, 2007, p. 5), but is nonetheless comprised of numerous, and increasingly more *localized*, particulates—so many so, it becomes harder to define or outline. There are innumerable examples that could be provided here, but common manifestations of the most local/ist AFNs are farmers’ markets, CSAs and *FoodSheds*, which actually involve farming/ food production, from the field or even the scale of home gardening, while others, like *100-mile diets*, are more akin to philosophies or belief systems which do not actually engage in food production but find local farming/ organic growers’ spirit in other activities, like supporting local business, purchasing local meals or produce, etc. Such *artisanal* based food system projects are often kinds of community-centered, do it yourself, or grassroots, organizations collected around common principles of *knowing where your food comes from*, i.e., *face-to-face* marketing between farmers and consumers (p. 8). Granted, artisanal and face-to-face marketing can indicate works more or less local/ized depending on any particular AFN manifestation. But, the main point is that local/ist projects are more or less materially, certainly discursively, “committed to *preservation of community, tradition, environment, and other non-market values*” (*my emphasis*; Goodman &

Goodman, 2007, p. 10). All in all, food systems localization projects purport to actualize lasting eco-social alternatives to the global food regime as well as global BIG organics by (re)connecting people with their food, and thereby, their communities, families and bodies. The benefits of the latter are innumerable, and should not be denied. Still, the most obvious question for the local/ism here then becomes: what about the *food desert* of *desserts*—and all of us who must survive *out there*?

Eating a Story of Terror and Retreat: Post Geography Geographies

Neoagrarianism is a strategic power-knowledge, rather a discursive *Work of Purification*, which has come to the fore to forward that the foregoing set of more or less material conditions and popular discourses of US agriculture since WWII should be imagined as food wars: a terrifying, placeless global food regime pitted against a hyper-rural, at times unreflexive, place of the local/ist. Though wholly interconnected with American agrarianism(s) through space and time, the major difference between the agriculture-agrarianism(s) interface of today is not the terrifying hybridity that has always already marked any relative space-time, but rather the material-discursive transformations of the world, commonly characterized as aspects of postmodernity.⁸⁵ Postmodern imaginaries are vital for understanding how the modern split between society and nature, mapped urban and rural in American agrarianism(s) since the dawning of the Republic, has easefully been elided a global versus local bifurcation in a myriad of critical and popular thought, like the new agrarianism. Basically, *the meaning of modernity* has been widely delimited as ruptured, throwing thus a postmodern world into a condition of crisis, even chaos. Widely varied descriptions, theorizations and representations more or less

⁸⁵ Reviewing *postmodernity* is decidedly beyond the scope of the project. For some of the most widely accepted commentary, see Jameson (1991). For a *geographer's* version of Jameson—albeit with substantial problems—see Harvey (1990).

oriented to critical theory and ranging a broad spectrum of international, multidisciplinary fields of the social sciences, including geography, cultural studies, and so forth⁸⁶ have examined how various material-discursive hook-ups have (re)produced what is a postmodern, or, and what is most important here, a *post geography* world.

Essentially, a postmodern or hyper-version of the same problematic modern geography portends *the death of geography*. What I mean to say is that the most striking, and persuasive, postmodernities imagine *space* as/of *time* and nothing more, respective of the massive speed-ups and hyper-connectivity of the biotechnoscience age. It is widely purported that speed-up, accumulation and flattening have all (re)territorialized some kind of *en masse global* space—an era of globalization lacking ever more any meaningful places. Thus, postmodernity is the most seductive version of modern geography with which to contend, for really what it has foremost forwarded, also through various *post post* versions today, is that we are living in a post geography world... According to Massey (2005), perhaps at her most passionate in *For Space*, turning space into time has always been a problematic modern imaginary of core to margin, which provisions all power-knowledge and force of causality to space; all meaningful meanings bound to a likewise reactive place that, in the (post)modern milieu, becomes threatened, fragmented, impoverished, disconnected, alienated and depressed. This last has only accelerated and inflated in various popular postmodern imaginaries of high global interconnectivity, entailing *space-time compression* and *post-Fordist capitalist accumulation* [i.e., the work of Harvey (1990) and Jameson (1991)]. Any of the material realities of globalization are particularly shaped to indicate that not only has the once space/ urban and place/ rural distinction

⁸⁶ For innumerable approaches presented through history of cultural studies, see, among many others, During (1993); Grossberg, Nelson & Treichler (1992); and/ or Hall (1997).

become pointless, but any other meaningful spatializations besides those trajectories of globalization are meaningless, too. The latter is not the *Work of Translation*, but rather the *death of geography*: a compressed global *timescape* flattened of place-based difference.

It is rather easy to imagine the US agricultural paradigm, at least the multiple trajectories leading to the emergence of a *global food regime*, on just such a landscape, what with its greater deregulation of supply management, the interinfluential rise of large-scale farming and transnational mega agricorps... with its conventional-industrial family farms (re)structured, in some cases, out of existence; its rural communities and farm families fragmented and dispersed through increasing pluriactivity efforts while various invested interests wield whatever is left of the good and usable national myth for garnering more federal monies to subsidize the largest farms (re)producing a massively destructive *desert of desserts* through a purportedly risky biotechnoscience. It is rather easy to imagine various material realities and practices of the US agricultural paradigm as a placeless global desert of real food—the death of geography through some kind of government-corporate colluded biotechnoscientific *worldcide*. This (post)modern imaginary of post-Fordist, post capitalist global GE *cornscape* flattened of place-based difference is not only a neoliberal free marketer's fantasyland but further proposed to have been inevitable—perhaps in the fall of Rome; perhaps in the *Unsettling of America*; perhaps in the first gene splice. No other story is imaginable... except those which imagine redemption as retreat from this placeless *post geography* geography imaginary of compression and deregulated transnational capitalism of accumulation, i.e., one big borderless global space of cosmopolitanism, better characterized by terminologies of *circulation/ mobility, displacements, diasporas, migrations, travelings, border-crossings, nomadologies, fragmentation* and *despair* than by race, class and gender.

Essentially, in said imaginary, space is nothing more than a hyper-linear time forward, thus propelling causal billiard ball distribution from not just core-to-margin, but along what could more accurately be cited as a global plane moving ever more quickly *West-to-rest*, along the way (re)creating consumer wants in its own image *en masse*, particularly here in terms of agricultural practices and food. Really, the global food regime has been foremost critiqued as a spatial force that takes advantage of other places *beyond the West* it *sees* to be *void* of value, culture, identities, and so forth, assuming *they* are waiting for *us* to provide advanced biotechnoscience. The *Green Revolution*, for instance, has been recast as sufficient and literal proof that the truly terrifying global food regime has been attempting to remake the world as the West's best customers for agribusiness biotechnoscience; and America's satellite GE corn-based McDonald's satellite communities. By contrast, another implication of the same *post geography* imaginary, only intensified within various material realities, is that places beyond the West (because they are discursively *positioned to be* beyond the West) somehow thus hold purer, more embodied knowledges closer to nature: the secrets of universe which *The West* can in turn pillage for fuller, better, indigenous knowledges and resources... At any rate, core-to-margin and cause-and-effect remain decidedly powerful—perhaps even more problematic as (post)modern geographical imaginaries when it comes to proclaiming some kind of government-corporate colluded biotechnoscientific global food regime destruction of places today; or pervasive beliefs that in a post geography world, the secret to fuller embodiment closer to nature can come only from the margin, be that of the West, i.e., the Global South, or, most importantly, the local/ist.

Now, none of this last to say that any given set of these material-discursive proposals lack any material *Truth*, proof or significance. But it does intend to present perhaps the most seductive imaginary of a terrifying world successfully and entirely flattened to the point where

all that (re)territorializes are satellite communities of the West, waiting as though in historical queues to catch-up with the West (through all the opportunities provided for/ forced-upon them by the West). And, if *they* don't want it, *they* have to take it anyway, i.e., the *Green Revolution*. If *they* do want it, *they* can get it, and *now*, thereby making us all, either way, *the same*, i.e., *very fast food*.

There is no denying that, whatever we call it, a once industrial revolution turned corporate form (re)solidifying as a transnational capitalist system and global food regime of agribusiness and biotechnoscience, can seem like a highly homogenous postmodern space marked by the continually complex/ webbed dynamics of unprecedented global processes and significant alterations of cultures and economies—what is also happening in the world. Many of these developments are undoubtedly terrifying—and so are the quasi-objects of agriculture and foodways when it comes to biotechnoscience. Actually, biotechnoscience has accelerated the proliferation of countless quasi-objects more indicative of the age of biology than the age of Enlightenment, with quasi-object agri-monsters perhaps the most terrifying of all: *listeria*,⁸⁷ CAFOs, *pink slime*, Mt. Dew, diabetes, *irradiation*, *Atrazine*, and, without a doubt, GE commodity corn.⁸⁸ GE commodity corn is a profoundly salient example of a quasi-object that has proliferated almost entirely *out of control*, evident foremost in environmental degradation, obesity and related human and nonhuman morbidity and mortality.

⁸⁷ See the CDC website, at, www.cdc.gov, for food-borne pathogen outbreak data.

⁸⁸ Latour (1993) *specifically* mentions *corn* as a preeminent quasi-object in *We Have Never Been Modern* (p. 49).

Unquestionably, however, the above delineation of globalization as a terrifying Baudrillardian (1994)⁸⁹ *desert of the real* is only one version of the world. It's a map, only one story—but a powerful one that can be operationalized to set-up the place-less global as an inevitable bulldozing force of biotechnoscientific destruction, that is and only can be opposed and resisted through more natural, traditional and community-centered local/ism, represented thus in turn as the only place of naturalness and real food; as well as a place to retreat from terrifying times. I contend that this last is the essence of a (post)modern and new, perhaps, but still *Work of Purification* nonetheless, submitted, just as in decades past, to purify a relatively terrifying modernity bifurcating society and nature, space and place. Only now, the *best Workers of Purification*, or today's *new agrarians*, more easily divide the spatial imaginary of agricultural practices by those which are coordinate the concurrently constructed meanings of the once urban turned hyper-global, and the once rural turned hyper-rural and/or local/ist.

When the material reality of the conventional, renamed *conventional-industrial*, US agricultural paradigm once associated with the industry and commerce of urbanity becomes a global food regime replete with deleterious agri-technologies, including everything from agrichemicals to GE and refinery capacities endlessly (re)producing environmentally unsound and processed, to mean, unnatural, and, in the case of various claims about GE, unsafe, food products, it can also be discursively shaped to serve as the terrifying biotechnoscientific global place-less space even pulling BIG organics into the fray with federal regulatory standards, mega

⁸⁹ I am referring here to the highly problematic Baudrillard (1994) work, *Simulacra and Simulation*. *Simulacra and Simulation* is a nihilistic theorization of the postmodern world. At the most basic level, the book can be read as an interpretation of postmodernity, in terms of electronic media culture of mass reproduction and reproducibility (i.e., *simulacra and simulations*). This last can be seen as thus a desert of real things—like a realer than real reality of Disneyland, or referents: signifiers signify signifiers signifying—just a hyper real postmodernism. There are a number of ways to read his book, but I fundamentally find the text to serve as just another *Work of Purification*: a terrifying *Global Tyranny Space*.

corps and global agreements—all against which various food system projects can be imagined and proposed as the only places left. Take for instance an example from American popular culture, where some products actually promise a way to escape the current HFCS addicted system and go back to the *good old days*; rather, that we can race into the past ‘before’ such issues of a global food regime (re)territorialized. Given troubling HFCS health statistics as related to (GE) commodity corn surplus, one of the most interesting marketing campaigns to date—the veritable return of the *soda wars* of the 1980s to augment the *food wars* of today—are the *Throwback* (*PepsiCo*) or *Heritage* (*Dr. Pepper Snapple Group*, of *The Coca-Cola Company*) lines of soda products. Given various shifts in commodity corn production and price, in early 2009, *PepsiCo* released a line of soda products called *Throwback*. Both *Mt. Dew* and *Pepsi Throwback* consist of pure cane and/ or beet sugar instead of HFCS for sweetening. Just three years prior to now, sugar prices had dropped while, at the same time, many consumers had become quite alarmed by HFCS in relation to morbidity and mortality... not so incidentally while the price of commodity corn also spiked. Bringing these together finds a product that claims to take one back in time before the commodity corn monster came into fuller fruition. The *Throwback* lines of *PepsiCo*, once offered for *a limited time only*, became permanent lines as 2011, in both 12 pack 355ml cans as well as 591ml bottles. Their prices are comparable to the HFCS versions popular to most consumers, but can be more expensive when the HFCS syrup versions of the sodas are on sale—which data shows is quite often. Other companies have followed suit, with *Dr. Pepper Snapple Group*, of *Coca-Cola Company’s*, *Heritage Dr. Pepper*; and *7UP Retro*. The product lines, part of what has been called a *nostalgia craze* in food marketing (Horovitz, 2011) clearly seek to market a better time in America, and specifically, a better time in American agriculture—to signify a time supposedly before HFCS—by marketing

these other forms of sweetening also within retro packaging operationalizing logos used up to thirty years before. Though the *Coca-Cola Company's* lines of retro, to mean varietal *sugar* sweetened, beverages, are still sold on a limited basis, with the *Throwback* lines of *PepsiCo* permanently going global, means that the false sense of health if one imbibes products of the *good old days* will continue to be misleading to consumers in terms of general diet and health (Thau, 2011)—merely concealing the fact that HFCS products will continue to proliferate a *desert of desserts* all the while some consumer segments *throwback* or *go retro* to (re)locate their own American heritage.

All told, however, the food system projects which most fervently and effectively imagine and represent that the only places left are severed from the above detailed hyper space can be grouped as *localism*. Since the *Work of Translation* cannot distinguish place or the local as materially-discursively severed spatial territorializations or fixed scales, the *Work of Purification* must fixate upon hyper-scales and even greater distances of society and nature opposition to gather its meanings. Certainly, within the new (post)modern American agrarian *Work of Purification*, materially and discursively opposed the social space gone global, place becomes far more entrenched in the margins, ever closer to the nature. This (post)modern version of the same American agrarian geographical imaginary is a notable way that, along with many other *Works of Purification*, localism retains its most important significations of everything from the naturalness and quality of its foodstuffs, to its alternative face-to-face marketing of such products—all the while proliferating quasi-objects, like GE corn monsters, without fuller cadence, or accountability since these latter hybrids cannot be included in the local/ist imaginary. Simply put, it's a *post geography* world... except when geography matters most for localist meaning-making.

To (re)territorialize its positionality as the oppositional marginal place to the terrifying global space, a clear distinction has been drawn in a number of different *Works of Purification*, ranging from more scholarly to popular representations of local/ist projects, between, first, *which* agricultural practices signify a life and work with/in nature somehow free of social trajectories. Because this last proves to be far less evident in a US now conspicuously marked by both conventional-industrial and organic paradigms, a shift has had to occur amidst global transformations where local/ist projects deploying practices oriented to AFNs can be, and are more generally delimited as, *family farming*. Any resilient, pluriactivity strained and federal subsidy addicted family farmers of the conventional-industrial paradigm must be lumped in the homogenous, agribusiness and biotechnoscience driven global food regime space desert. Undeniably fragmented, strained but extant nonetheless on the terrifying *cornscape*, conventional-industrial farms—the very farms to which the label *family farm* referred for hundreds of years of American agriculture history—are no longer the predominant family farms, or at least not in the way the phrase has been operationalized by many researches, local/ist projects, and most certainly the new agrarianism. In macrostructural agri-food research, such family farms have been restructured into oblivion. In congressional lobbies, such family farmers are touted about but only toward garnering monies for large-scale agriculture that only further challenges their material existence. They are (re)positioned as victims of the global food regime; profligate and/or welfare recipients of mountainous federal programs (Hurt, 2002); or worse, in the new agrarianism specifically, a food wars (GE) adversary. Conventional-industrial family farming is no longer the primary signification of the geographical imaginary of US agriculture....

Essentially, when the family farm, as the overarching image of the modern American agrarian democracy based on rural labor, (re)configures in hyper-rural imaginaries and hooks-up

with the multiple historical, cultural and social trajectories of organic agriculture, specifically at its most local/ist c/si(gh)tes, rural labor can secure meanings that otherwise have been thoroughly breeched by longer, even global, spatial trajectories. Those meanings are namely that the hyper-rural, or local, is the c/si(gh)te of a *morally superior life than in the towns and cities*, reminding of such nonmonetary virtues of the long gone days of America as *independence, self-reliance*, and the *importance of community and common purpose*; that the new hyper-rural, or local/ist, is “*an integral part of American moral and political life; an equivalent of the public good*” (*my emphasis*; Hurt, 2002, p. 172-73). In fact, local/ist projects have adapted the imaginary so effectively that, today, in Jager’s estimation, the only “sufficient literal truth” (p. ix- x), or material reality, of the US family farm comes in the form of particularly local/ist manifestations of AFNs, which he explores in greater detail as *proof* that family farms exist. The point is that a “purified, normative localism” (Goodman & Goodman, p. 10) emerges, being here, one, purified of longer spatialized, to mean, global trajectories, like profit-fixated or market-oriented principles and biotechnoscience; and two, normative, which is to say, implanted in a secular theology and useable myth of American family farming.

Allen (2010) rightly argues that the prevalent viewpoint thus within local/ist food (re)production schemes is that simply because they are often based on such time-tested family farm agrarian structures and likewise rural livelihood strategies—that simply because those family farms have been discursively divorced from the global GE conventional-industrial food paradigm in various scholarly and popular representation—only a sense of common good rules over local/ist agricultural decisions (p. 300). What the latter indicates is what Hinrichs (2000) argues is a conflation of “*spatial relations with social relations*” (*my emphasis*; p. 301). Ostensibly, if the hyper-rural, family farm place is materially distanced in terms of space, place

and scale, for example, in CSAs and 100-mile diets—which are formations absolutely fixated and reliant upon food miles, community and regional scales—they can represent a likewise, and powerful, discursive distance from the global market, its agricultural practices and relations. This last is a powerful imaginary of being, essentially, *what* it is in *where* it is: boundaried-off from the transnational market as its non-market, non-monetary and moral economy oriented instead to artisanal, moral, pure and conflict-free principles and indigenous knowledges; and thus defiant of hegemonic values of the global spatialized trajectories—even those of BIG organics (also Goodman & Goodman, 2007). *Conflating spatial relations with social relations* is key to understanding any (post)modern *Work of Purification*, for it locks all significations in a bifurcated schema of global and local that proves highly useful for essentializing and reifying the practices and meanings of a place cut-off from the global space, thus self-evidently *closer to nature*, equating with historical agrarian values of virtue, peace, health, independence and justice.

Fogging spatial and social relations is how we can understand meanings of naturalness and quality foods associated with local/ism. The latter is important because usage of the word *natural* today can vary so greatly across the local/ist producer-consumer spectrum that even a general deployment of the term cannot be extrapolated. Some authors (Verhoog et al., 2003), in drawing from qualitative interviews with a wide range of organic production on the small scale, have actually attempted to unpack the term “natural” as it is *commonly* used. Though arguing that the concept seems to have a triadic meaning, simultaneously referencing, 1) natural as the *organic*, which means *life processes*; 2) natural as the *ecological*; and, 3) natural as referential of the *inherent* biological and otherwise *nature* of the (food) entity described, the authors ultimately conclude that *naturalness* has high *moral* value—more like a *cognitive, emotive, and normative*

experience of organic agriculture which, and mostly, distinguishes it from conventional-industrial agriculture because it respects deep ecology, and/ or some integral aspect of the nonhuman, by *not* utilizing *unnatural* practices, seen to be agrichemicals or advanced GE.

Essentially, *naturalness*, whilst implying science-based evidences, instead here seems to express sentiment, which, all told, remains rather fuzzy. We can remember Gunder's (2006) formulation of the term sustainability as an ambiguous, or what he calls catch-all term (p. 211) that is as empty as it is overflowing of significations. So, *naturalness* as the first line in small organics' offensive on the unnaturalness of conventional-industrial agriculture, specifically in terms of conventional-industrial synthetic chemical use, lack of ecological principles and independence from/ *disrespect for life* in all its thinking and (GE) practices which view nature-as-death (i.e., the food wars) (drawn from Verhoog et al., 2003), remains a confounding formulation and operationalization. Though to be sure promoting and enacting many *better* agricultural practices than the conventional-industrial as it continues through present day, such localist practices have very little to do with whether or not the food is more natural outside of a belief that *GE* is *unnatural*.

Take for example the latest *Stanford study* on whether or not organic produce and meat products are higher in nutritional and vitamin content. The Stanford researchers show that, first, discourses of nature/ *naturalness* and quality sentiments have actually influenced many consumers, who generally have been found to believe that there are some kind of scientifically significant health benefits to organics. Second, some of the latest research also shows that, beyond that more sentimental healthfulness, typically organics are no more healthful than conventional-industrial products, or at least no more than *simply eating more fruits and vegetables* in one's diet than meat-based protein (Chang, 2012). The authors add that there may

be less exposure to agri-chemical residue, as well as antibiotic-resistant bacteria, through consumption of organic food. But a greater nutrition of the food itself was not statistically significant. Researchers were unable to find a difference in vitamin content between organic or conventional-industrial plant or animal products, save only beneficial trace amounts of phosphorus, and inconclusive traces of omega-3 fatty acids, in the former products (Pittman, 2012).

Furthermore, Carroll (2012) recently added her views on the matter in terms of children's health, citing that, "The nation's pediatricians have weighed in on the issue for the first time, and they say that when it comes to nutritional value, organics are virtually indistinguishable from conventionally produced foods" (Carroll). Not only does Carroll reiterate the great uniformity of the Stanford evidence that there is no nutritional difference, but goes on to clarify with work from the *American Academy of Pediatrics* (AAP) that, actually, "In the long term, there is currently no direct evidence that consuming an organic diet leads to improved health or lower risk of disease" (Carroll). Concerns over pesticide residues remain a point of contention when comparing conventional-industrial and organic foods in light of children's health, but again, such debates are not about nutrition *per se*. Summates Carroll, today one of the only clear differences between conventional-industrial and organic foods "is price" (Carroll).

Walter Robb, Co-CEO of the international *Whole Foods Market* (2012),⁹⁰ a nation-wide retailer of what they call *quality food*, publically rebuffed the Stanford study, reassuring consumers that organic products are well worth their relatively higher prices because he *knows* organics are of higher quality: he has been an organic gardener for all of his life, and like this can actually "*see... the vitality of the food*" (*my emphasis*; in Nepach, 2012). He also cites the

⁹⁰ Visit their website, at, www.wholefoodsmarket.com/healthy-eating to learn about the mission.

Rodale Institute's (again, a highly organized non-profit advocate of organic agriculture) various comparison studies which show that “the nutrient intensity of organic food was 20% to 50% greater” (in Nepach) than their conventional-industrial counterparts. He insists that, based on such research, and not the meta-analysis of Stanford research, over time “scientists *will* conclude that organic food is a better choice nutritionally” (*my emphasis*; in Nepach). Until then, organics presumably remain the better choice for ensuring fair and quality “treatment of the environment, animals and farmworkers” (in Nepach). Eventually, he argues, organics will take-over the conventional-industrial super-market.

But, we're not *there* yet. As of now, the nutritional advantage of organics cannot be supported in research beyond that of the *Rodale Institute*. And, not surprisingly, agri-chemicals prove to be as dangerous now as they were thirty years ago. GE, which can supplant agri-chemical use, was not even mentioned in the above exchange. Given the fact that GE fails to show any statistical significant impacts on consumer health in the Stanford study; and Robb's comments fail, as many other organic distributors' comments, to provide any statistically significant charges to the contrary—even going so far to make all claims of organic *quality* sound like the experiential musings of a gardener—it seems to me that the real threat of “unnaturalness” remains an ever mounting commodity corn desert of desserts which will only continue to grow, with GE and without cadence, until higher-priced organics products most implausibly takes over the market. And, for now, naturalness formulations concern sentiments about sustainability and quality as being materially and discursively closer to nature, which altogether too often transcend scientific evidence... while failing to, in turn, actually clarify such transcendence outside of its partitioning-off from the implicit unnaturalness of conventional-industrial agriculture and its GE.

Incidentally, science journalist Michael Specter (2010) argues that in multiple other contexts, legally the term natural “means nothing at all. Mercury, lead, and asbestos are *natural*, and so are viruses... Other than mosquitoes, the two substances responsible for more deaths on this planet than any other are water and ‘natural’ food” (*my emphasis*; p. 133-134). Specter’s larger point here is not to argue, in turn, against organic production and consumption, which he finds to have many benefits overall. Instead, his and likened works illuminate that natural/ness should not be taken to be self-evident, nor unto themselves enough and good reasons for dismissal of other agri-cultural projects seen to be unnatural by contrast, like GE. The statistically unverifiable natural/ness, and/ or quality of BIG or more local/ist organic products reads more like a *defined-in-the-negative*, an, “*is what it is not*” play of any *Work of Purification* co-constituting a locavore sensibility—like an ideology purporting to be evidence.

Here I can relate many agri-food scholarships, incl. David Goodman (2002), with DuPuis (2002), and Michael Goodman (2007; 2008), which have taken likewise notice of the meanings which arise out of such spatial-social conflation. Authors cite the latter as due in part to an *en masse* shift in agri-food studies related scholarship from the more privileged production foci to food consumption and its politics (as related to a broader critical theoretical turn in the academy). They argue that the result has been a relatively recent explosion of consumer and food quality oriented studies (drawn from Goodman, 2002), only giving rise to another problem gestured to above: the implicit global-local, or regional-local, binary—with production the more global sphere of local consumption... I introduced this point in Chapter One.

The point here is that, drawing from the work of Sonnino and Marsden (2006), it seems that quality has been deployed most frequently to signify the foodways’ research turn away from the global conventional-industrial system (p. 183); and the turn to quality therefore seen as

anything and everything that the conventional-industrial system is not (p. 185): not agri-chemicals and, today, not GE. And this is how we can understand the local as a *trap*—if the word local purports that anything, otherwise unqualified than *not industrial*, is inherently better without fully exploring whether local conventions and configurations at that local scale achieve social justice after all. Those charges of the latter’s social relations of wealth, power and privilege when it comes to farmworkers, specifically migrant farmworkers; the traditional domestic order of family farms; and/ or consumer access issues, often socioeconomic, and so forth, are oftentimes not pointed out at the local level (Allen, 2008; Born & Purcell, 2006). Uncritical local delimitation can also have coordinate, unqualified conceptions of *regional*, an implied geographical orientation that would have an interinfluential relation with the scale of the *local*, but is left, instead, a vague conceptualization, or, worse, a particular construction that allows for the local conception to appear lacking in *any*, even relatively minor, violations of social justice (Kneafsey, 2010), i.e., *utopian* production and consumption. On the contrary, the CSA system, for instance, has shown time and again to cater to specific, highly privileged, college-educated groups who are otherwise politically progressive “with anticorporate and antiglobalization ideals” (Schnell, 2007, p. 556). The latter can limit both the location of available CSAs in “more progressive, urban, middle- and upper-income areas” (p. 556); as well as those who can even participate in its production.

Surely, and according to Allen (2010) as well, “no one can deny that local food is good food” (p. 295), or that various projects have *good intentions*, but again, this last does not confront queries about whether or not the quagmire of significations, from *nature/ naturalness* to *quality* means local/ist production through consumption are indeed shown, in science-based studies, to

be *inherently natural* or *better* food just because it may be more localized (Allen, 2008). The meaning(s) of quality as tied to the meaning(s) of localism are thus, finally, never self-evident.

The preeminent concern presented heretofore is one of geography; is about any (post)modern *Work of Purification*, like some versions of local/ism, that can position place as an unchanging entity, thus as a place-bound, in lieu of place-based, formation imagined to be stably natural, sustainable and thus of and for higher quality. In many ways related to the local trap, more certainly to the false notion of self-evident or inherent truths of naturalness, health and quality more or less waiting to be discovered, is the formulation of *unreflexive localism* (DuPuis & Goodman, 2005; Hinrichs, 2003). *Unreflexive localism* by no means argues that all localism is *unreflexive*—quite the contrary. The formulation instead indicates any number of the issues presented up to now when local, like place, is intended to be the self-evident scalar opposition of space, here coordinate with conventional-industrial agriculture. The authors argue that too often the latter two geographical formations of global and local are binarized, allowing for local to retain a kind of self-evident truth or power-knowledge of naturalness and purity given its discursive severance from longer spatial trajectories. In accordance with much of the relational thinking discussed before, DuPuis and Goodman (2005) argue that *any* local/ism which arises out of a fixed set of imaginaries about space, place, and scale, moreover the bifurcation between global-industrial, local-artisanal, can be an unreflexive, to mean nonrelational localism thereby “glossing over more exacting social and environmental criteria” (Hinrichs, 2003, p. 41) and begging many questions about how local/ist places are constructed; and/or indefinitely determine the region in food (Kneafsey, 2010).

Furthermore, otherwise uncontested *unreflexive localist* conceptions can also map elitist power claims of right living and right eating, basically (higher) quality upon the local,

positioning the global-industrial as therefore its wrong living, wrong eating, commodity (or productivist) opposite (DuPuis & Goodman, 2005, p. 360-361; also Evans, Morris, & Winter, 2002; Hinrichs, 2003; Mitchell, 2001). Replete thus with a place-bound norms and scales, *unreflexive localism* can function as a retreat from spatial trajectories which are always, already, co-constituting place. If the local/ist is a closed-off home, denying co-constitution through longer spatial trajectories, local/ism can likewise replicate hegemonic beliefs and values patterning longer social relations, moreover, providing a new set of *Norms and Rules of Being* for all life and eating—in a phrase, a *neo* neo-liberal discourse. Meaning, just as neoliberal free marketer imaginaries kill and pronounce the death of geography—that from the *West to the rest* we are all the same—the local/ist imaginary can comparably shut-down the interinfluence of longer spatialized trajectories to claim that somehow the local/ist is purified. Thereby, the place of the local can become romanticized, even backwardlooking, akin to something like a reactionary, place-bound politics *against* the global in lieu of a place-based, or outwardlooking, politics the authors believe could otherwise have great potential as a “mutually constitutive, imperfect, political process in which the local and global make each other on an everyday basis” (DuPuis & Goodman, 2005, p. 369), i.e., the *assemblage* of the opposed sides of the food wars.

Now, it is noteworthy here that this last is in no way intending to denounce localism, local/ist projects, or to argue in turn that these projects are not useful or meaningful. Quite the contrary, I am arguing that just because localism can and does inspire and reproduce multiple and various meanings, and material manifestations, of, more *sustainable* agricultural practices and communities—and even family or individual identities—and that indeed healthier families and individuals continually (re)configure through engagement with local/ist activities in ways far clearer and perhaps longer-lasting than those via conventional-industrial practices and its

complex territorializations, does not and should not *naturally* imply that either localism is always *self-evidently* thus; or, that such strengths cannot or should not be assembled with—are somehow *inherently* at odds with—various conventional-industrial practices. I seek (re)vision only, and in a like manner, stronger, healthier American agricultural systems for *all* humans and nonhumans.⁹¹ Allen (2010) rightly concludes that local food systems can “serve many purposes and improve the quality of life for many people” (p. 305). However, just because the latter might come true doesn’t “automatically move us in the direction of greater social justice” (p. 306) in a longer assemblage of humans and nonhumans. She argues, instead, that, “We should celebrate local food systems for what they can provide and *seek additional approaches to problems that are outside the range of the method of food-system localization*” (*my emphasis*; p. 306).

Alternative, relational approaches—the *Work of Translation*—can be seen as one force of *additional approaches to problems that are outside the range of the method of food-system localization*, because they seek to (re)vision the same world in a profoundly divergent imaginary. *How we think about space matters, how we think about corn matters*, especially for such global times given that our imaginary of space shapes how we understand globalization, cities, capital flows, cultures and identities. Above all, how we imagine and represent twenty-first century globalization, particularly here in terms of US agriculture is in turn how we develop and practice our political responsibility of place: a place-based, outwardlooking politics, provisioning fuller accountability and responsibility for translations and solidarities *much* longer than the place of home. Like Massey (2005) most eloquently posits, there is far more to the world than *what we consume...* There are many different ways to (re)vision and thus engage with the thoroughly

⁹¹ I do not intend to reduce the various *potentialities* of any foodways projects, but strongly resist spending disproportionate amounts of text here celebrating various forms of local/ist organics when innumerable projects elsewhere have quite effectively accomplished this last already.

social natural world than (re)creating *neo neo* liberal imaginaries of space and place which provision perhaps more comfortable retreats into an impossible, place-bound home—especially when considering that that home is never materially or discursively severed from, and is continually co-constituted by, even at times *terrifying* global trajectories. Globalization, seen as a *Work of Translation*, doesn't *flatten*. Even speed-up and compression must put its foot down somewhere. In the words of Massey, globalization in this purview *crumples*, thereby differently impacting individuals, communities and so forth contingent upon *where and who one is* (i.e., a matter of *power geometry*, and place, the world over). Arguing for a crumpling also means that the process of globalization is never *even*, illuminating how the dialectical synthesis of space and place through compression theory without fail reduces the latter to the former.⁹²

Thus, geography—our geographical imaginaries—could not matter more today because the world has *also* never been flattened of place-based difference. Essentially, if how we *live* the antagonisms, multiplicities, and complexities of everyday meeting places shaping wider relations, humans, at the height of their high-tech disconnection, would have to be *accountable* once again for their earthboundedness, including the global market; city commerce; and all nonhumans. Far from reinforcing territories, these propositions explode what geography can mean for politics in global times. In Massey's geographical imagination, there is simultaneity of responsibility *and* argument: "If we take seriously the relational construction of identity (of ourselves, of the everyday, of places), then what is the potential geography of our politics towards those relations" (p. 189)? Her question fundamentally dares us to consider *in what form geographical (re)vision*. More clearly than ever, *how we think about space matters*. Otherwise,

⁹² Massey's (1994; 2005) relational geography, for instance, avoids (and critically deconstructs) geographical imaginaries operationalizing dialectics, dialectical syntheses and reconciliations.

the world is flat; geography is dead; and we must retreat into *neo* neoliberal place-bound politics of decrying the existence of unnatural GE corn monsters, proposing localization and/ or other related ethics which disengage us from a global world thus left doomed, without a fuller accountability or cadence, to food wars. In this purview, then, it is an *imaginary* of disengagement of one side from the other, apparent in various representations of US agriculture, which I argue can render some versions of localism as less effective, *not* localism's general ethics or practices in and of themselves, and/ or in relation to the larger organic paradigm to which they are often wed.

I argue that the central tenants of the new agrarianism perhaps more prolifically and persuasively than any other such discourse articulate the global food regime in the way of the postmodern terror, where the geographical imagination of the global free marketer is paramount, and made to seem inevitable—that no other model or story is imaginable since the future has already been determined: a government-corporate colluded biotechnoscientific global food regime lacking real, natural foods and (re)territorializing only a terrifying biotechnoscientific *cornscape*. I argue that new agrarian *Work of Purification*, an imaginary of food wars—a (post)modern global food regime versus a purer, safer and more natural, place—can work more to survey and discipline foodways, and like this accelerate the proliferation of global food regime monsters by decrying and denying them, than provision a fuller accountability.

CHAPTER FOUR

The New Agrarianism: Wendell Berry's World(view)-as-Exhibition

We still have lots to learn and lots of problems to solve. I am well aware that makes people anxious, and I understand why. Anything so powerful and new is troubling. *But I don't think the answer to the future is to race into the past* (my emphasis; Jay Keasling, Professor of Biochemical Engineering, University of California at Berkeley, in Specter, 2010, p. 233).

The (post)modern geographical imaginary of *neoagrarianism* is a strategic power-knowledge, rather *Work of Purification*, which has largely mapped the proffered set of material and discursive conditions of US agriculture following WWII as food wars. Actually, there are few other imaginaries of the current conventional-industrial today that have (re)presented a more thorough evaluation of good and right agricultural practices, moreover, what food is *good* and *just* food, than the new agrarianism.

Chapter Five seeks to understand the place where various, still roughly uniform, neoagrarian writings and projects following doomsday have endlessly (re)located their strongest geographical imaginary and (re)presentational power. The new agrarianism shows time and again to be not a much longer network of American agrarianism(s) over the course of at least two hundred years, but drawn mostly from the salient works since the 1970s. And the latter is the place, interfaced amidst the shifting climate of US agriculture, of Wendell Berry's front porch; from where Wendell Berry has since spun sundry set of new geographical thinking and principles of agrarianism, all of which can be drawn from to provide a kind of (post)modern neoagrarian *Work of Purification* through space-time. Likewise, Chapter Five seeks to

(re)c/si(gh)te Wendell Berry as the Clockmaker-grandfather of *neoagrarianism*. The Chapter seeks to show that how an *otherwise* tricky modern American agrarianism(s) with a dauntingly complex lineage remains so *useful* to the most moderate and radical neoagrarians and locavores is because the intricate noninnocent compound has been (re)made as a singular, coherent (re)territorialization, or imaginary, in the works of Wendell Berry. Though too often reduced as a “conceptual shift toward what may be called ‘*literary agrarianism*’” (*my emphasis*; Jager, 2004, p. 82), or even suggested that his work, in terms of various environmental science, has “not been taken seriously” (Thompson, 2008, p. 529), I argue that Wendell Berry’s innumerable nonfiction writings have meant food wars to countless new agrarians... and for *that* foundational and organizational power, I conclude, his work has, in particular ways, been itself purified and preserved.

Farmer, Poet, Essayist, Novelist, Academic, Prophet, *Agricultural Romantic’s Poet Laureate*; Modern Day Thoreau, American Hero ... Southern Agrarian Distributist?

Through roughly fifty years of prolific and prodigious writing encompassing over fifty total books, volumes and collections of everything from essays, poetry, novels and short stories,⁹³ if nothing else Wendell Berry has (re)invigorated the American agrarian tradition. Agrarianism scholar Montmarquet (1989) says that “agrarianism may enjoy a significant future as well as past” (p. 218) because of Berry’s contributions—going so far as to call American agrarianism a “living tradition” (p. 221-248) due to Emerson and Thoreau to be sure, but more recently Wendell Berry, whom he further cites as a writer, professor, ‘farmer’: a “contemporary

⁹³ What I provide here is far from a complete overview of the entire Berrian compendium, which in this particular project would be quite implausible. So, what follows in this section are exemplary works of Wendell Berry. From this point onward, I will focus upon Berry’s critical nonfiction essays, first from the *doomsday decade*; next, from ~ a decade later; then, from about another decade later, and so forth, in order to understand some kind progressive Berrian world(view).

agrarian” (p. 235). Even today’s *unofficial farmer-in-chief*, Michael Pollan, acknowledges the political and otherwise force of the writings and (re)visions of Wendell Berry when, in the *Introduction* to, *Bringing It To the Table: On Farming and Food* (2009), he writes, “I challenge you to find an idea or insight in my own recent writings on food and farming that isn’t prefigured (to put it charitably) in Berry’s essays on agriculture. There might be one or two in there somewhere, but I must say that reading and rereading these essays has been a deeply humbling experience” (in Francis, 2011, p. 103).

Prefigured indeed, if one wants an American agrarian perspective on *any* given topic, one needs to look no further than the Berry compendium. Arbery (2012) agrees that there is just a “great range of topics on which Berry has expressed his views” (p. 50), and how such a vast range of commentaries *complement* each other because, in Berry’s thus (re)produced agrarian world(view) where “everything is of a piece” (p. 50). Berry’s thus interinfluencing agrarian world(view) encompasses topics as diverse, but as uniquely interconnected, as: “marriage, sex and procreation, education, food, the right use of nature, self-governance, technology, pacifism, Christianity, household management, the free market, the nature of propriety, imagination versus abstraction, poetry, incarnational hope, and possibilities for the future” (p. 50). The diverse Berrian oeuvre has been reframed as *the* “worldview... the countervailing idea to industrialism” (Carlson, 2008, p. 14), i.e., a treatise on the virtue of the local/ist in all its many forms; of the virtuous rural family smallholder’s capacity for responsible stewardship amidst a terrifying material-discursive global food regime...

In fact, distributist Carlson further contends that the rebirth of an American agrarian “humanistic approach to agriculture that would re-attach people to the soil” (p. 13-14) is mostly owed the ruminations of Wendell Berry. On both the force of Berry’s (re)vision, and its

particularity, Freyfogle (2001) summates that, “Berry has been *particularly* forceful in drawing attention to the health of the natural whole, to ‘the one value,’ the one ‘absolute good,’ that undergirds our agnostic culture... [Berry] presents with *particular* clarity the agrarian preoccupation with the land’s lasting vigor” (p. xix). Seale (2009) concurs, noting that Berry’s chooses not to lay-out a coherent vision for “remaking American society” (p. 481), or really even a *particular* ideology, but to borrow “from many traditions those elements he thinks supports his vision for humane and sustainable society and weaves them *into a vision that is uniquely his own*” (*my emphasis*; p. 482). Without question, Berry’s influence on the imaginary of US agriculture and foodways, as well as about most other issues interrelated to these last, has been pervasive and profound—but *particularly* so...

Ostensibly, Montmarquet (1989) forwards that Berry may have (re)invigorated the American agrarian tradition in the spirit of Emerson and Thoreau, yet notes that the agrarian perspective and style, applied to such a broad range of topics Berry nevertheless endlessly (re)connects through his world(view) since his seminal work, *The Unsettling of America* (1977), have been *entirely his own* (p. 235). I take the latter insight on the uniqueness of the wholly Berrian blend of the American agrarian tradition to indicate the emergence of neoagrarianism—a critical shift in the agrarian tradition via the writings of Wendell Berry ~ the doomsday decade, 1970s. Berry’s *oeuvre* would (re)enliven American agrarianism, only through and with a quite *particular(izing)* Wendell Berry *world(view)*.

Nonfiction from *Doomsday* to the End of the World

The current project has contended that discursive agrarianism(s) must be interfaced with material agricultural practices to understand particular modern American agrarian imaginaries through space-time. Correspondingly, I argue that *The Unsettling of America* must be interfaced

the food wars in that critical doomsday decade—as a conservative American agrarian reaction to what it constructs to be truly terrifying times. Actually, Wendell Berry (1977) prefaces the *second edition* of *The Unsettling of America* by remembering the doomsday context, particularly the years from 1974-1977, during which he formulated what would become his magnum (neo)agrarian opus. Berry writes that “the worst advice ever given to farmers” (p. vii), namely the call to plant *fencerow to fencerow* in the early 1970s, should be seen as more or less emblematic of every problem he takes on the essay collection. His work overall criticizes “orthodox agriculture... the technological advances in agriculture” (p. v-vi), including but not limited to: the strengthening of large-scale farms and agribusiness; land-grant university research favoring agri-consolidation and agri-chemicalization, an industrial conventional agricultural model; the loss of small family farms; toxic pollution, etcetera.

It is within this overarching context of the continuing (re)territorialization of US conventional-industrial agri-culture into a GE based, large scale farm based, federally shaped and agribusiness administered global food regime proliferating and proliferating terrifyingly deleterious environmental, agricultural and social monsters that Berry’s *The Unsettling of America* must be considered... and not only because of its own overriding critique of conventional-industrial agriculture. Just as the modern American agrarians before him situated their critiques amidst relative times of chaos and crisis, Wendell Berry also imagines the US agriculture of his time, including all its many, continuing and increasing agri-cultural chaos and crises, as a landscape with which to (re)connect; that should be (re)distributed. Among others, Berry most liberally borrows from and (re)configures Southern agrarianism—and not toward curbing the problems with the conventional-industrial mode he sees before him, but rather to signal that a choice between agricultures has become more possible. No one makes the latter

divide and/ or choice clearer than Berry, and mostly because of his seminal work, *The Unsettling of America*—imperative for (re)c/si(gh)tation of ‘the’ new agrarian modality from then on. Many themes continue through his later work, e.g., *What are People For?* (1990), explored briefly here as well.

Berry’s (1977), *The Unsettling of America* contains more or less nine separate essays which explore how a nation founded upon conquer and exploitation merely continues its conquest via the *colonialist* forces of agribusiness by the 1970s, i.e., the *great agricultural transition* since WWII described widely elsewhere. Berry sees agribusiness as the predominant pathological force riving the US agricultural paradigm from the cultural context and material practices and ownership of small family farms, in order to then actualize the mechanized, chemicalized pursuit of short-term profits. He considers how *en masse* industrialization of US agriculture, and its concentration of land and wealth into a few hands, alienates people from rural community, culture, land ownership and responsible stewardship. Thus, the cornerstone of Berry’s text is that US agriculture should progress as a cultural and spiritual discipline wrought of intimate, indigenous knowledges and love of the land. Francis (2011) argues that not only are Berry’s assessments critically astute in general, but that, “Wendell Berry knows this process first hand, as he returned to Kentucky and purchased a farm in 1965 that he has operated since then in a way that he considers sustainable ... and totally out of synch with the average industrial model farms in his state and elsewhere” (p. 103). Many have lamented, including Berry himself, that the collection of arguments and personal reflections and observations comprising *The Unsettling of America* remain quite relevant today because Americans seemed to have learned nothing since and continue to suffer the loss and devaluation of rural life and work with/in nature, rural communities and traditions; as well as *nature*, *natural* places, and *natural* product(ion)s.

To (re)present such an imaginary and critique, the book grounds every one of its claim in the “the first principle of the exploitive mind [is] to divide and conquer” (Berry, 1977, p. 11), being, the genocide of Native populations—what Berry argues *really* marks the dawning of America, and something we have really ever been able to surpass: conquer, exploitation, of the New World’s people, incl. women, and the land (also Montmarquet, 1989, p. 235). *Since the dawning of America*, Berry articulates, New World Americans been masters-over Native, woman and *nature Others*, and in the *evil* process corrupted the humility of having a sense of place in a larger ‘design.’ Since, in Berry’s first Chapter, the settling of the American landscape was really its unsettling through the violence and exploitation of power over, from that point on, the “exploiter’s revolution” (Berry, 1977, p. 12) could continue through the division of specialized categories of work and worth. Alas, the central theme: the first genocidal taking of later American geography was a tactic that continues through experts and specialists of industrialization and technology who corrupt responsible stewardship in pursuit of short-term profits. The latter makes all humans and nonhumans slaves to “labor-saving devices” (p. 12), here mostly entailing the mechanical and chemical machines of modern agribusiness.

Berry’s inarguable arguments in his opening Chapter therefore set the parameters of his imaginary of the modern American agrarian democracy, meaning for its redemption after unsettling which he further details for the rest of the book. As with most American agrarianism(s) at times of relative chaos or crisis, Berry’s promulgations also seek a transcendent power for the breakdown of such immanently, old as well as modern, consolidated agri-monsters. But Berry situates his transcendent force for immanent hope most assuredly in neither God nor government—or really any other mediating American institutions, which he sees to be the work of his reviled specialists and experts, incl., naturalist, conservation and/or preservation

organizations and clubs (p. 17-26). Instead, nature is Berry's God/ spirituality. The wide (re)distribution of the agri-monster to rural smallholders for a rural "responsible use" (p. 26) of nature is *wholy* itself—a natural spirituality as was intended in the beginning. And it is to that point, being one of geography, and in what way imagined geography, that I turn my own analytical attention. Meaning, Berry argues that what Jefferson had *intended*, anyway, was, "*independent*, free-standing citizenry... to be the surest safeguard of democratic liberty... an agriculture based upon *intensive work, local energies, care, and long-living communities*—that is, to state the matter from a consumer's point of view: a dependable, *long-term* food supply" (*my emphasis*; p. 14). Thus, the earliest agrarian tradition was an "old idea full of promise" (p. 14) that became corrupted, he argues in the line of the *Fugitive Agrarians* of the 1930s, by politics, leaving little else for the *self* to reside than in a political and corporate form ever in a conquistador's pursuit of short-term profits. He summates that our only legitimate hope, is, "the care of the earth... our most *ancient and most worthy* and, after all, our most *pleasing responsibility*. To cherish what remains of it, and to foster its renewal, is *our only legitimate hope*" (*my emphasis*; p. 14). As I will soon show, to legitimate an otherwise obviously, and rather inarguably, legitimate, hope, however, Berry's geographical imaginary must bifurcate society and nature.

Since long-term ecological health is inherently tied to that of human character and skills, as well as was predetermined by the first instance of European footing in the *New World*, in Berry's world(view) today, any mix of industry and commerce with nature will move toward large-scale speculators' vision and profits, reducing multiple forms of kindly ecological uses to single uses with an as reductive focus on the short-term thoroughly depleting rural smallholdings and communities without cadence. It is only through the agrarian idea(l), being what

Montmarquet (1989) sees as Berry's environmental philosophy of kindly use (p. 236) which runs the course of most of his writings, that people can reconnect with land. Kindly use is like that of perennial polyculture, which is to say, a vision for land use and agri-cultural practices which farm in nature's image by utilizing a great diversity of older and newer technologies, like horse-power with various cover crops; and older and newer skills, like handwork. Kindly use is expressed by small, diversified family farms built over the long-term, even generations, through households, communities and the social relations of the latter combined (p. 237). A fuller, embodied work, family and community life has, of course, a transactional relationship with a wider ecology. Writes Berry of these particular notions: *kindly use* "can dissolve the boundaries that divide people from the land and its care, which together are the source of human life. There are many kinds of land use, but the one that is the most widespread and in need of consideration is that of agriculture" (*my emphasis*; p. 30).

Obviously, Berry's views are full-bodied, meaning, presented toward (re)discovering a reconnection of the mind-body, a sensuality (also Montmarquet, 1989) that has dissipated with the (evolving) age of specialization and specialists fixated upon increasingly concentrated/consolidated industrial techniques, like increasing agri-chemical inputs, fuel energy costs, and mountainous debt for monocultural surplus and short-term profits. Embodied knowledges of performing rural life and work with/in nature, with/in a rural place of farm and household closer to nature is vital, he argues, for supplanting the *cult of the modern*, the *cult of the future*, the cult of "huge monocultures... moral ignorance, which is the etiquette of agricultural 'progress'" (p. 48). In fact, the *evil* cult of *moral ignorance* thrives on "a limitless technology" (p. 79) and "political totalitarianism (p. 169) permitting only "experimentally derived, technologically pure solutions to be imposed by force" (p. 169). In Berry, the *human limit* of such limitless

biotechnoscience is the discursive separation of the work of *local culture*, the place of the local/ist, whose only *kindly use* practices with/in nature can reconnect humans and work, humans and nonhumans, and provision hope and achieve health for both (p. 183). Berry writes, “If we do not live where we work, and when we work, we are wasting our lives, and our work, too” (p. 79). The central contention here is not that his evaluations lack insight, spirituality, or even inspiration, but that the geography upon which they are based can lead to highly problematic appraisals and representations of US agriculture as reliant upon *only* particularly delimited, and often local/ist, practices, for any form of revision or redemption, thereby excluding vast swaths of other possibilities.

The latter is also indicative of Berry’s somewhat duplicitous imaginary of human interconnection with nature. For all Berry’s critique of the modern separation of humans and nonhumans through categorical specializations, his own place of nature—the place of the rural community of smallholders living and working with/in nature—is merely another version of the same divisive modernity of society and nature, space and place, he generally deplores: a place-bound nostalgic place distanciated, at the same time, from certain forms of sociality, like unkindly uses (society, global, conventional-industrial trajectories); and quite interconnected to other uses he delimits as positive, right, traditional, local/ist uses (nature, local/ist place). For instance, Berry believes that humans are at once biologically and culturally rooted in nature, meanwhile arguing that wild nature, places of pristine nature, in fact *do* exist and should remain separate from humans (p. 29-30) so that wilderness can serve humans “as a standard of civilization and as a cultural model” (p. 30), i.e., the great ontological referent displacing God. Nature so distanciated from humans can be wielded for our own purposes, greater meanings and spiritually—like a prayer with/in *kindly use*... like *going to church* through a particular kind of

agricultural practice with/in nature. From the first instance, then, if there are in fact natural places untouched, or severed from, social forces, the Berrian geography can only further his claims of nature's value attendant of spatial-temporal *division*.

Chapter Nine of Berry's, *Unsettling of America*, and often republished essay, "Margins," most clearly demonstrates such a bifurcated geographical imaginary. It goes without saying that *marginality* is generally bred of a modern geographical imaginary which fails to be intrainplicative of longer spatial trajectories of space-time, thereby *locking*, or binding, projects in a hyper-rural place. Such place-bound geographical thinking *distanciates* place from, or opposes *place against* deleterious global forces, reinforcing both place and its rural nature imaginary as the inert, nostalgic margin of global forces, serving thus as a *retreat*. And, this last is precisely the Berrian agrarian idea(l) throughout the essay: a "marginal place, the marginal humanity... the theme of settlement, of kindness to the ground, of nurture" (p. 191), to mean a *place* perhaps even more Jeffersonian utopia than Jefferson's own utopian vision to be sure. This is where Berry argues that a more meaningful life and work, thus hope and independence from *terrifying* technocracy can be actualized. Thus the latter becomes a matter of what even *can* be revisioned, rather, what is being excluded or denied, from and by, his geography of spatial-temporal division.

What are Berry's preeminent marginal retreats of the *doomsday decade* of and to which he writes? The first is, quite significantly, the *organic family farm*, rather where "the attitudes and values of traditional agriculture still survive in our time and are supported by the experience of our time. Their survival is marginal and is mostly *ignored* both by the colleges of agriculture and agricultural press, which, if they acknowledge it all, so do in order to treat it with *contempt*" (*my emphasis*; p. 193). Obviously thus wholly resistant of the regulatory capture of organics,

which would come to pass in the decades to come, Berry exalts the hyper-rural family organic farm place as the “excellence” (p. 193) of human both character and agri-culture... the *very* place to which most local/ist AFN projects would return given the scientific legitimacy of BIG organics. Reveling in marginal agri-cultures’ lack of conventional-industrial practices, like intensive agri-chemical inputs and big mechanization, Berry forwards that the whole of US agriculture should be shifted into the diversity of perennial polyculture, and, foremost, intense human and nonhuman work of organic (re)production (p. 193-197).

The second exemplary, *marginal agriculture* offered in “Margins” is the horse-powered farm, like Berry’s own farm in rural Kentucky. Horse-powered farms are what he calls “survivals of an old way—a good way, when well followed” (p. 209). Still, such farms, he must acknowledge by the end of the twentieth century are “not necessarily the best” (p. 209). What is *necessarily better*, thus, of these farms he no less than acclaims for their shortcomings is their independence from “economic and political conditions” (p. 210), given that horses can work, literally and so to speak, “*whatever* the availability of credit or of petroleum products—something that cannot be said of the much larger yields of orthodox farms, which depend absolutely on credit and on ‘purchased inputs’ from the oil industries” (*original emphasis*; p. 210). Berry (re)considers the freedom proffered by horse-power as fertile for integration not toward improving the US conventional-industrial turned global monster, but for expanding and strengthening materially-discursively severed organic systems, which are the future for the greater sustainability of these and other farms... Last but not least, Berry’s coveted exemplary marginal agriculture is accomplished by *Amish farms*. These traditional, conservative, religious and comparably harmonious *place-bound* enclaves actively restrict the growth of institutions in favor of family and community assistance (p. 210-211); and reject, more or less, *all*

technological innovations beyond a certain point in history they have determined is the natural limit, *the human limit* (p. 212).

Taken together, Berry ponders the human scale—the human limit—and how we should best “stay within it” (p. 222), fundamentally advocating that “we cannot live except within limits, and these limits are of many kinds: spatial, material, moral spiritual” (p. 222). This last summation, however, is *not* submitted toward theorization of limitation in terms of cadence of social natural quasi-objects proliferation. Berry’s *limits* are material-allegorical fence lines demarcating a rural smallholding in once instance [explored in “The Boundary,” for instance, an essay appearing most recently in Freyfogle’s (2001), *The New Agrarianism*] and, more assuredly, boundaries in most other instances. These last are securely affixed start-stop points to society and nature so that their interaction, or dialectical, really trialectical, synthesis, merely solidifies an inherent, absolute essence of either before interaction. There can be no cadence of hybrid monsters for these remain concealed in Berry’s reification of limitations, or boundaries, of society and nature, space and place, absolute wrong and absolute right. For, Berry even goes so far as to say that we have “exploited relativism” (p. 222), which is to say, the interimplication of space-times, places and trajectories so much so, that, “we must now ask ourselves if there is not, after all, an *absolute good* by which we must measure ourselves and for which we must work. The *absolute good*, I think, is health... the health, the wholeness, finally *the holiness, of Creation*, of which our personal health is only a share” (*my emphasis*; p. 222).

Quite expectedly, Berry’s summation by the close of *The Unsettling of America* is no less than a reification of global-local boundaries he implies from the outset of the first essay. Geography and territorialization is not a project in Berry, but reified as more like a suspicious relativism (he in no way qualifies)—like an agribusiness *trickster*. In the Berrian world(view),

geographical territorializations, like place, do not and cannot remain open, an *open story-so-far* which changes through time given the hook-up of multiple spatialized trajectories. Any implication of sociality becomes an absolutist geographical formation of global destruction—an absolute wrong somehow suspect *before* situatedness—opposed distanced nature as Creator: ‘the’ absolute right. There is nowhere to go in and with Wendell Berry through the decades to follow doomsday other than further into the past, into traditions and nostalgic marginal places of the family farm. It seems Berry’s world(view) of limits and margins make clear that an *absolute good* cannot be attained in an intrainvolutive (non)human global(ized) assemblage, only through the lives and works of a place-bound history, tradition and idea(l)s of rural life and work with/in nature evidenced in organics, horse-power and the Amish. Given Berry’s own unease with all American mediating institutions sprinkled throughout the text, incl., religion, government and university research institutions, what are Berry’s confrontational ethics for *the other* material reality of biotechnoscientific conventional-industrial agriculture with which today we all must contend?

Few essays drive home the Berrian geographical imaginary of scale, land use, absolute rights and health, family farms and, critically here, the domestic sphere of such discursively severed enclaves than, “The Body and the Earth,” an essay first appearing as Chapter Seven of *The Unsettling of America*, but *widely* referenced and incorporated into numerous neoagrarian/Berry collections thereafter (e.g., Wirzba, 2002). In the essay, Berry (1977) considers the *human limit* again, meaning, “the proper definition and place of human beings within the order of Creation... our *attitude toward our biological existence*” (*my emphasis*; p. 97). In lieu of confronting *the age of biology* from this critical insight, Berry sees the question of this critical interconnection of “... the life of the body in the world” (p. 97) to be a *religious* question, which

is to say, a question of and for nature, and thus a question of agriculture—how “our bodies live by farming... joined inextricably to both to the soil and to the bodies of other living creatures” (p. 97); and, specifically, which kind of farming with/in nature actualizes absolute health, the wholeness of Creation. So, in Berry, to (re)consider our relationships with own bodies is to (re)consider our interconnections with nature, and *vice versa*; and, likewise, our agri-cultural relations.

To detail this preoccupation, Berry submits that the interconnection of humans and nature—that humans are small with/in nature, the Creation—is an “ancient perception” (p. 97) captured best in two key literatures of perception: Shakespeare’s early 17th century tragedy, *King Lear*; and Hart Crane’s (1930s) long poem, *The Bridge*. Berry uses *King Lear* for support of his notions of the “curative power of perception” (p. 98). Basically, the *curative power of perception* means that if a human respects “his proper place in Creation, a man may be made whole” (p. 98)—like Gloucester, whose critical perception of his proper place within Creation meant his life could be renewed. In Berry, this last has become nothing more than *blindness* in the US centuries later, signified by Hart Crane’s *The Bridge*. The power of knowing by seeing, of perception of the human limit on Shakespeare’s cliff has been (necessarily) forgotten so that we may drive our technologies more like “Titans or as Gods” (p. 101) through and over nature; becomes no less than a force of alienation by the time of Crane’s modernity, the height of technology, rather the bridge (p. 102). For, in the US today, Berry argues that nature is not regarded as a restorative force, but exploited agriculturally, with biotechnoscience, for short-term profits. Now from great heights, landscapes can only be (re)considered as romantic vistas or, institutions “within the concept of the scenic” (p. 100) which “diminishes us... as nothing before machines” (p. 101). The heights of Crane’s *bridge*, Berry laments, ascended for their curative

power of perception, to garner one's place within a larger perspective of things, become instead the "final estrangement" (p. 102): human alienation is quite suicidal in the modern age after all.

This last interconnection between the gains and losses of the power of perception—restorative in Renaissance Shakespeare and now alienating in modern Crane—is Berry's own bridge to discourse of agriculture and health, agri-cultural health "rooted in the concept of wholeness" (p. 98). The terrifying conventional-industrial global food regime itself, especially, today, is reflective of *our own health*: "... when one approaches agriculture from any *other* issue than that of health, one may be said to be off the subject" (p. 98). For, he argues that it is because we have lost our perception of our own insignificance, or smallness, which is wholeness—the whole horse, as it also were (in reference to his essay, "The Whole Horse," from *Art of the Commonplace*, 2002; and *The New Agrarianism*, 2001, for ex.)—that we have and are experiencing this profoundly alienating perception of nature. Through the specializations of a veritable technocracy fostering economic and otherwise competition, we are all altogether disembodied, in terms of our (agri)cultures, communities and even our *households*, i.e., blind. Like this, Berry's delineated heights of perception turned bridge, and bridge thus to agri-culture and health today, bring the author to another of his key formulations: the division between genders, a sexual division, of the household, i.e., "dismemberment of the household" (p. 116) which he diligently (re)enjoins through his complementarity thesis thereafter.

Ostensibly, Berry contends that the alienation of the body and the soul, the body from the earth, has secured an "expanding series of divisions" (p. 112) which have come to encompass the *division*, of once merely *difference*, between the sexes thus gender mapped the "work of men and that of women" (p. 113). Berry continues that, traditionally, the former was the work of providing for the household through, predominantly, agri-cultural activities, while those of the

latter were, traditionally, the “tasks of nurture: housekeeping, the care of young children, food preparation” (p. 113). In his line, since we continually fail to *live where we work and work where we live* in this terrifying and blinding landscape of modern technological tyranny and alienation which exploits nature, naturally we would exploit the complementarity of these gender attendant roles and spheres. So, the devaluation of the earth and environment by technology and agribusinessmen, the “pornographers of agriculture” (p. 136), exploit the fertility of the land, interconnected thus with the exploitation of woman’s fertility. These interconnected exploitations are modeled on economics and biotechnoscience in lieu of biological roots in nature (p. 137). Thereby, the agribusinessmen have abstracted and deformed the farmer, husbandman and husband’s role and sphere, as well as that of the housewife, and her role and sphere. Berry thus argues that the marriage becomes a *prison* (p. 119) of *bondage* instead of a “protective capsule” (p. 119), encumbered thus with “degenerate housewifery... indivisible from degenerate husbandry” (p. 116); a prison of *partiality* from which “there is no escape” (p. 116). To Berry, the entire dialectical whole/ wholeness/ health of the marriage *bond* has been supplanted with *bondage*, i.e., *the servile state* (also Belloc, 1933, connected again shortly).

Since, Berry argues, “One cannot live *in the world*... there can be no such *thing as a ‘global village’*” (*my emphasis*; p. 122), his whole horse can only be actualized through restoration of the household, and the marriage, as a “unifying ideal... a practical circumstance of mutual dependence and obligation, requiring skill, moral discipline, and work” (p. 116-117). Actually, in Berry, such a household is a preexisting, intrinsic aspect of all *good* rural agricultural work with/in nature, for a “*good* farmer is husbandman and husband, the begetter and conserver of the earth’s bounty” (*original emphasis*; p. 116). In terms of geographical imaginary and representation, then, Berry’s dialectical synthesis basically works to reject, reduce

and conceal the general and global, opposed particular and local/ist; as well as trajectories of biotechnoscience he either demonizes as pornography or more likely denies in favor of an unchanging places. Actually, Berry's places are fabricated with sturdy and impermeable boundaries and limits, ensuring no more than a retreat into the more particular, and thus purified, local/ist place-bound community, family farm, marriage and gender coordinate domestic spheres.

By its close, *The Unsettling of America* permanently emplaces hope and peace, health and wholeness in the synthesized domestic order of rural life and work with/in nature (p. 123-24). The central proposition here is that the local/ism is Berry's curative power of perception—the place of limits where our bodies and minds can be restored a Jeffersonian agrarian utopia. Notably, such a place cannot exist without the foundational geographical imaginary of division otherwise shown to be wrought and intrainplicative of highly problematic realities and representations of US agriculture today...

The material-discursive food wars as they continue in the years following *The Unsettling of America* situate countless more Berry nonfiction, essay and literary contributions which more or less explore and expand this overriding world(view), incl., formulation of *kindly use*, the *human limit*, health, freedom, domesticity and *the small*. His further conceptualizations are rooted in this overriding geographical imaginary that blockades social trajectories of American institutions and global trajectories of large-scale agribusiness and biotechnoscience. In Berry, the latter can and will never do more than *abstract* the place of the local/ist and/or nature.

Take for example Berry's (1990) nonfiction essay, poetry and character sketch contribution ~ a decade later, entitled, *What Are People For?* In general, this multifarious collection focuses on the character of humans' relationship to each other on the *small scale*, the domestic order; and the relationship to land on the *large scale*—a synthesis of the particular and

general not unlike that (re)presented in *The Unsettling of America*. Essentially, the book is about *scale*—the small, local/ist, *human* scale, *in* place. He says that we need to more fully develop the local place in the image of nature so that the work of agribusiness pornographers—the conspiratorial forces of “governing agricultural doctrine in government offices, universities and corporations” (p. 123) escalating in their collusion since WWII—will cease to make people *redundant*. Ostensibly, given our “rush toward mechanization, automation, and computerization” (p. 125), Berry wants to know, “*what people are for...* Is the obsolescence of human beings now our social goal? One would conclude so from our attitude toward work, especially the manual work necessary to the long-term preservation of the land, why should there be any surprise at *the permanence of unemployment and welfare dependence*” (*original emphasis*; p. 125)? Obviously, the Berrian *Work of Purification* cannot contemplate or tolerate *power geometry* of multiple spatial forces which continually (re)territorialize the other human needs of such government intervention in the lives of many Americans, as in the form of welfare. In Berry, people are for rural agricultural labor, in the *Old Testament* sense—the only form of virtue available to Americans, anyway, since Jefferson (the *other* prophet).

Through poems, character sketches, literature analysis, essays, and letters from his readers in a simulated Q & A session, Berry explores this theme, and what we can do about an age increasingly marked by migration to the urban centers, the consequent loss of place of the local/ist, the farm, the forest, the town, the community, the family and the complementarity of—particularly with gender—the small scale. In Berry, today’s community life (p. 117-119) is oriented less to *people* than to specializations, mechanizations, atomizations, and unemployment... All humans can expect on such a terrifying, placeless landscape is unchecked materialism and consumerism—an unhealthy, useless and goalless life. Ultimately, the place of

health and utility upon a placeless landscape of purely economic economy of waste can be redeemed not if we all just go farm in nature, but eat responsibly (p. 145); participate in food (re)production (p. 149); compost (p. 150); cook (p. 150), and, above all, *know where your food comes from* by buying directly from the farm, i.e., the CSA (p. 150) and eating with *pleasure* (p. 152). This advice column is “the politics, esthetics and ethics of food” (p. 152)—the veritable how-to of a locavore’s sensibility, what Berry calls “the work of local culture” (p. 153-169) which has exploded as multiple local/ist discourse and material AFNs local/ist projects today.

The work of local culture again leads Berry into his formulation of gender complementarity and the domestic order, first formulated in *The Unsettling of America*. Letters in response to Berry’s essay in the latter book serve as a foray into his latest, and widely referenced (e.g., Wirzba’s 2002, *The Art of the Commonplace*), gender focused essay, “Feminism, The Body, and The Machine.” Apparently, at some point, some letter writers went so far as to accuse Berry of being a *tyrant* (p. 175), among other things. His response is that, first, his attackers “deal in feelings either feminist or technological, or both” (p. 179), feelings he dismisses as the accepted rhetoric of a public driven to the point of a mindless, lazy welfare state (it can be assumed) by biotechnoscience and destruction of the earth for short-term profits. Second, obviously, he counters, he is no more or less than a humble tiller and *conservationist* (p. 177). His horse-powered farm in rural Kentucky is patterned by a mutual partnership with his wife. Basically, Berry continues, men and women are only in bondage in the relations of science and technology beyond the household economy—when they don’t work together, at the home, for the home, without ulterior authority of so many of the evils outlined hereupon, specifically in “The Body and the Earth.” Nevertheless, like this enters the now legendary figure of Mrs. Wendell Berry, down on the farm in rural Kentucky typing dictated notes on a “Royal standard

typewriter bought new in 1956 and as good now as it was then” (p. 170). Berry counters quite fervently to accusations of tyranny he dismisses outright as merely the ramblings of a feminism *en vogue* (but otherwise beside the point) that he has never exploited his wife. He asks, “Why would any woman who would refuse, properly, to take the marital vow of obedience... then regard as ‘liberating’ a job that puts her under the authority of a boss (man or woman) whose authority specifically requires and expects obedience” (p. 183)?

His question reflects his earlier writings on gender complementarity of the *Unsettling of America*, and really his views on local/ism more generally: it is only within the boundaries of a hyper-rural life and work with/in nature where humans can be free. Longer social, agribusiness and biotechnoscience forces co-constitute nothing more than a *servile state*. To Berry, synthesis of the particular and general, rather husbandman and a “*diversely skilled* country housewife” (*my emphasis*; p. 184), respectively, can set gender differentiated, not divided, humans free.

In fact, Berry’s response to his feminist, technological or otherwise challengers leads him to ponder far more “obvious” (p. 187) questions in the age of advanced biotechnoscience and GE, like, “what is the purpose of this technological progress?... Surely the aim cannot be the integrity or happiness of our families, which we have made subordinate to the education system, the television industry, and the consumer economy” (p. 187)... To Berry here, exploitation of the land by *biotechnoscience* is the exploitation of gender difference as division; of sexuality and (re)production. For example, Berry continues, “The diseases of sexual irresponsibility are regarded as a technological problem and an affront to liberty” (p. 191). In his estimation, such industrial sex is focused “an *industrial accounting, dutifully toting up numbers of ‘sexual partners,’ orgasms, and so on*, with the inevitable industrial implication that the body is somehow a limit on the idea of sex, which will be a great deal more abundant as *soon as it can*

be done by robots” (*my emphasis*; p. 191). Though Wendell Berry is clearly opposed sexual intercourse with varietal machinery, the larger point to extrapolate here is that any social relations beyond the fidelity to impermeable boundaries of rural life and work with/in nature, or beyond the complementarity of genders, is no less than “hatred of the body... inherent in the technological revolution” (p. 191). This is why Wendell Berry resists, fundamentally, not only vibrating sex toys but also the computer; why Mrs. Wendell Berry types his notes on a typewriter (p. 194): so neither of them will be exploited, moreover, *raped* (p. 174) by the agribusiness pornography industry.

Though again, Berry proclaims that it would be “uncharitable and foolish... to suggest that nothing good will ever be written on a computer” (p. 194)—veritably the line of, *some of my best friends use computers*—Berry notwithstanding abhors computers for they are a “radical separation of the body from the work of the mind... a sterile, untouched, factorymade look, like that of a *plastic whistle or a new car*” (*my emphasis*; p. 194). Berry’s quite purposive obliviousness to biotechnoscience as profoundly more complex by 1990 than a vibrator or a *plastic whistle* aside for the moment, what Berry perhaps means to say is that using a computer would stand between the body and mind of his wife who types his notes. Anyway, what’s far more pressing is Berry’s geographical imaginary of division which has not surprisingly inspired an attendant denunciation of the global/ization wedded biotechnoscience, which carries through, *What are People For?*, esp., with the essay, “Why I Am Not Going to Buy A Computer.”⁹⁴

The whole of the essay is Berry’s response to (real or imagined) readers’ questions, defending his belief that, “If the use of a computer is a new idea, then a newer idea is not to use

⁹⁴ Berry’s referenced essay here was written twenty years ago. As with most *things Berry*, I have no idea if Berry actually had a computer at that time (i.e., if it was a metaphor); or if he has purchased one since. Really either way, the following propositions would not change much.

one” (p. 177). Quite passionately, Berry lays out his case for en masse unplugging, or leaving the grid, of an “IBM-style technocracy” (p. 174); how even owning a computer makes one part of a modern technocratic culture peddling products, which are only commercials for their next products. In Berry, this *cultish faith in the future* (p. 176-77), i.e., technology can only degrade the body and its relation to nature. The computer, among other biotechnoscience, and especially that which is oriented to agri-culture, leads to nothing less than eco-rape, in the form of strip-mined coal for electricity and dumping of massive amounts of agri-chemicals. Berry situates all humans and nonhumans as externalities and waste of progressive biotechnoscience. His nine-point list to follow for assessing the ‘good’ of a technological innovation (p. 171-72), including, “2) It should be at least as *small in scale* as the one it replaces... 8) It should come from a *small, privately owned shop or store*... 9) It should not *replace or disrupt anything good* that already exists, and this includes *family and community relationships*” (*my emphasis*; p. 172), is a veritable Old Testament for *getting off the grid*, literally... the power grid; figuratively, larger American society and culture. And yes, he remarks quite proudly, he performs his agricultural work with horses, writes with a pencil and paper, and has Mrs. Wendell Berry do his transcription on a typewriter. By the way, if his readers fail to “recognize the innovativeness” (p. 177) of his world(view), then their “conscience is not working” (p. 177).

Berry admits that he, too, is “still in bondage to the automobile industry and the energy companies” (p. 196); that he still travels via “inconvenient, uncomfortable, undependable, ugly, stinky, and scary” (p. 196) airplanes; that he remains *encumbered by* “something complicated” (p. 196). By the end of his winding response to *some* criticisms (i.e., the *two* of five otherwise quite favorable responses which might be figments of his imaginations), Berry clarifies, beyond all reasonable doubt, that his work overall (which is meant to include his writings and his work

with horses) intends not only a reification of the rural work of local culture and local/ist place with/in nature, but a retreat from global times: a backwardlooking, place-bound retreat into local/ism, being, “good human work that remembers its history” (p. 193). He laments, “I am afraid I won’t live long enough to escape my bondage to the machines... I knew a man who, in the age of chainsaws, went right on cutting wood with a handsaw and an axe. He was a healthier and a saner man than I am. I shall let his memory trouble my thoughts” (*my emphasis*; p. 196). From Berry’s seminal works to this mid-1990s collection, there is no promise or hope in biotechnoscience, in cyborgs, in monsters—there is no “freedom” (p. 191). Any otherwise conceived notions of open possibility in quasi-objects, in intrainfluences ever more pronounced in terrifying and promising assemblages of the twenty-first century are simply categorized and swept aside as slavery to the *global* servile state.

So, Berry wants us to trouble our thoughts with a retreat to “the ‘nature of the place’ as standard... the necessary limits of our own intentions” (p. 207)—where “nature is measure” (p. 204-210). He concludes that when we adopt “nature as measure, we require practice that is locally knowledgeable. The *particular* farm, that is, must not be treated as *any* farm. And the *particular* knowledge of *particular* places is *beyond the competence of any centralized power or authority*” (*my emphasis*, 210). For, ultimately, in the Berry world(view), we need particularity and syntheses—a *marriage of the body and the earth*, man and woman: “The inability to distinguish between *a farm* and *any farm* is a condition predisposing to abuse... the inability to distinguish between *a particular woman* and *any woman* is a condition predisposing to abuse.... *Rape, indeed, has been the result... now we must think of marriage*” (*my emphasis*; p. 210).

Having detailed some central themes of various Berry nonfiction turned neoagrarian geographical imaginary, through *which* discourse exactly did we arrive to formulations of (eco)rape and marriage?

(Re)Distributing a *Particular* Distributism *All His Own*

Berry's world(view) is a *Work of Purification*, but a particular, new American agrarian purification regime nonetheless given its interface with conventional-industrial progression of US agri-culture since the doomsday decade. Still, the rise of a global food regime as a (post)modern crisis is relative to many American agrarianism(s) prior. Ostensibly, given the hyper versions of agri-monsters most assuredly proliferating by the 1980s, it should not be surprising that distributist theorems experience a cultural and otherwise resurgence. What is important to understand about Berry's utilization of distributist economics theory in both *The Unsettling of America*, and his multiple neoagrarian nonfiction essays thereafter, is not so much his (re)configuration of distributism itself, but which distributist theoretical arguments he operationalized from others; and the kinds of geographical imaginary even plausible from those.

To briefly reiterate, distributism is more or less an economic and social theory, originally dating to ~1930s, that (re)configures a way to, literally, (re)distribute political-economic, industrial and corporate, commercial and capitalist, forms and power, incl. those of agriculture, whilst discounting outright socialist and communist systems. Along with G.K. Chesterton, Catholic realist Hilaire Belloc (1936; 1938) was a strong proponent and developer of *distributist* economic theory. Belloc argues that distributism would better actualize an individual's human dignity and free-will more than any other materialist philosophy driving socialism, communism or, especially, capitalism (1936; 1938). He sees the latter systems to rely on *wage slavery* (the *servile state*) to operate. Belloc argues thus for a distributist '*third way*'. Likewise, the *Fugitive*

Agrarians are the group of writers who can be seen to have more or less popularized such distributist leanings in the modern American agrarianism(s) tradition in the 1936 collection, *Who Owns America?: A New Declaration of Independence*. Their particular application of distributist teachings, however, is uniquely located by their overarching Southern agrarian imaginary.

Meaning, whereas purist distributism argues for the (re)distribution of private property ownership far more generally than a specific focus upon *agricultural* landholding—toward building stronger ownership, thus communities, to base social justice, and freedom in Catholic teachings—the Fugitive Agrarians apply distributist teachings throughout their Southern agrarian imaginary... with some vital substitutions especial to Southern American agrarian discourse. First, agriculture is seen by the Fugitive Agrarians as one of the lasting bastions of private property. Second, and perhaps most significantly, the Fugitive Agrarians problematize the long-view of organized religion as irrational. Allen Tate, editor of the original, *I'll Take My Stand* collection of 1930, submits a memorable essay on his unease with the institute of religion, finding spirituality in nature, the soil. Tate delineates the *whole horse* like this: “This modern mind sees only half of the horse—that half which may become a dynamo, or an automobile, or any other horsepowered machine. If this mind had much respect for the full-dimensional, grass-eating horse, *it would never have invented the engine which represents only half of him*” (*my emphasis*; from Berry, 1999, in Freyfogle, 2001, p. 64). This last is a fundamental theme of the work in that, specifically in lieu of Catholic teachings and charity, the Poets look to new confederate spirituality to drive their (re)distribution.

Subsequently, *Who Owns America?*, Catholic *distributism* (re)visioned through *Southern agrarian distributist economics* comes replete with a suspicion of democracy and religion, a need for an *enough and good* democracy as they believed was intended in the originating Jeffersonian

imaginary, and demands for the (re)distribution of private property through a no less than deplorable instrument of politics—one (re)enjoined not with God per se, but rather the *whole horse*, a more transcendental force, or spirituality; of white, heterosexual family farm smallholdings like the Southern agrarian past. The text thereby forwards highly problematic geographical imaginaries of nationalism, regionalism, philosophies of science, history, as well as race-class-gender constructions. It has a strong *separate but equal* tonality of property ownership (i.e., it would take a few more decades for *Brown vs. Board of Education*) (re)distributed to provision a third-space of private, self-contained and essentially spiritual lives.

The *whole horse* is a highly problematic reworking of Catholic distributism to fit in a specific agrarian argument that sees God-as-nature; and only particular forms and families of private property as spiritual. Its trialectical geographical imaginary seeks to synthesize only *separate but equal* complements otherwise left as predetermined opposites, particularly in terms of a synthesized third space—a retreat from longer spatialized trajectories, being private propertied enclaves of not the Catholic community and charity, but Southern agrarian idea(l)s. Overall, these themes, incl., the suspicion of religion and government; the necessity of a third-way retreat into local/ist rural smallholdings; and separate but equal complementarity in synthesis—in marriage, in nature—are the precise stuff of the *Berrian world(view)*.

Berry's (1991) highly referenced essay, "The Whole Horse," is perhaps most exemplary of the *particular* and unique *bricolage* that slowly becomes the Wendell Berry world(view)/ the discourse of "Wendell Berry." But, more obviously here, the whole horse interconnects Berry's works most ardently to the Southern agrarian tradition. The applied whole horse formulation enframes Berry's entire essay, and in doing so, carries with it Tate's unease with the institution of religion, and really any other American institution. Writes Berry, "the fundamental difference

between industrialism and agrarianism is this: whereas industrialism is a way of thought based on monetary capital and technology, agrarianism is a way of thought based on land” (p. 67). Meaning, in Berry, the agrarian mind, an ancient and modern idea inasmuch as practice, is religious at its “bottom” (p. 70), preferring Creation through “the love of the fields and ramifies in good farming, good cooking, good eating and gratitude to God” (p. 70). Actually, the agrarian mind is the mind of rural life and work with/in nature, discursively severed from all other trajectories. Berry clarifies here that the agrarian mind will never, “intersect or communicate with the industrial-economic mind” (p. 70). The possibility for *assemblage* with any practice that fails to fit into Berry’s right/wrong list assessing the value of any given technological innovation should not only be denounced, but demonized as perpetrator or rapist.

All told, the Southern agrarian idea(l)s of the 1930s seem to be an *enough and good* whole of a horse from which Wendell Berry would directly forward a new (old) declaration of who shall own America; for how to attain such independent rural (re)territorializations in the decades following doomsday: agrarian economic revolt. What suspiciously looks like a suspicion of political democracy and all other American institutions, Berry’s own whole horse argues for a retreat into privatized rural enclaves, to mean a place-bound home set opposed globalization: “*a revolt of local small producers and local consumers against global industrialism of corporations...* The coming of the World Trade Organization was foretold seventy years ago... *I’ll Take My Stand* did not foresee this because they were fortune-tellers but because they had perceived accurately the character and motive of the industrial economy” (*my emphasis*; p. 75; 73). Berry’s “The Whole Horse” is therefore perhaps his most ardent rejection of longer spatialized trajectories, denouncing outright “a working model of a conserving global corporation” (p. 79).

Actually, I argue that this essay is where Berry proposes the most limited of presumptions of the global and local, the inevitability of neoliberal possibilities and geographical imaginaries, and thus, in turn, (re)visions only a *neo* neoliberal discourse of a discursively severed, hyper-rural, place-bound local/ist retreat. In his words, “Between these two programs—the *industrial and the agrarian, the global and the local*—the most critical difference is that of *knowledge*. The global economic institutionalizes a global ignorance... in which *the histories of all products will be lost*. In such circumstance, the degradation of products and places, producers and consumers, is *inevitable*” (*my emphasis*; p. 74). The latter conceptualization provisions a local/ism and the locavore sensibility a long, unchanging internal history altogether discursively severed from any other forces and trajectories, i.e., the hyper-rural imaginary of the family farm that endlessly (re)territorializes thus a quasi surveillance, or disciplinary system, of those on the other side of the local/global, natural/ unnatural, sustainable/ conventional-industrial, quality/ dirty, healthy/not, binary line of the material-discursive food wars... Or, as Berry puts it, “Only a healthy local economy can *keep nature and work together* in the consciousness of the community—*can restore history to economics*... This [organic] market is being made by *the exceptional goodness and freshness* of the food, by *the wish of urban consumers* to support their farming neighbors, and by the excesses and abuses of the *corporate food industry*” (*my emphasis*; p. 74-75; 76). And with that, so reified are the boundaries of a choice between conventional-industrial and organics, the boundaries of a terrifying global space of biotechnoscience and the boundaries of the local/ist: the new agrarian food wars imaginary.

Berry’s remarkably nimble (re)configuration of Southern agrarian distributists allows for his own (re)discovery of transcendence in the wholeness of husbandmen’s arduous rural life and labor with/in nature. But this last must be achieved with/in the complementarity of the domestic

order, of the rural community and family farm. The marriage is thus the absolute smallest scale. Berry's Southern agrarian distributist imaginary has brought 1930s views of domestic order of the family farm right along with it—and not just any farmer, or any woman, we remember: a *particular* woman, rather, who I argue, is Berry's *particular* housewife: the *republican mother*.

(Bound) At the *Place* of the Small(est) Scale: *Complementarity*

Salient tenants of Catholic teachings of marriage and the domestic order from the 1930s, precisely the context when the Southern agrarians take their *distributist* stance, resound in Berry's formulations of the proper understandings of gender as *separate but equal*; as equal theses and antitheses differences, not divisions, to be synthesized in trialectical marriage in local/ist place. His agrarian principles of gender complementarity and mutual marriage alliance are obviously traditional, classical and/or biblical/ conservative understandings of the domestic unit as the (re)enjoinment of the mind and body, as well as husbandman and housewife, respectively. Berry's agile (re)configuration of Catholic turned Southern agrarian distributist world(view) aggrandizes a very particular, privileged Jeffersonian vision, and later multi-distributist treatise, of an unspoken, often dangerously Eurocentric, heterosexist, normative, even colonialist, consensus, of what family, community and, particularly, its husbandman and housewives performing agricultural labor with/in nature as *separate but equal partners*, should mean. Still, Berry affords privilege and power to his particular (and particularly skilled) housewives by such place-bound imaginings, which is how his imaginary has proliferated, almost unchallenged, *tricksters* of health and freedom so forceful, so appealing... so difficult to critically challenge for many decades even though, when all is said and done, Berry is (re)presenting the new agrarians a palatable ecofeminist argument of liberation that is little more than a(nother) *republican mother*.

Carolyn Sachs' (1996) *Gendered Fields* argues that there are no master narratives, macrostructural theories or histories of US agriculture, be they of agricultural economics, more general science or even feminist discourse, which can somehow capture a *pan* rural farm women's experience of either nature or the farm. She continues that such grand agricultural imaginaries can reduce all women's experience with/in the farm(ing) as antithetical to other masculinized positioning of farm work and spheres; and, by contrast to longer spatial trajectories, as *closer to nature*.⁹⁵ What's worse, in accounting for this homogenous farm woman's experience usually only the most privileged, i.e., Western family farming, predominantly made-up of white, straight and protestant farm wives, become the model from which all the rest of the world's farm(ing) women would be differentiated and deferred (p. 4-5). These geographical reductions deflate the diversity of rurality; the diversity of the women of rural places; and fail to encounter the geographies and experiences that are continually (re)territorialized in any interaction, any place, be that interimplicated in the US or the Global South (p. 1-2). Any of latter depictions might also be true, rather, might play-out in various places, but that's the point. What nature and/or oppression and privilege, or health and freedom, can even mean or signify for women's experiences of one place-based family farm understanding to the next can only be (re)territorialized, and imagined, as encumbered by longer space-time trajectories, i.e., complex power geometry. Sachs finds that place-based understandings are vital to more fully account for both the power geometry *and* exciting possibilities afforded by any agricultural context situating women.

⁹⁵ The foregoing overview of these critical ideas of women and agriculture is quite limited. For additional critical perspectives, see Whatmore (1991); Whatmore, Marsden and Lowe (1994). For additional critical perspectives on women and Iowa agriculture specifically, see Fink (1986).

The flip-side of this same argument that women are not always, or seamlessly, *oppressed* by rural family farming is, of course, that Berry's particular housewifery *within* fabricated rural boundaries of *complementarity* can indeed also be *libratory*. Meaning, if farm women's experiences are examined outside of flattening discourses which can homogenize woman as only either nature's super avengers, basically *howling at the moon*, or reduced to the masculine and ever locked at the place of home, it means farm women very well can assert some kind of *freedom in complementarity* inasmuch as anywhere else. And it is in this light that Berry's formulation of health and freedom in *separate but equal gender complementarity* in the *spirit* of various distributist (re)configurations in fact *can* be (re)presented as provisioning liberation and freedom. *Why can't* these last be discovered in husbandman and housewifery *complementarity*? *Why can't* women be *agentic* and work, and well, *with* men, in libratory ways in the family farming enterprise? These last are important questions raised by Berry's works.

It is in the foregoing vein that Berry's complementarity thesis has been presented as less oppressive than another expression of *ecofeminism*, a *feminist* theory which theorizes the oppressions of both land and women; how these two intertwine; and how both should be protected and preserved. Annette Kolodny's (1984) *The Land Before Her: Fantasy and Experience of the American Frontiers, 1630-1860*, presents the most infamous ecofeminist appraisal of *America* as a settlement resulting from the "psychosexual dramas of men intent on possessing a virgin continent" (p. xiii; also in Bilbro, 2012, p. 289). Bilbro (2012) also argues that various Berry writings, largely presented heretofore, utilize similar erotic imagery to stake his claims that the treatment of the earth and land has extended to our transfiguration of human bonds, particularly of the marriage bond, to *bondage* and servility, i.e., "an historical parallel... between the treatment of the land and the treatment of women" (p. 289). Thus, the

complementarity discourse of monogamous marriage, sexuality and fertility of Berry's writings Bilbro finds are more like poetic metaphors and flourishes based in the material and symbolic landscape exploited in the settling of the *New World*. Bilbro ultimately argues that Berry's works read like a journey toward pleasure, health, fertility and fuller bonds of not only the marriage, but a simultaneously participatory and self-sufficient responsible stewardship with/in nature (p. 289). In fact, he contends that Berry has not only significantly challenged traditional patriarchal relations (and sexual fantasies) between farming and the land/ woman (p. 289), but that his imaginary retains the force to "instruct and challenge ecofeminist theory" (p. 289).

It seems plausible to theorists like Bilbro that Berry's multiple writings work to restore a theoretically less patriarchal, separate but equal purview of gender as difference, not division; and (re)locate liberation and freedom in a complementarity of everything in its place. This last would mean that, in her proper limit and place, a woman's fertility and maternity properly differentiates her but fully (re)connects her to a healthy family farm and home; to nature and thereby, through that fecundity to all humans and nonhumans—an essentialist connection perhaps, but one more complex than a strict ecofeminism which, at its base, would nevertheless concur. In fact, like feminist environmentalism, ecofeminism purposively place-binds women closer to nature so as to advocate for their protection and preservation along with that of the land and local knowledges (Moeckli & Braun, 2001). Somewhat akin then to the, generally, *ecofeminist* project in turn, perhaps Berry's sexual imagery seeks a fuller human and nonhuman bond that can inform ecofeminism after all. It is possible to read Berry's complementarity formulation as a better *ecofeminist* (as opposed *tyrannical*) project: everything and everyone has a proper place and limit with/in marriage; within nature.

There is, however, another way to look at this. For example, Halpern's (2001), *And On That Farm He Had a Wife: Ontario Farm Women and Feminism, 1900-1970* argues that *certain* women benefit from a *separate but equal* positioning that bolsters their discursive severance, thereby affording them more *angelic* purity and status as family farm matriarchs. *Separate but equal* ideologies can enact a privilege and power inasmuch as they can result in, and quite evident throughout US history, a power over many other women, races, social classes, and so forth. In Sach's (1996) comparable take, modern American agrarianism has done far more to forward the moral superiority of the *family farm*, and the heterosexual white European marriage at its head, than anything else. One of the strongest images of the latter, *most* likely signified in Berry's formulation of marriage complementarity and coordinate housewife/ry, is the *republican mother*. The *republican mother*, at least in the case of the rural family farm with/in nature, is the angelic force who will drive its (re)production and domestic order (also Sachs, 1996, p. 132). She is the *angel* of this more virtuous and moral country life and work, ever liberated by such *labor*—in maternity, in the marriage for the husband, and on the farm (p. 133). Like the land itself will be, the *republican mother* passes these virtues on to her sons, her own maternity in this way on to her daughters (p. 136). Women's special roles then in this especial context are markedly not intended to be performed toward meeting any other goals and needs than those of the farm, furthered symbolized by the husband(man) head of operations. As an ideology of domestic order, these labors elevate farm women above all other women—esp., Nonwestern women of color. In these ways, farmwifery is indeed, like in the works of Berry, far from oppressive (for *some* women). Not only is particular farmwife/ry morally superior, but there are great stakes of power-knowledge and representation for both the husbandman/ry and housewife/ry for maintaining *separate but equal* complementarity of the domestic order.

All in all, the implication of Berry's far more cogent ecofeminist project is, first, that *complementarity* is no simple matter of *man-oppress-woman down on the farm*. The problem arises when, second, such power-knowledge of privilege becomes quite *libratory* for the most privileged groups, for such privilege is attained and maintained through the purification of place of longer spatialized trajectories of biotechnoscientific sex robots, airplanes, chainsaws, GE commodity corn and so forth. Let us remember the words of Berry (1990) himself, on (re)considering any distanced trajectory or assemblage when he writes, "farm wives who help to run the kind of household economy *that I have described* are apt to be asked by feminists, and with great condescension, 'But what do you 'do'?' By this they invariably mean that there is something better to do than to *make one's marriage and household*, and by *better* they invariably mean 'employment outside the home'" (*my emphasis*; p. 181). There is no place in the Berry (prophecy) place of the *republican mother* for the pluriactivity of many to most conventional-industrial farm women who juggle a minimum of three roles and spheres on and off the farm to simply maintain the material-discursive power geometry of 'that' family farm. It seems those women are not the concern of Wendell Berry—and neither is the conventional-industrial family farm, whose imaginary has turned local/ist in defiance of the global and all that is wedded it.

At the end of the day, *Toward Cornotology* is far more concerned with Berry's *tricky*, highly problematic, *Southern agrarian distributist* oriented geographical imaginary of food wars than with Berry's formulation of gender complementarity-as-republican-motherhood *per se*. Not simply a sexist tyrant (or a racist tyrant, as many of his own rhetorical flourishes could easily concede), with such tricky delimitations Berry makes almost inarguable arguments for a curative power of perception—a *larger perspective of people and things*—connected to agriculture today, a change in vision; for our own health. Without question, Berry quite usefully, and passionately,

articulates how communal and more personal health and wellness, tied to agriculture, is undergoing a profound division, dismemberment, disembodiment today. That point, generally, is difficult to refute. So, if the sum of his works' parts is that change requires a shift in seeing, or even to *think globally, act locally*—even at the place of the body—to affect an agri-cultural system otherwise totally goalless, useless, seemingly out of control, then he does acknowledge the dynamism of place to co-constitute those relations. Yet, as ever, *how we think about space matters—how we think about corn matters...* Rather, *what* Berry proposes should be the thinking underlying redress of such issues comes mostly in the form of a *retreat* into local/ist place. In Berry, what should take place, *locally*—ever evident in his marriage complementarity thesis that (re)asserts an ineffably complex construction of *republican motherhood closer to nature* inasmuch as a complete disdain for biotechnoscience and all mediating institutions of governance and accountability—is what becomes almost inarguably problematic. When all is said and done, the particular Berrian world(view) blending of, namely, Jeffersonian and 1930s Southern idea(l)s particularly, cannot confront a global twenty-first century social natural world of a biotechnoscience that affords as many deleterious monsters as monstrous possibilities for *what people are for* well beyond complementarity or even the Western family farm.

The Preservation of Wendell Berry/ “Wendell Berry”

In some notable ways, the new agrarianism works to ensure that there is no reason to challenge some of the most oppressive agrarian representation throughout history; or how it has come to stand-in for more accountable confrontation of a biotechnoscientific reality. The Wendell Berry world(view)/ the discourse of Wendell Berry, i.e., “Wendell Berry,” has been purified of anything associated the global. Doing so allows for the privilege of a very particular family farm and its domestic order with/in nature, as well as for the most reified local/ist projects

to be considered as material-discursive *counterparts* of the global, but purified of its trajectories. *How* Wendell Berry, and largely according to “Wendell Berry,” is preserved as an at once farmer, poet, essayist, novelist, academic, *agricultural romantic’s poet laureate*; a *modern day Thoreau, American hero*—even a *prophet*—is to what I now turn my attention.

Ascribing *intentionality* to Wendell Berry as progenitor of the *new agrarianism*, or really even as a proposer of solidly material, long-term solutions of the many issues and concerns of US agriculture today, *naturally* raises significant and largely unanswerable questions about his *distributism, genre* and even *objectives*.

First, Berry is only occasionally presented as a distributist—and if he is, he is certainly not presented as a *Southern agrarian distributist* given all the problems attendant of the label. Like Arbery (2012) puts it, the latest collection of essays about Berry’s humanism, being editors Mitchell & Schlueter’s (2011), *The Humane Vision of Wendell Berry*, while including, finally, critical connections of Berry’s works and distributism, the distributism they highlight is that of, among others, Chesterton and Belloc. So comments Arbery (2012), the incorporated essayists “oddly do not give much credit to *I’ll Take My Stand* or the Southern tradition that informs Berry’s views. Perhaps the contributors do not want his teaching *to seem* merely *regional*; perhaps *the tincture of racial issues, which Berry also tends to avoid, stays them*” (*my emphasis*; p. 50). Regardless, it would be difficult to deny at least a modicum of *racial issues*, like a doctrine of thesis and antithesis, moreover, *separate but equal*, throughout the Berry nonfiction compendium, particularly in terms of gender complementarity and *republican motherhood*... Perhaps this last is why Editors Mitchell and Schlueter, in a recent on-line Q & A with the *Intercollegiate Studies Institute* (ISI) about their latest Berry collection counter claim that Berry is an “agrarian in the Jeffersonian tradition. By this *he means* to remind us of the *democratic*

tradition of agrarianism as found in Jefferson's writings, and to distance himself from the southern tradition of agrarianism, with its racist and aristocratic associations" (my emphasis; ISI, 2011).

The point here is to simply entertain whether Berry seeks to distance *himself* from said tradition as much as the editors of multiple Berry collections seek to distance *him* from the Southern agrarian tradition by simply refusing to situate his works within any other form of distributism than that of Catholic realists; or, even that of Schumacher's (1989) *new age distributist economics*, outlined in *Small is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered*, originally published in 1973—both of which Berry's central themes more realistically *resist* in any number of ways. "Berry's deeply reasoned preference *for the local, the particular, and the small*" (my emphasis; Arbery 2012) undoubtedly aligns his work with distributism in general. Even Mitchell & Schlueter (2011) concede this last, though without hesitation (re)positioning Berry amidst more socially palatable *Catholic realist distributism* or even Schumacher, far more clearly than implicating the *Vanderbilt poets*. I submit that the latter can be seen as a form of purification of Wendell Berry/ the discourse of "Wendell Berry."

Essentially, Berry's geographical imagination of the new agrarianism is far more in the line of the Southern agrarian (re)consideration and (re)interpretation of Catholic distributism, which is to say, more strongly oriented to the American agrarian tradition, specifically that of the US south, than English Catholic distributism which, all things held constant, fails to be definitively agrarian. The foremost case in point is, of course, Berry's particular unease with the institute of religion, as well as other any other formal American mediating institutions of governance, including that of 'churchgoing' but extending to partisan engagement with national political, economic, corporate, globalization, academic agri-research among other paradigms as

well. Instead, the *Southern agrarian distributists* offer substantial resistance to big solutions proffered by any institutions. They also offer, as Jefferson before, the vital substitution of God for the tiller and tilling; tradition and nature. So, and most usefully for the Berry's new agrarianism, Southern agrarians look *back* to the land and small, private hyper-rural enclaves—precisely where we find Berry: less a *good Catholic* than a *Jeffersonian rejecter* “of any partisan engagement with national politics... Berry thinks along *Antifederalist* lines: he tends to mistrust institutions... He praises Jefferson's preference for the small, independent farmer” (Arbery, 2012, p. 50). Perhaps Arbery (2012) says it best of these somewhat conflicted strains of Berry's rejections and assents when he summates, “The answers appear to lie in a measure of integrity or *wholeness* that Berry applies to *his* experiences. If *he* cannot find in church the same reality of God he knows for himself, or find in politics the care for one another he knows through his membership in a small community, *he cannot endorse a supposed good in the abstract*” (*my emphasis*; p. 50). “His” experiences are undoubtedly not only on the land, but on his own US Southern horse-powered Kentucky family farm since 1965. I return to this point on regionalism momentarily.

Denying the distributist orientation of the Berry world(view) by emplacing it with/in the distributist constellation of Schumacher (1989) is equally as spurious. Really, about the only aspect that such decidedly Western Catholic, and/ or other Southern distributist, texts, have in common with Schumacher's *Buddhist economics* is the use of the term *scale*—that scale should be that of the human, i.e., that *the small is beautiful*. *How* each arrives to that conclusion—or conceives of that *scale*, which is to say, the geographical imaginary of these distributisms—in terms of geographical imaginings could not be more contrastable. Basically, Schumacher decentralizes Western ontological and cosmological trajectories (of imperialism) and calls into

question the claims to power of Western economics, to again emphasize, foremost, the human scale as it is exploited in practice, not somehow as its is preordained or inherent in current systems. This last is incongruous with a Catholic realist distributist argument, (re)considered through the Southern agrarianism imaginary to be the only way out of capitalism (and certainly socialism or communism) or any kind of liberal collectivism. Plus, Schumacher's work has not been the operationalized theoretical leanings of the largely distributist-based neoagrarianism thought beyond the 1980s. While indicating Schumacher to be sure, even new age Catholic distributists, Carlson (2007) and Lanz (2008), for instance, seek a purer Catholic distributism. All in all, Berry might contend that *small is beautiful*, but only if the small is entirely disconnected from the BIG—which utterly rejects the challenge of Schumacher.

My point is that Wendell Berry is a skillfully (re)configured and (re)configuring Southern agrarian distributist for *the new age* who is not disenfranchising any of his millions of readers the world over by drawing from a tradition that remains—and for good reasons of *separate but equal*, incl. of nationalism, racism, heteronormativity, sexism and so many heretofore—nonetheless consistently purified of its association with his works/ “Wendell Berry.” Like this, Berry's world (view) can be at once Christian *without Christianity*, Catholic charity without the Catholicism, and *backwardlooking* to the *tradition* of the modern Jeffersonian American agrarian vision *without* the constraints of other centralized, federalist and likewise mediating institutions which, all told, *could* disenfranchise many devotees as yet another big *transcendental* solution for *immanently* terrifying global realities; or, could be denounced, as evident in his own *Q & A* session presented in *What are People For?*, didactic, even tyrannical, judgments. The new agrarian mind imagines a geography oriented not toward church but *back to the land*, which is

itself all of Creation: a point well taken without the encumbrance of the gospels into the nearest *Whole Foods Market* today inasmuch as it was *back to the land* in the 1960s...

I indicate my second point on regionalism here. Berry can also skillfully utilize Southern regionalism as a scale in the Southerners' proposition without alienating readers; why he would no more distance himself from the Southern agrarians than from Southern geography. In Berry, the regional scale of the Southerner can signify tradition, as well as that of his own rural farm life and work. In Berry, regional scale would work quite well, actually, to signify the ethics of the small, be that implicit in the human limit of humans in nature. In that way, regionalism, in lieu of disenfranchising, more assuredly in the Berry world(view) *reinforces* a resistance to federalist industrialism and government intervention, a healthy suspicion of federal political democracy from which we can reconsidered through hyper-rural *third landscapes* locatable "between environmentalism and industrial pillaging" (in Arbery, 2012, p. 50). Regionalism, as a third landscape, is ultimately expressed through his own Southern land and farm.

And it is this last insight of Berry's third-space, *a way out* of the terrifying global times like that proposed by the *Fugitive Agrarians*, which bolsters my charge that to try to separate Berry from *Southern agrarianism*, and to emplace him in a more contemporarily acceptable, liberal or at least traditional, distributist framework serves other purposes for the new agrarianism *collective*—not of or by or even for Wendell Berry *himself*. For, as Arbery (2012) articulates, Berry is "*the prophet* of starting over. He makes one grateful for the clarity he provides *about the nature of a good life and the urgency of finding the courage to live it as he does*" (*my emphasis*; p. 50). Paul Thompson (2008) likewise calls Berry a "*contemporary prophet* and spokesperson for agrarian themes as they relate to environmental matters" (*my emphasis*; p. 529). Arbery, Thompson and countless others thus illuminate precisely the kind of

influence and inspiration Berry provides the new agrarians which must be preserved at all costs: a *clean slate* in local/ist third space.

Beyond modifying his distributist associations, the Berry prophecy is protected and preserved foremost by its reduction to *genre*. Disrupting critique of Berry since his seminal work comes foremost in the argument that this is *just literature*, after all. Wendell Berry is defended as merely writing the *literature of the land* (Jager, 2004, p. 82); that his works and idea(l)s should not be applied beyond literary tradition. Obviously, Lundin (2007) posits, the absolutely innumerable themes of Berry are *just* traditional themes of more general agrarian literary genres, including the pastoral, the character-sketch and a myriad of short fiction. At times, it can seem rather foolish to take Berry's discourse as a call for material food war when, Lundin continues, Berry more generally offers a more spiritual "wisdom of the poetics of embodiment" (p. 333) for the modern world. He concludes that when it comes to understanding the body and the earth, the curative power of perception, Berry's poetic embodiment provides no more, no less, than a Biblical spirituality without the Bible, so to speak, writing, "In his understanding of marriage, the body, and the broken beauty of our earthly lives, Wendell Berry has shown us—and continues to show us—*how to learn and how to live that mean...* between a *rape* and *Platonic love*" (Lundin, 2007).

This last is why, many argue, there are no *big solutions* offered in Wendell Berry—no confrontation or cadence of biotechnoscience, for example, available in his writings, including those of nonfiction: Wendell Berry is, fundamentally, a visionary poet. Montmarquet (1989) likewise contends that Berry's work espouses an outlook that intends to offer not *government* solutions, market solutions, or really any "big solutions" (p. 239) because Berry sees these last as only further disconnecting humans and nonhumans, moreover hastening the end of the rural

family farm smallholder. Jager (2004) assents that *big solutions* are unclear in even Berry's most salient nonfiction agri-cultural indictments because the Berrian imaginary, like *most* US agrarianism(s), makes sweeping generalities. Although by the time of yet another *Afterword* addendum to his third edition of *The Unsettling of America* in 1996, for instance, Berry argues that government should be allowed "to intervene to protect" (p. 240) small farms, and otherwise actualize his overriding objectives of (Southern agrarian) (re)distribution "through policies of taxation which achieve an equitable distribution of property" (p. 240), like with supply management in the form of price and production controls (p. 240), his allies contend that this is just more proof that that Berry is a *traditionalist* in his views of "industrial invasion" (Jager, 2004, p. 73; 78).

Actually, Jager defies anyone to position Berry's work as any category other than motivational, or spiritual—more akin to a sermon than a cogent theory. He writes, "Spiritual themes, mostly Christian, and a spiritualized view of the natural world run throughout Berry's writing, everywhere inform his sensibility, and are implicit in his judgments" (p. 76). And like this, modern American agrarianism in general, and Berry's new agrarianism in particular, is "not a sharp enough instrument for social diagnosis" (p. 82), locatable thus to the nature side of sociality. In fact, Jager forwards that one would be hard pressed in the American agrarian tradition today to find any form of concrete indictments and as concrete solutions; that there has been an inarguable conceptual shift toward a more romantic contemplation of embodied interconnection of humans and nonhuman wilderness, nature (also Montmarquet, 1989, p. 240)—a romantic, or literary, agrarianism in line of Emerson and Thoreau (decidedly not the *Fugitive poets*) (Jager, 2004, p. 80). The aforementioned interview exchange with Editors Mitchell and Schlueter goes so far as to say that Berry's literariness, or genre, renders irrelevant

any critique that focuses its contention otherwise. They can easily discount rather strong accusations that Berry is a tyrant; or worse yet, a *racist sexist* tyrant, because, the Editors clarify, the innumerable influences of Berry's world(view) include God, no less (here meaning, the *Creator*); and the canonical (not specifically agrarian) titans of, "The Bible, Dante, Milton, Shakespeare, Thoreau, T. S. Eliot... A *correct understanding* of Berry cannot be captured by any single one of them, yet much can be gained by exploring the references Berry makes in his own writings" (*my emphasis*; ISI, 2011).

For now, the more *literary*, or *romantic*, *agrarianism* certainly comprises a part of the Berry world(view)—and is perhaps what makes his work so undeniably *pervasive* throughout American thought on foodways and food systems localization today. Jager (2004) also notices this, proffering that sheer *volume* could account for the utter omnipresence of Berry in American thought on foodways; or, equally as likely, that the many spiritual themes are unique and particular to everyday life, as well as particularly toned: Berry usefully lacks the aggression of a Victor Hanson (p. 81-82), for instance, whose work makes similar claims though with a more confrontational tone that could turn-off some readers, particularly, whom Jager himself actually qualifies, *urban readers*.

It would be quite difficult for anyone in Wendell Berry's position, poet or not, to rebuff his persuasion—especially given the high-profile of American BIG organics and AFNs local/ist projects; innumerable food documentaries, including rising stars, like Michael Pollan, who entirely credit their works to his influence; and the countless neoagrarian collections of essays which draw often directly from his works. It seems that Berry, at least in his (1990) essay, "The Responsibility of the Poet," in, *What are People For?*, even acknowledges the wide ramifications of "Wendell Berry," the poet; and his art, the poem, to evoke particular historical,

social and so forth imaginaries which do have the ability to shape discourses larger than himself and even a strictly delimited literary genre. Still, Berry believes his works are, and should be, above critical reproach for they are just a humble contribution of love to the world. As he sees it, his works are thus an *amateur's* knowledge, to mean, the local/ized knowledges (further detailed below) of the margins, mappable the work of love. These geographies are submitted in opposition to global/ized knowledges of the specialist, expert, critic and professional standards coordinate the work of *competition*, *ambition* and *selfishness*, even, “expense, ostentation, and mediocrity” (p. 90)—*all* no less deplorable than agribusinessmen’s pornographic exploitation and devastation. By contrast, his work meets only the challenge of “*amateur standards*, the standards of *love*... always *straining upward* toward the humble and the *best*. They enlarge the ground of judgment” (*my emphasis*; p. 90).

Perhaps not surprisingly, Berry’s own clarity of the politics of his aesthetics relies on the same geographical imaginary of sociality opposed nature/ naturalness, which again (re)positions his own *whole horse* indictments as an innocent contribution of literature of the land—a purportedly *purser* motivation and profession beyond critique of professional/isms. Such a geography is further clarified in one of his latest nonfiction essays, “Local Knowledge in the Age of Information” (2005), which still fosters some strong *political* undertones after all.

Berry’s newer nonfiction submits that his, and the work of his “allies” (p. 399) should be taken as the useful efforts of the “periphery to be heard by the center” (p. 399)—which is a “*useful dichotomy*... [that] *does in fact exist*, as does the tendency of *the center to be ignorant of the periphery*” (*my emphasis*, p. 399). He contends that his work is, as it has always been, positioned thereupon as a plea from the human limit—“a plea for humility” (p. 410). His, like other, allied knowledges from the marginal, or here, peripheral, place he connected to *love* can

be easily contrasted other, more global/ized spaces of “the land grant university... industrial city... national or state government... But above all, now, as a sort of center of centers, is the global, ‘free market’ economy of the great corporations, *the periphery of which is everywhere*” (*my emphasis*; p. 399), i.e., and *not* love. Berry contends therefore that today’s global world of the “world wide web” needs *better* communication than that, rather, needs a better *conversation* “between periphery and center” (p. 400)—between the *poetry of love* and the *science of destruction*.

In Berry’s geography from and for the margin he *does* attempt to clarify that the center *is* important as a receptacle for social relations, like those of the land grant universities (which he only just abhorred). In fact, the center is *most* valuable because one cannot have a periphery without a center: “one is unthinkable without the other” (p. 405). But what we more likely can learn about his geography here—which is my central concern—is that the center *must* exist for what he calls a better “conversation” (p. 407) with the periphery. A conversation remains in pointed contrast, he argues, to the “commodity” (p. 407) of *uncooperative* (p. 408) and “limited” (p. 409) *World Wide Web* ‘communication.’ Meaning, and in Berry’s words, “if we want the most sensitive application of intelligence to local problems, if we want the best work to be done, if we want the world to last” (p. 408) then we must seek such poetry of love, being, “*placed* knowledge... placed language, made in reference to local names, conditions, and needs... a refined, discriminating knowledge of localities by the local people” (*my emphasis*; p. 408).

Overall, from Berry’s geographical imaginary of and in the *margin*, of the *periphery*, being the ‘rural,’ or local/ist, place of *love*, there is nothing offered by the center, or by the center of centers than “uniformity, oversimplification, overspecialization, and (*inevitably*) destruction” (*my emphasis*; p. 408). And, finally, with one last rhetorical flourish to impermeably seal the

boundary of his (post)modern core-to-margin geographical imaginary of *Purification*, Berry distanciates *nature* and our most intimate understanding of it as “beyond our technology and beyond our language... the *irreducible reality of our precious world*... of which we will *always be dangerously ignorant*” (*my emphasis*; p. 410). He also deftly distanciates all tools of biotechnoscience, undefined and abandoned in the ether of the center of centers which he only seeks to push yet further *beyond* his hermetically sealed place of nostalgia and poetry.

What started out as a humble poet’s plea from the amateur’s and local/ist’s margins, or periphery, of and for love and humility—what he called a fuller conversation of center and periphery—becomes by its close what I find to be more generally the now expected conclusions of the Berry world(view) imaginary of global times. I argue that the latter forward/ implicate some serious political ramifications beyond *literary genre* after all: a discursive third-way retreat into the place of the rural-turned-local/ist life and work with/in a wholly and mysterious, distanciated nature-as-Creation, i.e., a nature that is somehow free of spatialized social relations and trajectories. In looking for Berry’s own delimitation of the intentions, or at least coherent meanings, of the force of himself as a poet; and of the pervasiveness of his writings, we are provisioned a geography of space removed from a hyper-rural local/ist place, society split from nature, cores distanced from margins, all with coordinate values of destruction and love, respectively. Fundamentally, what Berry manages to do here (as elsewhere) is discursively sever the *periphery* from the *center* so that the poet-turned-local/ist retains the *secrets* to history, even to *the universe*, i.e., here to mean, *love*... And it is for reasons of geography and space-place severance alone that I contend Berry’s formulations can be analyzed as another (post)modern American agrarian *Work of Purification*. In Berry, whatever trajectories directed from the *core*, or center, will impact the margin only as the core intends with its biotechnoscience of death; that

his much loved places have no role other than resistance of the center's trajectories; and, ultimately, that places are *always already* more knowledgeable of nature, or closer to nature, than the core. Hence, we arrive to another hyper-global version of the modern billiard ball geographical imaginary. Berry's (re)vision of the place of the poet and his local/ist knowledges, (re)fashioned with scale-fixed borders, distances and proximities, looks more like nested scales which move either downward from the professional/ism to the amateur; or core-to-margin, being center to periphery. According to Berry, history tells us that the center should be deferent to his particular fabrication of the periphery if all humans and nonhumans want to survive—and this is where the political dimension comes into play.

In a manner of speaking, Wendell Berry doesn't *want* a conversation, but to homogenize and reduce the center into the periphery, (re)creating thus a more purified place of local/ism and local/ist knowledges. Such geography needs to be preserved because it most artfully conflates all social meanings, even of poetry here, with spatialization. If anything is simply located with/in the margins, the periphery, then it is more healthy, natural and loving—sustainable. It doesn't matter, then, really, if, like in a conversation with *The Land Institute President*, Wes Jackson [popular author of, *Becoming Native to this Place* (1994)] such life and works are less engaged in politics, because, Jackson says, such people "*are busy*, which creates a problem. They don't have much of a constituency. *Many of them can be rightfully accused of being self-absorbed, but their practices make them a source of hope*" (*my emphasis*; in Yates, 2012, p. 61). These purportedly more a-political localists, working in, of and for place, are proposed to be the *only* way humans have, in the words of Berry, "ever approached sustainability... in small-scale communities scattered here and there across history, and only then because they were forced to live within the *strict limits of scarcity*" (*my emphasis*; p. 61). Even if the latter can be, all told,

critiqued as a *self-absorbed*, self-fulfilling *prophecy*, or, in the articulation of McWilliams (2009), more “akin to making sure that everything is fine in *our own neighborhood* and then turning ourselves into a *gated community* (*my emphasis*; p. 12) whilst *life as it is really lived* is continually (re)territorializing through more local *and* longer social natural forces every day, these self-proclaimed local/ist allies argue that as long as it is locked at the margin—in practice and in discourse—it is closer to sustainability.

Luckily for locavores, today such spatialized social meanings are far more widely available and operationalizable to anyone beyond just doing hard work on the natural systems farms. This last is really the driving force for preserving, in the ways described above, the geography of “Wendell Berry.” Because, today, even throughout the center—the global, the urban, where the otherwise declared to be sedentary, *servile state* of professional/ism resides—via the material locavore sensibility of AFN local/ist projects, like farmers’ markets, CSAs and FoodSheds, sustainability can be *everyone’s* project. Berry’s love, health, sustainability and food security can be actualized through the most local/ist projects by *everyone* geographically, i.e., 100-Mile Diets. The material realization of Berry’s world(view) is to, and again according to Editors Mitchell and Schlueter in their ISI interview, “shorten the supply lines” (retrieved from <http://www.isi.org/books/bookdetail>) so that individuals will be, 1) better able to know where their food comes from; and, 2) better able to know and engage with farmers’ local/ist knowledges which informs good decisions free of the “*whims of people we don’t know in places far from us*” (*my emphasis*; ISI, 2011). Ultimately, it seems the most immediate benefit of the Wendell Berry geography is that now *everyone* can participate face-to-face in purified and preserved sustainability, i.e., local/ist projects.

None of this last analysis of the geographical imaginary, and preservation of the geographical imaginary, of “Wendell Berry” is to in turn evaluate the effectiveness or utility of such projects. Quite the contrary, many localist projects certainly can and do inspire the more spiritual and full-bodied connections Wendell Berry has so passionately and poetically articulated for decades. The point here is that out of an otherwise spiritual geography positioning material local/ist projects as coordinate his innumerable formulations of peripheral nature, health and love, the *margin* can become the *only* place left for healthfulness and naturalness. Lacking critical analysis of geography and discourse, the latter could inspire a belief that all of the most deleterious aspects and effects of the current conventional-agricultural paradigm were *predetermined* to be a Goliath in the *unsettling of America* (and thus inevitable/ closed-off/ unchangeable); that the margins are *always already* knowable as a purer David to said interminably nameable and terrifying Goliath. The latter can self-perpetuate the margin’s purity and righteousness whilst denouncing outright any understanding, connection or tools various trajectories of the center might have to offer in terms of sustainability *always already* locked at the margin *before* the conversation begins. If the organic project became totally mainstream, then how could the project continue to be seen as forwarding power-knowledge from the margins? There are great stakes in Berry’s David and Goliath, or food wars, mapping and imaginary for the purity and righteousness of local/ism in the face of even BIG organics; and for imagining and articulating what is proposed to be no less than *terrorist* threat of biotechnoscience. Like this, I argue that the Wendell Berry/ “Wendell Berry” geography offers far more than *literature of the land* or *poetry of love*. His works can provision a thoroughly noninnocent political discourse with material expressions in a food wars dividing line, as well as through a wide diversity of high-profile and popular AFN local/ist projects. It appears to me as

though the high political currency and material benefits of Berry's food and lifestyles *Work of Purification* must be preserved in some of the various ways presented prior.

Altogether, ensuring that the prophet's works and representation remains an innocent, irreprehensible local/ist eddy of literature and literary genre spinning love toward the center, moreover toward the dangerous quasi-objects of the conventional-industrial agri-monster *evil*; or, that his image and writings remain more or less impervious to criticism, requires that all political dissent and critique is destabilized. Even though one could seek to dismiss Berry's world(view), in its Antifederalist suspicion of voting, welfare, private property and personal liberty; its staunchly pro-life, anti-promiscuity and anti-divorce standpoint; and its distrust of all science, technology and capitalism, as *ultra-conservative*; or, as in the words of Seale (2009), that, "Berry's choice not to lay out his vision for remaking American society in a rigorous way leaves him open to charges of *inconsistency* and even, at times, of being in league with (to put it mildly) less-than-mainstream political thought" (p. 481-482), his work only seems to gain popularity.... In a telling response by Editors Mitchell and Schlueter in their recent exchange with ISI, critiques of Berry can be categorized into "*one of two* groups: Those who have not read Berry *with care*, or those who would rather not *face the difficult questions he raises*" (*my emphasis*; ISI, 2011). *Both* of these latter groups, the editors explain, "Leave home, go to college, and settle in urban centers with other nomads of the educated class. From there they make a living dealing in abstractions *rarely making anything concrete, durable, or useful*" (*my emphasis*; retrieved from <http://www.isi.org/books/bookdetail>). Such statements can illuminate that critiques of Berry's politics are believed to be groundless *before* any conversation takes place, rendering the at times highly problematic geography quite palatable for today's more liberal Left leaning urban locavore sensibility.

When Jager notes of Berry that, “many, even *urbanized*, individuals, sense the deep appeal of his *sensitive agrarian outlook, though they may not be able to say why*” (*my emphasis*; p. 73), perhaps we can finally acknowledge that the unspoken ‘why’ of the Berry world(view) broad appeal is that, at least in part, the heavily edited and widely preserved geographical imaginary of “Wendell Berry” offers a greatly operational, material and discursive, conversation that, from the outset, discursively detaches all work of love from the center; rigidly emplaces it in particular places with/in a nature that could not be anymore unassembled; and finally, absolutely, determines that the work of biotechnoscience is not only unloving, uncreative and uncaring, but dangerous unnaturalness, gathering homicidal intent at the center of the center, the monstrous global/ization: the outer limits of all humans and nonhumans. Essentially, then, the role of Wendell Berry/ “Wendell Berry” can be extrapolated to be that his works continually reify the boundaries of local/ist *retreat*: a noninnocent (food) politics far less outwardlooking than it could be toward necessarily confronting and cadencing *other* trajectories and agri-monsters of the twenty-first century global food regime. It is in these particular, geography-based ways that the art of Berry’s *Work of Purification* could be seen as the *art of* (food) *war*.

Spinning a Spiraling New Agrarianism

Sachs contends that, in general, agrarianism is a masculinist, racist, Western ideology, with all the attendant issues of ideology, such as homogenization of difference, ahistoricism, and representation through only the most privileged... together leading rural people *down a blind alley* (p. 137-38). In Hurt’s (1996) estimation, American agrarianism affords nothing more than “universal white manhood suffrage” (p. 73). And now, if one accepts the foregoing geographical analysis and detail of the works of Wendell Berry/ “Wendell Berry,” then the new American agrarian tradition, purely literary or not, could be also be credited with sustaining the food wars.

There is no denying that whilst a global food regime's has intensively adopted and increasingly relied upon biotechnoscience, and eventually GE technologies—which, all things considered, can be quite shocking in their power to transform all aspects of human and nonhuman ecology and health today—Wendell Berry has quite prolifically offered hope to many, perhaps even love. Still, the central idea here, one of geography, is that the writer has also offered a very well-crafted (re)configuration of multiple agri-cultural and agrarian histories; cross-pollinated meanings, significations; and above all, a geographical imaginary relegating the purist power-knowledges of health, spirituality, freedom, liberation, and most coveted of all—sustainability—to the purified margins.

Obviously, the predominant analytical focus throughout this Chapter has been Berry's geographical imaginary. For speaking widely about synthesizing *the body and the earth*, human and the world, as whole places, i.e., a third-space, post-structuralist geography can (re)c/si(gh)te Berry's Southern agrarian distributist imaginary as also distributing, like other *Works of Purification*, a split geography—of a theoretically *post geography* world. Ultimately, the geographical imaginary of the politics of aesthetics (of science) in the writings of Wendell Berry can appear as a center and periphery, core-to-margin, mapping, always mapping-out prior to interrelations in turn that more life, hope and meaning resides in the margins—a fuller, better power-knowledge in its severance from the world. For all Berry's reconfiguration of duality as connection and health, at many times such artistic constructions remain bifurcated, and, as I have argued, like this—and when purified of their less desirable associations—retain great political utility as a particular address of the increasingly terrifying materiality of the global food regime.

As I seek to lay-out in the next Chapter, the new agrarian purification will continue in this vein to distribute an increasingly terrifying conventional-industrial agriculture and food

regime, including agribusiness pornography and biotechnoscience, to a global abstract space with ever fewer meaningful places. All aspects lumped in global abstract space, particularly biotechnoscience, often retain few meaningful differentiations or analyses, and like this become a homogeneous mass including, but not limited to, *inconvenient, uncomfortable, undependable, ugly, stinky, and scary* computers, power grids, vibrating sex robots and tractors *all* contrastable more meaningful, fixed marginal places—where also nature can be discovered.

Irrespective of the discursive community so firmly in place that it can actually boast that any “Wendell Berry” critique can be displaced and reduced as *literature of the land*; or emanating from the general direction of the center by professional/isms who/which cannot properly contemplate Berry or possibly accept his challenges, or merely mistook his spirituality for some kind of coherent political action when it is not, Berry’s geographical imaginary is very useful politically. *The Land Institute*’s initiatives, for instance, have *wide* impacts on thinking about organic (re)production versus conventional-industrial (re)production throughout the US. They often produce some of the strongest evidence for full systems agriculture whilst too often accepted as scientifically verifiable evidence, along with *Rodale Institute* findings even when conclusive evidence is lacking. Berry has been intimately involved with both organic institutions since doomsday. His apolitical conservative neoagrarianism is also, thus, *wholy* material; *wholy* political. Not only does his work inform powerful material institutions, and a myriad of AFNs local/ist projects which can utilize such new agrarian visions to materially and discursively ‘sell’ local/ist productions as particular marginal power-knowledge of David fighting against a tyrannically global Goliath no matter how BIG either might become, it allows *everyone*—urban and rural alike—to participate.

Perhaps the most powerful material-discursive stakes in purifying and preserving the Wendell Berry world(view), more akin to a *world(view)-as-exhibition*, is the locavore sensibility. Meaning, while the *Work of Translation* would find that when a community *home* is fixed as the opposite tension of space-time, it is a *place-bound retreat*, and likewise, less *outwardlooking* politics, Berry's rigid geographical distinction between space and place becomes highly useful. It purports a direct, billiard ball ideological interpellation, an *ocularcentrism*, or self-evidence, of the materiality and discourse of the margin, the periphery, the local/ist. In the latter purview, anyone can be healthy and redeemed by taking-up particular agri-cultural practices and/ or local/ist projects discursively bound to the marginal place. We can all know by seeing nature/ naturalness and quality as long as these last are taken-up in his particular hyper-rural places. I argue that the latter, a locavore sensibility, provisions masses of people an *ideology* that can come to *stand in for* not only agricultural history, but *evidence*. Albeit only in speaking of geographical imaginaries here, or representation, still I contend that such coordinates inculcate popular representations that each to each imply that *as long as* locavore assessments are embedded with/in the purified material-discursive local/ist *always already* set opposed the central, federalist, corporate, political—especially conventional-industrial and biotechnoscientific—*before* any such conversation begins.

As follows, if anyone feels likewise that GE is unnatural and dangerous, then GE becomes, through representation and performance in the world, unnatural and dangerous, i.e., something to denounce and avoid at all costs, whether that be in funding initiatives or individual buying behaviors. If from this geography, implicated in various representations, an individual believes or feels that certain foods are fresher or better because they do not engage biotechnoscience, for instance, then the food can become largely *accepted* to be healthier while

the evidence remains uncertain. Like *Whole Foods Market* Co-CEO, Walter Robb, stated: he can “*see... the vitality of the food*” (*my emphasis*; in Nepach, 2012). In other venues of American life, any such claims would *also* demand innumerable and rigorous, scientifically viable and reliable studies and comparisons to be convinced of such truth and justice. Instead, too many representations inculcated by the Berry world(view)-as-exhibition, or likewise geographies, purport that we can *know by seeing*.

To me, the latter is one plausible effect of the “Wendell Berry” new agrarianism, a *world(view)-as-exhibition* now so pervasive in US agriculture representations. Such geography and representation is arguably perpetuating a miasma of thinking about US agriculture and foodways, (re)producing less confrontation of a global food regime proliferating out of control and/or *just food* than inveterate and endless David versus Goliath food wars. In fact, I submit that the new agrarian imagined food wars actually work to proliferate and reify the terrifying trajectories of the global space. Which is to say, in failing to confront the inter-implication, the positive possibilities, of the throwntogetherness of space-time and place; the social and the natural; biotechnoscience and the art and poetry of love, Wendell Berry’s literature of the land can be imagined as another unreflexive tyranny, like a foil of a free marketer’s vision of a totally *McDonaldized* post geography world—like a *neo* neoliberal discourse that also kills and pronounces the death of geography. Instead of proclaiming the complete and total McDonaldization of the world, however, the neo neoliberal discourse proclaims the complete and total McDonaldization of the world which should be particularly denounced and as particularly denied. Neither imaginary enlightens of the power of place in terms of the dynamism of space-time. Both proclaim that place doesn’t exist; or that place exists, but only in particular ways bound to marginality. And, actually, the latter proliferates the former in endless,

nonconfrontational David versus Goliath food wars: *the cult of the future*, in the words of Wendell Berry, including all that he lists as modern biotechnoscience; pitted against, what could merely by contrast, then, could be called, *the cult of the past*. The point is less to evaluate the utility of either than to point out through geographical analysis that little more than a miasma can emerge out of the absolute, or *hyper*, version of any imaginary and/ or representation: *absolutist* poles, unreflexive *neoliberal* and *neo neoliberal* geographical imaginaries, respectively.

Analyzing the geographical imaginary of Wendell Berry and how it informs both material projects and other discourse and representation today is an attempt to move toward rather reasonable questions about how we imagine and represent US agriculture; how we can revision food war as *assemblage*. For instance, can *Southern agrarian distributism* (re)furbished for the New(er) World most responsibly confront any of the most monstrous issues and concerns of, specifically here, GE commodity corn (over)production? The latter is better characterized by the age of biotechnoscience than by Jefferson's *Life and Moral Teachings*; by *pink slime* than by aesthetic metaphors of the whole horse; or, by irradiation than by conservative Catholic teachings of complementarity and marriage bonds... The Berrian world(view)-as-exhibition doesn't just spin poetry of love endlessly off to the side of food wars. In particular representations today, it also noninnocently forwards a material-discursive agrarian local/ist vision no matter what the costs in material reality for twenty-first century conventional-industrial hyper-monsters to spin almost entirely out of control without fuller, confrontational accountability or cadence, even allowing for their accelerated proliferation—just as the originating Jeffersonian American agrarian utopia did before him. Meanwhile, we hope for the end of the strip-mining of coal and the utter economic depravity of Appalachia; for Amish communities; or, for *Whole Foods Market* (more preferably, though, the local/ist) to take over

the market and change the world in its image. Can new agrarian representations, in such a Berrian world(view)-as-exhibition, offer a fuller accountability, rather a democratic assemblage accountable to (the representation of perishable) humans and nonhumans? Do we have the privilege and luxury of the republican mother, backwardlooking to tradition and local/ist accountability? I contend that it takes, at least, a *computer* to confront biotechnoscience and enact a fuller, nonagrarian eco-subjective understanding of the curative power of perception.

Clearly, I concur with Berry's overarching argument for a shift in vision, in *how we see*—what I call widely elsewhere *(re)vision*, *diffractive reflexivity*, and here, *eco-subjectivity*—for achieving fuller *social natural ecological health*. But, it does *matter how* we arrive to that acknowledgement, rather, *how we think about space* as a steering mechanism of our projects, policies and politics. An eco-subjective steering mechanism of the *Work of Translation* is highly contrastable the curative power of perception in terms of more open representations which seek to consider multiple possibilities for US agriculture, including the (re)vision of a far more strictly regulated, and thus a more accountable and responsible, biotechnoscience which could then be *imaginable* as more than a doom machine. The point here, as throughout the project, is not to advocate for GE in turn; or to only *further* evaluate the utility of any agricultural practice or discourse. I seek to analyze geographies of agrarianism through time in order to (re)vision an openness and possibility in the representation of US agriculture—a more *democratic* representation which can contemplate *all* available agricultural tools to date beyond Berry's check-list of *standards for technological innovations*. Perhaps it comes down to *what we call it*, *perception* versus *eco-subjective*.... Or, and far more likely, the *Work of Translation* is a much more open theoretical geography precept for representation than some kind of new agrarian urbanism, a populist rebellion against “the drabness and sterile designs of suburbia” (Freyfogle,

2001, p. 17). *How we think about space matters. How we think about corn matters.* If nature is endlessly (re)territorializing as a *social nature*, in interface since the first *genetic tinkering* of agriculture itself 10,000 years ago, then from the first instance there is no *natural* nature, or family farm partnership with/in it, that is somehow *free* of the longer spatialized forces.

Let it be said that conventional-industrial US agriculture is not simply going to disappear through *rejection*. The thoroughly undesirable and unhealthy trajectories of surplus GE commodity corn will continue whether they are denied or retreated from via specific material-discursive *Work of Purification* imaginaries. Certainly there are better farming paradigms today than the current conventional-industrial agricultural paradigm—many of which are indeed offered in the perennial polycultures and other organic literatures and projects. Confronting the age of biotechnoscience, instead of rejecting it as unnatural, does not advocate for conventional-industrial agriculture or GE *absolutely*. Quite the contrary, the point here is that a highly problematic conventional-industrial agricultural paradigm could be *improved*, comprised of best practices from the entire set of US agricultural practices available, if various representations of US agriculture were more open to assemblage. In fact, if there was fuller accountability for biotechnoscience in our representations of US agriculture, a biotechnoscience *which will continue to proliferate regardless* given the high economic and corporate stakes for the technology which have never been denied here, at least the available technologies *could be* more democratically understood, appraised, and/ or only *then* harnessed *more responsibly*. For now, the Berry Prophecy Project, a collection of neoagrarian writings more or less always already spinning in the spiraling world(view)-as-exhibition of Wendell Berry/ “Wendell Berry” to which I look throughout the following Chapter, too often offer little more than a dialectical third-way, a *retreat* from a global terror proliferating GE commodity corn monsters. An *outwardlooking*

geography and representation is conceived of here is an *opportunity*: an opportunity for understanding, for complexities of evidence and apprehensions, for confronting quasi-objects, like commodity corn, as *also* representable actants of our society and culture... an opportunity for more open and *democratic* debate which can inspire the fullest possible accountability for the world we also live in while ever moving toward the one we would prefer.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Berry Prophecy Project

XLIV. The only true representation of a thing we can say, is the thing itself. This is true also of a person. It is true of a place. It is true of the world and all its creatures. The only true picture of Reality is Reality itself. (Wendell Berry, “Going to Work,” in Wirzba, 2003, p. 266)

Wendell Berry has artfully (re)configured a seductive new agrarian *Work of Purification* imaginary from multiple strains presented widely heretofore. His geography has served as *the* American agrarian imaginary for many more decades of writings thereafter. Actually, his agrarian propositions seem to have become an enough and good platform from which the new agrarian ideology can carry on often without really offering any other American agrarian history besides Berry’s own world(view)-as-exhibition of it. Prior to the *Berry Prophecy Project*, one can assume that agrarian thinking *would*, or presumably *should* draw on a longer lineage of global agrarian thought encompassing the classical age; more likely for the US, Jefferson, Emerson, Thoreau, Southern agrarians. But, as presented earlier, Montmarquet (1989) argues our particular a-Jeffersonian twenty-first century material-discursive realities pose a significant challenge to such reference as being disconnected or inapplicable.

I contend that Wendell Berry, having (re)considered and (re)configured many of these seemingly unwieldy prior strains, thus provisions the new agrarians a veritable *do-it-yourself* (DIY), *world(view)-as-exhibition* to most easily assemble with clear how-to, step-by-step instructions literally translated into a myriad of languages. Berry’s *neoagrarianism* does all the *honest day’s work with one’s hands*, and like this (re)fabricates an *IKEA* of *neo neoliberal*

geography. Simply obtain an essay of many offered, follow the easy-to-follow instructions and get a *new agrarian* coffee table perspective on “marriage, sex and procreation, education, food, the right use of nature, self-governance, technology, pacifism, Christianity, household management, the free market, the nature of propriety, imagination versus abstraction, poetry, incarnational hope, and possibilities for the future” (Arbery, 2012, p. 50). Arrange the construction in your flat and enjoy a “worldview... the countervailing idea to industrialism” (Carlson, 2008, p. 14), i.e., a treatise on the *virtue* of hyper-rural family smallholder’s capacity for responsible stewardship amidst a terrifying global food regime... The central problem, I continue to propose, is that innumerable quasi-objects, like GE commodity corn, continue to lack full representation in such imaginaries, rendering such representations thus less open to a more democratic debate that could inspire a fuller accountability for actants of US agriculture.

The main point of Chapter Five is that Wendell Berry began a cyclical offering of a new agrarian critique at a critical space-time that could be easily operationalized thereafter to reference and orientate, and, biblically and scholarly (and everything in between) legitimate neoagrarian works. Still, neoagrarianism(s) *en masse* could not be all the *same*, or draw from Berry in the same ways—if directly at all. Instead, I submit that many writers influenced less by a much longer modern American agrarian tradition than Berry’s own imaginary of it seem to base their own neoagrarian perspectives from his work. Like this, the new agrarians forward diverse interpretations and method/ologies of argument to accomplish principles and conclusions nevertheless roughly uniform with the Berry imaginary. Instead, then, of more outwardlooking confrontation of the quasi-object, *social natural*, and otherwise hybridized assemblages continually (re)territorializing US agri-cultures, new agrarians more or less fabricate their agrarian representations of terrifying monstrous global-GE foodways through and of a Berrian-

inspired third way out of the assemblage—a retreat into hyper-rural enclaves. Generally, such representations can/ do not most accountably represent, or name, quasi-objects of biotechnoscience, esp., (GE) commodity corn.

Chapter Five seeks to trace how some of these new agrarian places are imagined, and to what degree/ not their representations confront twenty-first century agri-monsters, by (re)locating a broad sample, pulled from a diverse US geography over roughly the last twenty years, of highly influential, or at least representational, new agrarian fiction, nonfiction and/or collected works and essays along a spectrum of thinking, i.e., a continuum of new agrarianism. The continuum stretches between two absolutist neoagrarian extremes. I propose the continuum to show how neoagrarianism, inculcated by said geography, seems to have, more or less, always already arrived to Berry’s particular front porch before its propositions of conventional-industrial agri-culture are even fully presented.

Altogether, the Chapter provides diverse examples of how a broad spectrum of new agrarianism can be negotiated along a continuum in the first place. I see a continuum as the most cogent analytical tool for at once placing such a simultaneously sundry and uniform set of often Berry-inspired neoagrarian imaginaries from over the last twenty years in conversation with each other, as well as with “Wendell Berry.” Plausibly, my continuum could be operationalized well beyond the current project as an analytical tool for fellow quasi-agrarians. It illuminates how post-structuralist geography can be applied in the analysis of neoagrarianism since doomsday; as well as how post-structuralist geography can (re)vision geographical imaginaries and representation of US agriculture toward assembling a more confrontational, quasi-agrarian representation. Likewise, I (re)c/si(gh)te comparable works that could appear in continuum’s *in-between* place—a place of often interdisciplinary *assemblage*.

The *Berry Prophecy Project Continuum*

As follows, the continuum stretches between two absolutist neoagrarian extremes: *Berry Prophecy Place* and *Global Tyranny Space*. Both absolutes, which are not accidentally mappable the bifurcation of society and nature, respectively, and the material-discursive food wars more generally, result in a hyper-rural *retreat* from terrifying global times, but in *polar opposite* fashion: either hyper-rurality can achieve a wholly *spiritual redemption* from the terrifying biotechnoscientific monsters, a curative *utopian* so-called *Berry Prophecy Place*; or, hyper-rurality can briefly offer a purifying *reprieve* from the terrifying biotechnoscientific monsters before their otherwise predetermined and total eco-rape and destruction is complete, like a suicidal *dystopia* so-named *Global Tyranny Space*. If the extreme absolutist poles are left to stand, and stand-in for agricultural histories and embodied realities, than the *new agrarian mind* of *Berry Prophecy Place* will can do no more than *displace* the other absolutist, extreme pole of the industrial mind of *Global Tyranny Space*: an endless, utopia-dystopia shuttling back-and-forth horizontality that provisions a myriad of *retreats* to be sure, but fails to fully engage with multiple, *coeval* spatial arborescence (structure, society) and rhizomes (agency, nature) which, when assembling, translating, mediating and intertransferring competencies, continually (re)territorialize quasi-objects, like (GE) commodity corn, above, below and *vis-à-vis* the aforementioned *prisonhouse* of *horizontality*, not just at its polarities.⁹⁶ By the way, I just

⁹⁶ Here I am referencing an earlier explication by Massey (2005) of closed systems of meanings, i.e., *structuralism*. Massey even suggests Derrida's formulation of *différance* and spacing is far too *horizontal*, failing to account for external, coeval multiplicity of the *world beyond the text*. Her critique of *horizontality* functions well here for understanding the *Berry Prophecy Project continuum* as, itself, an *endless* shuttling back-and-forth, i.e., a *horizontality of new agrarian differentiation and deference*.

described the *meeting place* of the continuum's *liminal in-between*, rather, the *Toward the Cornotological Limen*. I will return to the latter *in-between* demarcation shortly.

The Two Poles

First, I need illuminate the discourse informing either extreme absolute of the continuum. Either delimitation—as in a *continuum* in the first place—is in no way an *arbitrary* or performative gesture. The discourse of the *Berry Place* side of the continuum has been widely presented heretofore, characterized foremost by the *curative power of perception* captured by Berry's "The Body and the Earth," rather, his own reading of *King Lear*, presented in Chapter Five. Therein, he details the *curative power of perception*, namely: if humans respect the proper human limit, or, his proper place in Creation, a man may be made whole.

Now, the other extreme side of the continuum, *Global Tyranny Space*, in its absolutism is in no way *unrelated* to Berry's *curative power of perception*. However, *Global Tyranny Space* is the extreme logical *opposite* of the Berry reading of Shakespeare's (~1604-05) *King Lear*, being: the collapse of the proper boundaries of the human limit *long before* Crane's *Bridge* with the corruption of BIG Monarchy and landholding—just a *colossal landscape* over which lords a tyranny of absolute power, blinding and death. This directly contrary reading of the conflated *King Lear* (~1605) text to which I am referring hereafter (Greenblatt, 1997) reconsiders how the tragedy foremost concerns the reverse of the curative power of perception, being the tyranny of enclosure—as related to the mass enclosure movements of the European commons that extended well into and through Shakespeare's Tudor England. The very essence of enclosure was to take common land not for its stewardship by a supposedly moral figure, but to place it under an unaccountable tyranny. Shakespeare's tragedy is foremost about landowning—sprawling, rural natural landholdings—yet not in terms of their redemptive power... The tragedy can be

(re)positioned as the catastrophe of land manipulation by powerful interests toward absolute, tyrannical transgenerational power. Given the overriding and abysmal suffering, death and evil in connection such manipulation of common lands, with survivors shaken to their knees in penance with only the slightest glimmers of relief from pain and madness variously marked, blinding and death are a gift. With *nothing*, *kill*, and *never* the main themes of a tragedy, for instance, when Lear utters, “*Never never never never never*” (5.3, lines 283-84) at his death upon the realization of Cordelia’s own demise before him, the themes of *King Lear* can be also be imagined as the *flip-side* of redemption... and one of Shakespeare’s greatest tragedies.

The dark, stark sobriety of the tragedy survived through attempts to rekindle some sort of positive reaffirmation since the 19th century (drawn from Greenblatt, 1997, p. 2307-2311).

Revelatory gestures abound, and it remains possible to view Gloucester’s trajectory in a Christian purview, moving from suffering to rebirth. Ultimately, however, a call to salvation or seeing redemption here in any way mostly falls to projection of a Christian teleology onto the pagan world of the play (p. 2313). Rebirth and redemption are proffered more likely by *biblical visionaries* to follow the bard—enter Berry’s, “The Body and the Earth,” the symbol for *Berry Prophecy Place*. The pain and suffering *also* evident with a directly contrary reading of the play can characterize the extreme opposite pole of the *Berry Prophecy Project* continuum: *Global Tyranny Space*... where *humanity must perforce prey upon itself, like monsters of the deep*...

Perhaps no one performs such a contrary, and highly applicable, reading of *Lear* than Jane Smiley (1991). Her *Pulitzer Prize* winning novel, *A Thousand Acres* (1991) is the most sufficient adaptation, and discourse, of Shakespeare’s Kingdom of Lear’s absolute, patriarchal-tyrannical power in terms of the material, conventional-industrial agricultural paradigm of Iowa commodity corn production, marked by large-scale farms; government management programs

and regulation; creditors, agribusiness patents, contract farming, and so forth. Her work appears directly following the extreme economic fall-out period of the early to mid-1980s. In that purview, the novel concerns a Midwestern US, Iowa, family farm under the patriarchal tyranny of the father, the King of a veritable conventional-industrial agricultural *Kingdom*, to be inherited by his three daughters. Her work reveals not only the tyrannies of the conventional-industrial agricultural system in place, but the stark import of transgenerational landholding in these families to carry-on the traditions *no matter what* the financial or familial dissolution, alienation, abuse, terminal illness, suicide and death... The stress, expectation, fidelity, and absolute power of the enterprise leads to the tyranny and madness of *King Lear* foil, patriarch and father Larry Cook, and the unraveling of his absolute power over the Iowa *Corndom*. Unquestioned fidelity is demanded of his three daughters, Ginny, Rose and Caroline, reflecting Shakespeare's Goneril, Regan and Cordelia, respectively. Any crack or fissure in obsequiousness results in disinheritance, betrayal and revenge. The Cook's neighbors, Harold Clark and his sons Loren and Jess, are likewise *King Lear* counterparts of Gloucester, Edgar and Edmund. The blinding of Gloucester, so vital to Berry's reading in "The Body and the Earth," is accomplished in Cook daughter Rose's husband Pete's tampering with an anhydrous tank. Ginny's likewise murder plot to kill Rose, as well as Pete's suicide and Caroline's disinheritance, all also in keeping with the originating tragedy, complete the new biotechnoscientific age of the Iowa family commodity corn farm: total dissolution of the family and its *one thousand acres*.

Foremost, transgenerational endowment of landholding power from the King and father is the centripetal force of *King Lear*, Smiley's interpretive novel, as well as many American farm families... Keeping the family farm, rather the intergenerational landowning, at all costs, can actually drive all kinds of (gendered) pluriactivity and other efforts. When Shakespeare or

Smiley gender the inheritance line woman, rather specifically to be inherited by no less than the iconic three sisters, they can illuminate the absolute power-knowledge and unquestionable dominance of the King, of the tyrant, over land interconnected with woman. The latter highlights the ebb and flow of the power of the symbol, as well as the reality, of, landholding in conventional-industrial family farming. As such, the *one thousand acres*—that coveted benchmark in the success of a family farm in the rural Midwest—and its inheritance thus by *three sisters* is the main protagonist of this novel—and just like landholding and the power of land and property is the main force of the de-raveling of the Learian reign. The land itself, and what has been projected onto that land, commands the family and the novel. Although land is inherently masculine in such *privatized* power (into veritable Kingdoms, no less)—as Ginny notes in an encounter with Rose, remembering, “Corn plants are oddly manlike—the leaves always reminded me of shoulders, the tassels the heads” (p. 152)—women have inherited these just as in Lear, nonetheless... and in this framework, they will be *punished* for it.

Furthermore, for such a public reveal of power—that *one thousand acres* stretched expansively across the landscape for all to *know by seeing*—the theme of *concealment*, of keeping “private things private” (p. 340), makes-up a main line of the novel, the original tragedy, as well as many rural communities remaining on the US landscape. Keeping *private* the utter exploitation that conventional-industrial American farming is vital—and not only from the farming community. Keeping *concealed* the *truth of the thing*, or the loss of the more virtuous farmworker, is vital for sustaining the national discourse, rather the necessary American family farm iconography... But to keep private all that is already public remains a family goal, especially when it comes to losing the farmland, an event that can (re)create often explosive expressions of depression, divorce and even suicide.

Altogether, the three daughter-sisters cannot simply take-on the androcentrism of the conventional-industrial enterprise without chaos and death. Though Rose tries to, she too succumbs perhaps to this maneuvering, paying for the sins of playing outside of gender expectations and provisioned roles. The thousand acres of masculine power in plants, owned and parceled-out on the whims of a tyrannical patriarchal family farmer to his unshakably faithful (or not) daughters, is the only plane of memory and history allowed. This last ultimately leaves nothing of rebirth or redemption. Only a final release, or momentary relief from its pressures, sprawling expectations, and degradation, for at least one of its daughters, is possible. Ginny more generally observes that the greatest lesson of the conventional-industrial Iowa family commodity corn farm dystopia is that even temporary reprieve, in retreat from the tyrannical space, is the most desirable goal... a polarized version of the *whole horse*: “*you get to the point where relief is good enough*. I felt another animal in myself, a horse haltered in a tight stall, throwing its head and beating its feet against the floor... *the horse wears itself out, and accepts the restraint that moments before had been an unendurable goad*” (my emphasis; p. 198).

Having also *worn himself out*, King Cook eventually dies along with others, including his daughter Rose. His *thousand acres* is torn asunder no matter how private/ privatized they attempted to keep it. Others, mostly newly-divorced Ginny, may finally become free by retreating from the rage, the spit; the linear, masculine trajectory of productivist, conventional-industrial Iowa family commodity corn farming. But, as with Lear, Smiley ends less than hopeful: only blinding and death, more certainly alienation, from such a *Corndom* can be the surest redress for, and reprieve from, those endlessly rolling rows of (the rule of) verdant *men*: “*Our sustaining corn... every acre of the high-grown field*” (*King Lear*, 4.4, lines 6.7, p. 2532)

ironically spies Cordelia of the family landholdings, where her father has gone mad, leading to her own death.

Smiley's imaginary of *King Lear* is greatly contrasted Berry's imaginary, though never wholly removed from it. Smiley's novel offers a conventional-industrial agri-cultural landscape of blinding terror and death both indicated by Berry; and from which we must retreat, also indicated in Berry's geography. By contrast, in such extremes of dystopian *Global Tyranny Space*, retreat is mere reprieve from the terrifying global times—less to a specific place than merely to someplace *else*. Actually, I think the implications for such interconnections to neoagrarianism in Smiley's novel are threefold. First, the conventional-industrial family farm has become almost wholly untenable by families in the material reality of the current agricultural paradigm. This last issue leads into the second point: the implicated Smiley critique of conventional-industrial agricultural practices, or the high costs, literally and figuratively, of increased input tied to chemical use and so forth, incl. disease, like cancer; or disability, like blinding. Third, Smiley is clearly masculinizing the tyranny of such land enclosure and (ab)use; and the domination of the land as interconnected to the domination of women—again, a highly Berry-oriented theme in the world of US neoagrarianism today. Smiley solidifies the connection of Western colonialism and patriarchy as just a litany of violence and tyranny by privileged white Christian males perpetrated on land like/and women's bodies... That does not simply mean, in turn, that Smiley's women characters are uniform or transparent. In fact, the three daughter-sisters are highly differentiated. Smiley refuses to reduce her women characters as inherently closer to nature; or to proclaim that, ultimately, their fertility and maternity will save them. Instead, Smiley's novel illuminates the absolute tyranny of conventional-industrial family

commodity corn Kings and *Corndoms*, their absolute control over land and women, from which only momentary reprieve is possible through divorce, distance or death.

So, *neither* extreme absolute of the *Berry Prophecy Project* continuum yields a more *outwardlooking* social natural representation or possibility for the fullest possible democratic hope. Both poles offer only polar absolute redemption or death, with either going too horizontal, to mean, too far one way or the other (third-) way: there is nothing in-between... and *nothing will come of nothing*. An updated, conventional-industrial agri-culture version of Shakespeare's landscape reads like most neoagrarian accounts of postmodern eco-rape, homicidal plants, federal-corporate colluded conspiracies, moreover a neoliberal marketer's fantasyland. Again, this last reading is in no way totally removed from Berry's own depiction of the conventional-industrial agriculture (just without his redemptive imaginings at the end); and his particular reification place-bound local/ism just as unreflexive as the latter. Both are absolutist. And, unreflexive place-bound retreats serve both extremes. But, in the case of *Global Tyranny Space*, local/ist enclaves are merely a purifying reprieve from the terrifying center's tyrannical power. Writings located at the extreme side of *Global Tyranny Space* can no more leave that demarcation, save only with temporary local/ist reprieve from predetermined destruction, than writings located at the extreme side of *Berry Prophecy-Place* can leave their own *place-bound third-way retreat* of memory and nostalgia. All things considered, the *Work of Translation* shows that no extreme, or essential absolute in a divided geography or representation, can ever locate/enact *a way out*. Quasi-objects must be more openly accounted for, named and represented somewhere *in-between*.

Toward the Cornotological Limen

My geographical imaginary of the *Toward the Cornotological Limen* draws from Latour's (1993) *thought exercise* where he imagines what *they*, or *non-Western Premoderns*, would draw, "if asked to depict our strange obsession with dichotomies" (p. 103). He assumes that the imaginary request would (re)produce a kind of "provisional map in which nature and society would barely escape the networks... this picture in which nature and culture appear to be redistributed among the networks and to escape from them only fuzzily as if in dotted lines" (p. 103). Latour's thought exercise yields that instead of (re)producing this impenetrable understanding of nonmodernity, we should just drop the dichotomy between upper and lower halves, or nature and society, *them/Other* and *Us*, or non-West and West, dichotomies, entirely. However, keeping both the network imaginary mapped in assemblage with/in the dichotomous circles of the *Work of Purification* in the form of dotted lines is a necessary depiction. Meaning, the power-knowledge of modernity bifurcation retains great force, or power-knowledge, in the world, even as it is, more accurately, *always already* unstable (*dotted* lines) given the indistinguishable *Work of Translation*. I find this last imagery useful for showing how these dichotomies, like those of *Berry Prophecy Place* and *Global Tyranny Space* (mapped *nonhumans nature* versus *humans culture*, accordingly), are *always already* (re)territorializing through the translations and mediations of quasi-object assemblage. *In-betweenness* fails to ever be fully removed from either structural extreme pole of utopia or dystopia. It implicates the discourse whilst acknowledging that total separation is impossible through space-time.

The *in-between* c/si(gh)te is a place of *assemblage*, which means of translation and intertransference of the competencies situated along the continuum's two-way flow between both poles, i.e., an *assemblage* of *social natural* imaginaries, indictments, representations and material

practices of both *Berry Prophecy Place* and *Global Tyranny Space*. Therefore, the *in-between* c/si(gh)te of the continuum is a place more aptly described as a *limina*, to mean the threshold below which a stimulus cannot be distinguished from any other, hence the *liminal*,⁹⁷ or transitional place, of the continuum's *assemblage*. This last is why the *in-between* c/si(gh)te of the *Berry Prophecy Project* continuum will be called the *Toward the Cornotological Limen*: a *liminal in-between* of both the *Work of Purification* and *Work of Translation*, also depicted in the work of Latour (1993, p. 102)

Latour's model shows how *quasi-objects* are *always already (re)territorializing* through purifying discourse and translation, because (and the obvious irony here) the Western penchant for splits and dichotomies, or *Work of Purification*, has not only denied but accelerated the proliferation of hybrid monsters. The *limen* is a place of confrontation, moving toward representation and naming of quasi-object actants—an accountability that officially acknowledges the c/si(gh)tes of multiple trajectories of human-nonhuman hook-ups ever in the making, and whether we want to acknowledge them or not. Thus, by applying Latour we can understand that we must start our inquiries—to modify our confidence in purification toward fuller performances through the world—*just like the rest of the world*, meaning, with/in the locus of the quasi-object. Mutual exclusivity is impossibly inclusively happening. This last indicates the *liminal in-between* c/si(gh)te of the *Berry Prophecy Project* continuum: a place which does not deny the power-knowledge of either extreme of utopian agency (*Berry Prophecy Place*) and the space of dystopian structure (*Global Tyranny Space*), nature and society—the food wars more generally—but instead moves toward a critical confrontational, accountable, thus *quasi-*

⁹⁷ I more or less drew at least some of this *language* (but not really *thinking*) of the *limina* from Belgian-French psychoanalytic feminist sociologist, and student of Lacan, Luce Irigaray's (2008) latest contribution, *Sharing the World*.

agrarian, representation of US agriculture. As I will briefly outline, such liminal *Toward Cornotological* stories are generally interdisciplinary, accountably intermixing and cross-pollinating science studies and cultural studies, including historical and geographical exploration. They often intermingle highly varied perspectives on embodiment and sensuality, experiential knowledges and biotechnoscience discourse, as well as philosophy intrainplicating sustainability and healthier applications of that biotechnoscience; of agriculture and agrarianism(s). They name and represent quasi-objects of the *in-between*, esp., (GE) commodity corn, moving toward a more open representation of US agriculture today.

Berry Prophecy Place and Global Tyranny Space: (Re)c/si(gh)ting Selected

Neoagrarianism⁹⁸

Fictional representation of neoagrarianism oriented to either extreme pole of *Berry Prophecy Project* continuum can include the *Berry Prophecy Place* works of Barbara Kingsolver's (2000), *Prodigal Summer*, set against the preeminent *Global Tyranny Space* work presented above, *A Thousand Acres* (1991). By extreme contrast at the opposite pole of *Berry Prophecy Place*, Kingsolver's novel can be considered as a neoagrarian remedy of much of Smiley's conventional-industrial landscape of patriarchy, inheritance, suffering, and death. *Prodigal Summer* is a representative neoagrarian *redemption* story, of nature, of sustainability, of *going back to the land* if perhaps not literally, through a Berrian world(view) imaginary of

⁹⁸ I selected what I argue to be *representational new agrarian* works from an inestimably broad range of potential examples, moving from fiction, to nonfiction, essay collections... These works are not necessarily considered otherwise to be works of *neoagrarianism*, but the more or less extremes of their at least contemporary agri-cultural related perspectives are demonstrative of what I argue are the workings of the *new agrarian* mind; the *new agrarian* continuum I propose here. My analyses are also intended to be demonstrative, not comprehensive or exhaustive. The selected works and analyses are not intended to be any more than exemplification of the *Berry Prophecy Project continuum* as *Toward Cornotology* originally proposes and illuminates it.

(re)embodiment, sensuality and pleasure. Basically, like Smiley most presumably had *Lear* open on her desk (though she denies this), Kingsolver seems to have had Berry's essay, "The Body and The Earth," open hers.

Incidentally, like Wendell Berry, Barbara Kingsolver was also born and raised in rural Kentucky. She is a highly prolific and award-winning novelist. Kingsolver's (2000) novel, *Prodigal Summer*, speaks to many of her predominant fiction and nonfiction themes, including celebration of nature, rather the miracle of the land, human and nonhuman relationships, and American foodways, particularly local/ist projects like her own family's one-year *100-mile diet* chronicled in *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* (2007). *Small Wonder* (2002) is one of her latest nonfiction essay collections oriented both by a quote of Wendell Berry, which reads, "To treat life as less than a miracle is to give up on it" (p. vii); as well as Wendell Berry's format of *The Unsettling of America*. Meaning, Kingsolver also begins *Small Wonder* with a nation changing event, only instead of Native American genocide, the events in New York on September 11th, 2001. The latter leads well into her essays on the above themes ever emplaced in a Berrian oriented geographical imaginary of "knowing our place" with/in nature; that the land "provides our genesis" (p. 39), at least via a fuller ecological view of human and nonhuman interchange, every moment of every day (p. 73). In such a perspective of the small, *small wonders* are forever bound with/in the place of the household, the place of the home—a "place of safety" (p. 197), "the principle function and duty of human family" (p. 199).

In Kingsolver, as in Berry, the place of home is the keystone of her work for it is the place of peace and justice, a place where she doesn't farm with horsepower but "grows vegetables for her own table, not just to pass the time but as a kind of moral decision about how I want to live" (p. 248). She sees this act, as well as that of eating with her family meals from the

family garden in the family home with/in nature, as a moral choice no less positioning her in the *margin*, which, in her own words, is “out here” (p. 248), to mean otherwise incomprehensible to others of the center, or the “big city” (p. 248). With other such local/ists, rather a *crowd of the local* implicating a “revolution” (p. 251) of dancing and “excellent food” (p. 251), Kingsolver reminds herself that the margin *is* the center, or should be, if millions continue to enjoin the locavore movement. She explores how the local/ist place of home is comprised of “the theatre of the street, the accurate joy of children’s hearts, the literature of tomorrow’s wisdom arrived today, just in time... the choice of life over death... too good to resist” (p. 251). All told, *Small Wonder* mostly binds just about everything *good*, incl. children’s health, joy and laughter, as well as creation and Creator (p. 264) to the margin, provisioning just about anything *bad*, namely GE—what she calls, “a fist in the eye of God” (p. 93-108)—to the core.

On this last, Kingsolver’s overarching and overwhelmingly Berry-esque geography of all topics properly placed and bordered, scaled and distanced, summates from the place of home *in here* (with/in nature *out there*) that, ultimately, GE is a technical mystery of manipulation that might be *fascinating*... Yet, she has held in her hand the germ of a plant “*engineered to grow, yield its crop, and then murder its own embryos*... I have glimpsed the *malevolence that can lie in the heart of a profiteering enterprise*” (*my emphasis*; p. 108). She desires to defer to Berry to discover the proper small; the particular wonder upon which she writes, “By the power vested in everything living, let us keep to that faith. I’m a scientist who thinks it wise to enter the doors of creation not with a *lion tamer’s whip and chair*, but with the reverence humankind has traditionally summoned for entering *places of worship: a temple, a mosque, or a cathedral*” (*my emphasis*; p. 108). *Small Wonder* concludes that it is “better to live better, more honest lives as believers” (p. 264) of local/ism than ever to live, by contrast, as cynics who, perhaps “on top of

the game” (p. 264), have no *hope*, no *wonder*. Taken together, Kingsolver’s geography is at once highly deferential to Berry’s; as well as seeks to tightly delimit, and denounce, GE.

Kingsolver’s (2000) novel, *Prodigal Summer*, published the same year as the foregoing nonfiction essay collection—with its strongly worded denouncements of the whole of biotechnoscience—in many ways emplaces and interprets these themes in the fictional world of Zebulon county, Kentucky, and one of its small communities in the untamed Appalachian mountains. Like Smiley, Kingsolver also focuses on the tragedies of conventional-industrial agri-culture, though besides Midwestern Iowa commodity corn production perhaps in its *most tragic* form today: rural Southern family tobacco farming. This backdrop can illuminate at once the crisis of conventional-industrial agri-culture, as well as the hope and promise of the more healthful alternative system, signified by woodlots, the lineage of American Chestnut trees restored from blight, farmers’ markets and goat farming—which all some way or another eventually overtake the tobacco farm when it must be totally (re)structured by the widowed farmwife Lusa upon the death of the landscape’s own *Tobacco King* (*Lear*), Cole Widener. Actually, the novel envisions Zebulon County as *cosmic punisher* of all things conventional-industrial agricultural, where King Cole appears to be *disciplined* for his farm’s short-term profit agricultural trajectory by being killed in a farm accident. The death of his sister is also credited agri-chemicals and practices of conventional-industrial systems, and their tyrants who liberally pollute the soil, air and aquifers with toxins correlative of breast cancer. This last also (re)enforces the novel’s universe as a judicial system: local/ist projects of the margin will be rewarded whilst projects of the center will be punished. The Widener family farmholding shall be purified of all of its conventional-industrial trajectories by the end of the novel, in the spirit

and materiality of a small, local/ist sustainable goat farm that is and shall be more *just(ice)* in the world of Zebulon county, Kentucky, USA.

The central, unifying theme of the novel is the synthesis of a geography of scalar and distanced opposites not unlike those in the Berry world(view), including, nature and society, margin and core, gender complementarity and so forth, respectively. All of these last opposites will be synthesized through the interconnective exploits of *alternative* science and local/ist projects. Such syntheses are symbolized by ecofeminist *women* scientists and naturalists who appear inherently closer to nature. Enter here Lusa and her work with entomology to ever complement coyote scientist Deanna of the Forest Service, who lives in the mountains behind Lusa's farmstead. The latter alternative health and healing narrative also comes to include both neighbor narratives of the local/ist agriculturalist, Miss Rawley; and once land-grant university agricultural tyrant turned reformed conservationist of the American Chestnut tree, Garnett. Actually, Garnett is more like the symbol of traditional science and agrarianism(s)—called an *old chestnut*—who is obsessed with an older, natural order of plant hybridity and breeding that shall be surpassed with newer thinking on sustainable paradigms and technologies which again, his neighbors, from Lusa to Deanna and Miss Rawley, likely signify.

However, the ultimate Kingsolver synthesis is that of prey and predator, which shall redeem the characters, and purify Zebulon county, Kentucky, its local/ist communities, and really humanity of all predation (including that of conventional-industrial agri-culture) for all time. Forest Service coyote scientist Deanna, the ultimate symbol of a more *wild* nature, passionately fornicates with Eddie Bondo, the Wyoming sheep rancher hunter of said coyotes, within that wilder, thus transcendental, natural/ist setting. These painfully transparent adversaries eventually procreate a perfect synthesis purified of predatory venery and other forms

of destruction, like agribusiness. Eventually, at in the closing scene of the novel, Deanna, when pregnant, literally stumbles down from the mountain (given extreme vertigo from losing her *isolation* with/in nature, her closest link to purity) toward the home of the local sustainable agriculturalist, Miss Rawley, only by chance to happen upon the once productivist tobacco farm of the widowed Lusa Widener. A local/ist third-way retreat will be born.

In the end, the place of the family farm is reborn of the synthesis, a trialectical third-way retreat from the landscape of the tobacco King—a purification of the once predation of the conventional-industrial farm through more particular works of the small with/in nature, also predominantly symbolized by Deanna's pregnancy with the new agrarian baby: a hybrid baby of the wild and tamed, prey and predator, science and naturalist, old traditions in new ways bound to the place of the hyper-rural local/ist farm. Lusa's two orphaned children of her martyred sister-in-law also balance the cosmic scales. Even the children are presented to be veritably *gender-bending*: another more perfect complementarity. Miss Rawley, the ultimate local/ist, will school both Deanna and Lusa, as well as the new organic baby of all reconciled binaries, on responsible stewardship of the farm, (re)creating thus a more organic whole (horse) of the body and earth for all time. In almost a complete reversal of Smiley, Kingsolver's women can take-on the androcentrism of the enterprise without chaos and death as long as they accomplish this last in particular, local/ist ways closer to nature. Lusa concludes that, along with Deanna and Miss Rawley—a local/ist trifecta foiling the three conventional-industrial daughter-sisters of Smiley—that the women of Zubulon are the chosen ones. A predominantly fertile and maternal alternative health and healing closer to nature will purify the soil; *the body and the earth*.

For all its often cogent, though ultimately sweeping critiques of the productivist agricultural paradigm, including sexism, soil erosion, environmental degradation, and so forth,

Kingsolver's nonfiction collection, *Small Wonder*, as well as its (re)interpretation through *Prodigal Summer* here—and her own neoagrarianism more generally—usefully offers a slight glimmer of dialogue about biotechnoscience; of a representation naming other trajectories of US agriculture. At times, Kingsolver's exploration of science, emplaced within her own nonfiction subject/ivity cited previously and/or fictional women characters here, borders on a feminist critique of science, rather, forwarding a post-positivist, situated science. This last can be considered a more open representation of the complexities of US agriculture today. However, at other moments, her approach to biology can lock all answers in nature *out there* as mysteries of Creation waiting to be found, like by Deanna: the discovery logics of positivist science. While Kingsolver does work to incorporate and/or indicate more situated knowledges of science, her overarching perspective is more essentialist in its approach, which sees women as closer to nature... an ecofeminism I showed more or less akin to Wendell Berry's world(view) as well; and less stable when under the lens of a post-structuralist geographical approach challenging division of space and place and such divide's accordant value system, incl., gender.

It is important to point out that Kingsolver's multiple twenty-first century contributions do not *deny* biotechnoscience *per se*; that her work is often more accountable and open to other trajectories of agriculture. For instance, Kingsolver juxtaposes the traditional objectivism of the *old chestnut* with the 'newer' ideas of post-empirical investigation, being a feminist approach to science that *situates* human and nonhuman interactions toward stronger objectivity. However, her ecofeminism, with all its biological-based essentialism of women as thus closer to nature, can also indicate, regardless of the import of her contributions, that a new generation of women-directed land use initiatives are somehow better *because* women direct them—only because, we can extrapolate, the *margin* locates them. Her geographical imaginary and conclusions are so

strikingly similar to the neoagrarian works and conclusions of “The Body and the Earth” that fertility becomes the only way to purify the world of biotechnoscience—and far more, it is implied, than can any woman’s advanced professional/ism (of the center), let’s say, in academics. If fertility, as a place of family, maternity and rebirth, is the only force that can reverse destruction in this geographical imaginary, then outwardlooking representation and politics will be *closed* since it is always, in this view, already determined by women’s biology.

Memoir, Nonfiction, Manual

Contrast the foregoing essays and fiction⁹⁹ with the neoagrarian memoir of V.D. Hanson (1996), entitled, *Fields Without Dreams: Defending the Agrarian Idea*. Hanson’s memoir of his own life on a family farm he later attempts to save himself in adulthood is *quite* far to the *Global Tyranny Space* side of the continuum. Albeit moving inward from Smiley’s fiction toward the *limen*, Hanson’s (1996) *Fields Without Dreams* could be billed as the *true* story of Smiley’s conventional-industrial landscapes of tyranny, blinding and death—precisely why writers, like Jager (2004), frequently comment upon the *sour* moods and *aggression* of the far-right conservative military historian, classicist and author. And, perhaps this last CV has informed Hanson’s imaginary of the US agri-cultural landscape as a *war*—agribusiness versus rural smallholder—from which even brief *reprieve* would be welcome.

In Hanson’s general estimation, if *where there is hope there is life*, then there is no life in the small US conventional-industrial farms of today. This more or less *grapes of wrath* memoir

⁹⁹ Given greater scope, Fricke’s (1993), memoir, *Dino, Godzilla, and the pigs: My life on a Missouri hog farm*; and/ or Jager’s (1990), memoir, *Eighty acres: Elegy for a family farm* could be foiled Hanson’s work from *Berry Prophecy Place*, whilst Pyle’s (2005) angry journalist indictments, *Raising Less Corn, More Hell* could be seen to interpret and/ or bolster them from *Global Tyranny Space*.

of his family's raisin grape farm in the San Joaquin Valley of California, extends from the farm's inception through the extreme economic fall-out period of the early to mid-1980s (~1983). The *tyrant* of the more often literary and mythic setting of orchards and vineyards is the hyper-modern conventional-industrial, government and corporate agribusiness behemoth of a conspiratorial monster, a kingdom within which Hanson locates his indictment of the loss of a food-grower representative democracy. To Hanson here, the force of the tyrant has all but annihilated American farming entire, exploiting, corrupting and destroying its farmers and thus, what Hanson sees as, its *especial* class of angry, isolated farmer voters who might be rough around the edges, but remain in possession of an *alternative knowledge* closer to the stodgy armed yeoman of ancient Greece... an especial man and class, forced to be penitent at the feet of the tyranny; or lost forever in the collapse and death of US family farming. And, Hanson's agrarian bedrock of the democracy, first conceived in classical Greece, has gone the way of the stodgy yeoman/ small family farmer of that classical time. In Hanson, what we *all* have lost, then, is not just an important form of pragmatic voter and dissenter, but crucial foundational blocs of our democratic Republic. Hanson muses that all we seem to be arming ourselves with to redress such multiplying and mushrooming grievances is a more *romantic*, or *literary*, agrarianism entirely ignorant or dismissive of the agrarians of classical Greece; or the pragmatic dissent of the small family farmer. Delineating this last, Hanson writes, "This is farming nowadays—not a lifestyle, not a noble enterprise, not a stewardship of ancestral ground—and there is no place for the bawl and the whine" (p. 59).

Suffice it to say, just when his vivid descriptions of the epic ups and downs of his family's attempts to save their farm, and critique of American agrarianism as well, seems to acknowledge the imperativeness of a more confrontational, quasi-agrarian representation of

multiple quasi-object and spatial trajectories what we get instead is the epic *fall of empire*: a terrifying depiction of agribusiness tyranny and consequent yeoman/ry madness, a call for revenge and war around the time of 1984, when interest rates rose, inflation fell, and “the California raisin industry was all but destroyed” (p. 72)... his family (farm) all but destroyed. He writes that by the 1990s, if the agrarian would see “his own small history as the ancients might, if he dare compare his deeds with those of his kindred who came before, if he should see his tenure only as a link in the great chain of succession, then surely what started in 1983 conjured up *awful images in his brain*” (*my emphasis*; p. 84). And, with such clouded brains of *awful*, farmers have by his time gone quite mad on this landscape of tyrannical Middlemen, cancer and death, of both farms and people, ever more so ceasing to be a way of life. The utter madness of continuing to borrow money, sell at a loss (p. 87-88), or migrate out (p. 111) ensures a further loss of his independence—his solitariness garnered from nativity to the place of the family farm. The yeoman/ry are destroyed, left abandoned, to enjoin nothing, nothing more, anyway, than what he characterizes as rather *stupid, new age gardeners* (p. 112), i.e., building *aesthetics*, not *food landscapes* (p. 197). Here, I submit, Hanson has gone too horizontal into the depths of the dystopian absolutist pole, resisting any and all acknowledgement of the positivity of many localist, and comparable other, initiatives; as well as the possibility of *assemblage*, which again he sees as *always already* defeated with the fall of ancient Greece.

Hanson laments that what he takes with him to the *new age garden* is only *who and what we all are as a democracy* (p. 122)... which is *not* migrant wage-labor, apparently, dismissed by the author outright as *migrant amigos*. What is lost is the real farmer himself, the only “true Greek” (p. 217): once independent, dissenting citizen of the consensus, sold-out to contract farming, immigrants, rent-loans-debt, and the market tyrant-arbiter overseeing kingdoms now of

madness and despair, losing so much to save very little (p. 267). *Better men, of better times* (p. 238) are gone, leaving desolate landscapes of war and death. Our fate was sealed before the Common Era; before the twenty-first century US in turn. All that remains is abstract tyrannical space. Only an (armed) agrarian revolution (p. 265), the agrarian idea(l) he seems to be defending in the title, could contend such a terrifying global food regime.

There are aspects of Hanson's work that I can appreciate, especially in light of the utter demoralization that can occur through conventional-industrial family farming, even impacting my own family in terms of madness and death, literally and so to speak; and the utter shortcomings emanating from the far end of the *Berry Prophecy Place* side of the continuum. But what begins as a more confrontational, quasi-agrarianism becomes little more than a *desert of the real* predetermined in the classical age. Hanson's massive tyrannical placeless space of *monoculture*, or satellite communities, of the West, in more ways than one all (re)cycling pornography, violence, and death is as much a retreat from social nature as are treatises for unreflexive third-spaces. Though undeniably interconnected with the history of agriculture-agrarianism(s), Hanson's cycling of Western time and geography arrives not to the agricultural *quasi-object*, or the *in-between*, but to another extreme of place-binding: neoliberal tyranny.

To put it another way, Hanson's work functions as a mafia wife of *Global Tyranny Space*. His memoir works to solidify certain neoliberal geographical imaginaries proclaiming that there are *no places left* in the world; that domination and replication is successful and complete. In that way, Hanson's memoir as successfully reifies the geographical imaginary he seeks to critique—of this *one*, totalizing and flattening imaginary of the global free marketer—more than some sort of agrarian revolution. There are other geographical imaginaries, like post-structuralist imaginaries of social nature, besides the abstract, neoliberal, free market space of

war. By failing to acknowledge these last, democratically representing organic alternatives, and/or by conceding *all is lost*, Hanson becomes a mafia wife of the tyrant. His memoir is as terrifying as the space he seeks to deconstruct, bolstering the imaginary he seeks to confront, leaving no options thus besides armed conflict. Perhaps this is why later continuum emplaced writer, Richard Manning (2004) calls Hanson's memoir about the agribusiness *desert of (desserts and) the real*, "an extraordinarily angry book" (p. 129). Likewise, and according to Jager (2004), Hanson's aggression is less appealing than the spirituality of Berry, which perhaps is why Hanson's perspective is less pervasive in the US today. Yet, Hanson's work can still be imagined as neoagrarianism nonetheless given that the writer takes-up the Berry world(view) characterization of terrifying conventional-industrial global space, whilst just taking it to *the* logical, polarized extreme far closer to Smiley's fictional representation. Retreat in Hanson fails to be an appeal to what he polemically reduces as *new age gardening*—this is certain. Still, his work, while refusing the place-bound family farm, also does little more than retreat into the past, i.e., ancient Greece: his only momentary reprieve or peace from *Global Tyranny Space*.

On the other side, and actually well tethered to the absolute extreme pole of *Berry Prophecy Place* (albeit moving a bit inward from Kingsolver by inches) is Gene Logsdon's (1995) *The Contrary Farmer*—a work which would beg to differ with Hanson on most points, but most specifically that the age of the yeoman/ry has long since passed. Logsdon owns and farms less than fifty acres in Upper Sandusky, Ohio, about a mile from the farm where he was raised. He has written over twenty-five nonfiction and fiction books, one of the most popular of which, besides *The Contrary Farmer*, being his (2004) collection/ how-to manual, *All Flesh is Grass: Pleasures and Promises of Pasture Farming*. Based on this exemplary Logsdon work, here the author would most likely argue that he *is* the stodgy, rough around the edges, yeoman

farmer quite alive and thriving on his cottage farm... just in much different parameters than conventional-industrial agri-culture. Meaning, Logsdon is *off the grid*, where, he would tell you, all “real farmers” (p. 6), being yeoman/ry patriots and long-time followers and supporters of Wendell Berry *should* be.

The Contrary Farmer draws directly from “Wendell Berry”—becoming another collection directly quoting Wendell Berry’s work at its onset—for inspiration, format, conclusions and even nature-as-redemption narrative, yet nonetheless attempts to locate a pragmatic solution to the current tragedy of conventional-industrial beyond penitence to the tiller and the tilled. Logsdon intermixes the Berrian world(view) with Wes Jackson’s research on perennial polycultures at the place of his own cottage farming. Here, cottage farming means farming part-time, for fun as well as profit—what by many others is described as a *material* AFN project of the strictest demarcations in terms of practices, scale and interimplication of longer space-time. In these Berrian-Jacksonian, local/ist ways, Logsdon can forward an at once neoagrarian discourse and local/ist farming manual—an interesting hybrid of descriptions of rural community traditions along with his own memories growing up in family farming. Logsdon delivers his own small farming experience alongside practical advice.

Logsdon’s cottage farm/ing memoir and manual, while diverse in discursive method/ology as well as material practices—and an exemplary work of embodied agricultural knowledge often performed through generations—nevertheless forwards a geographical imaginary which (re)creates the preeminent material-discursive local/ist project place. Essentially, Logsdon directly discourages engagement with any and all political, social, cultural and otherwise forces. All spatialized trajectories beyond his fence lines are delineated to, essentially, lack any utility. Even beyond that, longer spatial trajectories are characterized often

with a dismissive tone. As Logsdon writes: “*people are the same everywhere... the way to enjoy humanity (or at least to endure its absurdities) is to cultivate the people and places of their own community... with this sensibility, a farmer avoids the attitude that most often makes farm work burdensome*” (*my emphasis*; p. 5). Certainly, with/in one’s own cottage, or local/ist, project farm, and through particular material cottage, or local/ist, project farm practices deploying the least amount of technological innovation drawn out in detail in the essay/ Chapter, “Pastoral Economics” (p. 16-37), Logsdon’s local/ist neagrarian rules for *right living and right eating* could seem quite reasonable. His rules are practically a carbon copy of Berry’s (1990) own nine-point list for assessing the ‘good’ of any technological innovation (p. 171-72)—a veritable bible for *getting off the grid*, literally, that “real” yeoman/ry farmers like Logsdon apparently not only live by, but continue to modify so as to only further reify the local/ist cottage farm even more *strictly* than that allowable by Berry.

In fact, “real farmers” (p. 6), no less than Hanson’s yeoman *before* the Common Era, are not only quite alive and well with/in these *particular* places they never desire to leave (much like Kingsolver’s own garden and Zebulon County *out there* from the city folk), but Logsdon argues that they experience the world more deeply because they are mindful of hard work. Real farmers—contrary farmers—enjoy farming more than any other farmers because of their great depth of knowledge and skills. They even understand and enjoy nature far more than the average person (p. 6-7). Unlike Hanson’s lamentation, Logsdon shows not only the vitality, but the virtuosity and superiority of such yeoman/ry farmers who must deploy diverse techniques and skills of pastoral economics and perennial polycultures so that their small farms will not require indebtedness to the grid (p. 23). Logsdon’s cottage farm is thus measured in terms of the human

limit, using nature as measure. No other measures, most certainly those of industrial economy (p. 30) are plausible if the contrary farmer wants to achieve full personal and ecological health.

The mark of properly and *particularly* limited farmers and farms is biodiversity, integrating pastures, meadows, woodlots with livestock and crops. Commodity cropping simply does not, or should not exist in Logsdon's particular cottage place (p. 149-174). Only low-impact, bio-diverse practices on one acre of land which he harvests by hand—when not using horses, anyway (p. 157-160)—are acceptable. What is the golden mean thus implicated for the contrary cottage farmer and farm? Logsdon might reply, “An effective *underground* economy that the rest of us could learn from if only we would” (p. 33), i.e., the Amish.

Nonetheless, with much more stoic, at times cantankerous, yet other times highly troubling perceptions of nature as a fickle “bitch,” no less than a “vast killing field” (p. 53), Logsdon ventures further *underground* than Berry and others of the *Berry Prophecy Place* pole. His self-assured, even arrogant, perspective of the life and work of real and contrary cottage farming can nevertheless be achieved through reading his neoagrarian treatise and manuals for both life and work—by adopting his lifestyles philosophy for *right living and right eating*. Logsdon lives and works, as well as articulates these last, quite starkly more off the grid, politically and otherwise, than other comparable neoagrarians. In many ways, Logsdon's work merely takes Berry's world(view) to its most logical extreme, like Hanson's viewpoint I have argued pushes the Berry world(view) into a vast, placeless desert of the real. In contrast to Hanson, Logsdon's writings are (re)unified with the extreme absolutes of *Berry Prophecy Place*, where he unfailingly locates synthesis measured against only cottage and Amish farming communities; only man and nature: his diverse cottage farm and barnyard becomes a *peaceable kingdom* where he *responsibly stewards*, in his words, that *bitch* of a *killing field*, nature. All

told, vastly intrainplicative of the works of Berry while remaining far less pervasive than either the influences of “Wendell Berry” or V.D. Hanson, Logsdon’s work can thus forward some rather *unplugged* articulations of nature; cottage life and work; as well as interrelated food politics, including a suspicion of, if not at times disdain for, BIG organics and organic accreditation. Logsdon *is* Berry’s and Hanson’s imaginary of a hardworking, stodgy and cantankerous yeoman/ry—perhaps here understood to be just so place-bound as to be *underground*.

Essay Collections

Moving into other nonfiction interpretations of neoagrarianism, oriented to either extreme pole of the continuum, finds the *Global Tyranny Space* essay collection, edited by Andrew Kimbrell (2002), entitled, *The Fatal Harvest Reader: The Tragedy of Industrial Agriculture*; and *Berry Prophecy Place new agrarianism* essay collections, edited by Eric Freyfogle (2001) and Norman Wirzba (2003).

Beginning with the former, Kimbrell’s (2002) collection, though positioned closer to the *liminal in-between* than Smiley’s *A Thousand Acres* and the Hanson California farming memoir, remains a heated *Global Tyranny Space* contribution. Its thirty plus essays of leading thinkers on the ecological and agrarian mind to which the book is dedicated (as well as to nature, though more in all her wisdom than in her “bitchy” moods) continues in the new agrarian tradition of keeping all things firmly uniform to “Wendell Berry.” Actually, of Berry’s essay overviewed prior, “The Whole Horse” (p. 39-48) rears its weary head to kick-off the “Understanding the Agrarian Ethic” section (p. 39-76) of the collection’s *Part Two* contrast of *Agrarian and Industrial Worldviews* (p. 38-224). “Understanding the Agrarian Ethic” is rounded out by the

earlier mentioned essay of Berry's self-proclaimed ally, Wes Jackson, entitled, "Farming in Nature's Image" (p. 65-76).

However, *Global Tyranny Space*, rather a geographical imaginary of the tyrannical, flattening and corruptive terror of agribusiness, destruction, war and death as presented in Smiley's interpretation of Lear and V.D. Hanson's memoir is the overriding premise of Kimbrell's (2002) reader as well. Starting from its title alone, conventional-industrial agriculture, and any trajectory that could possibly be aligned with the overriding image of landscapes of fatality and tragedy, is not only problematic, but homicidal... a dark and gloomy sterile landscape dead of anything other than mechanization, anhydrous and tools of biotechnoscience also menacingly plastered across the front cover of the paperback edition. A brutal landscape of globalization offers nothing more than terror from which we all must retreat for purification with/in and through particularly fabricated places, be those offered by material local/ist projects, or even prescriptions for population control of those living in certainly the most wild of natural places (i.e., Iltis, p. 106-120)—which is, in many ways, are just Berry's same arguments for the human limit taken to its most logical, and terrifying, extreme of *Global Tyranny Space*: the human limit, i.e., limiting certain space-time populations in the Amazon, for instance.

Anyway, Kimbrell commences the collection with likewise heated condemnation of the "seven deadly myths of industrial agriculture" (p. 3-5), moreover, agribusinessmen's BIG lies which Kimbrell argues have been given a "free ride from our media and policy makers" (p. 3). The central goal thus of his work is set forth. Kimbrell will "debunk the myths that have for too long been used to promote and defend industrial agriculture" (p. 4). His orientating purpose then, for the public and activist alike, is to dispel the myths of the "globalized food production

system” (p. ix). At its most promising, Kimbrell’s introduction of his collection can also simultaneously be at its most *reductive*, contending his work will, “*confront* the powers controlling our food supply and *reverse the crisis* in which we find ourselves ensnared... despite *the seemingly overwhelming odds against reversing the crisis* of culture and agriculture” (*my emphasis*; p. ix) by presenting numerous essays on only *particularly* situated and argued *sustainable alternative* literatures of and for the bulldozed margins of David. Like this, Kimbrell’s confrontation is the logical *Global Tyranny Space* extension of the Berrian periphery-center *conversation*, more like a, “call to arms... to fight the threat *globalization megatechnologies*” (*my emphasis*; p. ix). Before page one, the reader is naked and alone on a stark, terrifying global space *desert of the real* and biotechnoscience. The only reprieve one could hope for is blinding, death, or, at least, a retreat...

Each Kimbrell essay to follow falls under the threateningly toned theme of *busting corporate lies and myths* with “THE TRUTH” (original emphasis; p. 6-36). The seven deadly myths, in terms of THE TRUTH, in order, are as follows: 1) industrial agriculture does not feed the world; 2) industrial food is not cheap; 3) industrial agriculture is inefficient; 4) industrial food offers fewer choices; and, perhaps most importantly here, 5) biotechnology will not solve the problems of industrial agriculture. Though none of these “myths” have been denied throughout the current project, Kimbrell’s gnashed teeth, particularly when it comes to this last “myth,” bite out the shape of a *neo* neoliberal’s geographical imaginary where everything bad is at the center; and everything good exists in the local/ist margins.

For instance, in a mere four pages, Kimbrell reduces all biotechnology to a homogenous mass of problems that more accurately are owed the current *application* of GE in the conventional-industrial paradigm, not the science itself. All of his claims are actually well-

known and rather exploited, such as the concentration of ownership of genes by corporations; as well as cross-pollination with non-GE fields. Unfortunately, with no evidence, he takes this last to its illogical extreme, proclaiming that GE food is, in *fact*, “toxic” (p. 35), and creates “unique, unknown health risks” (p. 35) by reiterating the well-worn image of the “fish genes in tomatoes” (p. 35)—which has nothing to do with most commodity crops—as if such genetic transfers inherently, or self-evidently, prove his point of the *unnaturalness* turned toxic danger and death of the technology he doesn’t otherwise fully define or differentiate. Concluding that GE will never be the “ultimate panacea” (p. 36) for the fatal harvests of tragic conventional-industrial agriculture given its degradation of the environment; unknown human and nonhuman risks; and potential for spurring *en masse* starvation, the reader is left trembling in his fog of conflated myths and TRUTH. Kimbrell never attempts to distinguish between how biotechnoscience is being applied and toward what objectives in the current, highly problematic conventional-industrial agricultural paradigm; and amongst the highly varied biotechnoscientific tools themselves. And, the included essays only speak to his overview. Mendelson’s included work, for instance, calls all GE, again otherwise undifferentiated from that which involves cross-species gene transfers, “shots in the genetic dark” (p. 151). Any claims for the similarity or safety of GE when compared to traditional plant breeding are discounted outright as “simply wrong” (p. 150). Again, to reiterate, the central point in overview of Kimbrell here isn’t that such claims are wholly unreasonable or that we should dismiss them, but rather that the geographical imaginary of US agriculture should be left at least *slightly* more open to *all* possibilities available or yet to be imagined—particularly when it comes to strengthening the conventional-industrial paradigm.

Regardless, Kimbrell's and his essayists' depictions of the global food regime remain entirely sealed-off from any trajectory of the properly and particularly situated local/ist place, presented variously throughout the next ~two-hundred plus pages detailing conventional-industrial agriculture's *World War Three* (WWIII): a, to quote, *toxic trail* of conventional-industrial agriculture's war on nature. GE, along with all other such trajectories, called "corporate control and globalization" (p. 224) are "the enemy" (p. 224). The named enemy is, moreover, collusive conspiracies of both (re)creating US agriculture as a *bioserfdom of corporate chemical-industrial agriculture* (also Henson, 231; 233)... the picture presented can be at times truly *terrifying*. Mendelson goes so far as to say that GE, as a tool for only the agribusiness' pornography industry exploiting nature; and, in his language, *masturbatory* scientists, is a call for war on the war on nature: "Only by initiating *a complete moratorium on the production and sale of genetically engineered foods* can we hope to *forestall* the unprecedented risks presented by these foods" (*my emphasis*; p. 160). If complete moratorium of GE is the only possible outcome of the food wars contention more generally, we are basically abandoned by the Kimbrell collection to be naked agribusiness prostitutes and slaves armed with a collective fire extinguisher upon a vast landscape of terrorism aflame. Is this an *outwardlooking*, or at least more *open*, representation of the various tools of twenty-first century US agriculture? Is this an overview of conventional-industrial tools to date that inspires more democratic participation in the US agriculture debate? What is the alternative, or even *hope*, proffered here?

By Part Four conclusions and recommendations, the present day and future of US agriculture is left far less open to any possibilities and considerations than steered toward a particular geography of the small family farm imaginary, itself extant in and made possible by

(re)distributing land, banking and fuller knowledges to the margins, rather “small, local initiatives” (p. 64), namely food systems localization projects, exemplified best by CSAs (e.g., Nassauer, p. 49-57; and Norberg-Hodge, p. 58-64). Though the latter essay contributions highlight the existence, and even power, of place, as well as the imperative work of (re)establishing ecological diversity via perennial polycultures research, the *outwardlookingness* of place is reduced to particular, and particularly local/ist practices, like, the politics of ethical eating (Waters, p. 283-287), incl., farmers’ markets, urban agricultural projects, entailing both community gardens (p. 300) and CSAs (Specter, 288-294; Fisher, 295-302). Ostensibly, most Kimbrell collection authors advocate for such rather commonplace sustainable alternative food systems localization initiatives, with some even proposing the eco-labeling of organic products (Lydon, p. 303-307). Yet others argue that organics and AFN local/ism projects are *still* not local enough (Imhoff, p. 308-316). Imhoff contends that all agricultural production should be broken-down and redistributed into small, cottage-like farms reintegrated with the wild (p. 311). In some ways, this last is no less extreme than the imaginary and tonality of conventional-industrial WWII.

Taken together, the final conclusions, recommendations and rhetoric of the writers in Kimbrell’s collection are far less aggressive than the introductory section, and/ or the section headings. Actually, by the end, contributors (re)create something like the Prophet’s *hope* (p. 317-322)—actually, his own particular hope, the essay concluding the rather angry collection being “Hope,” by Wendell Berry. Berry recognizes that *Global Tyranny Space* can seem hopeless (p. 317-321). But, as ever, Berry believes in the “revolt of the local small producers and local consumers against the global industrialism of the corporations” (p. 317). This last struggle of conservationists like Berry, or Berry’s allies, is more or less the only hope we have.

Global corporations, commodity crops, and biotechnoscience simply have no hope, responsibility—no place—in his writing, or in many of the views offered throughout the collection, with Kimbrell’s being one of the strongly worded among them. Many included authors do attempt to (re)create a much fuller conversation about biotechnoscience, foodways, GE/ food labeling, and the limitations of organics, which are all very necessary foci for confronting the conventional-industrial agriculture noticeably absent from Berry’s prolific offerings. Like this, Kimbrell’s collection can move closer to the *limen* for its engagement with timely issues, but remains strongly oriented to *Global Tyranny Space*... with momentary reprieves of Berry’s, and likewise, *hope*.

On the other side of the continuum we find Freyfogle’s (2001) essay collection, *The New Agrarianism: Land, Culture, and the Community of Life*. Granted, like Kimbrell’s location in regards to Hanson, Freyfogle’s collection also inches inward to the *in-between* given his inclusion of a wider diversity of perspectives than the self-proclaimed underground *Contrary Farmer*. Freyfogle’s lighter take on, and conclusions and recommendations about, basically the same imaginary of conventional-industrial discursive-material realities (re)presented by Kimbrell, orients his collection to *Berry Prophecy Place*. Still, firmly in keeping with the *new agrarian* tradition set forth by Wendell Berry, of Freyfogle’s fifteen integrated essays, Berry authors two. “The Whole Horse” rears its now rather road-weary head once more, while “The Boundary” reminds us, yet again, of the *human limit*... and of Berry’s geographical imaginary. A Daniel Imhoff (p. 17-28) essay likened to his distributist contribution to the Kimbrell collection; as well as another installment of Gene Logsdon’s (p. 81- 92) “particularized, place-specific advice on organic gardening and homestead skills” (p. 81) illuminates how highly

interinfluential, self-assuring and self-perpetuating is both the mostly uniform new agrarianism; as well as the *discourse* of Wendell Berry/ discourse.

The uniformity of Wendell Berry/ discourse on this side of the continuum is what remains so remarkable about a rather unexceptional collection that too expectedly exalts from its outset the resurgence of agrarian thought in the US—but only in terms of how organic agricultural practices and thinking works to integrate multiple groups and individuals in the image of the livelihood farm from classical Greece: communities, families, sustainable foodways (p. xiv). Freyfogle’s new agrarianism so thoroughly re-imagines and represents the geography of the Prophet as to largely (re)create Berry’s own social-spatial conflated miasma. A case in point, Freyfogle writes that, “the New Agrarianism is best understood in *metaphorical terms*, not as a *constellation of practical proposals, back-to-the-land and otherwise*, but as an effort to *draw on agrarian traditions to criticize modern culture*” (my emphasis; p. xxxvii). However, the *new agrarianism* is apparently, at the same time, “*quietly rising to offer remedies and defenses*, not just to the noise, vulgarity, and congestion that had long affronted urban dwellers but to *various assaults on the land, family, religious sensibilities, and communal life that have tended everywhere to breed alienation and despair*” (my emphasis; p. xiv). The *new agrarianism*, oriented as both *metaphorical* as well as a *remedy* for and *defense* against (post)modernity, and its “wide range of public and private ills... diseases and degradations, particularly the hedonistic, self-centered values and perspectives” (p. xiv; xvi), nevertheless presents essays thereafter, supposedly chosen for *literary merit*, which altogether most concretely critique modernity, material expressions of conventional-industrial agriculture (p. 111-161) and proceed to as absolutely (re)enforce *material* AFN local/ist projects, like cottage farming, farmers’ markets, CSAs, community gardens, religious groups oriented to the land, grassroots small-

action groups organized around anti-GE protests (p. xv-xvi; 3-110), community and family centered reclamation of the commons toward more responsible land stewardship *in the image of the Creator* (p. 181-262) and so forth. The point is that the central representation of US agriculture today, at least in Freyfogle, purports to be simultaneously an innocent literary critique that can also thus somehow, inarguably, inculcate innumerable, political and material, practical proposals for AFN local/ist projects in the many pages of essays presented thereafter. It claims to be, at once, *of the past* but not *in the past*; of and *for* place, but not *bound to* place. But, then, the writings denounce all space distributed the center as a modern, global “market, new technology, and liberal individualism” (p. xxxv); whilst exalting and reifying all local/ist places as *wholy*. How is a rejection of *all modern space* the delimitation of either an *outwardlooking* place or outwardlooking local/ist projects? Is this representation truly leaving open the possibility of any tool or discourse which is mostly grouped with a fundamentally abstract and denounced space of *liberal individualism*?

Analyzing the Freyfogle collection’s geography, it seems that the new agrarianism, while ever exploring the strengths of alternative agricultural models and the undeniable potentiality of many localist proposals and projects for inspiring and bolstering both collective and individual, particular and varied forms of healthfulness, nevertheless also (re)territorializes a *third-space* at once stabilizing all historical and likewise trajectories of modernity and biotechnoscience as *Global Tyranny Space*, all historical and likewise trajectories of hyper-rural local/ism as *Berry Prophecy Place*, and then synthesizing *both* otherwise unchanging geographies to endlessly (re)produce the stuff of Wendell Berry/ “Wendell Berry” world(view)-as-exhibition duplicity. Actually, the writer who is cited to most forcefully articulate the agrarian mind to counter “agnostic culture” (p. xix) is none other than Wendell Berry. Berry’s included contributions

make clear to the new agrarians that what he calls, “the good life” (p. xxxiv) comprised of likewise Berry world(view) abstractions like health, beauty, manners and morals, hard work, family and neighbors, spirituality and economic security (p. xxxiv)—can only come into fruition when all the pieces of the new agrarianism, namely, “the land, natural fertility, healthy families, and the maintenance of durable links between people and place” (p. xvii) *lock into place*, thereby (re)creating the durable scale, the human limit. The new agrarian ‘good life’ seems to be nothing more than a material-discursive *third-space*, at once not past or modern, not space but *not* locked in place, because it is *everything* of what *ought to have been* and *what should be*, i.e., “yearnings” (p. xli) for eternal wholly healthfulness of the scale of local/ist organic tillers; for an impossibly clean slate, or starting over in a thoroughly social natural world that cannot be so easily disentangled after all. No hope is even considered to have ever emanated from, nor will ever possibly be associated with, the collection’s constructed center. If the foregoing claim has yet to be evidenced enough, in the words of Freyfogle himself, “New Agrarianism has no settled home... on the conservative-liberal political spectrum” (p. xxxviii), but can be nonetheless be described as “Southern conservatism... expressed most eloquently today by Wendell Berry” (p. xxxviii). The Freyfogle geography compels and perpetuates this baffling contradiction—cited before to be a particular geographical phenomena of Wendell Berry/ “Wendell Berry” world(view)-as-exhibition: *third-space*.

By contrast, consider the likewise *Berry Prophecy Place* contribution, though much nearer the continuum *limina*, of Wirzba (2003), entitled, *The Essential Agrarian Reader: The Future of Culture, Community, and the Land*. His work is by far and away stronger critical engagement with *global* aspects of the current US conventional-industrial agricultural paradigm; and a more open representation of US agriculture which destabilizes the rigid geographical

boundaries of the core and margin and all their attendant agricultural practices and discourse. Yet, the latter pronouncement does not portend that, in turn, *The Essential Agrarian Reader* is a *Global Tyranny Space* oriented edited contribution. Wirzba's (2003) collection pushes the conversation and recommendations about foodways forward *without* adopting Kimbrell's harsher rhetoric of busting toxic industrial impacts and localist warriors' war on the machine; or devolving into confounding Freyfogle rhetoric. A far more engaged, rhetorically and critically sound, material-discursive neoagrarianism overview, Wirzba's collection is nearest the liminal in-between—at least so far... even if it doesn't *commence* that way.

Berry Prophecy Place essayist and novelist, Barbara Kingsolver, presents the *Forward* to *The Essential Agrarian Reader* which thereafter features multiple *Berry Prophecy Place* works, incl. those of Wes Jackson, Gene Logsdon, Eric Freyfogle and the prophet himself, mentor and friend to whom the work is dedicated, Wendell Berry. Indeed, the dedication to Berry is profound. The words of the ever more obsequious fellow Kentuckian Wirzba resound throughout the new agrarian cathedral that is Wendell Berry: "It would be difficult to overestimate the significance of Wendell Berry's work for articulating and defending the agrarian cause. Through his writing, instruction, and personal example, *Berry has been an inspiration and indispensable guide* for many of us" (*my emphasis*; p. 20).

Like this, *The Essential Agrarian Reader* sets out to clarify why *agrarianism matters today* (p. 1). Essentially, we learn that in our haste to adopt every possible biotechnoscientific innovation, we have all lost other aspects of life, like "communal support, traditional wisdom, clean water and nutritious food" (p. 3). In *The Essential Agrarian Reader*, none of these last could *ever* emanate from the general direction of biotechnoscience... which also cleans water and provides safe and nutritious food—points the representation overlooks and/ or disregards.

“Agrarianism” otherwise totally unqualified or undefined beyond *Wendell Berry’s* seminal work, *The Unsettling of America*, is purported to “test success and failure... by the health and vitality of a region’s entire human and nonhuman neighborhood” (*my emphasis*; p. 4). In fact, in the words of the editor, an *authentic*, or *genuinely agrarian vision* (p. 4-5) has yet to be attempted given the breadth of its challenges, incl. *everything* from soils to species diversity, human and nonhuman contentment, community solidarity, and *joy in living* (p. 4). Instead of reasonably questioning, in the first instance, the immense amount of qualification it would take to properly position all of these last vague generalities if they are indeed to stand as the new agrarian mind and vision, Wirzba proclaims that his collection will “help us imagine and implement” (p. 5) such neoagrarian genuineness, being a recombinant, *urban agrarianism*—a treatise for both urban and rural health, drawn from the best attributes of both (p. 6). For, even those living in urban environments can “protect, preserve and celebrate life” (p. 8), the responsible freedom of not living in rural places but having them ever in mind and practices wherever one might be.

What seems like a social natural representation of US agriculture, via a more relational geography, that attempts to account for the continuous interrelation of space-time and place (I return to this point shortly) at once unfortunately becomes Wirzba’s foray into a more complexly located denouncement of reified global space-time, to mean precarious “*global/postmodern* life that compels us to take our commitments lights and to value our relationships less than we should” (*my emphasis*; p. 10). Likened to other new agrarian accounts, Wirzba continues that our lives can only be improved in this global tyranny space of abstraction, consumerism and alienation via “traditions, communities, habitats, and other organisms” (p. 10). It appears as though in Wirzba’s estimation, to be *agrarian* is to resist *certain forms of* consumerism, thus, namely achieved through the discovery and reunification of the direct link between farm and

fork, thus society and nature, in the US today: food and *ethical eating*. Since “we are what/ how we eat” (p. 10), ethical eating becomes the fulcrum of “*regional networks* that join together producer and consumer, country and city, nature and culture” (*my emphasis*; p. 16).

Again, and quite usefully, ethical eating does not mean we all must move to the countryside. The material reality of ethical eating today usefully indicates “urban agriculture” (p. 16) as much as organic production models in other places. “Urban agriculture,” or local/ist initiatives taken-up in urban settings, including quite positive and successful initiatives such as vacant lot/ *FlowerWindowBox* / community gardening, farmers’ markets, CSAs and even the purchase and consumption of foods from local businesses (p. 15-16), is imagined here as a *quiet revolution* (p. 16) of larger AFN local/ist projects. Wirzba concludes that regional networks—these urban-rural and otherwise AFNs—can bring together once binaries of producer and consumer, country and city, nature and culture, and therefore (re)produce food as a “natural, social, cultural, and spiritual product” (p. 16). In his collection, regional networks are genuinely agrarian. Regional networks must be responsibly supported and celebrated—what the essays presented thereafter intend to accomplish.

The three parts of essays to follow present the likewise Wirzba enframed, new agrarianism of regional networks—which is anticipated from the outset by Wendell Berry’s well-traveled “Agrarian Standard.” From his *standard*, in the words of Wirzba, other works build their own arguments (p. 17) about *resettling America* through regions of beauty, health, community and family, exemplified best by Amish-style community farms “as Wendell Berry has told us” (Donahue, p. 50; p. 34-50). Actually, Telleen continues from Donahue’s work that “*The Unsettling of America* justly deserves to be honored” (p. 55) for setting-up the *new agrarian* project, what she in fact calls, “The Ten Commandments of Agrarianism” (p. 59). The

latter argues foremost to distrust anything BIG. Furthermore, Orr's (p. 171-187) aptly entitled, "The Uses of Prophecy," perhaps most directly references Berry's world(view), arguing that no one since classical Greece, ex. Hesiod, has, "*without ever becoming repetitious or boring...* represented the agrarian cause with greater eloquence, logic, or consistency" (*my emphasis*; p. 171). Such claims Orr credits "the close calibration between his works and the life he's lived" (p. 171)—highly inspirational, yet as "much dismissed" (p. 171). As he sees it, if Berry's work is ignored it is because it *is* prophetic and most people "don't much like prophets because they make us feel uneasy" (p. 176). The new agrarian mind is only further delineated in essays of popular neoagrarians, and "Wendell Berry" allies, Wes Jackson (p. 140-153) and Gene Logsdon (p. 154-170). Many essays on the regional network (re)connection of country and city illuminate the remarkable affinity of "New Urbanism" (Northrup & Lipscomb, p. 191-211) with such neoagrarian concerns and priorities. For instance, Witt's essay (p. 212-221) draws from Berry, the *Fugitive Agrarians* as well CSAs for a model of (re)distribution of farm landowning and stakeholding. Yet again, such local/ist projects (p. 101-120; Witt, p. 212-221) provide the most tangible, material models of the new agrarian mind. And, without question, irrespective of the problematic geography (explored below) these all remain some of the strongest and most promising alternative agriculture models and projects to date.

The point here is that Wirzba's collection/ representation moves *toward the liminal in-between* because the editor includes essays which take on imperative issues of the global food regime, again starkly contrasted the Berrian miasma of Freyfogle and far more evenhandedly than Kimbrell. Take for instance the essays appearing throughout the three part collection, including essays by Herman Daly (p. 62-79) the editor himself, Norman Wirzba (p. 80-100); and Hank Graddy (p. 222-236). Daly's essay seeks to provide a legal and legislative delimitation of

“sustainability” while Hank Graddy, (p. 222-236) outlines actual material, legal and legislative solutions to the terrifying *Global Tyranny Space* conventional-industrial paradigm he sees as best exemplified in the CAFO system. Likewise, the contribution of Editor Norman Wirzba (p. 80-100) usefully discourses such redress in terms of embodied performances based in/ of place. He sees such place-based knowledges as the proper steering mechanism of our performances weaving with/in and through longer network flows of the material-discursive world. Wirzba’s essay is a necessary addendum to the new agrarianism in terms of how human and nonhuman performances negotiate, mediate and translate the ineffably complex and interminably shifting material-discursive, social natural world—what sounds like a necessary inclusion of *relational* (re)production and performance, like, e.g., *eco-subjectivity* (Murdoch, 2006). However, the difference between Wirzba’s and Murdoch’s formulations comes of course in Wirzba’s adoption of the *new agrarian mind* as the preeminent ecological steering mechanism of embodied performance in the world. An otherwise cogent essay mostly provides the first of many indications that Wirzba’s regional networks and places are more *bound* than *basing* human and nonhuman performance—especially since these last are locked in the imaginary of “Wendell Berry” literally in the first instance, as well as in the last.

Meaning, just when this representation opens up a real opportunity to finally discourse fuller post-structuralist implications of social natural performance and steering mechanisms regarding US agriculture, Wirzba’s collection closes with another essay installment by Wendell Berry: “Going to Work.” Berry’s essay, bulleted by paragraph with Roman numerals (as if in the form of *commandments*) reiterates his now rather commonplace argument for the agrarian mind. In a particularly troubling concluding contention, ever in his commandment framework, and ever against the abstractions of the logical extremes of his own world(view), being *Global Tyranny*

Space, Berry argues that, “XLIV. The *only true representation of a thing* we can say, is *the thing itself*. This is true also of a *person*. It is true of a *place*. It is true of the *world and all its creatures*. *The only true picture of Reality is Reality itself*” (my emphasis; p. 266). In the Berry imaginary, anything made, be it images, artifacts, representations, are not Reality, capital “R.” They are mere “realities,” small “r” representations, “made by science or by art, or by both... All of them literally are fictions... *never equal to the reality they are about*” (p. 266). Thus, “our *sciences and arts owe a certain courtesy to Reality*... only by humility, reverence, propriety of scale, and good workmanship” (my emphasis; p. 266). Really, Wendell Berry’s work here pulls the oftentimes promising, but largely place-bound Wirzba collection, under the purview of the new agrarian *true picture of Reality*, operating like a governing surveillance, or disciplinary system, which seeks to merely supplant the current conventional-industrial, biotechnoscientific system with a *new vision* of what is and should be meaningful *Reality*.

All of Wirzba’s included initiatives for ethical eating, “urban agriculture,” local/ist AFN projects; a *throughput definition* of sustainability toward (re)visioning globalization, macroeconomics and development; and cogent regulatory and legislative redress for conventional-industrial crimes against humanity are each and all necessary conversations. Likewise, Wirzba’s imaginary of region and the regional networks that interconnect such embodied performance, or “urban agriculture,” with other forms of *natural systems* organic agriculture in place-bound prairies is also a far more intricate geography and involved take on the prophet’s own geographical imaginary... whilst continually drawing from it.

Notwithstanding then, Wirzba manages to simply move hyper-rurality *out* of the local/ist cottage farm and *emplace* it with/in particular embodied experiences of particular urban settings. Like this, he escapes the prisonhouse of the Berrian center and periphery model that glaringly

denounces and omits all trajectories of the core. Instead, but ever without destabilizing the Berry discourse, Wirzba can enfranchise even more urban agrarians via the works of Berry he simply (re)configures through a highly comparable critique of (post)modernity; exaltation of rural organic life and work; and celebration of some performative aspects and local/ist agricultural projects of the center, and particularly qualified compassionate consumerism and ethical eating initiatives.

This last is a very useful shift. Urban local/ist agricultural projects like these are severed, purified and protected, like the prophet himself, from Wirzba's otherwise quite commonplace indictments of "postmodernity" to be thus, presumably, just the rest of the same center of corporate capitalism, uncompassionate consumerism, professional/ism, and, biotechnoscience. His sophisticated reworking of the Berry geographical imaginary, with erudite plays of space, place-time and scale, mindfully includes regions in the discussion as the center and periphery fulcrum enjoining producers and consumers, country and city—all of which is mostly lacking in the Berry geography entire. Wirzba's necessary addendum of regional network thinking can appear to engage with a thoroughly social natural world without retreating from it, or even with "food" as a more natural, social, cultural, and spiritual product. And, again, this is an important inclusion, and collection, overall. It's a necessary addendum for the mounting support of the embodied place-bound practices of locavores just in more places of the same, i.e., urban agrarians. However, a geography oriented analysis and inquiry of the Wirzba representation of American agriculture wonders whether Wirzba's "celebrated" (p. 16) regional networks of the urban and rural have *continually* negotiated and translated boundaries. Or, do his scalar enclosures always start and stop, begin and end at particular boundaries already extant *before*

they synthesize as “region?” Essentially, are all urban local/ist projects self-evidently good, providing thus an *enough and good true picture of Reality?*

It becomes clear that the embodied performances inculcating the regional network implicated here are part and parcel of a highly qualified and limited (re)configuration of geographical demarcations, becoming merely a transplantation of marginal place to a particular place *within* the center—a center he far more generally characterizes and denounces as an abstract space of corruption, exploitation, domination, colonialism and (uncompassionate) consumerism. Like this, Wirzba’s regional network is like an underground tunnel connecting particular embodied experiences and knowledges of place to as particular local/ist places; CSA stakeholder to the CSA farm; the compassionate consumer to the local farmers’ market; the *FlowerWindowBox* to the home table; the local/ist center place to the local/ist marginal place, and so forth, all which otherwise, and usefully, remain hermetically enclosed.

We can see, then, how the Editor’s regional network tunnel becomes a far superior (re)vision of the neoagrarian geographical imaginary, yet stops short of confrontation of the interinfluence of multiple, coeval social natural trajectories (re)territorializing the material realities of *regional and local traditions, communities, habitats, and other organisms* in the first instance; and/ or *social natural* trajectories, including those of the body, (re)territorializing what “food” is in the first instance. Instead of *going back to the land*, Wirzba merely substitutes *going back* with *gardening*, *the land* with a *vacant lot* in Detroit, Michigan. To reiterate, such local/ist projects are vitally important in many, though qualified, ways throughout the US today. The point here about the geographical underpinnings of new agrarian treatise and representation is that social natural global monsters *will continue to proliferate* while yet more consumers compassionately disengage from them. Can participation in a communal garden (re)territorialize

an assemblage of best practices for (over)producing the commodity corn which, in most food deserts, both necessitates the communal garden in the first place; and inculcates the “food products” which will be more widely purchased by the imagined beneficiaries of the communal garden? What is meant by “region” here: sub-state, county-by-county? Most inexplicably, what is the time-line of this compassionate revolution? These are the questions of my relational geography project, which from the Introduction has been aimed not at *denouncing* local/ist projects and/or representations, but rather at challenging their geographies; at seeking the most open and outwardlooking democratic representation of US agricultural tools and discourse available and not yet dreamed of today. What happens to/ with/in conventional-industrial agriculture, and the unnamed, unrepresented quasi-objects of, e.g., commodity corn—which will continue to proliferate just outside of this particular imaginary?

The way I see it, when Wirzba argues that such *regional networks* (re)create “food” which can be *celebrated* as an at once *natural, social, cultural, and spiritual product*, he does not intend an understanding of “food” beyond very particular(ized) “food” actualized most readily by as particular(ized) producer and consumer embodied action in local/ist efforts—even if these are oriented more clearly to particular enclaves of the center. And this last becomes less a matter of the worth of the projects than of clarity and/ or kind of geographical imaginary and representation presented. Actually, *most* “food products” and “consumption” strategies widely available today would fail to fall within the parameters of Wirzba’s greatly expanded, nevertheless highly reified, regional-local/ist network boundaries. When all is said and done, Wirzba’s attentive (re)working of the prophet’s geographical imaginary perhaps *more strictly* challenges us to account for every single embodied act of meeting our most basic needs, just as in Berry’s world(view) of every single act of eating as well as every single act of sexual

intercourse, with an overwhelmingly particular delimitation of natural, social, cultural, and spiritual significations of the new agrarian *true picture of Reality*—the *Berry Prophecy Reality*—where just about any *other* senses or *embodied* significances of all public and private actions, strategies or *moments* of food, sex or and everything else in between are categorically alienated, abstract, ignorant, unnatural, or, at their worst, *uncompassionate consumerism*.

Moving Toward the Cornotological Limen

In various geographies overviewed here, the *ocularcentrism* of the Berry *world(view)-as-exhibition* can noninnocently offer a false *hope*, a seductive promise for health if spatially bound to his well preserved margin, represented as the *only true picture* of US agriculture realities today. By contrast, the works seeking to dissipate the fuddle and the fog; to end this endless material-discursive food war challenge such geographical dualisms of modernity to, in effect thus, (re)vision how we imagine, *see*, and represent US agriculture. Said writings live and breathe most closely to the *limen*, and like this more critically play with the imaginaries of either side of the continuum; and move the project toward (re)c/si(gh)ting quasi-agrarianism.

With/in the *Toward the Cornotological Limen*, I would first (re)position, with qualification, the prolific and award-winning environmental reporter, journalist, author and editor Richard Manning's (2004) book, *Against the Grain: How Agriculture Has Hijacked Civilization*. It is one of the most engaging, controversial and well-researched books presented up to this point—the closest to the truly exemplary works of the *in-between*. Manning's book takes on many of the latter Wirzban (2003) themes, like embodied actions and significances of meeting our most basic private (sex/uality) and public (food consumption) human needs, though in a *longer* network of contemporary conventional-industrial agriculture—a *strikingly* different (re)vision than that of the *new agrarianism* more generally.

Still, Manning's work is far *trickier* to emplace with/in the *limen* given, one, Manning's more or less Hansonian toned disenchantment with any reform coming from political systems; and, two, his ultimate advocacy for the most radical of the radical places: embodied performances of vengery, meaning, hunting for good food and good sex. Still, I place Manning's book nearest the breathing and changing *in-between* because his work provisions vitally important thinking on the translations associated either extreme pole, be those of structure and agency, theory and reality, *the world and the text, the body and the machine*... His work can enlighten of the kind of imaginary necessary for (re)c/si(gh)ting a more accountable, confrontational, material-discursive quasi-agrarian representation.

Most likely written on his own front porch in rural Montana, *Against the Grain* is at once a highly readable, captivating, controversial, provocative, prodigiously researched and scholarly (re)vision of agricultural and evolutionary history; and personal memoir of food and *love*. Manning beautifully interweaves his embodied experience of nature, food and sexuality through a highly interdisciplinary set of scholarly and more popular influences, including works of anthropologists, biologists, archaeologists and philosophers, to explore how all humans and nonhumans have become corrupted with the advent of agricultural practice—even in terms of the processes of building civilizations from the first instance, to mean then actually ten thousand some years ago when began the endless trading of “a large measure of our sensual lives for the bit of security that comes with agriculture” (p. 8). This last is how Manning sees humanities to have grown *against the grain*; how we now must move forward *against the other grain*, i.e., commodity corn surplus. Altogether, many of Manning's *Jared Diamond*-esque insights here remain the topics of contentious academic debates. Still, the author's objective to more fully engage with the utter complexity of the *real* beginnings of the US conventional-industrial

paradigm, and the implications those have had for all humans and nonhumans ever since, indicates a complex *social natural* entanglement to be more fully articulated in his book..

So, what truly emplaces Manning's work nearest the *liminal* place is his resistance to reducing everything about conventional-industrial agriculture to a terrifying *Global Tyranny Space* of little to no differentiation through space-time. For instance, Manning carefully addresses contemporary agribusinesses' "laundry-list of misdeeds" (p. 146) so as to *not* bolster or encourage the kind of complacency which can result from making various forces a "lightening rod" (p. 147) for critique. Manning argues, instead, that there are many forces since the dawning of agriculture which could be critiqued to understand US foodways today. Simply rendering homogenous and terrifying the conventional-industrial agricultural paradigm fails to account for how such denouncements, in a much longer network, have also worked to, for example, (re)create both food and sex/uality as elitist hierarchies used by the more privileged to deny the hope and health of either to vast amounts of people. Actually, given that sex/uality is a more private act, today more public food practices can function like a surveillance system of what is and shall be better and more healthy (p. 149-161). Manning never denies the highly varied symbolism of food and sex the world over through time, but instead seeks to discourse how these basic human needs can become surveillance technologies (p. 155), esp., when certain public food performances can be wielded to distinguish some groups from the barbarism constructed of other food performances; how food can relegate people to one side or the other of the material-discursive food wars divide. There is no denying with Manning the power-knowledge of agri-cultural paradigms to (re)produce foods that can be used to define, discriminate, alienate and enjoin individuals with every public order of an *Extra Value Meal*

versus the announcement at an academic workshop luncheon of “vegetarian lasagna... for anyone with a conscience” (p. 159)

In its marked differentiation from other neoagrarians of the continuum, Manning’s book can work to explicate how the GE commodity corn cropping paradigm, fueling fast-food, is *also* intrainfluential of space-time trajectories which base and shape all Americans’ performances through the world, whether in a new agrarian revolution choosing foods *against* them; or in the coerced diet of innumerable Americans who in many ways *must* choose them. The latter assemblage cannot be confronted by retreating from certain, undesirable trajectories into different, and socially differentiating, food choices. Therefore, confronting (GE) commodity corn monsters does not portend that we encourage and continue conventional-industrial foodways as they unfold today. It means that in every selection of vegetarian lasagna we also have the conscience that that moment of selection is simultaneously implicative of, and proliferates, other social natural monsters which our own relatively privileged food choices will only *continue to* proliferate *if* the trajectories of that new agrarian lasagna-and-soy-latte moment becomes the *only* conclusion, discriminating of all other longer to more *Global Tyranny* trajectories, like biotechnoscience, reduced to agribusiness... We embody and thus perform social natural places which *always already* entail commodity corn.

This last is also the precise point at which Manning’s work, moreover recommendations, becomes its most *tricky* in orientation to the *Berry Prophecy Project* continuum. Meaning, in terms of recommendations, Manning remains unsure of what to *call* a highly different system he has in mind, but he is quite certain of the artillery that should be deployed against *Global Tyranny Space*: “*sensuality... our weapon in this is sensuality*” (*my emphasis*; p. 202).

Sensuality should be deployed with/in *Berry Prophecy Place*... though ever with Manning's far more radical twists. Alas, this is where Manning somewhat *goes Berry*.

Manning's examples of new sensuous foodways focuses less on *organics per se*, since his book critiques agriculture *en masse* and takes to task the significations and meanings which can be drawn from such alternative practices and selections... whilst never discounting organic practices as a vital part of myriad of necessary tools: "*Organic agriculture is a necessary step, but it is not sufficient*, at least as it stands; a *fundamental redesign* is required" (*my emphasis*; p. 198; 200). The same could be said of the local/ist projects. Essentially, Manning argues, *these are all important tools*, but we are thinking about organic agri-culture, and local/ist projects, in the wrong way. How Manning looks at such organic projects is in terms of the embodied, sensual experiences of hunter-gatherer experiences which can be (re)enlivened with/in American foodways today—moreover, through the food hunt inspired by farmers' markets and local/ist CSAs. He demands that the weapon of sensuality is (re)locatable in freshness, which means, above all, local/ist foods (p. 199)—food that is alive, ripe, delicious and slow. The hunter-gatherer sensuality is key here, a sensuality of ten thousand years, (re)awakened upon every encounter with such diverse freshness, in a slower manner of walking and talking through a farmers' market, or the fields of perennial polyculture (p. 201)... Food, along with sex, "connects out species to the future... nutrition and reproduction. These drives are our essence" (p. 202). All told, Manning wants us to be *unsure* of the immediate future, which is to say, to let go of all forms of agri-cultural food security that have (re)created nothing but a *food insecurity* that retards our ability to hunt, literally and figuratively. In Manning, the "hunt for food and sex" (p. 202) must be released from the dehumanization and *taming* of all agricultural models and implicit agrarianism(s), or values of agricultural activities, and (re)awaken "pathways of primal

signals” (p. 202). This last takes us to the next level of *Berry Prophecy Place*: ventry; the art of hunting-and-gathering; the art of *slow food*. *Against the Grain* is an important book, but hunting and gathering at the local farmers’ market, or in the woodlot, might not be the most feasible, or accessible, *quasi-agrarian* (re)vision, or representation, after all.

If the future resides in such places whose embodied knowledges might more fully *base* our food practices through the world, all we are offered in material reality by Manning is, and again, farmers’ markets and CSAs. Wirzba’s regional network tunnel, though greatly exploded and (re)considered in Manning’s imperative work of embodiment and performance, still serves to (re)connect places of ventry—the gratification of the hunt, both for food and sexual desire—with urban and otherwise local/ist projects, failing thus to fully address what is meant to happen with the material (GE) commodity corn paradigm he otherwise so fully confronts. Manning usefully reminds *Toward Cornotology* that the coeval world of material agricultural practices must never be tamed by even the most promising texts purporting that we should politically and otherwise subvert agriculture without politics... rather, with sensual, embodied hunts for good food and good sex—the logical conclusion that lacks full accountability when it comes to conventional-industrial commodity corn (re)production elsewhere.

And this is precisely where Manning takes many like-minded critics. Midgett (2009) praises the revisionary history of *Against the Grain*, specifically its engagement with the challenges of anthropological investigation of agriculture, and even its conclusions which might be disturbing to many readers, but feels “obliged” (p. 5) from his engagement with Manning to elaborate on how badly necessitated, even by his own excellent work, are recommendations for the US conventional-industrial (GE) commodity corn production paradigm in Iowa, whence Midgett writes. Ethanol production in the years following Manning’s work have spiked,

(re)creating an impossible situation for commodity corn growers in terms of the land, resources, fossil fuels and so forth needed to meet demand. Unsustainable acreages, inflated prices on a global scale, implausibility for meeting fossil-fuel needs, and the precarious investments of rural communities with/in this constellation comprise a list of likewise “disturbing considerations” (p. 6) that continue to necessitate material solutions which Manning’s work cannot provide.

What can be drawn from Manning toward (re)c/si(gh)ting material recommendations is a necessary addendum to the new agrarianism: embodied performance of place, *basing* all material-discursive, text and worldly performances throughout the *Berry Prophecy Project* continuum, i.e., outwardlookingness. We must never retreat from or into either absolutist extreme. More or less from with/in the *limen*, Manning’s book is always *vis-à-vis* the binary essences of the continuum... His work is *so* engaged with sensuality as to not ignore, or deny, (GE) commodity corn monsters, but likewise seeks to confront them with only, and again, the weapon of sensuality. This last weaponry is imperative for assembling the material-discursive food wars; and most certainly moves the closest to the *liminal in-between*. But sensuality alone will never be the most adequate power-knowledge and/or representation of US agriculture given that sensuality is too often forwarded by the *new agrarians* as a *place-bound* maneuver to *know by seeing natural* foods.

Sensuality recombinant of a fuller quasi-object assemblage of best agri-cultural practices from both sides of the food wars; and best new agrarianism from both sides of the continuum would, together, complement other works with/in the *limen*. Take for instance James McWilliams’ (2009) fully *liminal* work, *Just Food: Where Locavores Get It Wrong and How We Can Truly Eat Responsibly*. His personal and scholarly account, if *throwntogether* with

Manning's proposals could explode possibilities for quasi-agrarian (re)vision, imaginary and representation.

Ostensibly, McWilliams investigates whether organics, particularly organic community-supported projects, are the only viable sustainable alternatives to conventional agriculture; or are indeed *the future of food*. Interestingly, McWilliams was once a self-proclaimed resister of all-things conventional-industrial food and GE. However, his also personal-professional food writing enlightens that what began as supportive turned rather suspicious, and inquisitive, about where organic material practices and their attendant mentalities and ethics will take us if they remain closed to conventional-aligned biotechnoscience; and what could be afforded by unconsidered alternatives to date, namely restriction of meat-based protein intake with concurrent amplification in *aquaculture*.

McWilliams first usefully overviews how *rational* discussion about a now fiercely divided US agricultural paradigm, and the future of undeniably interconnected global food systems, seems to have gotten lost in various organic related rhetorics of *retreating back into a simpler time*, or into what McWilliams calls, the mythical *Golden Age* of agriculture.

McWilliams rightly names the popularity of lamenting conventional agri-culture and foraging for alternatives, a social movement—going as far to call it a locavore revolution (p. 2). He forwards, like Manning, that more or less *sensual* politics of organic consumption are as much Berrian *agricultural acts* set against industrial agricultural as they can work in differing behaviors to invest “a symbol for a certain kind of identity” into food (p. 215), thereby futzing material-discursive food wars with lifestyle philosophies and GE panic in lieu of directly speaking to many looming questions about whether the most plausible future of food around the globe is *only* locatable in small, local organic harvest-through-consumption paradigms (p. 6-10). McWilliams

contends that, “Small/ sustainable/ organic models are *just one general answer among many others* to the failures of the world’s food systems” (*my emphasis*; p. 80).

What McWilliams sees as the most significant driver of the locavore revolution, that drives his subsequent analyses (p. 17), is *food miles*, i.e., *a conflation of social relations with spatial relations*. Examining the food miles ideology and ethic in full gets McWilliams to thinking about many of the philo-political precepts of what he sees as the otherwise consecrated, at least off-limits, fields of organic agriculture. And without flip-flopping, as it were, though still radical to some, McWilliams stylishly proposes that one indeed can support organics and other manifestations of even local agri-cultural (re)visions without accepting the *100-mile*, so to speak, limitations of many agrarian dreams; without rejecting the more positive attributes of conventional-industrial agriculture. Accordingly, from an extended critique of limited food miles formulations, McWilliams challenges the global-local demarcations of conventional-organic, respectively, and recommends that the salient utilization of food networks is more ecologically friendly than limiting food consumption to only locally delimited organics (p. 17-52).

Relatively, he also counterpoises what he calls organics’ “inflated claims” (p. 79), namely via the *Rodale Institute* and others, that solely organic agriculture can set straight the path to future sustainability. The potentialities of GE for also reducing pesticides and tillage while still increasing yields, what is far more than currently possible with organic methods alone, are entirely discounted in such claims as *dangerous*. Finally, the foregoing cited limitations of organics *without* assemblage with conventional-industrial methods, like GE, McWilliams finds are profoundly exacerbated the further the most radical locavores move outside of their *gated communities*. Which is to say, radical neoagrarian food activist rejection of biotechnology has

not had the best interests of other agri-cultures, like of African agri-culture, in mind (p. 112)—as the author describes it, instead placing “first-world ideology ahead of third-world reality” (p. 112). A number of organics’ ethics of ethical eating, or more singular food ideologies McWilliams argues are too frequently romantic, in the case of GE politics become even “elitist solipsism” when confronting a far more global age of biology, population increase, often limited postcolonial farming practices, and so forth (p. 116).

The real *meat* of McWilliams’ argument, however, in some ways speaks to Manning’s venery arguments. If Manning thinks we should only eat what we *hunt*, then McWilliams thinks part of the solution, like to the CAFO system backboned by surplus (GE) commodity corn production, might comparably lie in limiting our meat consumption to aquacultures. McWilliams inquires: since meat-based protein demand is only rising with increases in world population and income levels, what would the world—air, water, and landscapes—*look like* if all CAFO meat production was shifted into free-range and grass-fed agri-culture? His main point is that a better pattern of future food production could be “to use the best tools we have” (p. 222) to both develop *the local* inasmuch as we (re)vision the global. That looks like midsize agricultural operations, regionally integrated, but definitely biotechnologically advanced (though harnessed in a different way than by the current mode). And, it should mean that we all eat less meat, and further utilize the latest biotechnoscience—and well beyond a focus on only program crops like corn and soybeans—to create sustainable aquaculture ecosystems. Taken together these initiatives would better achieve *just food*, to mean, instead of (e.g., a Michael Pollan-esque argument) *it’s nothing more than food*, “‘just food,’ as in food we can rightly associate with the justice of sustainability” (*original emphasis*; p. 214). If such material-discursive practices could

be (re)enjoined with Manning's weapon of sensuality, the assemblage can work to release us from the new agrarian imaginary that inhibits full accountability for social naturalness.

A quasi-agrarian ethics of ethical eating, of Manning's embodied sensual performances throwntogether in the *liminal in-between* with McWilliams' confrontation, finds cyborgs, monsters, social natural *life as it is really lived*: so-named and represented quasi-objects of irradiation, global climate change, *e. coli*, *in vitro* meat, international trade policies, fibers, synthetics and sequins, *Smartphones*, molecular genetics, regulatory structures, *plink slime*, vaccines, genomics, vitamins, patents and (GE) commodity corn—all as social natural as conventional-industrial practices and organics; as local/ist projects and biotechnoscience, (re)combined in more open, democratic representation of US agriculture. If Manning's sensuality steering a more eco-subjective human performance meets McWilliams' (re)consideration of (GE) commodity corn and perma-aquaculture, we can (re)imagine the social natural world as outwardlooking and becoming as the cyborg monsters we are *always already* becoming...

Lockie and Kitto (2000) contend that the strongest critiques of the more conventional, and problematic, approaches to agri-food studies, “point towards a greater need to consider the symbolic economy of food; the complex and relational nature of power as it is extended through social networks... and the centrality of non-humans to those networks” (p. 16). Applying Latour, the authors argue that there can be no *local place* or *local food* somehow free of longer trajectories. Such relational perspectives of agri-culture as an interinfluential, human and nonhuman assemblage dissolved of dualisms appear “to offer a great deal to agri-food research. Not only would it assist in the understanding of how globalization processes are created through situated human action, but it would help also to account for the organic content of food and the

biological bases of the agricultural labour process in a conceptually coherent manner” (Lockie & Kitto, 2000, p. 6). Such approaches also engender a more open representation that can inspire *unruly and practical conversations* about why biotechnoscience has been welded the conventional-industrial side too often discounted in the binarism of global-local; and how many biotechnoscientific techniques, namely GE, when (re)contextualized in such (re)visions and representations, could be more equitably evaluated as yet another agricultural technique among many others *which could*, ever mindful of all necessary research and regulation, actualize better a fuller accountability for all assembled, eco-subjective (non)humans.

Really, what we find, then, is a more outwardlooking representation of *assemblage* of the best social and natural, material and discursive, agri-cultural practices available and not yet conceived of today—where the recent work of Pamela Ronald and Raoul Adamchak (2008), entitled, *Tomorrow’s Table: Organic Farming, Genetics and the Future of Food*, lives and breathes. The authors specifically *name* the agricultural divide problem and its associations for a wider audience. Accordingly, *Tomorrow’s Table* is a scholarly-experiential investigation of the views of critics, regulators, farmers and scientists as well as consumers and personal reflection (not to mention inclusion of preferred recipes) to better determine the ways in which a truly more sustainable future food production is possible through the “judicious incorporation of... genetic engineering and organic agriculture” (p. xi). In lieu of rivaling the agricultures against each other, or definitively decrying one in its entirety while glorifying absolutely the whole of the other, the couple’s neighborly suggestion for a dinner menu turned accessible handbook for an array of regular consumers, potential growers and even food scholars—complete with a textbook style *glossary of terms*—instead dexterously presents the conventional and organic as no less than “two important strands of agriculture” (p. xi) that have been fallaciously segregated as

irreconcilable opposites when they are as interwoven as all of our interests in real, local and global, ecologically sound and ethical, food security.

To draw in and hold the attention of such a broad spectrum of eaters, farmers and scholars, Ronald's work with GE, for instance, is clearly organized around questions of not only general science based knowledges, but common fears associated with those knowledges throughout American culture—concerns shared across diverse readership, like: *Is GE appropriate to use on our food?* (p. 56), or, *Who can we trust?* (p. 81-84), and, *Is GE food risky to eat* (p. 85-104)? Among student instructions for *isolating DNA from organic strawberries* (p. 47-48), and recipes for *Spicy Eggplant* (p. 68) and *Cornbread* (p. 79) with both GE and organic based ingredients, Ronald illuminates how innovations have always faced skepticism and rejection. She rightly proposes that innovations which most greatly deviate from established norms, and/ or are seen as unnatural practices (p. 57), tend to be the propositions swarmed and even halted with the greatest suspicion and controversy... just like GE, obviously, and even more particularly as it is applied within foodways. She provides a bit of fresh air for some of the deepest anxieties of the material-discursive food wars, writing,

In the end, we can only gather the most accurate information from reliable sources and make the best choices possible. I know that GE crops currently on the market are *no more risky to eat than the rest of the food in our refrigerator*. And the *same* technology has a significant potential for *saving children's lives*, whether through reduced exposure to pesticides or *increased nutrients* in their diet. (*my emphasis*; p. 102)

Respective of those saved children, Ronald contends they can thank the highly controversial nutrient rich GE rice (whose loudest naysayer is ecofeminist seed activist, Vandana Shiva—an

expert of new agrarian documentaries). Ronald sees GE rice as one of the strongest examples of how to communally interweave orthodox plant breeding—truly ancient processes—with modern genetic techniques to crack New(er) World food puzzles. And as it stands, GE rice has effectively countered deleterious food insecurities far from home, ex. in China, India and the Philippines (p. 3-10). Blending space-times—ancient practice and contemporary food production—leads well into Adamchak’s interwoven, experiential-professional positions on organic farming, past and present (p.13-42), as well as organic seed saving politics in light of gene property rights, regulation, and patents (p. 127-136).

These are just a few examples of how Ronald and Adamchak join together to *join in* the controversy (and name social natural quasi-objects) in lieu of enjoining or avoiding it. They advocate for GE, its pan efficacious and safe deployment through organic methods, i.e., *genetically engineered, organically grown* (p. 155-168); as well as how emphasize that the growing population seated at *today’s table* contextualized by widespread ecological destruction is in/we are all in dire need of “*collective help and all appropriate tools*” (*my emphasis*; p. 167). *Tomorrow’s Table* is nothing if not outwardlooking—a truly forward-looking open story that serves up the issues only *so-far* as to leave the future open to (re)vision. And, *Tomorrow’s Table* could not be timelier given the birth of the world’s seven billionth human on October, 31,

2011.¹⁰⁰ ... Granted that at the time of publication the total population was *only* 6.7, this context

¹⁰⁰ The rate of population change by *billions* took over a century after the first billion was reached, but from then on and through the twenty-first century, there would be a billion more in less than fifteen years and so forth until 2011, when one billion more came just 13 years after the six billion mark (Gomez & Sullivan, 2011). Of course increased life expectancy, infant mortality rates, rising standards of living and access to birth control are all the complex factors among others that both contribute to the global birthrate as well as complicate trying to predict it... Regardless, today there are seven billion human travelers on planet earth, 1.34 billion of whom live in China, the world’s most populated country; with India running at a close second with 1.17 billion in total population to date. Some have noted that the seven billionth birth also

seems to have vitalized the couple's (re)vision of agri-culture, quite evident in their opening question: "What is the best way to produce enough food to feed all these people" (Ronald & Adamchak, p. ix)? Now, population scares have often been wielded to justify all sorts of extravagant claims and initiatives. Their work proceeds from there nonetheless, but with an ever pertinent caution extrapolated from those numbers—though one far removed from the *morose* true-myths of Malthus and the *Green Revolution*, or Ehrlich's *doomsday*—being, "if we continue with current farming practices, vast amounts of wilderness will be lost, millions of birds and billions of insects will die, farm workers will be at increased risk for disease, and the public will lose billions of dollars as a consequence of environmental degradation" (p. ix).¹⁰¹ The authors argue that although there exists such great potentialities for GE to finally address the common charges of the tragedies and crises of conventional agriculture while moving toward a "more ecological way of farming" (p. ix)—really for *feeding all these people*—resistance to using the best tools has come mostly from those supposedly most concerned with social justice (p. x).

Furthermore, the authors condemn how organics have taken USDA delimitation to mean a total rejection of GE processes and products—to mean *just more* of the same risky, unnatural and unsafe methods and products of conventional agriculture—and in turn have effectively drown out the possibility for the "judicious incorporation" of both agricultures (p. xi). It is

symbolizes a demographic shift into slower population growth, while others have predicted that the eighth billionth person in the world might arrive as soon as 2025.

¹⁰¹ Implied here are also the billions of dollars the public will lose on healthcare related to the more social dimensions of environmental degradation, i.e., the toxic environment interconnected with obesity and Type-2 diabetes and their related conditions, the increases of which have temporal connections with (GE) commodity corn production. The high rates of these last, predominantly seen in the US, have not surprisingly found their way through the seven billion crowding the globe... This last insight—of morbidity and mortality, disease pathology, both domestically and abroad, as tied to US agri-cultures—is incredibly complex.

noteworthy that rejection intensifies regardless of the authors' clearly outlined criteria for the agricultures' incorporation. Meaning, the criteria draws upon scholarly research, USDA and *Nutrition Service* recommendations for effective agricultural practices, and the writers' own experiences *in the field*. As follows, the authors propose their own Berry-esque list for innovations, only writing instead that any technology or farming practice that is able to effectively, "produce abundant, safe and nutritious food; reduce harmful environmental inputs; provide healthful conditions for farm workers; protect the genetic make-up of native species; enhance crop genetic diversity; foster soil fertility; improve the lives of the poor and malnourished; [and] maintain the economic viability of farmers and rural communities" (p. xi-xii) is acceptable practice, which is to say has met their criteria. That's a tall order for agricultures, either conventional-industrial or organic, as they work now. Only the recombinant strengths of *both* could actualize the authors' (re)vision and representation of a more ecological agriculture contextualized by unprecedented population and related concerns... but at the same time goes well beyond that well-worn hypothesis. As it stands, many see this selfsame call for judicious food continues to mean nothing more than *just* food wars.

Tomorrow's Table is nothing if not *outwardlooking*—a movement toward *quasi-agrarianism*. We must excite a *unruly and practical* kind of imaginary, (re)vision, representation—a *conversation* about *the only true picture of Reality* (over a slice of GE cake in the *liminal in-between*); about agri-cultures otherwise abstracted in the imaginary and material realities of food wars. In Ronald's words:

There seems to be a communication gap between organic and conventional farmers, as well as between consumers and scientists. It is time to close that gap. Dialogue is needed if we are to advance along the road to an

ecologically balanced, biologically based system of farming. *Science and good farming alone will not be sufficient to provide food security to the health, or to the poor and malnourished, or to solve all of our current ecological woes.*

Government stability, as well as governmental policies, plays a large role in ensuring food security. Without science and good farming, however, we cannot even begin to dream about maintaining such a secure future. *GE is not a panacea for poverty, any more than conventional breeding is organic practices are, yet it is a valuable tool that farmers can use to address real agricultural problems...*

Like any tool, GE can be manipulated by a host of social, economic, and political forces to generate positive or negative social results.

The question is not whether we should use GE, but more pressingly, how we should use it—to what responsible purpose. Consumers have a significant opportunity to influence what kinds of plants are developed... Let us direct our attention to where it matters—the need to support farming methods that good for the environment and for the consumers. Rather than focusing on the unforeseen consequences of combining *Prunus domesticus*... with snippets of edible virus, I prefer to ‘celebrate the triumph of human ingenuity’ that will allow me to bring Aunt Lissy’s plum cake to our table. (*my emphasis*; p. 166-167)

Unfortunately, Michael Specter (2010), whose book was motivated in part by Ronald and Adamchak’s work, has noted that the couple’s personal-professional project remains a “brilliant, though perhaps futile, attempt to reconcile the warring sides” (2010, p. 130). Actually, in a recent article concerning the conditions as presented here, further related to Ronald and Adamchak’s efforts specifically, McWilliams told the *New York Times* that he sees the couple as

“looking into a tidal wave of opposition... fighting an immense uphill battle... I cannot think of another issue that really sets the organic lobby [so] on edge. ... Their attempt to blend organic agriculture with genetic engineering is really quite *visionary*” (*my emphasis*; in Voosen, 2010). To such simultaneously glowing commendation and dull confutation, Ronald has responded that she is quite *disappointed* that the “larger organic community has not responded like her husband” (Voosen) to their work, specifically her take on GE as *blended* with her partner’s organics-oriented perspective of agriculture. As she sees it, “There’s no incentive for the organic community to read it... The [organic] marketing is going really well now, and the public has a certain idea. They *falsely believe that sustainable means organic* and *falsely believe GE seed falls outside this*” (*my emphasis*; in Voosen). Even Adamchak cannot deny her description of his *camp*, concurring that the most outspoken opponents to GE are indeed factions of the organic movement, who, though relatively small in number, nonetheless in recent years have come to constitute a highly “influential... part of the US farm system” (in Voosen).

What seems *far more* likely at present is that the Berry world(view)-as-exhibition, his new agrarianism, and the new neoagrarianism imaginary of the *prophet’s prophet*, Michael Pollan, will more likely accelerate material-discursive food wars; and, in turn, without the fullest representation or name, the proliferation of (GE) commodity corn monsters.

No war is *wholy*.¹⁰²

¹⁰² This phrase, adapted to the current project’s focus on agri-cultures and food, originally comes from the book (2001) and Jacoby’s documentary film (2007) of the same name, *Constantine’s Sword*, written by and starring, respectively, James Carroll.

CHAPTER SIX

The *New New Agrarian Dilemma* for the *Omnivore*:

Michael Pollan... and Then in a Documentary

Laws, like sausages, cease to inspire respect in proportion as we know how they are made. (John Godfrey Saxe, 1869)

An imaginary, vision for, and representation of, assemblage, will have to *hope* and *wait* it seems—at least for now. For just upon exploring the works which I locate nearest the *in-between* place of the *Berry Prophecy Project* continuum, the *unofficial farmer-in-chief* of the *locavore revolution*, Michael Pollan, contributes yet more writings and even more consultation on documentary films which most seductively take us to the depths of both sides of the *Berry Prophecy Project* continuum. Michael Pollan's countless contributions toss-and-turn nearest the *Toward the Cornotological Limen*. However, his works holds an especial position in the *Berry Prophecy Project* not only for their high currency in popular US food talk today, but for their particular detailing of American commodity (GE) *cornscapes*. Altogether, Pollan's popular imaginary and important scholarship can be (re)positioned alongside many other works nearest and within the *in-between*... albeit not without some *significant* points of contention—the overarching objective of this Chapter. As follows, Chapter Six briefly (re)presents Pollan's *cornography*¹⁰³ to argue that his promising, scholarly and popular researches, at least by their

¹⁰³ The origins of the term, *cornography*, are unclear. At one point, I even thought *I* had invented it... And, of course, even Michael Pollan (2008) himself has used it in reference to writing about corn (p. 205). However, just *Google* “cornography” to find that the phrase mostly references sexual acts with corn-on-the-cob; or, sexual arousal achieved by looking at photos of butter melting on corn-on-the cob. Regardless of its origins, the phrase will be deployed to delimit *particular* research of commodity corn; and *particular* descriptions of its *sexuality*...

conclusions, usually become powerful Berrian imaginaries—limitations more comparable to the *Berry Prophecy Project* than a more *accountable* cadence of twenty-first century agri-monsters so-called and left in *Global Tyranny Space*.

Pollan's *corn stories* (e.g., 2006) require especial attention in light of not only the spectrum of new agrarians since Wendell Berry, but also in terms of their profound influence on other popular neoagrarian representation to date: documentary films. I briefly examine how Pollan's particular imaginary of foodways, and particularly of (GE) commodity corn, has greatly shaped the *new new* agrarian documentary. As a case in point, I overview popular documentary film theory to provide a reading of the documentary *King Corn* (2007), to which Pollan lends his works, voice and countenance. Like this, I explore the new agrarian documentary representation in terms spectatorships and performances, which I further delineate through a construction called the *GE Corn Effect*. Thereby I propose how quasi-agrarian documentary film readings could continue well beyond the current project to. Likewise analysis of new agrarian documentary films could more fully engage the *material* impacts of such imaginaries, which I briefly suggest in a short analysis of US GE food labeling as well.

The *Quasi-Agrarianivore's* Dilemma: Corn Sex

How did we move from *scandalous ignorance* of a plant to the supposed *common knowledge* that that same, particularly conventional-industrial (GE) commodity corn plant is driving transnational capitalist agricultural destruction all over the world? Without question, the seminal contributor to *King Corn's* twenty-first century *celebrity* as *food and commodity*, part and parcel of the end of civilization via a conventional-industrial agriculture run rampant is undoubtedly prolific, award-winning, best-selling journalist, author and professor, US corn journalist extraordinaire and omnivore icon, Michael Pollan. To be sure, no one along the *Berry*

Prophecy Project continuum can weave a seductive corn yarn like Michael Pollan. He has been called one of the most groundbreaking, fascinating, original and elegant writers of our agricultural crisis today—comments which work to (re)position him as just one step away from Wendell Berry, the writer to which he pays homage for inspiring his many contributions. In fact, Pollan has proclaimed that most, if not all, of his work has been *prefigured* by Wendell Berry, and for that, he is deeply *humbled* (in Francis, 2011, p. 103). To wit, Pollan claims in his guest *Introduction* to one of Berry's (2009) more recent (re)collections, *Bringing It To The Table: On Farming and Food*, that the works of Wendell Berry helped him solve what he calls the *Thoreauian* problematic of the environmental movement, being that instead of leaving nature 'out there,' we all must figure out how to work with/in it 'here,' rather, that "we are all implicated in farming" (p. xiv). Pollan (2006) goes so far as to proclaim that the work of Wendell Berry/ "Wendell Berry" is comparably influential to Sir Albert Howard (p. 145; 220; 254; 259).

Given all of the foregoing detail, the work of Michael Pollan, as in, *In Defense of Food: An Eater's Manifesto* (2008); and, *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals* (2006) could be rather easily emplaced along the *Berry Prophecy Project* continuum, more or less near the *most* complexly located works of Norman Wirzba (2003); and with/in conversation with the as well-researched, (re)considered and at once sensually cogent contribution of Richard Manning (2004). Namely, Pollan's works, like *all* of the works I have considered along the continuum, are in no way dismissible outright. I would even argue that Pollan's contributions are, in many ways, exemplary of the *liminal in-between*. So much of his scholarship is a necessary indictment of conventional-industrial commodity cropping system, organics, the federal supply management system and US Farm Bill, general health and nutrition—critiques

which have all been directly drawn from at various c/si(gh)tes of *Toward Cornotology* so far. So what is crucial here in terms of drawing *particular* attention to Pollan's works is *the way he thinks about space*, moreover, *how* he names, and represents, the quasi-object, esp., commodity corn. His regularly useful and enlightening scholarship has *also* managed to quite seductively reify some as *particularly* dangerous representations of US conventional-industrial (GE) commodity corn and the ever attendant food wars—meaning, particularly dangerous quasi-object corn stories, imaginaries and representations that are, most pressingly, taking on a whole life, moreover inspiring a whole new continuum (mostly the form of documentaries) *all his own*. All in all, Pollan's generally creative and accessible indictments consistently become, by their close, a far more reverent collusion with the *world(view)-as-exhibition* of “Wendell Berry,” likewise impeding the full potentiality of a more accountable, social natural agric-culture assemblage for which his researches, representations and consultations can also cite and advocate.

Pollan's (2008) self-proclaimed *manifesto* has similar themes of Manning's (2004) *Against the Grain*, at least when it comes to plays of sensual and structural meanings of food and nutrition in the US today; and how embodied food experiences have been corrupted by the varietal forces of conventional-industrial *Global Tyranny Space*. Essentially, Pollan finds that, in lieu of dividing people by meanings of *food*, the so-called expert/ise and specializations of the food industry, or food science (“The Western Diet,” p. 83-136); nutrition science (“The Age of Nutritionism,” p. 19-82); and even food journalists have worked more generally to take-over the authority of what quality and quantity of food people should eat in the US today—really in the *Western diet* in general. Through the hookup of multiple and terrifying forces of biotechnoscience, the average diet has been reduced to component parts and quantities impossible to understand by average people, thereby making all *Western* humans, anyway,

anxious and confused, feeling more guilt and neurosis from our food experiences than sensual pleasures (p. 80). Essentially, *whole foods* have been dismantled nutrient-by-nutrient, additive-by-additive. Like this, most *Western* humans, anyway, have stopped eating leaves and began eating nothing but seeds, rather commodity crops and their innumerable processed products.

In an endless desert of (the real) natural foods where people feel nothing thus but empty from unnatural/ly compartmentalized and processed food (corn) components and products we *call* “food,” we also eat far too much of these parts of food, and never feel full or *whole*. This last point is what Pollan calls *the American paradox*: the more we talk and worry about food and nutrition, becoming even obsessed with supplements and dietary guidelines in some cases, the less healthy we become; or, the more we eat—the more food we have available to eat—the less secure we become in terms of health and real food *stores*, both nationally and with/in our individual bodies. We have moved *en masse* from food culture to food science, finding only that this food science is not science, but a industrial logics, an ideology (p. 80) of the industrial mind that endlessly attempts to enliven neurotic unhealthy bodies supplement-by-supplement, additive-by-additive, HFCS molecule-by-HFCS molecule—an industrial ideology of increasing food quantity instead of forwarding whole food quality.

Pollan therefore intends for his eater’s manifesto to *defend* food from the industrial mind, the food industry, nutrition science and food journalists. He proffers that his mantra to “Eat food. Not too much. And mostly plants” (p. 1) can restore the sensuality to the intellectuality of food. In the same vein of Manning, Pollan argues that such sensuality is enlivened through various local/ist projects, entailing “the resurgence of farmer’ markets, the rise of the organic movement, renaissance of local agriculture” (p. 14)—constantly situated by Pollan, and likened new agrarian writers, as already “*outside* of the conventional food system” (*my emphasis*; p. 14).

Reinforcing that our food choices have grave consequences for agriculture, culture, humans and nonhumans, Pollan laughs that it seems strange that he must publish a book telling people to “eat food” (p. 15), but immediately clarifies what exactly he means by “food” today. Given these various local/ist projects, though, we can “count ourselves fortunate that once again *real food* for us to eat” (*my emphasis*; p. 15). On the whole, Pollan argues that real food is that which has been (re)emplaced in a context from farm-to-fork. Real food and real food eaters, Pollan argues, are some of the only means and persons who can challenge industrial food logics.

As the book continues, real food becomes even more highly qualified, as does the professional/ism, expert/ise and food deconstruction practices of *Global Tyranny Space*. The manifesto transforms into a straightforward guidebook (comparable at times to the format and tone of Wendell Berry, Gene Logsdon and so forth) for *right living and right eating* real food replete with section headings of how we should, quite particularly, escape from the Western Diet (p. 137-182) and its forces of conventional-industrialization, dieticians and nutritionists and so forth. To escape, really retreat from conventional-industrial agriculture and its ideology of biotechnoscience, we must “regard nontraditional foods with skepticism” (p. 176). This last skepticism entails everything from refusing all processed food products that cannot rot given additives and other components of far too complicated labels, being anything containing HFCS; and really, refusing all foods making health claims. Furthermore, according to Pollen, we should refuse all food sold in the middle of the supermarkets, shop only in the aisles of its outside edges, and really just not go to the supermarket in the first instance. If we want to take the industrial mind and logics to task, and improve culture as well as agriculture—in the words of Berry, enact eating is an agriculture act—Pollan argues that with such skepticism we can vote with our food choices (p. 161), i.e., another, better, nonelectoral strategy of compassionate consumerism.

Skeptical voting via food means we should join a CSA, shop at farmers' markets (p. 158) or more generally eat like an *omnivore*, to mean, eat food that is organic and local/ist, has short commodity chains, and is, foremost, diverse and in season. Diverse, seasonal foods are leafier than seedy, just as grass-fed meat is leafier than commodity-corny. No meat should be purchased from CAFOs. Diverse, seasonal foods also includes wild foods, meaning as much grass-fed beef taken-down by Manning's venery, as wild mushrooms. Michael Pollan's rules for right living and right eating even tell us how much, when and where we should eat. For instance, he writes that we should eat real, full meals, preferably slow/ly, preferably from our own gardens, and preferably with people—never alone, neither at our desks nor roaming the snack aisles of gas stations. He summates that membership to the local/ist revolution, geographically situated throughout both the supermarket and community by the performances of eaters, and its retreat from *Global Tyranny Space*, makes the industrial mind and logics more accountable to... whom exactly?—*all* humans and nonhumans?

The manifesto's central contention that, "To reclaim this much control over one's food, to take it back from industry and science, is no small thing; indeed, in our time cooking from scratch and growing any of your own food *qualify as subversive acts*" (*my emphasis*; p. 200)—and really its geographical imaginary of the local/ist and supermarket overall—raises as many questions for me as it solidifies tenable responses to the social natural world he otherwise usefully discourses. I wonder, for instance, if the industrial mind and logics are made more accountable through these subversive acts to *Americans* and/ or all nonhumans or, more likely, to the new agrarian mind, veritably a new ideology (also, in that way, one lacking biotechnoscience), like a new surveillance, or disciplinary, system... Meaning, if, to Pollan here, food sciences like these are not sciences, and are, instead, ideology, what do we call a *retreat*

from biotechnoscience into the local/ist, new agrarian mind that seeks to police various stratagem for their subversiveness in the face of both industrial logics and the new agrarian eater's manifesto? Is not the new agrarianism simply *another*, perhaps better, ideology, of food science—the rules for right living and right eating, veritably the prophets' new prophet's dietary guidelines—which, all things considered, also has and wants nothing to do with *science* besides a very particular interpretation of it?

The central point here is that although Pollan goes to great lengths to illuminate a sociohistorical problem with food sciences, food buying and eating behaviors, his geographical imaginary and representation can work to supplant industrial logics with his own *eaters'* logics—much like, as shown prior, he argues that BIG organics can, at times, works to displace industrial systems whilst not entirely replacing them, and even drawing from then, for organization and so forth. Does the Pollan imaginary and representation *name* the conventional-industrial system and its quasi-objects to more democratically represent them, or to proffer a guidebook for denouncing and avoiding them? I contend it's decidedly the latter.

The indefatigable shuttling between extremes of the horizontality polarized by *Berry Prophecy Place* and *Global Tyranny Space* (re)disperses the new agrarian imaginary of food war, ever here through Pollan's imperative, well-researched and well-argued book about US health and food cultures. Pollan provides solid arguments and suggestions for how to eat and live better, how to eat and live more healthily—that is not the point to be dismantled here. My contention is that his representation proposes that we retreat into a *whole* place—a place of the *new agrarian true picture of Reality*—without confronting how unstable the *whole real thing* he has at once just named is still endlessly (re)made through the hook-up of multiple trajectories (re)producing such (im)pure, (un)natural and (un)familiar foods, places, bodies and

performances. If, in the Pollan imaginary, we are to move our bodies to particular places of the supermarket, for instance, where is the call for literal and performative *confrontation* of the monocultural conventional-industrial paradigm he otherwise so eloquently represents in the *other* parts of the supermarket where we shouldn't go (and where most of the general US population is shopping)? The latter is not the objective of the new agrarian mind intent on retreat, and this could not be clearer in Pollan's (2006) most popular/ized efforts to undoubtedly name and represent the quasi-object, but *not* toward its fuller representation. Rather, Pollan most successfully castigates and banishes (GE) commodity corn to the outer regions of *Global Tyranny Space* food-and-sex deviancy...

Michael Pollan "does" Wendell Berry better than anyone else on the *Berry Prophecy Project* continuum; probably better than Wendell Berry himself "does" *Wendell Berry* for the next generation of new agrarians, evident in innumerable writings and also food documentary framing and consultation. Today, Michael Pollan and his books can be seen as a popular/ized cult of new agrarian personality, being another new agrarian professional/ism and expertise preserved and purified of the (academic) center (and center of the center). In one of his most popular efforts (2006), Pollan successfully (re)visions conventional-industrial commodity corn cropping today to be so terrifying and irredeemable that his otherwise new agrarian pronouncements for the trialectical, local/ist mind of locavore revolution really do seem like the *only* viable option made available by local/ist projects today... Such erudite, accessible, engaged and engaging, multifaceted scholarship cannot be denied for its great force and influence. Nevertheless, Pollan's imaginary could be argued to be simultaneously as imperative for continually building confrontational assemblage as he ultimately makes crucial a quasi-agrarian

representation that can more democratically confront *both* conventional-industrial commodity corn cropping, and his particular representations of it.

The strongest case in point of the latter claims comes in a telling section about commodity corn appearing in Pollan's (2006) wildly popular book, *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*. In general, *The Omnivore's Dilemma* is at once a personal and professional journey through what he positions as the usefully trialectical, three major players of the US food system, rather, the "three food chains that sustain us today: the industrial, the organic, and the hunter gatherer" (p. 7) which will eventually explode into a *third-way out*. To accomplish this embodied and scholarly exposition toward, ultimately, synthesizing the latter three forces into a third-space of local/ist retreat, Pollan nevertheless proceeds on a complex journey through each of three segments comprising modern American foodways. His personal-professional method/ology [again in the vein of many writers appearing up to now, including Manning (2004); McWilliams (2009); and Ronald & Adamchak (2008)] encompasses his own material-discursive trek through food chains from the farm to the plate. He actually meets with farmers and sellers of both the conventional-industrial and organic systems, like Iowa family commodity corn farmer George Naylor, radical localist Joel Salatin of *Polyface Farms* (who features strongly in a Pollan consulted documentary feature to come) coordinate *McDonald's* and *Whole Foods*, respectively. He consults foraging experts for the hunter-gatherer chain, which finds Pollan walking in the woods [probably in a crouched stance that can be imagined of Manning's (2004) sensual daily hunt for food... and sex] with a loaded rifle, gathering fungi, and even attempting to make salt from salt ponds at the bottom of San Francisco bay all for his "extremely slow food feast" (original emphasis; p. 403). Actually, regardless of their mileage, all food chain paths lead to feasts whether purchased and/ or prepared that are, as in the description

of his eater's manifesto, always enjoyed at the dinner table with family and friends... Actually, *always* except for the first conventional-industrial chain: the conventional- industrial meal was finished in less than ten minutes in a moving car leaving *McDonald's*—another version of today's dinner table which Pollan ultimately uses to present his central point: conventional-industrial commodity corn driven food products and meals are not *really* “food” and meals. These last are more like *signifiers* of food that merely, *regrettably*, only *fills-up*, not satisfies, a consumer (p. 119).

Altogether, *today's table* is arguably the crux of Pollan's well-researched, well-written and quite original personal-professional investigation of when a rich American cultural history of *pleasure in food* and eating became, instead, “a national eating disorder” (p. 1-11). Pollan contends that primarily because of the modern conventional-industrial food chain that he finds arose with WWII, Americans have come to lose sight of *where food comes from*. He furthers that conventional-industrial food systems purposefully disconnect people from the pleasure of food in order to inundate them with cheap, processed food products that promise little pleasure besides merely feeling full... and not for long. In Pollan's estimation, Americans are seemingly easily alienated by the conventional-industrial processed products toted by supermarkets and fast-food, resulting in the contradictory twenty-first century obsession with healthy eating by “a notably unhealthy people” (p. 3). Applying Wendell Berry, Pollan thus contends that eating is not only an *agricultural act*, but an ecological, political, and cultural act as well; meaning that, while not exonerating *organics* in all its many forms, including the most extreme of hunting-gathering as some sort of cohesive or fully sustainable solution or alternative (p. 134-184)—even usefully taking BIG organics to task—Pollan nevertheless summates that *to eat industrially is to eat in ignorance* (p. 11). This last is the main point of the book, which Pollan garnered by

taking-up the incumbent rituals of these trialectical food chains: without “fast food there would be no need for slow food... *Food would be... well, what it always was*, neither slow nor fast: *just food*” (my emphasis; p. 411).

To Pollan, Americans have lost the unspoken cultural knowledge of eating, or what used to just be natural inclinations to hoard recipes and prepare fresh food stuffs. Now we just practice stomach-filling of processed products whose origins are not only almost inexplicable through the twists and turns of the industrial food chain, but also must be forgotten—made to seem as natural inclination, too—but for much different reasons. Namely that, in his imaginary, if we know what it really was we wouldn’t eat it. And, in actuality, what *is “it”*?—meaning, what is the “keystone species” (p. 6) of his experiential version of modern industrial food chain and therefore our as modern *national eating disorder*—alienation, ignorance, morbidity and mortality and pan ecological ruin? In Pollan, in a section title, “it” is: *Industrial Corn*.

Much like I assumed an investigation of geographical imaginaries of American agriculture through space-time would yield *multiple* imaginaries, but became continually redirected to the new agrarianism instead... although Pollan originally assumed his investigation of today’s conventional-industrial food chain would lead to divergent places and people, he found himself over and over again having arrived to “a farm field in the American CornBelt” (p. 18). This last is because, in Pollan’s account, to trace the consumer capitalist conventional-industrial food chain is to trace the domestication and cultivation of *teosinte*, turned *zea mays*, turned *maize*, turned corn, turned hybridized commodity corn which now, in its various GE commodity forms, have taken over the average US supermarket. He consequently contends that conventional-industrial commodity corn has become a (post)modern day *imperialist*, a sort of *conquering hero of its own story* of capitalist-oriented enclosure, or domestication, first by

hunter-gatherers and then, eventually, by the industrial, capitalist logics of agribusiness. Corn's capture by agribusiness, in a particularly *tricky* turn of his narration, becomes the hyper-conventional-industrial GE plant to overcome all other plants, and even its captors with whom it most closely identified in its *rise to world domination*: "Corn has succeeded in domesticating us... [corn] has conquered our diet, and, in turn, more of the earth's surface than virtually any other domesticated species, our own included" (p. 23; 20), i.e., the ultimate collusion of exploitive agribusiness domesticator and the domesticated. Ostensibly, Pollan's earliest delimitation of the plant is in no way accidentally reminiscent of *Global Tyranny Space*, where commodity corn's story could *only* be one of *imperial ascendancy and worldwide domination*—in collusion, of course, with the rise of capitalism and the corporate agribusiness form: colonists, slave traders, industrialized agriculture farmers, the USDA, *Gatorade*, *Ding-Dongs*, Ronald McDonald, ADM, DuPont and Cargill all armed with their high-fructose corn syrup weapons of mass destruction.

How Pollan accomplishes this immovable grand narrative, imaginary and representation of a *terrifying* quasi-object inextricably fettered to *Global Tyranny Space*—a monster from which we must *retreat*—is highly atypical. I argue that he draws on decidedly charged language and imagery of pornography, rather here, *cornography*, to solidify the interconnection of agribusiness *eco-rape*, or exploitive domestication, corn's capture, corn's resultant morphological *Stockholm syndrome*,¹⁰⁴ rather its own seeming identification with the *industrial mind* to accomplish its seemingly *innate*, (re)productive capitalist trajectory and *en masse*

¹⁰⁴ *Stockholm syndrome* is the phenomenon in which victims display compassion for, and even loyalty to, their oftentimes violent captors. It was first widely recognized after a six-day hold-up and hostage situation arising from a 1973 bank robbery in Stockholm, Sweden. See Fitzpatrick (2009) for the multiple issues related to the diagnosis.

revenge on American society and culture. What is Pollan's overarching objective for so naming and representing the quasi-object as a particularly delimited and delineated *monster*? The farmer-in-chief argues in a particularly new agrarian move that quasi-objects like (GE) commodity corn simply *should not exist* if we want to live better, healthier lives—which he firmly enforces, by his work's close, in the much reviewed margins of a Berrian (world)view. The question thus becomes one of naming and representation: is this a truly confrontational, or democratic, representation of American foodways? What are the implications of such a geographical imaginary that so *particularly* names, spatially positions (i.e., in *Global Tyranny Space*) and discharges a quasi-object that will in no realistic stretch of space-time soon be disappearing from the landscape of US agriculture? To explore these questions, first I will overview Pollan's central claims, including his use of particular economic botany. Then I will examine the implications of the imaginary and representation thus provided.

As follows, what Pollan labels apropos of the above claim, "Corn's Conquest," is an introductory segment about how corn became the ultimate "protocapitalist plant" (2006, p. 27) through what he labels as three *tricks* (p. 21), rather, co-evolved corn morphology which, when exploited through capture, or domestication strategies since the beginning of agricultural intervention itself, would only escalate industrial idea(l)s through space-time. Essentially, in Pollan, the full suite of more or less expressed corn morphological traits became the perfect target of original domesticators; as well as much later agribusiness pornographers' surplus fantasies, and, through space-time, biotechnologies. The first definitive morphological corn trick that could be exploited and (re)created through the agribusiness pornography industry is corn's so-called strange sexuality. In applying particular economic botany, Pollan can write at length about corn's *freaky* sex life, which purportedly precedes its captivity by the earliest

domesticators; and becomes exacerbated through its hostage situation (i.e., domestication). Corn is masterfully fabricated to possess an inherently freaky sexuality, so strikingly different from any other species that it would likely be conducive to sophisticated exploitation and manipulation of conventional-industrial consumer capitalist captors and logics. Essentially, by first positing corn's sexual reproduction *trick*, Pollan can later contend that increasingly industrial captivity would amplify corn's innate (un)naturalness.

Stepping back for moment, it is important to note that corn's reproductive structure is related to the earliest *natural* transmutations of the plant, which continue to be *hotly debated* (Diamond, 2005, p. 137) in various fields of plant science. Pollan basically *recognizes* the debate, though more generally summarizes its current hypotheses as follows. Unbeknownst to many, there are no *wild* maize plants *as we have ever 'known' them*.¹⁰⁵ As mentioned previously, botanists generally can agree that corn descended several thousand years ago from a weedy grass called *teosinte*. This lineage, rather the mechanisms of *how* this happened, remains the matter of contention. Essentially, *teosinte*'s appearance, lacking any ear, or cob-and-husked ear arrangement; its limited quantity of inedible hard-covered seeds; and its flower structure and size varies *greatly* from the common derivatives of maize of the *New World*. The limitations of *teosinte*'s use value—in terms of food and commodity to humans—related to its reproductive biology (seed quantity and coverings; flower structure and size) would have to be *dramatically* surpassed for corn's other aspects to become as useful as they definitively proved to be as both a

¹⁰⁵ *As we know them* simply means the more *common* maize and corn, and now *commodity corn*, varieties, we generally recognize *to be corn* at any given juncture of space-time... Essentially, *corn* could be the *corn* of the 15th century, when Columbus remarked on the *New World* botanical wonder to Isabella's court; of older biotechnology, called hybridization; or even of the latest biotechnological (re)production.

food and commodity (drawn from Diamond, 2005). And, like most things with corn, how that drama unfolded exactly remains a matter of debate.

Pollan mostly stays out of the fray, however, by selecting the *popular* (and *popularly rejected*) formulation of economic botanist (and population control advocate) Hugh Iltis¹⁰⁶ from which to extrapolate how maize, “the only cereal with unisexual inflorescences” (Iltis, 1983, p. 886) evolved. Using Iltis, Pollan side-steps the debate and chiefly forwards that teosinte endured a *catastrophic sexual transmutation* (Iltis, 1983) that produced traits most commonly associated with maize. Iltis’ theory claims that an *abrupt*, epigenetic series of chromosomal conversions (on as few as four chromosomes) together would *instantaneously* transmute the female sexual organs *from* the male sexual organs located at the apex of the stalk (the tassel) into the cob-and-husked ear arrangement in the middle of the stalk. In his theory then, nutrient allocation had moved to enormous ears in the middle of the plant in something like a *flash of light*. Far larger kernels than ever offered by teosinte became possible because the stalk, not the apex of the plant where the male organs remained, could better support the now nutrient-heavy ears of female reproductive organs. Pollan, via Iltis thus, argues that without altering the location or make-up of the male inflorescences, or the tassel, located at the apex of the stem, this *instantaneous*, *hermaphroditic transsexual transmutation* (re)produced the highly contrasted (from teosinte) and

¹⁰⁶ There is a connection among Pollan, Hugh Iltis and *Global Tyranny Space*: Iltis’ invited essay in Kimbrell’s (2002) collection, *The Fatal Harvest Reader: The Tragedy of Industrial Agriculture*. Therein, Iltis argues that, in light of changes to all human and nonhuman ecologies given agriculture through time, one of our most salient options for redress is *voluntary curtailment* of enormous population growth before Chinese and African dictators and catastrophes of nature, quote, *surely do it for us* (p. 116). Iltis’ work here is as pertinent talk today as it is *terrifying* in its suggestion that *controlling population* is the only way to save national forests and other wild places, like biosphere reserves, which are often geographically situated within populations, again quote, *too poor to care for them* (p. 112-116). Thus, by association and thereafter via direct indictment, Iltis argues that *they* need to live within *our* limits (p. 117): the perverted extreme of Berry’s *human limit*. Selecting Iltis brings some baggage—that is the main point.

characteristically *maize* ear morphology and anatomy so useful for human civilization thereafter (Pollan, 2006, p. 27). But, this last *moment* of *transmutation* was also *catastrophic*, he notes, because the plant lost its ability to reproduce itself in its hermaphroditic transsexual *zea mays* form (while teosinte *can*).

With Iltis, Pollan can emphasize that this *transmutation* was crucial for corn's *heroic story* in terms of nutrient allocation, i.e., more nutrients can be captured from the middle of the stalk than from the top of the plant, (re)producing relatively enormous and enormously useful kernels; as well as its deviant, ultimately masochistic, transsexual suicide that manufactured its own total dependence upon hunter-gatherers, and eventually agribusiness tyrants: the perfect co-dependent victim. So, and highly unlike teosinte, and really, in Pollan's words, "so strikingly different from any wild species" (p. 18), *maize's* otherwise *catastrophic* height and seed, or kernel, density, could increase and as such become the preeminently versatile agribusiness plant we recognize today overwhelming full human and nonhuman ecologies. With Iltis, Pollan can forward all of these claims for a catastrophic corn monster, whose unnatural sexuality preceded human intervention; (re)produced enormous ovaries which made it attractive to (thus preceding) its domesticator captors; and became actually the perfect victim of their stratagem in terms of (re)producing industrial logics...

Most usefully for this last formulation, corn's *unnatural* sexuality is highly interinfluential with another corn *trick*: "C-4" photosynthesis.¹⁰⁷ Given corn's aberrant sexual and otherwise morphology, it can "manufacture" more organic matter and calories from the same amount of sunlight, water, and basic elements than ordinary C-3 plants. Additionally, C-4 plants

¹⁰⁷ "C-4" refers to a small group of plants that synthesize four carbon atoms instead of three using less water than ordinary, C-3 plants during photosynthesis.

take in more carbon 13 than their C-3 counterparts. In the language of industrial capitalism, Pollan summates thus corn's inherent *economy* and *advantage* over other plant competition (p. 20-22) could be adapted to eventually meet the objectives of a capitalist conventional-industrial system driven by agribusiness' fantasies for complete power-knowledge and surplus. Alas, the third corn *trick* from this evolved, *unnatural* morphology and sexuality is its monstrous design of enormous kernels of large grains set in rows upon a central, cylindrical, woody part of the ear, altogether swathed in husks. Pollan continues that, through space-time, corn could become the preeminent plant because its whole structure responded quite well to its capture and captors, likewise becoming an ever more sturdy, multipurpose, or versatile, plant (p. 25). Granted, this took thousands of years, and hundreds of years longer than other domesticated plants. Yet, Pollan's grand narrative remarks that its diverse utility was worth the time and trouble because...

Corn could be eaten as a vegetable, stored as a grain, fed to animals, used for heat, fermented for alcohol or transported for sale, while its husks and cobs could be utilized for various crafts, or even used for toilet paper (p. 25- 26). Pollan writes that this corn *trick* was first ardently capitalized upon first by the early 17th century New World conquerors (p. 24). Then, colonists were initiating what would become an *en masse* violent appropriation with the food staple of the Native Americans, who had been cultivating corn for centuries. Corn would become the cornerstone of their survival to then, of course, all but annihilate those who had first enlightened of corn's ability to highly adapt to multiple climates and produce comparably extensive quantities of a rather multipurpose cereal on less ground than other plants (p. 24-25). Corn's total structure can be adapted for many uses, but most importantly, accumulated, leading to food *surplus*. In due course the market economy inculcated with corn surplus would be expanded with corn-fed slave labor, no less acquisitioned in Africa with corn currency (p. 26).

Pollan thus references *corn's dual identity, as food and commodity* as imperative for the growth of a burgeoning nation, and all the other aspects of power, imperialism, and later capitalist economy that came along with such abundance.

Taken together, along with corn's *catastrophic sexual transmutation* evolved an especial photosynthesis, changing through space-time since its originating domestication; as well an *unnatural* design, facilitating all kinds of human uses through the space-time. The corn plant, all told by Pollan here, was the ideal target for developing capitalist, conventional-industrial agriculture's agribusiness mind and trajectories—the perfect captor, really, since corn seemed to so usefully to adapt to the industrial logics and fantasies of the captor the longer it stayed in captivity, i.e., the *Stockholm syndrome*.

Now, Pollan's adoption of Iltis' theory of the *catastrophic sexual transmutation* (CSTT) of teosinte to maize is a powerfully purposeful selection. For, Iltis' theory that corn's *inherent*, no less *catastrophic, transmutative* sexuality—which could have ended its own evolutionary story if not for the advent of human intervention to peel its *unusually large* ears and spread its *remarkable* seeds—can be adopted to argue that corn, in the words of Pollan, is a hermaphroditic transsexual “freak” (p. 28), i.e., the perfect *prisoner* of industrial logics, instead of just... a teosinte plant that someone happened upon and more or less, deliberately or accidentally, domesticated through time for its basic *sweetness* and various utility, and plausibly like this (deliberately or accidentally) instigating many of its morphological traits through time, including that of the ear itself. Pollan, however, must use Iltis (1983) to argue that this sex “freak's” entire reproductive structure more or less changed in *an abrupt catastrophic instant* that forever thereafter required human intervention to (re)produce. In light of Iltis' originating theory, corn can seem both from its own morphology, as well as how that is exploited in captivity, to be a

catastrophically disturbed, ever more *tricky*, moody and unreliable plant, totally co-dependent and willing to please—a sexuality *made strange*... Corn, in these ways, is the perfect *captive*. It identifies with and forwards the biotechnoscientific industrial logics and desires of its agribusiness abusers to even *surpass* them and make us all freaky corn (re)productive sex slaves in its image, rather the image of agribusiness. Just look at the supermarket, Pollan reminds us: *Corn has succeeded in domesticating us* (p. 23), i.e., the ultimate *Patty Hearst* to an agribusiness *Symbionese Liberation Army* (SLA), whose brainwashing and abuse (domestication, cultivation, eventually hybridization and GE) would (re)create a mutually interinfluential, (re)productive plot to rob the food banks of the world. Like this, Pollan delineates corn's *tricky* method of reproduction in a *particularly cornographic* passage he calls “the beauty and wonder of corn sex” (p. 28).

As if attempting to bring to the page the agribusinessmen's cornographic fantasy of corn sex slavery, beginning with the male organs of the stem's apex Pollan first treats readers to the dramatic climax, the *money shot*, of corn sex: male inflorescences, called *pendant anthers*, explode with “superabundance of powdery yellow pollen,” in fact, “14 million to 18 million grains per plant, 20,000 for every potential kernel” (p. 28). As Pollan writes, how *strange*! He exclaims: that's *a lot* of sperm for every egg expunged over just a few summer days between input and harvest! The corn plant, thus (un)naturally excited, (over)produces (like its other forms of surplus) superabundant pollen over the female organs, being *inflorescences*. The female inflorescences are comprised of upwards of 800 hundred flowers aligned along a tightly encased cob “that juts upward from the stalk at the crotch of a leaf” (p. 28) about a meter below the tassel. And, in the words of Pollan, the inflorescences *wait* (presumably *trembling*) for the *superabundant* male ejaculate. Each floral ovary has the potential to become a kernel if, as Pollan continues, the

“single, sticky strand of silk” (p. 28) it sends through the tip of the husk, on the *very day* of the tassel explosion, is able to get hitched to a single grain. At this point, not only is corn sex excessive, in terms of ejaculate, and generally *strange*, in terms of its hermaphroditic transsexuality, but it is also fetishistic: the female inflorescences are treated to a *golden shower of yellow pollen* (p. 28).

As if this corn orgy of superabundant *urolagnia* is not *made strange* enough, Pollan warns that the *next* phase of corn sex mechanics becomes “very strange” (p. 28)—actually referencing what’s known in common parlance as a “threesome” (*ménage à trios*): two halves of a divided nucleus and a *waiting* flower embryo (p. 29). He lays out how the nucleus of a pollen grain dimidiates when it alights upon the silk extension, producing two genetically identical cells that together perform the necessary actions, being *tunneling* and *sliding* down the silk strand, to fertilize the *waiting* flower embryo where the second cell will form the endosperm, or the developing embryo’s food store of starch, protein and other nutrients. This last, called the kernel, will mature in about fifty or so days (p. 29) if the superabundant, sexually deviant *urolagnia* turned *ménage à trios* has been *successful*.

I contend that the *cornographic* detail of the last passage is a *noninnocent* showcase of corn’s aberrantly racy sex life that would generally be banished as a topic of conversation at a typical family sit-down meal. By applying various thinking from the influential pornography/film theorist, Linda Williams (2008), I argue first that Pollan’s use of this imagery of the *money shot* has a twofold purpose. First, the *money shot* is *superabundant*, in fact, totally coating the female inflorescences *waiting below* (the relatively *unknown* clitoris as it were, *waiting* for the ejaculate). Commodity corn does not dispel a *frugal* ejaculate, and like this can be connected to the excesses of transnational consumer capitalism, i.e., corn sex/uality is an inherently neoliberal

superabundance. Second, *any* familiarity with hard core Western heterosexual pornography's common principles and trajectories, as well as its easy connection to other hard core sexual acts which could involve varied sexual orientations and 'gender-bending' (i.e., the gay and otherwise sexed pornographic money shot) both resonant nicely with Pollan's description of corn's female organs which already have a more phallic appearance (i.e., cobs) while the male organs have the more presumably feminine appearance of flowers which instead expunge massive amounts of ejaculate to suffuse the waiting (and trembling) *albeit phallic* female cob. This last implication of supposedly more sexually deviant acts at the moment of the money shot also works well for his later description of the plant's *ménage- à-trois*... Pollan's own floral *money shot* of a description purposefully highlights corn's hypermasculinity to the point of deviancy; its ties to transnational consumer capitalism and agribusiness, completely suffusing all *waiting and trembling Others*. All told, we are given the primary aspects of his quasi-object representation—and they no doubt have strong implications: a preexisting *sexual deviancy* of corn and corn sexuality that cannot be *undone*.

Second, Pollan's choice to use this seemingly simple word, "waiting" (or, "await" and "waiting" female organs, p. 28-29), is as loaded as the rest of his "Corn Sex" passage. To forward his exegesis of corn as the conquering hero of all humans and nonhumans, roles of the female reproduction must be reduced to the agentic and dominant male pollen, which so dynamic must tackle a complicated distance only to then have to *dividuate and conquer the female flower "awaiting" the male profusion* (p. 28) no less, waiting with its sticky phallus-like silk protrusion. The most obvious example on this last is when Pollan calls the complete overproduction of pollen " 'better safe than sorry,' or 'more is more,' being nature's general rule for male genes" (p. 28)—he intentionally avoids language that would suggest the superabundance of the ejaculate is

wasteful. However, at the same time, he describes how the female's unused silk dries up and turns reddish brown, indicating the waste of the female role in reproduction (drawn from Martin in another context, 1991). The female organs of the plant are the awaiting and passive mother, eventually dried-up. Going even further into the pornographic imagery and troubling adjectives, we thus discover yet another form of corn sexual deviancy. For, the male ejaculate again must *divide and conquer* the *trembling female inflorescence*, (re)creating a veritable "ménage a trios" (p. 29) in the process; as well as *hard core cornographic* fetishes—like *urolagnia*, otherwise commonly known as a *golden shower*, being urination to achieve sexual arousal.

Altogether, the quasi-object has been named: *freak, aggressor, disturbed...* Readers may not know exactly *why*, but regardless are left to believe that corn is the ultimate, if not wholly masculinist, certainly the most dominant and deviant, transnational consumer capitalist plant. Both the pornography imagery and the language deployed by Pollan work so not intend to more openly represent the undeniable mutuality of corn's sexual versatility. Instead, he highlights what is often seen in other contexts as *deviancy*, altogether thus establishing *uniqueness* necessary for commodity corn to become the preeminent facilitator of conventional-industrial monoculture and global capitalist food. Such naming and representation can inspire little more than great apprehension with the popular and indispensable quasi-object of American foodways.

Meaning, inasmuch as Pollan is supposedly explicating corn's *tricks*, he is more so ensuring that every possible inch of the imaginary is aligned with common associations of an imperialist, masculine dominance reminiscent of an as competitive, domineering capitalist system—again, what even Wendell Berry himself famously called *agribusiness pornography* over thirty years ago. *Cornography* sounds like a theoretical stockbroker's work and sex fantasies combined: a *threesome* maximizing profit at every possible turn before exploding into

the trembling, awaiting inflorescence. And, as such, Pollan's cornographic passage is not intended to delight in redolent corn sexuality—and all forms of sexual expression which are always also already happening in the thoroughly social natural world. Rather, his writing manipulates the description of plant reproduction to be somehow genetically and otherwise utilizing its sexually deviant morphology to accomplish its captors' industrial logics; exploitive technologies and, in turn, facilitate industrial food as strange and (over)produced as the corn sexuality itself. Calling corn “obliging” (p. 30) to human intervention, incl. machines, pesticides, herbicides and GE to the point that the *biological equivalent of a patent* (p. 30) has been reached, Pollan's *cornographic* representation seals the fate of the quasi-object as already completely *collusive* with its captors *before* every situated relation. He makes sure that corn sexuality is not spatially associated with *naturalness*. All told, the quasi-object is *locked into space* as an abhorrent *monstrosity* of freaky sex and agribusiness manipulation so powerful that today, “researchers who have compared the isotopes in the flesh or hair of North Americans to those in the same tissues of Mexicans report that it is now *we in the North who are the true people of corn*” (*my emphasis*; p. 23). Naming, representing, capturing the monster's inherent *trickiness* as such forewarns that the *trickster* thus exploited will come back to exploit all humans and nonhumans: a *maize maze* of terror... Reading *The Omnivore's Dilemma* is to imagine quasi-objects as monsters not of possibility but of terror; is to be move through the supermarket in particular ways—at least any that lead us away from the commodity quasi-object which shall remain, in turn, doomed. Exactly *what* then should happen with the commodity corn cropping system in the future?

Ultimately, Pollan's skillful narrative of the sexual deviancy of commodity corn does not withstand other, more widely accepted versions, of the same corn sexuality story. Another

imaginary, one far more likely, is indeed far less sexy and ultimately shuts-down the ‘sexually deviant corn sexuality meets agribusiness pornography’ narrative in the first instance. Meaning, Iltis’ theory has been not only widely discounted, but *recanted* by the author himself and well before the Pollan publication. “Homeotic Sexual Translocations and the Origin of Maize (*Zea Mays*, Poaceae): A New Look at an Old Problem” (2000) is something of an Iltis mea culpa, stating that the once widely accepted CSTT, first outlined in his own article (1983), is implausible. What Iltis (2000) says today is that while the CSTT *solved the problem* of how maize evolved from teosinte—a very old problem, in fact, which his work purported to solve after a century of hundreds of other authors *agonizing* over maize morphology; a century of published *pet theories* to account for the origin of its ear, “a veritable babel of titles and conflicting views” (p. 9-10)¹⁰⁸—it doesn’t work. His theory was proven “illogical and wrong on many counts” (2000, p. 17).

His new, *sexual translocation theory* (STLT) basically acknowledges that the process of corn’s evolution from teosinte was a far slower and less dramatic process of (re)location than some kind of profoundly deviant, instantaneous and catastrophic, transmutation. Instead, he writes, the less guided and deliberate movement of sexual reproduction traits occurred over a relatively ineffably long time line when compared to the domestication of other plants. And, it is entirely unclear if such sexual translocation preceded human intervention, anyway. Actually, though *teosinte* is almost wholly accepted today to be the progenitor of maize, no one can seem to agree on what was attractive about teosinte, or maize forms, if they indeed preceded human involvement in the first instance. Writes Iltis, “With time, accidental planting soon led to habit,

¹⁰⁸ Turn to pages 9-10 of Iltis (2000) to see the *substantial* list of works comprising *the veritable babel of titles and conflicting views*.

and habit to selection, inadvertent or deliberate” (p. 22). Most likely, the direct ancestor of maize was domesticated not “for its grain *but for its sugary pith and edible parts*” (my emphasis; p. 36). Which means, the instantaneous transsexual attractiveness of a profanely deviant plant with lusciously irresistible ears and fat, juicy kernels is far less likely than an accidentally interesting teosinte plant whose slow, intermixed, inadvertent and purposeful selection one plant at a time was taken in the hopes of replicating some of its more valuable portions (p. 36-37). Corn’s most valuable portions we know today were, actually, quite few and far between for quite a long evolutionary history relative of many other common domesticates.

Therefore, what is most definitive so far is that maize *somehow* descended from *teosinte*; and that, if taking-up the proposed STLT of Iltis (2000), this last was a gradual process. Far less *freaky*, far more benign, Iltis avers, “In short, there is then no need to hypothesize any *major, instant mutations shortening primary branches or other radical changes in plant gross architecture as being essential*” (my emphasis; p. 19). In fact, a more even-handed Iltis reminds us now, anyway, that nothing can really explain “the maize domestication we so wish to understand” (p. 28-29). Without question, the earlier proposed CSTT is far more captivating, seductively worded rhetoric of catastrophes and economic-natural monstrosity—a highly useful rhetoric for condemning the corn plant to a world not of the natural, to be a sex freak out of place in a new agrarian complementarity of responsible, healthy, pure and natural (to mean *hybridized*) food *and coitus*. And, with a *new agrarian* skill and account like no other—“doing” Wendell Berry better than anyone else on the *Berry Prophecy Project* continuum; probably better than Wendell Berry himself “does” *Wendell Berry*—Michael Pollan adapts the world(view) of the prophet on *most* things, but especially here Berry’s particular delineations of agribusiness eco-rape and pornographic exploitation of nature, to rework the provocative Iltis “mistake,” *making*

corn strange for the new and portentous age of GE. Pollan has so skillfully implanted a hyper-capitalist intentionality of agribusiness pornographers in (GE) commodity corn's morphology and anatomy that it seems to have an inherent commercial *mentalité*'. And, like this, he warns, it will seek to appease its agribusiness exploiters forever. Pollan has named the quasi-object, but he has named it, "Sadist," with a (re)production morphology safeguarding an almost inherent *human* desire for a war on nature and *en masse* eco-rape. The imaginary and representation is closed, rendering all plausible confrontation as an opportunity for new agrarian *retreat*.

With great clarity and perspicacity, Michael Pollan has brought to the forefront serious issues with the US foodways, actually trenchant issues which have only expanded and accelerated in the twenty-first century with GE and likewise tools. But Michael Pollan's imaginary and representation does little more than *doom* the quasi-objects of US agriculture to the absolute extremes of *Global Tyranny Space*, a tyrants' *cornscape* of extremely terrifying globalization, transnational capitalism, satellite communities of mini-malls and fast food, speed-up, deserts of foodstuff significations, and again, really alienating, freaky and sexually deviant and promiscuous plant abuse victims turning the tactics back on the agribusiness *cornographers* and the rest of humans and nonhumans... Michael Pollan kills and pronounces the neoliberal (imaginary) death of *geography*, and a rather disturbing account of its (porn corn) star commodity plant which has fully *conquered the conquerors*—especially the poorest among them—in most aspects of our daily lives, from the aisles of every supermarket, down to our last strand of hair.

Needing, perhaps expecting, at this point, more in the way of open dialogue and possibility for confrontation, we are offered in turn the prophet's hope: place-bound *family dinners* (together, never alone, never standing at our desks or at a convenient store; and only of

organic whole foods gathered and prepared with attentive and love and care from the outer aisles of supermarket, a monthly CSA vegetable box, a farmers' market and our own garden). To ultimately argue that in order to most efficaciously confront such a terrifying cornographic fantasy *monster* we must (re)emplace food, "in the steadying context of a *family and a culture*, where the *full consciousness of what was involved did not need to be rehearsed at every meal because it was stored away, like the good silver, in a set of rituals and habits, manners and recipes*" (my emphasis; p. 411) leads us to the porch of the prophet: the *true picture of Reality*. Apparently, we can just cut-off the absolutely terrifying, cornographic corn yarn he himself has just spun and once again, just as spontaneously as maize was purported to catastrophically transmutate, *know by seeing* natural foods, or *know by eating* natural foods together at a dinner table. What happens to all the conventional-industrial commodity quasi-object which will also be grown, processed and widely diffused in products and international trade beyond the boundaries of our hyper-ideological, place-bound family meal? Where is the imaginary and representation of *how* quasi-objects should be grown and proliferated instead, in the future, for the world, if not within and toward this truly terrifying way of *cornscape* Pollan otherwise so articulately described?

Exploding any solution or recommendation to imperatively *confront* the latter at times seems to fall outside of Michael Pollan's objective. Pollan, whilst suggesting stronger US Farm Bills and an eater's manifesto, has quite effectively (re)situated the latter inquiry in the *Global Tyranny Space* realm of... *not my problem*. By tethering (GE) commodity corn so inextricably, so complexly, to all the corruption and deviancy of (postmodern) *Global Tyranny Space*, he must simply shuttle back to the extremes of *Berry Prophecy Place* for a sit-down family meal of *the Real*. *Toward Cornotology* contends that we don't *just* get a more *just* family dinner of "just

food”—or *true picture of Reality*—from the *body of the world* with the world(view) of the prophet, Wendell Berry; or the prophet’s prophet, Michael Pollan, as they have each been dialogued heretofore along with innumerable others of the new agrarian continuum. What we *just* get is a new generation of new agrarian geography and representation, and a new generation of new agrarian documentary, where the argument that agri quasi-objects, particularly in their GE forms, simply should not exist, is *King*...

At the end of the day, the questions such relational geographical analysis of US agriculture imaginaries and representation raises are quite basic. It seems today that the average American consumer gains ever more awareness that what they generally consume is so *complexly*, even *strangely* dangerous, toxic and unnatural without being provided, in turn, a more open, outwardlooking opportunity for confronting or even entertaining what should be done with, or consumed of, for that matter, *the conventional-industrial system* besides *not* participating in it for these reasons so named, i.e., *going organic*. The main point here is not to discredit that recommendation or organics; or that organics and local/ist projects are not positive or more healthful—that is not my focus, point or even interest since I am not interested in more *agrarian* evaluations. My project seeks to simply understand the key messages of many new imaginaries and representations of US agriculture presented heretofore, incl., that of the most popular writers today, like Michael Pollan; and ask geography-oriented questions of the socially-spatially conflated food wars: Can I eat anything from the conventional-industrial system (‘over there’) if I care about my community, the environment and/ or my body? Is there any positive science to be considered from the conventional-industrial system (‘over there’)? What happens to the conventional-industrial system and its quasi-objects (‘over there’), rather, how can or will the system improve for the environment, farmers and others who will continue to purchase its

products, if I, for my own health and wellness, move into organic and/ or local/ist consumption? Is not organic agriculture ('over here') also a continual social natural boundary project enlivened by quasi-object agri-monsters as well? Does not the conventional-industrial system ('over there') continually impact all humans and nonhumans around the world whether *we* participate in it or not?

Documentary as a *Neoagrarian Fog (of food war) Machine: King Corn*

This section presents one example of how the work of Michael Pollan has influenced other forms of representation with similar effects. It intends to begin a conversation to exceed these project margins about the likewise *new new* agrarianism extension into a far more popular representation today: documentary film. Without question, the documentary is a highly differentiated form of representation, including that of fiction films. I argue that the new agrarian operationalization of these various documentary techniques has worked to proliferate the new agrarian imaginary—and specifically, in the proceeding example, the particular new agrarian mind and (GE) commodity corn denunciation of Michael Pollan. By the end of the section, I explore what I call the *GE Corn Effect*: a particular imaginary of biotechnoscience evident in other *food wars* documentaries, as well as various *material food wars* contentions.

Foremost, the documentary is a different form of representation than others and like this necessitates seem kind of orientation. Looking to one of the preeminent authorities on the documentary film to date, Bill Nichols' (1991), *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary*, for some kind of definition of documentary *representation* locates an ineffably complex representation irreducible to a singular definition.¹⁰⁹ Meaning, Nichols clearly rejects any superficial definition of the documentary as *not* conventional fictional cinema; or, that

¹⁰⁹ For additional, often critical, perspectives on the documentary and/ or Nichols's works, see Rosenthal and Corner (2005); and/ or Ward (2005).

documentaries merely lack the kind of control of its subjects commanded by fictional cinema. He writes that, “the notion of *control* as a *defining criterion* perpetuates a muddleheadedness about documentary filmmaking scarcely less egregious than claims for the truth of documentary representation or for the self-evidence of facts” (*my emphasis*; p. 14). That being said, documentaries can be considered as different forms of representation, including from other film forms, for two central reasons. First, though all representation is negotiated by a community, documentaries, unlike written texts, are screened, viewed or seen, and thus purport a *knowing by seeing* the referent of representation. Second, perhaps most importantly, documentaries are *representing reality*—a historical reference to some coeval reality (a highly complex concept to be sure) more or less, as a matter of course, lacking from *fiction* representation, incl. fictional cinema. Given that documentaries are *seen*, and have a complex relationship to reality, in notable ways unlike readers, *viewers* must endlessly (re)create meanings which have an entangled interrelation with what kind of subject positions, or *spectatorships*, can be articulated through future performances in the world. The documentary “is” an *unstable* effect of multiple material-discursive practices which at times stabilize, perhaps then to (re)territorialize through becoming/emerging with/in the world. Thus, the documentary “is” porous, a space-time text, more like a *place* of assemblage of the *world and the text*, or of multiple indexical and ideological trajectories, translations, articulations and performances of representation, the *represented*, and, perhaps most importantly, “a constituency of viewers” and *a subject who will gain it* (p. 24).

This last should not imply that, in drawing further from Nichols (1991; 1994; 2001) we cannot locate some more or less shared aspects of the documentary. In some manner, *all* documentaries are shaped by first, hegemonic norms, rather longer trajectories of power-

knowledge (re)production. Basically, given the documentary's representation of reality, the documentary has (un)easy associations with other discursive practices and productions of "nonfiction," emanating generally from social structures and institutions—what Nichols calls *discourses of sobriety*, including those more or less scholarly (re)productions of science, history, politics, economics, policy and so forth. Also, documentaries have uneasy relationships with funding entities interconnected to these last, the film industry and/ or associated communities of film, and particularly documentary, (re)production. Though some documentaries are more complicit than others in attempting to replicate such discourses, they are *always* negotiated, i.e., boundary projects.

Furthermore, in some manner *all* documentaries draw from a wide spectrum of techniques and strategies for referencing, for (re)constructing a representation, of, *material reality*. Nichols basically sees this last as a matter of geography, which means that the more or less shared set of documentary techniques and strategies, ranging from the orthodox to experimental, should be thought of as a way of *spatializing* the human and nonhuman actants to *make meanings* to reference, represent, tell a story about and/ or argue a perspective of a material reality. *Where* and *how* humans and nonhumans actants are arranged, or spatialized in various situations, and/ or with/in which backgrounds, musical scores and the editing process itself is all evidentiary. Such spatializations signify various interpretations of social natural reality... Essentially, *spacing makes things meaningful*, what Nichols calls, *axiographics*. Axiographics include and inspire a full suite of structural and more particular techniques and meanings. Though a broad spectrum, *any* spatialization of reality has great power, and should not be considered as any simple matter of *simulacra and simulation*. Instead, Nichols shows that in the service of referential meanings, be those of an institutional argument, or personal story that the

axiographics of the film can (re)create a more or less didactic meanings. The difference between many documentaries thus often comes down to how proscriptive is the intention spatialized through documentary techniques, to, in effect, control specific meanings of material reality for audiences and viewers. Therefore, ethics are always involved in any given documentary spatialization. Like this, Nichols organizes such axiographics, and their attendant ethical considerations, by *modes* (overviewed shortly).

Finally, in the words of Nichols, “the extent to which our object of study is constructed, and reconstructed, by an array of *discursive participants or interpretive communities*” (*my emphasis*; p. 17), is the most important point, finally bringing viewing communities to the fore. Watching any documentary from the first instance is a viewing experience contrastable to others. Whilst not defining the documentary in turn, particular viewers generally watch documentaries to learn about, experience, discuss and so forth various aspects of material reality—a motivation Nichols calls *epistephilia*, or a “pleasure in knowing... a distinctive form of social engagement” (p. 178). Really, for whatever reasons (re)created through multiple forces, like how widely released, advertised and available the documentary is, where and for which viewers and so forth (and all then as interrelated to the motivation for watching any given documentary in the first place) communities of *viewers*—the *audience*—engage, negotiate, interpret and ultimately articulate, which is to also say, *perform* the space-time text.

The latter brings up an important distinction. There are any number of interpretations of *viewership* and *spectatorship*, but at the most basic level, viewers could be thought of as a collective audience whilst spectators/hips indicate the *subject/ivity positions (re)created*, being, *to whom* the film more or less intends, at least *by the* axiographics of the film, to be speaking, intending to reach or impact, etc. Films have wide viewership to be sure, but spectatorship

indicates that the spatialization of the message of the documentary are (re)visioned through specific perspectives, for specific perspectives and (re)presented *toward (re)creating* specific perspectives, or subject positions, through the viewers own power-knowledges and performances (drawn from Walters, 1999, p. 237). Of course the latter is a highly complex space-time assemblage of the *world and the text*—and has received ineffable amounts of attention across a broad range of disciplines.¹¹⁰ So, the main point here is that the axiographics of any given documentary co-constitute, more or less proscriptively, *particular* spectatorships when the space-time text is *situated* with viewers' own vast array of related power-knowledges and competencies. No audience is a blank slate which can be ideologically interpellated into any given meaning of a documentary representation; and no spectatorship is (re)created out of a viewer in the way of a billiard ball of representation that hits a viewer and instantaneously (re)produces an intended shift in subjectivity to meet that of the film and thus influence embodied performance in the world—be that to encourage voting for a particular candidate, participation in a protest march, letter-writing to a congressmen, volunteering with various action groups, or, most importantly, rejection of conventional-industrial foods and biotechnoscience in favor of *eating organic* and/ or *going local/ist*. Again, utilizing various axiographic techniques, documentary filmmakers *can* seek to more *strictly* intend particular spectatorships and influence embodied performance of an as particular subjectivity in the world. Yet, such control is continually (re)shaped through the viewing experiences and co-constituted spectatorships.

¹¹⁰ When speaking about viewers and spectatorships, one easily arrives to a vast film history, often marked by debate. Spectatorships and interpellation is *tricky*, particularly in terms of Althusser's Lacanian-subject ideology (contrasted a Marxist humanist ideology); how various writers add Foucauldian theory for clarification, and so forth. For a very general introduction to some of these and related issues in a critical and global media purview, see Ott and Mack (2010); and/ or Shohat and Stam (2003).

Perhaps what is most significant here is that the spatialization of the documentary is itself power-knowledge. *How we think about space matters* because *it matters* how documentary films, particularly linked in some way to co-eval materiality, and especially those which reach the most geographically and otherwise dispersed and diverse audiences, are *spatialized*. Documentaries can deploy particular techniques, for instance, which seek to leave its referential reality more open to translation and articulation with relative autonomy, exciting a vast array of performances through the world. However, if the documentary's axiographics are put in the service of making strange biotechnoscience, for example, then embodied performances could be excited likewise to any number of more restricted articulations. *How we think about space* in regard to the documentary not only *matters*, but obviously comes replete with innumerable ethical concerns as well. Altogether, all documentaries play with spatialization to deliver some kind of meanings otherwise referential of other meanings and co-eval materiality, with some more institutionalized, some more particular and personal, than others. And, such spatialization has power—is powerful knowledge—in material-discursive communities and should not be taken lightly. Meaning, all documentaries, in their spatializing maneuvers, share a great power to *name* reality and in some cases entirely (re)shape interpretations, even experiences, of human performances and otherwise understanding of reality long after viewing (p. 12).

Nichols usefully details common spatialization conventions and techniques which roughly coordinate various documentary modes which I can draw from here to understand the spatialization of the new agrarian imaginary in documentary representation; their more or less proscriptive (re)vision and (re)position of particular spectatorships from which social natural world performances, like accepting/ not GE, or biotechnoscience more generally, would be bound or based. Each *mode* has its own set of ethical concerns in the representation of reality,

and each mode addresses likewise ethical issues to various degrees and varying ways. All told, Nichols simply offers *a way to talk about general documentary techniques*, organized by modes, which are like genres but differ in that each is a form of historical representation (p. 23)—the *difference that makes a difference* of the documentary film. Ostensibly, though ever critiquing the boundaries implicit of talking genres and so forth,¹¹¹ few would argue that Nichols’ modes are generally useful in the way of organizing innumerable documentary film techniques through space-time. Nichols summates that, “The modes also tend to be *combined and altered within individual films*. Older approaches do not go away; they remain *part* of a continuing exploration... *Representation* of the historical world is *not a simple matter of progress toward a final form of truth* but struggles for power and authority within the historical arena itself” (*my emphasis*; p. 33). All things considered, Nichols’ six predominant, often interinfluential and always intermixed, *mode* typology—and his addendums to it as his writings go on—including, *expository, observational, interactive/ participatory, reflexive, performative* and *poetic* (see Nichols 1991; 1994; 2001), are so present in innumerable scholarships that they defy further summarization here outside of their applicability to the following analysis of *King Corn*.¹¹²

¹¹¹ Some critics charge that Nichols’ typology, or really any classifications or categorizations of “norms, standards, conventions, deviations” (Ward, 2005, p. 24) of documentaries inspire a belief in documentary’s *chronological evolution* (p. 27). I argue that Nichols’ *documentary mode* map usefully breaks down the diverse territory of documentary films into understandable units of meaning, i.e., the shared techniques of documentaries by *categories*, again, *modes*. The Nichols map is not intended to be hegemonic or final, closed or the ultimate description into which *all* documentaries can be closed-down as *genre* categorizations. His useful *modes* must therefore be understood as *organizational rubrics* rather than as some kind of holistic categorizations.

¹¹² Although Nichols’ mode typology is generally beyond the scope of the forthcoming analysis of *King Corn*, I can nevertheless provide a few examples of their applicability here for general reference by those outside of the discipline. For example, one of the most common *modes* of documentary is a collection of highly orthodox spatialization techniques—actually those *most*

commonly associated with 'the documentary' in general: the *expository* mode (p. 34-38). Expository spatialization techniques generally work together to *forward an argumentative logic* about a particular historical reality which the film seeks to *reveal* in a new light toward convincing an audience of said new perspective via, and chiefly, *direct commentary*. To accomplish this last, the use of disembodied *voice-of-God* narrators, experts, statistics, headings/titles of specific sections and so forth work together to *direct* viewers' attention through a basically linear story or argument about any given historical referent. Expository filmmakers also commonly utilize soundtracks and other sound editing that sequences a linear narrative to match likewise edited sequences of images. Emotive music will be edited over various images to inspire *particular* emotional reactions in any given viewing community. Interviews are also a key component of the expository axiographics. Such interviews are often conducted with experts, witnesses or other related actants. Questions are altogether commonly *absent present* in expository films, meaning that viewers can only gauge a set of questions in the responses provided. Expository documentaries seek to establish a total objectivity through rhetorical continuity of its spatialization. Although the documentary might jump around in time and/or settings to tell a story or move an argument, its overarching editorial framework drives the text from an overly didactic thesis to preferred conclusion. The particular and preferred expository *meaning making* is often called *moralizing* for its direct address of viewers toward collecting them around an intended interpretation or goal, likewise shaping spectatorships to *help solve* a problem supposedly revealed in the film.

An overlapping documentary mode, called the *interactive* (p. 44-56) locates axiographics which attempt to engage a more open-ended power-knowledge production. Techniques seek to allow the message to emerge *through* an engagement, or collaboration, of the filmmaker with interviewees and other actants. Essentially, the spatializations techniques of the interactive mode include the on-screen involvement of the filmmaker—not only acknowledging but even celebrating the involvement of the filmmaker's direct engagement with human and nonhuman actants. The filmmaker becomes not only another character in the documentary, but an essential part of the *meaning making* process. Like this, said mode is less classically expository and to varying degrees seeks to confront the *influence of the filmmaker* on and with/in power-knowledge production. So, instead of disembodied *voice-of-God* narration, reenactments and other overly directed techniques for continuity, participatory filmmakers' will often interspace *archival* footage, scenes of living and working with participants or of their own (re)vision of the film in camera set-ups, editing and so forth. Naturally, yet other questions of ethics abound with such *interactions*, including issues of *intrusion* into actants' lives, because the keystone of *participation* in either is the *interview* with human experts and/or participants. However, contrasted expository interviews with mostly experts or witnesses, *interactive* mode interviews generally demonstrate question and answer sessions between interviewers (often the filmmakers) and participants, indicating a more *participatory* documentary in the process. This last is why Nichols' (2001) later book, *Introduction to the Documentary*, shifts the language and focus of this mode and its ethical considerations from *interactive* to *participatory*, thereby taking on questions of how *reflexivity* shapes the *situatedness* of actants and *participatory* filmmakers.

By the time of, *Blurred Boundaries: Questions of Meaning in Contemporary Culture* (1994), Nichols addends his mode map with a relatively new set of documentary techniques which truly transform the medium by the end of twentieth century: the *performative* mode. *Performative axiographics* overtly seek to raise questions about the power-knowledge

Essentially, organized by whichever mode as a matter of course, all documentaries are *performed*. The documentary 'is' in the making, an *open story* only *so far*, an intertextual text endlessly (re)produced through axiographics, co-eval discursive and material realities and communities of spectators. Any given documentary is a boundary project, with the more performative and/ or reflexive the most *dangerous* given their postpositivist formulations and performances of objectivity and representation. Yet other documentaries, like, *King Corn* (2007), while deploying an interesting mix of *axiographic* techniques, nevertheless more or less *directly* deliver an intended message about the preeminent conventional-industrial quasi-object straight from the *new new* agrarian imaginary of Michael Pollan.

King Corn

King Corn (2007) is a *Peabody Award-winning* feature documentary production of *Mosaic Films Incorporated* and the *Independent Television Service* (ITVS), distributed by *New*

(re)production of the documentary space-time process and text. This particular set of techniques attempt to destabilize historical reference and hegemonic discourse by focusing upon how articulation of such *structural* discourses are (re)made through *situated knowledges* of all human and nonhuman film actants in the world. The latter seeks to *discourse* thus *the discourse* itself. To achieve this effect, the performative mode intermixes the elements of all of the modes mentioned heretofore, simultaneously thus performing the documentary in turn. The filmmaker would be, at once, an active participant in the (re)construction of subject/ive knowledges in the film whilst (re)constructing the film, showing both processes in often innovative ways. For instance, in place of *objectivity* shots, performative documentaries might intersplice music montages and emotive imagery with an interactive interview which, (re)combined, seek more *evocation and affect* than a linear, rhetorical argument. The temporal rhythms and spatial juxtapositions of images, music, and human and nonhuman actants works together to achieve a desired effect of the material reality referenced, but otherwise cannot be disentangled from the assemblage for a fuller understanding of some kind of signification otherwise. All things considered, *performative documentaries* seek an emotional (re)action on the part of viewers who might act in accordance with such affect. They stress more particular, subjective experience and response to the world. They can be strongly personal, unconventional, sometimes poetic and/or experimental, and might even include hypothetical (re)enactments of events designed to enable the viewer to step into the different *subjective* perspectives. In doing so, the *performative* mode techniques can *lose* space-time context as well, in the most extreme forms seeking to blur co-eval material and discursive realities on the screen.

Video (*King Corn*, 2013). It is the first effort of director Aaron Woolf, but stars the film's co-writers, co-producers and otherwise more experienced documentary filmmakers, Curt Ellis and Ian Cheney, as *themselves*. Dedicated ecological activists Ellis and Cheney have been best friends since Yale who decide to *learn where their food comes from* by moving to rural Iowa to grow an acre of corn before attempting to follow the harvest through the conventional-industrial food system. The film had a relatively low budget and was intended for limited release. But, *King Corn* received much attention in popular reviews, which all more or less warmly received their efforts (Seitz, 2007). In terms of other popular food documentaries, *King Corn* is certainly more inclusive of many of the most pressing issues of US agriculture today, and attempts to intermix a diverse set of techniques to create meanings which, at times, can remain more or less open to various interpretations when dispersed through a community of viewers. The overarching problematic becomes how critical the film is, or can be, given its spatialization, of particular critics promulgating as particular criticisms, with Michael Pollan being chief among those...

King Corn's predominantly interactive/ participatory and performative documentary mode techniques are all deployed within a largely expository framework to spatialize a *monomyth*, a hero's journey, though one far more in keeping with what Seitz (2007) calls, the "Truth-Seeking Comic Hero genre, as practiced by Michael Moore and Morgan Spurlock" (p. E14) than with, let's say, James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*. I see this particular hero's journey as one of the *new urban yeoman/ry heroes*, who must trek from their urban dwelling *ignorance* through fall-out to their own enlightenment in rural Iowa, when, via the Michael Pollan imaginary, they can journey back again to the urban sphere as new agrarian locavores. Whilst the axiographic mix of interactive/ participatory shots; various performative staging of agricultural

practices as well as documentary film set-ups; and expository/ interactive interview sequences could altogether certainly seem like a more intermixed *participatory* and/ or mildly *performative* documentary imaginary overall, I argue that the film's axiographics work less to leave *meaning making* more open to interpretation than to serve the overarching expository *message*. Meaning, the whole film is structured by expository/ objectivity techniques of using narrators, being Ellis and Cheney at various times, to, along with other techniques, pull the rhetorical frame through a *linear* space-time progression, i.e., monomyth. In *King Corn*, this means we see co-writers and stars Curt Ellis and Ian Cheney narrate their journey from the moment they pack-up their truck and leave their apartment and local supermarket in Boston, Massachusetts, to make their way to farmer Pyatt's farm in rural Green, Iowa, population 1015, to raise one acre of (GE) commodity. Following their linear space-time progression on the road is complemented by sections headlined by the names of any given month of their year, altogether working to (re)produce a *growing season* of not only commodity corn but the new urban yeoman/ry's journey from ignorance in the city to enlightenment in Iowa nature. So, with overarching narrations, section titles and observation shots all spliced together in a linear progression, the documentary utilizes comparable interactive and performative techniques to *build* a more linear hero's journey from one extreme pole of the *Berry Prophecy Project* continuum to other: a *new* urban yeoman/ry hero's journey from the extremes of *ignorance* about foodways today (*Global Tyranny Space*), moving through a series of revelations about the innerworkings of a conventional-industrial *global food regime*, to finally less critically arrive to *new agrarian* enlightenment, rather, Michael Pollan's imaginary and representation (*Berry Prophecy Place* local/ism) by its close. The point here is that, while obviously mixing modes, the axiographics of the performances and editing of this wacky *fish out of water* tale all come together *in line* of neoagrarianism.

From the moment Ellis and Cheney hop in the *old pick-up* and *head-out on the open road* to find “Iowa,” i.e., *where their food comes from*, viewers see that the Ellis and Cheney decided to learn *nothing* about *where their food comes from*—*nothing* about conventional-industrial agriculture, or at least act as they did not, before their arrival to one acre of Greene, Iowa, soil first introduced in a bleak and desolate, headlined, *December*, landscape, where and when their preparations for the next year’s growing season will begin. To emphasize the point about their *unenlightened* thinking about “food” as “food” and “farming” as merely involving *tractors*, *dirt* and “food” without any notion of how those three things come together before their arrival on the farm, Ellis and Cheney are shown eating all kinds of incredibly iconic and unhealthy corn-based foodstuffs while making their way through the Midwest. Simulated ignorance of our Yale graduate environmentalists or not, it’s quite convincing, even *wacky* inasmuch as self-effacing, but really more so *highly useful*. For from the moment of their arrival in Iowa to cultivate an acre of corn through harvest, from which they will follow further into the marketplace; to the last night of camping in their one acre, the filmmakers can be absolutely *shocked* by how truly complex the global food regime has become, revealed throughout their experiences at the veritable ground zero of the food wars, rural Iowa; *shocked* by what needs to be accomplished in order to make their one acre of (GE) commodity corn happen; and, ultimately, *shocked* by what needs to be accomplished in order to make sure that their one acre of (GE) commodity corn will never happen again: their consequent enlightenment under the guidance of Michael Pollan.

With/in an overarching, more or less linear, message and spatialization, viewers learn *where their food comes from* through a particular imaginary of the conventional-industrial system via intermixed axiographics. For instance, to spatialize the history of corn domestication, American agriculture, and the federal supply management system, the film uses interactive and

performative time-lapse photography shots. Dancing corn kernels under expository narration move across a map of the US to illuminate corn domestication since *Mesoamerica*. Likewise, farm toys move around a plastic barnyard to demonstrate how conventional-industrial agriculture has become so consolidated since WWII. Along with additional, more *interactive* sequences with the local *Farm Bureau* workers, viewers are (re)presented how this hyper-consolidated global food regime monster of hybrid-and-otherwise-modified corn seeds runs on the US federal subsidies, which at that time (~2003) would directly pay the filmmakers only \$0.28 for every bushel (re)produced through their one acre of corn, totaling thus a measly ~\$14.00 for all of their efforts. Participatory sequences and interactive interviews (re)construct likewise the other most salient factors revealed of the global food regime (re)creating such a low federal pay-out: agrichemicals, biotechnoscience and heavy mechanization.

Again in various interactive shots also featuring local farm workers, the new urban yeoman/ry heroes must wear science lab gear, like gloves and goggles, to prepare anhydrous and other chemicals for spraying. “We look like *farmers* now,” they laugh: the irony, *farmers aren’t scientists* but farmers are *like* scientists now. It’s comical, but still *revelatory*, given that viewers are also treated to watching the new urban yeoman/ry attempt to operate the incredibly complex machinery needed in today’s conventional-industrial paradigm just to prepare the soil, spread the chemicals and GE seed, and, eventually, harvest the acre. Through similar participatory and performative spatializations, the film shows that the truly scandalous aspect of industrial foodways is how such heavy mechanization and biotechnoscience has freed up so much time for farmers. Most ironically, the new urban yeoman/ry heroes must do something *else* in order to effectively conventional-industrial farm, like, we see through various observational/performative scenes, play baseball; visit the local bar where they play billiards; set-up film shots

for their corn kernel and toy tutorials on US agricultural history; play baseball, billiards and slip-n'-slide at the local grain elevator in a literally mountainous commodity corn surplus; and finally, gather *Intel* from a CAFO as well as Earl Butz's room in a nursing home—all before and after interviewing related experts, like Michael Pollan. The diversity of the techniques and aspects of the global food regime could allow for more diverse meaning making, yet the film uncritically relies on a relatively small pool of experts consulted for as particular reasons.

Incidentally, interviews are a central *King Corn* axiographic technique for accomplishing the highly structured journey from citydwelling ignorance to locavore enlightenment. Many of the interviews are *interactive*, which means we can see the interviewers, or Ellis and/ or Cheney, and their interviewees, interacting around a topic related to the filmmakers' attempt to follow their one acre of corn from harvest, to the local Iowa grain elevator, through a Colorado CAFO, and finally, ingestion as HFCS inebriated sodas of Brooklyn, NY. For example, the CAFO system is detailed through interactive shots with Dr. Allen Trenkle and his memorable *Bovine rumenotomy* experiment at *Iowa State University*, which demonstrates exactly what force-feeding corn does to cow stomachs. The section is rounded out by stock aerial images of an operational CAFO in Colorado today, showing most ardently what the system does to nonhuman nature. Such axiographics, within the overarching frame, lead us to the seats of a moving taxi, where Ellis and Cheney speak with a New York cab driver about the ills of diabetes in his own family. He emotionally articulates that these last are indeed related to high consumption of soda, i.e., of HFCS—a more emotional reference nonetheless well framed by the various interactions with commodity corn farming experts, like Dr. Trenkle; as well as by the other sequences of the CAFO. Additional interviews, like with Michael Pollan, are expository, which here mostly means a designated expert is speaking to someone off-camera, presumably the director,

presenting responses to questions or queries which remain otherwise *absent*, only *present* in the responses, about this whole (GE)commodity corn fed system of human and nonhuman morbidity and mortality. *Absent present* could also describe any experts or authorities from (GE) commodity corn processing industries, since no one will agree to meet or speak with the filmmakers. Overall, the main point is that while Ellis and Cheney interact with many of the film's actants, Pollan's expository interview sequences appear to serve as a more Representational, unchallengeable Truth.

The foregoing leads into perhaps the most memorable and *interactive* interview with Earl Butz, the former secretary of agriculture under Nixon, and now well into his nineties. The interview is mostly memorable for inspiring Ellis and Cheney to dawn suits and ties to variously blame the nonagenarian for (re)producing many material effects of the industrial system, as well as Michael Pollan's imaginary (CAFOs, HFCS, morbidity and mortality), albeit inaccurately crediting him alone with the entire modern subsidy system that guarantees huge crop surpluses through present day. The retired and wavering man before them does little more than repeat what he sought to accomplish with his *fencerow to fencerow* pronouncements over thirty years ago, but viewers can *know by seeing* through the axiographics and sequencing of the film that what he *really* accomplished was a global food regime now connected to the countrywide homicide and maiming of cows, taxi cab drivers and the land. Viewers are left with the impression that Earl Butz must be confronted in interaction, whilst Michael Pollan, in exposition, must be believed or even obeyed.

The latter expository and interactive sequences, (re)combined with others, together *reveal* the innerworkings of the otherwise grave mysteries of the *global food regime*—which is also, we learn, quite personal. Not only are families impacted in the most intimate ways by the

conventional-industrial commodity corn system, or so we learn in the New York taxi, but viewers also *know by seeing* the personal impact of the system in a myriad of other Ellis and Cheney interactions as local farmers with *locals*, whether at the community saloon, living and working on neighboring farms, or in the homes of those who can relate stories of both Ellis and Cheney's respective great-grandfathers who once worked in the same small town of Greene, Iowa—simultaneously (re)presenting thus that the citydwellers have so-named *deep Iowa roots*. The time spent on autobiographical detail only augments that this large, consolidated and complex terrifying global food regime is *personal*—and a personal enlightenment of rural Iowa fall-out. This last is also imagined on screen when the harvest of their one acre, after accounting for agri-chemicals, seed and related costs totaling about \$28.00, government subsidy and related additions make-up a difference earning of about only \$8.00—a real cost-price power geometry for too many Iowa farmers today. *Small wonder* so many small farmers, presumably like their great-grandfathers would have been, have lost their livelihoods—and must go so BIG and biotechnoscientific as to be global. Still, we are left in a bleak, Hansonian desert of Real farmers, restructured out of existence; and really *unreal*, (GE) commodity corn fed CAFO (re)produced unnatural food.

All things considered, the latter is really the central material-discursive *new agrarian* critique of conventional-industrial agri-culture (re)presented by *King Corn*: the conventional-industrial paradigm is so *unnatural* a Reality as to (re)produce “food,” rather commodity crops, which in their abundance still cannot be eaten from the field. To demonstrate this last, the *new urban* yeoman/ry otherwise playing baseball and billiards at the local bar, and/or emotionally engaging their *deep Iowa roots*, inexplicably attempt to actually *eat* commodity corn. Sitting on their pick-up cab, they struggle and cough and spit and laugh. Viewers see that, apparently, a

commodity product in no way intended for human consumption without processing is not as tasty, digestible and natural or safe as the highly contrastable natural and sustainable *Real food*, i.e., commodity corn crops are unnatural. As if this point wasn't clear enough, when the *denial* of an interview with anyone in the GE industry (thus made *evidentiary* of all the *concealed* aspects of the terrifying *Global Tyranny Space*) the new urban yeoman/ry, wearing goggles and gloves yet again, instead attempt to make HFCS in their home kitchen. It's a debacle, of course, and quite entertaining to watch. We laughingly find that the new urban yeoman/ry cannot digest dangerous agri-chemicals or HFCS any more than they could commodity field corn... The danger in this last move goes without saying, but the objective about these sequences does not: the film contends that global food regime is concealing the truth from viewers, for if they try to eat or make this "food," it will kill them. (GE) Commodity corn is a work of *science*, not nature. So, (GE) commodity corn products are not "food." Just look at HFCS, the film portends with its axiographics: it's *explosive*. If the current conventional-industrial monocultural paradigm is problematic, and since all this (over) produced (GE) commodity corn is (re)territorializing so many problems, commodity corn quasi-objects simply *should not exist*.

Having taken the year to go *back to the land* in eighty-eight minutes, the once ignorant new urban yeoman/ry heroes are enlightened of their purpose; moreover, the new agrarian *true picture of Reality* has been revealed. After camping-out in their one acre, a move unquestionably signifying their metaphorical and otherwise journey *back to the land*, Ellis and Cheney decide to buy it out from the larger acreage. Viewers can now *see* that at least this one acre of the *cornscape* will never again be put under (re)production of (GE) commodity corn. As the film ends, Ellis and Cheney play baseball there in place of continuing commodity corn (over)production into the future. Presumably, like this, we all must (re)create a sort of *field of*

local/ist *dreams*... Viewers can *know by seeing* that the only plausible alternative is to take commodity corn out of (re)production—an urban agrarian revolt through land purchase, not unlike the CSA stakeholder land purchase of organic acreage—in order to *retreat* from commodity (GE) corn cropping in general, and in its place (re)produce a *field of dreams* which will never have to endure the tragedy of *Global Tyranny Space* again. If that's gone *too* far back to the land, the plausibly intended and more likely possible spectatorships (re)created by implication is to participate in the locavore revolution. Viewers can engage the new agrarian mind as citizen eaters of all things anti-conventional-industrial even when they go back to Boston, for instance—another center (and center of the center)—as enlightened locavores. The implied spectatorship (the new agrarian imaginary) remains long after the film ends: *Eat Organic! Go Local!*—anyway, *just* reject biotechnoscience at the supermarket/ in your kitchen.

At the end of the day, *King Corn* is the moving picture version of new agrarian farmer-in-chief Michael Pollan's (2006) own food journey from conventional-industrial agri-culture to the *only true picture of Reality*, at least as it is delineated in *The Omnivore's Dilemma*. Sure, we are treated to multiple expository interviews with Pollan himself, who on screen basically recounts the entirety of his *making strange* corn sexuality as delineated in his book detailed previously. But far beyond that, the filmmakers have their hair tested for the presence of commodity corn; explore and explode the federal supply management system, which again changed directly with the advent of Earl Butz, Secretary of the USDA under Nixon; reenact the particular development of teosinte to maize to commodity corn (using farm toys and time-lapse photography); follow their one acre from the field to the elevator to the train to the CAFO to McDonald's, USA; speak with individuals directly impacted by HFCS, an unnatural and dangerous product also related to obesity and correlative conditions, like Type-2 diabetes; and finally, most troublingly, buy-out

their one acre of a much larger acreage in order to never put commodity crops under cultivation again—spatializing the overriding imaginary that the world would be a better place if not that we confront such agri quasi-objects, but if they simply didn't exist: the ultimate performative gesture of Pollan's book while *all* other component parts are no less than *direct* references drawn from Pollan's work. The film doesn't just suggest Pollan's new agrarianism. *King Corn* spatializes his new agrarian imaginary... down to his *last strand of hair*. We learn that the current paradigm is irreversibly problematic: commodity corn, particularly in its GE forms, *should not exist*.

It is noteworthy that *King Corn*, unlike other films to be named below, does intermix many strategies of the expository, interactive/ participatory and performative documentary modes at various times. The film could be (re)presented as a performative representation, inspiring *meaning making* to be a more open process for viewers to negotiate; and interrelated spectatorships likewise just *the stuff* of excited, more subjective, articulations. However, *King Corn* mostly fails to fully *reflexively* discourse the documentary representation process; ulterior interpretations of their own subject/ive experience of the material referential reality; or, to leave the intertext open for (re)configuration by viewing communities. On this point, *King Corn* goes to great lengths at times to *reveal* the new urban yeoman/ry setting-up cameras and actants for specific shots—mostly with the time-lapse still photography shots. Yet, none of these set-ups are intended to destabilize the *true picture of Reality* they more particularly forward through the expository narrative. In fact, the filmmaking scenes are highly productive in a completely opposite fashion than documentary/ filmmaker *reflexivity*. Meaning, if anything, filmmaking processes are operationalized by the filmmakers to be identities of *Other*. By reminding the viewers that Ellis and Cheney, through very distant relations, are *insiders* to the Iowa community, showing documentary filmmaking processes can simultaneously (re)assert their

necessary *outsiderness*, as therefore more *objective* observers of both the rural Iowa communities (where urban filmmakers are most likely few and far between); and, more obviously, to the conventional-industrial agriculture paradigm. Like this, *King Corn*'s (re)presentations and narrations can be received as even more trustworthy, for it appears as though the new urban yeoman/ry are connected to the land without establishing a kind of connection or investment in the conventional-industrial agriculture paradigm that has swallowed-up that land other than to reveal all that constitutes the unnatural and strange, even terrifying, *Global Tyranny Space*—a space that remains supposedly concealed from average consumers until the filmmakers reveal it.

The latter is why I argue that *King Corn* leaves very little room for ulterior *meaning making* when the intertext is dispersed through a community of documentary viewers. For those most comfortable and experienced with the medium, we are offered an overtly controlled and directed message, as well as a linear arrangement through time that altogether tethers us to an ultimate and ultimately intended thesis and conclusion about US foodways—particularly Michael Pollan's imaginary and representation. Unnatural, strange and inedible commodity “food products” whether in the field or in HFCS must be denounced and abandoned. The only possible food future proffered is that, in lieu of having Pollan's family *sit-down organic meal of the Real*, we can retreat into camping or baseball *in its place*. Luckily, we can take the new agrarian locavorism back through Wirzba's (2003) regional network tunnel to Boston, too, just like Michael Pollan's work takes him back to the University of California, Berkeley. Long after viewing, spectators will presumably move through performances of the organic and local/ist wherever they tread. The *GE Corn Effect* as provisioned is thus effective and complete.

The *GE Corn Effect*

I believe that documentaries are some of the most potent technologies of power-knowledge (re)production today, notably here when it comes to spatializing a particular imaginary of US foodways. With particular axiographics, the documentary intertext can purposively convey the new agrarian mind. For example, if these films draw from a relatively small collection of, and specifically shaped, expository, interactive/ participatory and performative axiographics, selected filmmakers can carry mostly proscriptive, didactic and linear arguments that often lack the critical reflexivity which can inspire more open-ended, democratic *meaning making*, thereby presenting an as particular new agrarian imaginary of US agriculture and with an as intended readership and performance.

Any number of what I call new agrarian films can be analyzed in this way, from the wide release *Magnolia Pictures*, *Participant Media* and *River Road Entertainment* co-production of Robert Kenner's (2008) *Food, Inc.*, which grossed over \$4,400,000; to the lesser known (and funded) but by no means less dangerous, *The Future of Food* (2005) by Deborah Koons Garcia, ultimately (re)presented by filmmaker Morgan Spurlock's production company for DVD release. Independent *Scared Crow Productions'* relatively low budget production and highly limited release of Timo Nadudvari and Adam Curry's (2006), *Bad Seed: The Truth about Our Food*; and/ or one of the smallest films listed here, *Wholesome Goodness Productions' Fed Up!:* *Genetic Engineering, Industrial Agriculture and Sustainable Alternatives*, by Angelo Sacerdote (2002); and, in a divergent way still easily connectable, *Collective Eyes'* production of, and *CAVU Picture's*, *The Real Dirt on Farmer John* (2006), directed by Taggart Siegel (see generally the IMDb at www.imdb.com) could all be examined as well. In highly differentiated ways, it is noted, the nevertheless *King Corn*-esque spatialized arguments generally purport to:

1) *lift the veil*, or reveal the *concealed* Truth—the *true picture of Reality*—of conventional-industrial food (re)production as the Goliath of the center, with organic alternatives as the David of the margin; and spatialize the dicta that, 2) *Laws, like sausages, cease to inspire respect in proportion as we know how they are made*. Rather, these films go to great lengths to *make strange* biotechnoscience as applied to foodways in general, and (GE) commodity corn (re)production, processing, (i.e. *pink slime* processing facilities, laboratories and so forth) and consumption in particular, as each to each deviant and terrifying modifications of nature, thereby (re)producing products which are unjust, unsafe, untested, unlabeled, unknown... veritably, thus *too strange* to be taken with precaution from the first instance. They are unquestionably and permanently banished to the ether beyond the highly reified boundaries of the new agrarian imaginary. The reveal techniques of such documentaries seek to alternatively reify the naturalness of organics, rather, *right living* and *right eating*.

The objective of too many of these films seems to be not to inspire spectators to make biotechnoscience safer, but to *make strange* biotechnoscience to the degree that any given community would presumably reject the unnatural commodity quasi-objects and biotechnoscience in general; and, retreat into particularly imagined practices, projects and performances. I call this last new agrarian documentary effect of complete GE rejection and total organic/ localism adoption the *GE Corn Effect*, i.e., the (re)creation of *particular* spectatorship subjectivity and performance in the world. This last is anchored most ardently to the axiographics of the new agrarian representation, but also to the particular corn stories of Michael Pollan; and backed-up by a small pool of the new agrarian experts, incl., *University of California, Berkeley* Professor Ignacio Chapela; and ecofeminist and expert on all things GE *terminator technology*, Vandana Shiva (e.g., 1989). If Michael Pollan has become the *go-to*

expert on all things US foodways in contemporary food-related documentaries, then Professor Chapela is the *go-to expert* on all things Mexican maize, sought in many documentaries listed here, incl., *Bad Seed*; *The Future of Food*; and, *Fed Up*. Perhaps not surprisingly at this juncture, two of the above films (*Fed Up!* and *Bad Seed*), when discoursing the impacts of a *global* food regime, also consult Vandana Shiva: the *go-to expert* on all things chemical treadmills, terminator technologies and the *Global South*...

For now, the new agrarian documentary *making strange* of biotechnoscience is rather *strange* itself in a world otherwise obsessed with simulated, anyway, science-based power-knowledge (re)production. With the glaring point about *fictional* representation of a coeval material reality aside for the moment, I am thinking about the obsessively devoted fans of the latest *Crime Science Investigation* (CSI) or CSI-type series, who are endlessly treated to reenactments of intricate trial-and-error processing of crime scene materials. All otherwise inaccessible, such complexly cross-pollinated *sciences*—at least their fictional depiction purportedly based on in-house expert guidance—become seemingly more accessible when the processing of discolored human skin scrapings, bloody clothes and a whole lot of maggots is located in futuristic interiors inexplicably pumping loud rock or techno music. The widespread acceptance, and fanaticism, of such *science-in-action* scenes that would presumably bore most viewers in a classroom has become so extreme that today, various legislatures even have had to confront and address *the CSI effect*. As Lash (2011) reports, “the ‘effect’ holds that jurors, having watched TV crime dramas... arrive at court expecting the prosecution to present DNA evidence conclusively linking the defendant to the crime. If the prosecution fails to present such evidence, the disappointed jury would likely vote for acquittal” (p. 2). As a result, many judges have taken to clarifying in jury instructions that DNA evidence is *not* a requirement in presenting

a case in court. Such actions intended to free the legislative process from the *effect* of having seen one too many reenactments of genetic testing have instead become hotly debated, most recently in the *Maryland Court of Appeals*. The Court now has to determine if one judge's redress of the *CSI effect* unfairly biased the jury (p. 2). Ultimately, not only have such popular fictional representations of the most advanced sciences been *embraced* by vast numbers of people outright over the last ten years, they seem to have come to command some rather substantial perceptions and attitudes (i.e., *fiction* inspired spectatorships) about what counts as *evidence*—and even *justice*—in American society.

So, in terms of acceptance and justice, portraying science-based processes as in *CSI* seemingly works to (re)create spectator locations that actually impact courtroom behaviors—actually demand more *science*, but only in a certain way. This last is forwarded here not to churlishly compare fiction and nonfiction representation, but to merely highlight that *all* representation has *great force* in the (re)territorialization of spectatorships. Taking this last point further, can we not entertain the fact that when such spatialization in the *representation of reality* is carried through a *nonfiction* intertext—especially when such an intertext is far more direct, proscriptive, didactic—that the co-constitution of spectatorships would also retain a power-knowledge at least as commensurate with the fictional representation, if not much more so in some cases? A comparable *making strange* of science-based processes in foodways, namely agri-biotechnoscience, in various new agrarian documentary film representations have perchance even greater power thus to co-create spectators whose performances through the social natural world could indeed shift to rejecting GE in foodways (or biotechnoscience more generally)—spectators thus plausibly preferring less science in foodways; that GE commodity crops simply should not exist, i.e., the *GE Corn Effect* (like the flipside of the *CSI effect*). The difference

between the latter two examples of representation of science-based process basically involves the framing and narration of naturalness. On one hand, using genetics to *process* material, even covered in maggots and even if carried with a fictional spatialization of a no less than somewhat coeval material reality of CSI becomes acceptable, actually requisite, for justice with/in the spectators' performance through the world (like in a jury, for instance). However, on the other hand, applying similar principles to *engender new* hybrids, or cross-pollinated quasi-objects, as spatialized in more or less nonfiction documentary portrayals is a *pink slimed*, unnatural injustice that must be rejected and halted through spectators' performances through the social natural world—be those in social action groups rejecting GE in foodways (or biotechnoscience more generally), voting behavior, or, ever again, *Going Organic!*

The *GE Corn Effect* does not purport that people reject GE food products outright—quite the contrary in some cases. But it is submitted to illuminate that while such portrayals of science have come to mean justice for a whole slew of people, evident in the impact of the *CSI effect* on criminal law, concurrent food documentary spatializations of comparable biotechnoscience in another venue (particularly those interconnected with the techniques of the *expository* and *interactive* modes) have come to signify, arguably for the same or similar set of average Americans, a far more new agrarian expert-oriented denunciation of opposing GE experts and their labs of Dr. Frankenstein. Interviews with certain new agrarian experts usually present them to be like CSI scientists—akin to heroic specialists/ saviors. Interviews with any GE experts either by implication (*absent presence*); or, in their own edited versions are greatly contrasted. GE experts are often made to seem like monsters themselves, motivated only by rampant government-corporate conspiracy, purposive deception and malevolent greed to use a somehow

inherently, or essentially detrimental—even homicidal—technology to manufacture unsafe, unlabeled, and simply terrifying *Frankenfoods*.

There are real world, or material, impacts, of the *GE Corn Effect*, the strongest example coming in the veritable *Antietam* of the *food wars* to date: the US GE food labeling debate. Obviously, awareness, let alone *acceptance* of agri-GE is a complex topic at the interstices of access, information, interest, knowledge, economics, lay media rhetorics and so forth. My point here is simply that widely influential neoagrarian imaginaries of, particularly, GE, in various popular culture representation can lead to confusion about GE labeling, which does nothing to: 1) secure GE labeling in the first instance; or 2) better regulate GE from inception, through application and patenting. The latter means that often environmentally sound GE practices have become stifled, if not entirely halted in some cases, due to those attitudes' effect upon research funders, or the processes of Federal GE legislation, regulation and labeling (Stewart & Mclean, 2004). Actually, to the credit of innumerable representations of anti-GE advocacy, new agri-GE product development trended *downward* with the *Monarch* and *Starlink* GE corn cases at the turn of the current century (Stewart & McLean, 2004) (also when the USDA, who approved various GE corn varieties, banned GE in organics). However, likened representations have more often worked to merely *cloud* the issue, which, again, can be briefly overviewed in the context of the GE regulatory and labeling debate.

GE regulation today is more like a *throwntogetherness* of statutes and general consumer awareness, among innumerable other factors, laws, expectations and representations. To date, GE is regulated through a patchwork of federal agencies, most deferential to the FDA under FDCA provisions which themselves are deferent to '*material*' and '*substantial equivalence*.' The latter means that mandatory labeling of GE products is not required in the US... and little

legal stricture about its review is, either. Albeit supposedly “*all* GM foods and feeds currently on the US market have undergone what is called an FDA ‘consultation,’ in which the developer submits a dossier of compositional data relating to the putative ‘identical’ food or feed” (in Marden, 2003, p. 997) many reviewers and critics from a variety of disciplines continue to critically examine, and oft times challenge with a mix of admiration, suspicion, and some disdain, the absence of both mandatory pre-market review, and subsequent labeling in the US; or whether *all* corporate products are actually going under extensive review. Some critics charge that the current regulatory framework of GE food products is indeed inadequate and consumers need something else or more [Bratspies, 2003; McHughen & Smyth, 2008; Kuiper et al., 2001; Rich, 2004; Smyth, Khachatourians & Phillips, 2002a; 2002b; Baker & Burnham, 2001a; 2001b].

Formal response from the FDA to the latter inquiries continues to maintain that regulatory authority will only be triggered with questions of safety as determined from evaluation of dissimilarities between the components of the *standard* and the *new* product, i.e., *products over processes*.¹¹³ Scientific panel review of biotechnology in the US determined that: 1) all genetic modifications can yield hazardous resultant products, thus product-to-product based approaches are better suited to a, 2) biotechnology that is no different than other agricultural innovations on a continuum; thus, 3) risk assessment triggers should remain product composition over generative processes, and 4) that assessment should wholly be of “risks” rather than precautions (Marden, 2003; McHughen & Smyth, 2008). The preceding is crucial to understanding the current regulatory debate; as well as the position of the US in the context of EU countries and their regulations of GM products (McHughen & Smyth). In the US,

¹¹³ See generally, “Statement of Policy: Foods Derived from New Plant Varieties” (1992).

“Substantial equivalence” prevails through *whatever safety concerns may ordinarily reside in that food....* (qtd. in McHughen & Smyth).

It remains uncertain if there *will ever be* mandatory GE food labeling. If there are substantial differentiations between products (not *processes*) labeling would already be required. Currently, in the FDA’s purview, no mandatory labeling conditions have been necessarily or sufficiently met in the GE context (Marden, 2003). Furthermore, *voluntary* labeling, not unlike the consultation outlined heretofore, is allowed. But this aspect has an interesting *reversal* important for appreciating the impact of various popular anti-GE imaginaries and representations today: FDA policy specifically states that, currently, “any labeling that a food is ‘GM-free’ or ‘GMO-free’ would be considered *misleading* under 21 U.S.C. § 343.”¹¹⁴ Further denounced is *disclosure of manufacturing process*, “based simply on consumer desire to know.”¹¹⁵ Perhaps counterintuitively, then, *lack* of information about whether or not a product is derived from GE technology here is apropos while *labeling* it would be considered *misleading* (Robertson, 2003). Essentially, “while a consumer has a right to know of processing methods that change the expected characteristics of a food that right is not applied when it is the production method itself that changes those characteristics... the case of distinction with a difference” (Rich, 2004, p. 7). The implications of this are FDA acknowledgement that: 1) consumer concern is not yet a necessary or sufficient condition for changing the strictures, which would require legislative shifts; and 2) in the current climate of *consumer distrust*, labeling will plausibly demonize the GE manufacturers’ products, leading perhaps then to *decreased development of the technology*.

¹¹⁴ See generally, “Statement of Policy: Foods Derived from New Plant Varieties” (1992).

¹¹⁵ See generally, “Statement of Policy: Foods Derived from New Plant Varieties” (1992).

Taking all of this all into consideration, for now *the absence* of the GE label means fettered, but not obstreperously so, industry-wide development of biotechnoscience quasi-objects—largely at *corporate* discretion and determination of safety. In addition to the seeming FDA facilitation of GE technology is another crucial factor that seems to be reiterated throughout the FDA “substantial equivalence”-driven regulation: the concept of voluntariness. Voluntary consultation, voluntary labeling ... Regulatory authority over what is “equivalent” can at times be shifted to the discretion of the *voluntary* corporation, given the lack of mandatory pre-market review. Though again, many seek consultation, this looser approach to advanced technologies could potentially be put in the service of corporate interests (Bratspies, 2003). This last acknowledgement is, without question, of the utmost concern here and otherwise. Overall, the current regulatory structure, and particularly the FDA, has an interesting partnership with the older and newer biotechnological making of (un)natural corn sexuality. And, it remains absolutely possible and happening that GE crop technologies could be created and patented for all sorts of reasons to meet not only the socially constructed demands of post industrial civilizations, but to further the objectives of global free marketer imaginaries of the domestic and international market. Such multiple realities demand the most open, outwardlooking imaginaries and representations possible toward inspiring *unruly and practical* dialogues...

Take for instance the *Aventis* StarLink corn incident of 2000 (described in both Bratspies, 2003; and Smyth, Khachatourians and Phillips, 2002a; 2002b), where we can see all of this murky regulatory oversight hook-up at the place of the quasi-object, GE commodity corn. To briefly reiterate, in late 2000, consumer-right-to-know and environmental groups detected rDNA from the first generation GM corn product, *StarLink*, in Taco Bell taco shells. The patent awarded *Aventis CropScience* for said GMO was predicated upon crop segregation via a buffer

zone crop. For, this particular GE corn had been approved only for animal feed, and not human consumption. Days upon alert of the discovery, *Kraft Foods* began recalling their taco shells. Though the contamination could not be denied, and was aggressively followed-up by numerous government agencies, no allergenicity could be associated with the corn by independent researchers, the FDA or the CDC—even though they conducted a “gold standard,” double-blind, placebo-controlled, food-challenge (DBPCFC) *Bt* corn allergy study (Sutton et al., 2003). Regardless, forty-four consumers complained of allergic reactions (which could not be verified by investigators and lead to no further inquiry) to the products only after what was called a *media firestorm*... set-off by a coalition of consumer and environmental groups, most notably, *Friends of the Earth* (FOE), a multimillion dollar donated resources and international network of supporters to lobby for the environment, climate change, and a healthier world (see generally www.foe.org). FOE, already fired-up on their website about some dead monarch larvae, had purchased the corn-containing products at grocery stores, thereafter sending the products for genetic testing and beginning the recall and controversy.

Two aspects of the foregoing are of particular interest at this point for understanding the food activist imaginary: first, a major goal of FOE is to represent consumers’ safety, hence why they purchased the corn products in the first place. This proved to be a highly valid concern over the segregation of the GE corn; and the current regulatory structure. But at the same time, the funding through which they are able to perform such independent tests is garnered privately, meaning that not unlike *Aventis*’ responsibility for the safety of its products, FOE is held accountable for its food-related activities, conclusions, and framing website rhetoric *only to its “shareholders.”* In that light, there need be no scientific corroboration for its claims on food safety, which is perhaps why the strongly charged, largely undefined, *Frankensteinian*

connotation and image, connecting GE to *nanotechnology*, can be sold to worried stakeholders as: 1) a terrifying, unknowable science-health crisis of the (post)modern world, as opposed to a biotechnology centuries *in the making*, from which FOE will nonetheless save them through their donations by delivering them back to a safer, more natural, *earth*; and, 2) unquestioned contradictions of scientific findings, like that, even supposedly *without testing*, FOE can know that there are *immunocompetancy issues* related to GEOs from which FOE will save them through their donations (see generally www.foe.org). The crux of the issue here is that biotechnoscience, otherwise in a myriad of forms reduced to a *singular* image, is continually represented, without openness to possibilities in even highly qualified ways, as always a *new* science, as opposed to, for instance, other views of biotechnoscience as a concatenated link of decades' production which actually, if nothing else, can also be perceived as *more precise*. “Inconclusive,” and even “negatively correlated” does not equal “no testing” in the scientific community... but it does to FOE. The latter is my central concern, and far more than some kind of equally absolutist claim in response that *all* of their imaginaries, projects and concerns lack utility or merit. Cannot we ask for an *in-between* place—that the imaginary and representation be more open, or outwardlooking, to multiple, heterogeneous perspectives and possibilities, including those of various GE biotechnoscience, without being indicted for attempting to destabilize the reasonable concerns and/ or the very necessary local/ist project and/ or activist cause?

The *Aventis StarLink* incident raised concerns over human health related effects largely disseminated to consumers through popular media, which generally includes press releases and stories found in the lay print press, i.e. major newspapers and magazines. Contemporary science communication studies largely agree that the study of popular media's channels, framing, and

themes in relation to “how the public accesses information and acquires new knowledge” can shed light on “people’s opinions and perceptions and their subsequent decision making on consumer goods” (Mcinerney et al., 2004, p. 48-49). Studying frequency of information seems a reliable way of accessing consumer knowledge of GE. The case of *StarLink* in 2000 is an excellent example of spiking media coverage on GEOs, in both major newspapers, like *New York Times*, *Newsweek*, and *Wall Street Journal*; and popular magazines. Such coverage, which for the most part was slowly but steadily growing since 1995, rose dramatically in 2000, before tapering off due to coverage of the events of September 11, 2001. Many of these stories covered animal biotechnology, such as cloning and *Mad Cow Disease*, but *StarLink* did in fact account for a notable portion. Nonetheless, given the size of the US population, and the number of widely circulating newspapers and magazines, there is relatively very little published about GE products. Furthermore, frequency, as studies generally show, actually has very little to do with *people’s opinions and perceptions and their subsequent decision making on consumer goods* (Mcinerney et al., 2004) anyway. Because so relatively little is published for wide dissemination, the information should be reliable, informed, and informative. However, what studies more generally find is that there is even less science information “that is informative and substantially about the topic” (p. 48-49). Again, not so much on frequency but *quality*, the average consumer has very little opportunity to learn about biotechnology production and products until, for instance, *StarLink* is pulled from the shelves; until *controversy*. So *what* exactly was published *about StarLink* is the bottom line (Mcinerney et al., 2004, p. 56-59); and, comparably here, understanding the axiographics of popular representation, like documentary films, becomes more critical for gauging coverage *quality*.

When correlating samples of major magazines and newspapers of the time, it was shown that the *StarLink* controversy was reported in small, introductory detail for reports more extensively on: “protests against globalization and biotechnology, both in Seattle at the World Trade Organization meeting in 2000 and in other places around the country; public opinion; trade; the environment; politics and public policy” (Mcinerney et al., 2004, p. 48-49). Ostensibly, the *StarLink* incident became vital for framing other issues of globalization, and so forth, comprising a veritable “impetus for the increase for publication of articles on GE food, even though the articles were not specifically on the issue” (p. 62). It seems that connecting GE food scares to greater sustainability issues had proven successful years prior by a powerful lobbying force deferred to by the popular media. With the *death of some monarch larvae* a few years prior, US foodways had already become a *deadly environmental crisis* (p. 64). At the forefront of the quality of coverage issue and its rhetorical strategies is the quality of sources, first obviously with the monarch *Nature* study itself. Yet perhaps more so is that as the coverage of the report as a *crisis* continued, “Journalists turned to activist groups for information” rather than reliable insight from academic, government, or food industry sources (p. 64). From that point on, the crisis was no longer solely that of the environment, but became mostly inexplicably linked to *human* mortality. Overall, representations have power-knowledge to imagine, name and excite *social natural* performance through the world. They can also lead to cloudy articulations and, like this, veritable material-discursive food wars stalemates.

For example, today most Americans indicate in surveys that they want GE food to be labeled; they want GE corn compositionality to be indicated. A 1997 *Novartis* survey found that 93% of Americans wanted labeling of GE foods, with a *Time* magazine study two years later yielding an 81% consumer interest in mandatory labeling (Marden, 2003, p. 12). In 2001, a

more detailed poll conducted by the *Center for Science in the Public Interest* showed consumer desire for GE labeling at 62%, with interest in labeled pesticide percentage disclosure (such as from *Bt corn*) running first to GE in general (second). Most participants indicated that labeling was imperative if the whole food was GE, as opposed to if major ingredients (like corn) or a food additive were derived from GE processes (p. 12). It seems, generally, that most consumers want GE labeling so as to “make choices consistent with their preferences” (Baker and Burnham, 2001a, p. 387). Some of those preferences could include eventual purchase and consumption of GE products as long as the consumer understands what they are; that they are clearly labeled; and in some cases, of a particular brand and/or inexpensive (p. 387). Deeply held values which inform consumer actions and motivations are indeed safety focused. But many consumers connect ideas of GE safety with labeling, meaning, *with* an FDA stamp of approval: “labeling products based on their GEO content could provide these consumers valuable information to consider in making their product choices in much the same way that nutritional labels indicate nutritional content” (p. 400). So, the central issue is that the desire for mandatory GE labeling for these average consumers is less about rejection of GE than assurance of GE’s safety and quality. Consumers generally want to know, agree that they know safety through an FDA label, and trust their federal regulatory system to keep their products safe, which is represented in that label.

The most obvious question: can a FDA approved GE label *ever* signify these last aspects given the highly charged and various imaginaries and representations of US agricultural quasi-objects today? Is it not likely that the various spatialized messages of new agrarian representations, like documentary films, could only further fog this already foggy issue? Really, the GE label today would not likely function as a signification of FDA approved quality. It

would function like a *scarlet letter* of GE food products (Hart, 2004), i.e., the *GE Corn Effect*. And if this last is the case, most likely mandatory labeling will more plausibly stigmatize the products—so people *won't buy them*, and *reject biotechnology*, thereby corrupting the purpose of the very label that the consumers they work on behalf of, want, i.e., wanting the label as it *represents* safety, whereas its absence represents *unsafe* products, i.e., “drawing attention to the technology used in producing the food may raise concern among consumers and lead to increased resistance to the technology. Labeling of the GMO content of the foods would surely be controversial and would almost certainly be opposed by biotechnology advocates...” (Baker & Burnham, 2001a, p. 359). Due to the federal and industry-wide acknowledgement that labeling could have a *GE Corn Effect*, namely inculcated in the aforementioned FDA authority which deems its *labeling* would be considered “misleading” (Robertson, 2003, p. 78) under both the FDCA and this sociocultural regulation, labeling plausibly *will not* happen. So, whilst many critics charge federal regulation of GE related food products should at least stipulate the *labeling* of GE products so consumers can make more informed purchasing and consumption decisions, the imaginary of the food wars, spatialized in various representations such as those presented, does little more than work to make the label so desired little more than a terrifying alert... Like this, the FDA will not—in some ways, as stands, *cannot*—label GE given its own, undeniably troubling, regulatory patchwork. And, so the food wars spin...

When all is said and done, I argue that many more new agrarian representations, like documentaries, could be comparably analyzed to understand how a divisive imaginary of US foodways—and one regularly locatable in the constellation and/or continuum of the new agrarian prophet, Wendell Berry/ “Wendell Berry”; and, today, also highly relatable to the imaginary and representation of Michael Pollan and his most provocative *cornographies*—starkly contrasts the

imaginaries and representations of biotechnoscience in *other* arenas of American popular culture and everyday life... and like this, proliferates very serious material *effects* when it comes to US food labeling law, to name just one example; as well as GE quasi-object monsters in general, which, to date, continue to require much fuller representation in a more open, outwardlooking, imaginary of US agriculture.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Toward Cornotology, *Quasi-Agrarianism*

Belief in something called the modern has itself been a mistake. Instead, the *amodern* refers to a view of history of science as culture that insists on the absence of beginnings, *enlightenments*, and endings: the world has always been *in the middle of things, in unruly and practical conversation*, full of action and structured by *a startling array of actants and of networking and unequal collectives*... The shape of my amodern history will have a different geometry, not of progress, but of *permanent and multi-patterned interaction through which lives and worlds get built, human and nonhuman*. (my emphasis; Haraway, 1992, p. 304)

I am standing on the front porch of our rural Iowa commodity corn farm, which continues today as a custom farm inputting 100% GE seed. Through life to the point of death; some redemption; yet other incalculable yields and losses; and now material and discursive (re)vision, today this abnormally lush, sturdy and resilient *cornscape* continues to *fall in line* like soldiers marching almost to the front porch. And it was and is from here, for here, our family farm ever *diffracted* through a GE commodity corn plant, that I finally (re)c/si(gh)te *quasi-agrarianism*.

My project seeks to both enact and provision a critical quasi-agrarian (re)vision toward different geographical imaginaries and representation of US agriculture. Quasi-agrarianism seeks reconsideration of some of the most popular geographical imaginaries of US agriculture today, which I have cited as neoagrarianism, by first exploring a much longer space-time of material agri-cultures and discursive American agrarianisms. Likewise, my project attempts to

lay-out salient theoretical, historical agricultural interfaced discursive agrarianism groundwork for understanding US agriculture, interfaced popular neoagrarian imaginaries; for moving *toward cornotology*, quasi-agrarianism. By both examining *the meaning of modernity* as it is applied in relational geographical theories of modern bifurcation of society and nature, reenjoined as a social nature imaginary of space and place, respectively, a quasi-agrarian imaginary thus seeks to trace American agrarianism(s) from the first instance as a modern *Work of Purification*; and how the interrelated, though varied, modern American agrarian imaginaries and material expressions through space-time inculcate the material-discursive food wars following WWII.

Without question, US agriculture changes immeasurably following *The War*—a *great agricultural transition* more like. Accordingly, I my works seeks to illuminate how popular and scholarly (post)modern and post geographical imaginaries of US agriculture shift almost uniformly to food wars: a global food regime versus an organic agri-culture increasingly fractured BIG and small, or local/ist food and lifestyles sensibilities and projects. Whatever had existed of the (conventional-industrial) family farm in material reality has certainly become an even more *tricky* power geometry wrought of debt, rent, federal subsidies and deals, further fragmentation of pluriactivity and resiliency—moreover, a struggle of even my own family within a postmodern price-cost squeeze that remains barely a footnote in macrostructural perspectives presenting the great crisis as an unquestionable success of advanced biotechnoscience, purchase and processing... all resulting in corporate efficiency and a relatively low cost of food. Epic commodity corn surplus now satiates mega processing industries with cheap grains for the refinement of processed food and feed products, while its left-overs continue to shape a more global food regime in its image; while the federally regulated and determined commodity crop surplus has also undoubtedly ensured less domestic food

security than one public health crisis after another... a *maize maze* nightmare, a *desert of desserts* and the *Real*... The food wars are a seductive and powerful imaginary—and *why not?* Various scales of organic controls are more beneficial than any kind of conventional-industrial system to date, in any number of different ways related to public, community, ecological, familial and personal health. Still, any conclusive answer to whether the *carbon footprint* is lessened by BIG organics, let's say; if conventional-industrial agriculture is consistently outperformed by BIG organics; or, if organic food is healthier in terms of *naturalness*, each to each necessarily remain points of contentious debate which I submit must be more openly, outwardlookingly and democratically represented if we are to fully imagine all of the possible tools which could be integrated for a truly *sustainable* US agricultural paradigm.

A recent study published in *Nature* (i.e., Seufert, Ramankutty & Foley, 2012) provided results of a rather exhaustive, comparative review of organic and conventional-industrial crop trials. The researchers argue that organic crop yields were often *lower* than those of conventional-industrial counterparts, specifically in terms of wheat and corn. Organic agriculture was more comparable for perennials, including fruits and vegetables production, but organic yields were still lower. Although the *Rodale Institute's* longest comparison has shown consistently that organic crops outperform the conventional-industrial, specifically in drought and flood conditions—and their beneficence for general soil health cannot be denied—larger conclusions to be drawn from far more often conflicting reportage is that better soil management, to mean increasing soil's capacity for water and nutrient holding, water infiltration and structure overall, can buffer crops' productivity amidst otherwise catastrophic, and now more common, climatic change incidents, like crop drought, blight and disease. Since greater vacillations of weather must be endured given global climate change, soil improvement, particularly in organic

strategies of crop diversity, connects to greater global food security—this last is without question.¹¹⁶ However, can not the most popular imaginaries and representation of US agriculture today also entertain side-by-side BIG organics and conventional-industrial systems comparisons to date that show soil quality *can also be* improved by the assemblage of both systems’ exhaustingly researched and, though highly qualified, *most promising*, tools and techniques—the best of *both* agri-cultures? If, for example, some GE biotechnoscience can lessen synthetic agrichemical inputs, whilst adding necessary vitamin content found in organics, could not the strengths of both systems be assembled to, in effect, strengthen the most dangerous and deleterious consequences of the conventional-industrial system? This last is simply a possibility which is imaginable and representable, evident in the works presented as nearest the *in-between* place of the new agrarianism today.

Really, the *soil* of the *in-between* place is where quasi-agrarian imaginaries seek more open and outwardlooking representation of US agriculture to be comprised less of a food war, with attendant divisions of value and tools, than of multiple social natural assemblages of both the discourse and practices of the conventional-industrial and organic agricultures; where the strengths and weaknesses, data and fears of both systems are considered and represented toward dialoguing a more sustainable US agricultural future, routing from the soil to the table. This last open representation is an issue of geography—of geographical imaginary, rather, how we imagine and represent society and nature, how they assemble, and the quasi-objects which are continually reproduced through such boundary projects. In relational perspectives, boundary projects would follow a much longer network through space-time even extending to the first

¹¹⁶ For metacommentary, see generally, “Can Organic Food Feed the World? New Study Sheds Light On Debate Over Organic Vs. Conventional Agriculture” (2012).

genetic tinkering which lead to agriculture 10, 000 years ago. Through a relational imaginary, GE can be represented, if nothing else, more *openly*—an application of relational perspectives that in *no* way intends to *uncritically* glorify some massive, homogenous GE biotechnoscience grouping as *just safe* anymore than it intends to set-up another US food system *talisman* on the *other* side of the *just* food wars. An outwardlooking representation could at least indicate that the latest GE has connections to traditional plant hybridization; moreover, that it is plausible, in other imaginaries, that the some biotechnology can be (re)c(si)gh)ted as a far more sophisticated and precise plant hybridization... In its agronomic forms (F1 GE *Bt* commodity corn, for instance), some GE can actually displace agri-chemical use in the conventional-industrial global food regime; and, in only qualified and controlled ways, could be explored in terms of its beneficence for soil health *when* in *assemblage* with, for instance, various organic methods. Would not an open representation of any of the strengths of the conventional-industrial paradigm, namely certain forms of GE biotechnoscience and its promising possibilities of thoroughly lessening, if not eventually eliminating, agri-chemicals, combined with organic systems' soil management, *best grow* a discourse about how to better grow commodity crops, like corn, and thus a truly more *sustainable global food regime* in the future? As Thompson (2006) puts it,

The risks and unintended consequences associated with all these agricultural technologies can truthfully be said to be *the risks and unintended consequences of conventional plant breeding*... We must do a better job of thinking critically about agriculture's ecological footprint... *it would be seductively and tragically mistaken to think for even a second that opposition to all GM crops is the logical consequence of concern for biodiversity.* (my emphasis; p. 84; 85)

Open, outwardlooking representation of US agriculture as an *assemblage* is the ecological steering mechanism of quasi-agrarianism. Through my analysis, I try to show that instead, *food wars* is the most widely available imaginary of US agriculture. Likewise, and to date, governing bodies of US agriculture do much to ensure GE will never *integrate* in *material* reality, esp., following Section 205.105 of the *National Organic Program*, which definitively differentiated biotechnology, rather *traditional* plant hybridization, *from* recombinant DNA techniques, and in turn, further clarified the material-discursive boundaries of the *food wars*... though with even less *clarity* in material reality. As of now, far too many US consumers are lead to believe *100% organic* means *zero tolerance for GE* in organic products, which is simply not the case (Ronald & Adamchak, 2008, p. 3). It goes without saying that achieving *100% purity*, in essence, *zero tolerance* for *any* agriculture product, GE based or not, is *impossible* in the twenty-first century. The USDA acknowledges this last, but that doesn't clarify *tolerance levels* for average consumers. A reasonable question here would be if this last is the intended result...

It's worth asking why the organics industry is seemingly so invested in *not* determining a specific GE threshold for organics that also meets consumer expectations since they have *already* set an effective five percent threshold for synthetic chemicals in organic products (given agri-chemical drift from conventional production cannot be avoided) (p. 3). At least one logical deduction from this lack of determination would be that consumers interpret *100% organic* to indicate *zero tolerance for GE* in organic products. Clarifying the latter most certainly could disenfranchise some organic consumers. Also, the extreme sensitivity of current product testing for trace DNA from GE plant material means that the organic industry would have to set the threshold *so low* that almost every product would be disqualified, thereby offering *zero* products for organics' consumers (p. 3). Another idea that can be drawn from the foregoing is that

clarifying tolerance might mean GE is seen to be even mildly *acceptable* by many organic proponents—an imaginary in direct contrast to what it is far more commonly represented as an unnatural and mysterious Frankenstein science (somehow deeply divergent from orthodox hybridization and thus far more terrifying than agri-chemicals) that actively seeks to pollute nature and purity of natural products. At the most basic level, these latter channels do not fully represent that the avoidance of cross-pollination and contamination is a big concern and responsibility of GE growers, too, who, like organic producers, have many stakes in complying with federal regulations.

Well beyond that, though, are much larger questions about the meaning of protecting organic nature/ naturalness from GE; or what such protection can even mean in a twenty-first century world where biotechnoscience has thoroughly penetrated all other aspects of everyday life, and mostly without comment from a general public who might be made uneasy by endless popular blogging about *pink slime*, *in vitro meats* and processed GE commodity corn-based products while otherwise mindlessly inebriated on *smart phones*, *Facebook*, anti-anxiety meds and a global networked textile/ luxury industry... Obviously, the complexity of this last is practically *unimaginable*. Meaning, if such protection and purification is taken-up for ensuring the healthfulness of all humans and nonhumans and food systems—the real point of any project connected with US agriculture—another issue arises in terms of scientific validity. Oftentimes, when it comes to extensive comparative review of a substantial *healthfulness* of organics, not surprisingly, *agri-chemicals*, from carbon footprints, crop yields and soils, to residue on food products, are of the *most pressing* concern (now as they were thirty years ago)... And, the much more striking anxieties about eating GE commodity corn-based foods related to immuno-competency, metabolic and chemical changes, physiological effects, the way bodies absorb

antibiotics and can fight off infections given baseline health statuses can *already* be related to poor diet, sedentism, obesity and its many related conditions that *directly* have little to nothing to do with some forms of GE—with *the most pressing issues remaining those of intensive GE application toward surplus and bad food*. Better implementation of qualified forms of GE biotechnoscience could be represented in light of the most promising objectives to displace agrichemicals *and* curb commodity surplus, thus all the interrelated aspects of the assemblage, from the power of agribusiness to unhealthy foods and total global ecological decline. Instead, such larger *social nature* questions are displaced by USDA prohibition of *the use of GE seed or other GE inputs*, and the last decade of material-discursive food wars over what can be attributable the social and what should be accepted as natural... about the *great GE unknown* in food and feed, and the need for its *marking* and advancement only with the ethic of a rather fuzzy conception of often economic toned *precaution* whilst evidenced and established health effects related to an astronomical commodity corn surplus and processed diet, driven by the often corrupt conventional-industrial current GE application paradigm, spin almost entirely out of control.

This last goes to the heart of the whole *Toward Cornotology* project, its ethic of quasi-agrarian *confrontation*. There are many reasonable concerns about the potential real risks of GE; and GE commodity corn. Many of these issues remain points of very necessary contention, challenging a whole host of regulatory entities, producers and consumers to consider GE and the creation of *superweeds*; its cross-pollination with non-GE fields; its risks to consumer and animal health; and the efficacy of the regulatory structures overseeing GE at all points of development, diffusion, input, processing, products and so forth, incl. of course, US patent laws (at least, governing the patents not reached by the corn plant's *own biology*). And all of the

abovementioned may or may not require a bit more *precaution* in our *principles*. In popular imaginaries and representations, GEOs can appear as colonialist plants, pushing out other non-GEOs, creating a replicated, monstrous surplus of itself, relying on agri-chemicals (spread or infused or both), federal subsidies, and consumer disconnection from the issues. In another representation, however, biotechnoscience's *possible* usage does not have to equate to an unequivocal *inevitability* of the current global food regime. Rather, GE could be named and represented as a highly contested site, with its quasi-objects the *in-between* place from which the possibility for assemblage might be a *heated* negotiation, but one that is nevertheless open and outwardlooking.

The most salient *risk* of GE usually fails to be a conclusively *evidenced* danger to humans and nonhumans, which, again, should be more openly represented and negotiated in a spectrum of all *hybridization* risks (techniques which have been evolving for thousands of years) and their applications—the *objective* of their applications. Actually, breeding for disease resistance and introducing such genes into cultivated crops are the building blocks of both agri-cultures. The latter acknowledgement, if nothing else, seeks to be open to a whole host of perspectives and possibilities of assemblage, rendered wholly implausible if biotechnology is predetermined in various imaginaries or representations to be an *always* or *inherently new* theory and practice mappable only one agri-culture of the current food wars divide. A quasi-agrarian geographical imaginary seeks to confront and name such social natural quasi-objects, in effect liberating them from a flattened, truly terrifying world of GE colonial monsters and human/ nonhuman eco-rape so that they can be more accountably negotiated, appraised, possibly rejected but, overall, *regulated*—especially since their proliferation, their current usage toward certain objectives, will only continue but *just* without fuller accountability: GE technology has, and will, continue to

transform not only how food is produced, but the *relationship consumers have to their food*, whether it is preferable or desirable... really, even whether we want to confront it: agri-cultural quasi-objects are *also* part of the world we live in. Meanwhile, in terms of other representations, it is undeniably imperative that a competent regulatory nexus of federal authority-biotechnoscience and patenting-state laws/ user compliance more accountably represent the GE monsters that will otherwise only continue to *proliferate* desserts with desert consequences. We *can* account for *social nature*, (non)humans, in our imaginaries, representations: possibility is not inevitably. The agri-cultural world today is no more *predetermined* by the (post)modern American agrarian imaginary as it was *prescient* in the fall of ancient Greece, or, for that matter, the *Unsettling of America*.

Significant, seeming absolute economic power and control of conventional-industrial agriculture by agribusiness is only part of an increasingly complex landscape of advanced technology which has been the *possible*, but not *inevitable*, shape, of conventional-industrial agri-culture gone global. The point is that a representation less fixated on totally discounting any aspects of an often truly less comfortable reality, but one *also* happening in the world, might inspire fuller accountability for the irresponsible progression of quasi-objects, thereby more effectively displacing dangerous agri-chemical inputs, for instance. The most pressing issue related to GE then is often its accountable *use*—which could also be named in outwardlooking representations that consider a whole host of ways quasi-objects can save lives and restore dignity more locally (to conventional-industrial family farmers *who still exist*) as well as globally (explored below) beyond the damage they have wrought (including agri-chemicals and likened deleterious biotechnoscience). Still, GE is currently being implemented to bolster commodity corn surplus, and thus the monoculture conventional-industrial agri-culture gone global, not to

promote, at present, the most sustainable, or accountable, forms of conventional-industrial cropping. And it is in those seemingly unchangeable ways, GEOs are represented—which isn't wholly unreasonable, considering their cross-pollination with non-GE fields can deplete various nonhuman populations, and undoubtedly thereby transforming the relationship that consumers have to their food. Ironically, monoculture conventional-industrial agri-culture gone global is arguably what led to the *need* for GE crops for pests and weeds, like *Bt* corn, *in the first place*. The agri-chemicals required for such an agri-culture model were in no way sustainable. In some perspectives, agri-chemicals have changed the global climate, with other trajectories, so much so that more advanced technology has become *necessary* to function with/in, address those, changes. Agri-chemical and GE commodity corn surplus has had significant, provable impacts on all aspects of human and nonhuman health. In that way, we can see once again how nature is always, at once, social. Yet also, and perhaps more importantly here, we can see how imperative is moving *toward cornotology, quasi-agrarianism*; toward outwardlooking and open representations of US agriculture.

Regardless, today, the danger of agri-monsters is far more likely to be represented than the possibilities of social natural quasi-objects. Moving toward quasi-agrarianism thus requires highly uncomfortable, sometimes inflammatory but always unruly debates and questioning, including: is *Identity Preservation* (IP) even possible in a twenty-first century world? What kind of stable identity exists, since the beginning of agriculture, that isn't *always already* a hybrid identity to be preserved? Is it even possible to shut-down social natural cross-pollination in one aspect of the world (i.e., foodways) while *life as it is really lived* 'everywhere else' is continually in the making, moreover, boundary projects, of the social and natural? Can economic and regulatory factors, like patent law, also incite fuller accountability on the part of these mega-

corps, especially since such corporations will, far from dissipating any time soon, only continue to expand their biotechnological capabilities? Or, is complete rejection of GE via principles of seeming *precaution* the only viable response to such often reasonable, no doubt problematic, concerns? And, how reasonable do those concerns seem when rejection of GE, in order to preserve the idea(l)s of *zero percent tolerant* naturalness, which itself is a noble goal, nonetheless means that many more people than the relatively smaller set of privileged consumers will continue to live with the consequences of a harvest-through-consumption paradigm that will only proliferate in turn more conventional-industrial monsters throughout the globe, just without the fullest accountability? Is a *worldwide conversion to organic farming methods*, then, which fail to, at least on the scale that would be required to supplant commodity cropping today, demonstrate *en masse* a lesser carbon footprint and comparable yields, the most plausible *alternative*?

These are some of the most pertinent, monolithic and uncomfortable questions which *all humans must confront* whether divided by food wars or not. None of these questions have absolute answers. There has yet to be seen a singular means through which we can grow, harvest and consume food that does not, in some way, negatively impact the environment; and/ or wholly includes consumers of every socioeconomic, geographical, and so forth, materiality. Simply, cannot, in turn, the representation of US agriculture be less absolute and more outwardlooking to *any* social natural possibilities *already* happening in the world? It seems as though there can be only war if there is no representation of concession, or responsiveness to assemblage—if *IP* and related issues remain the frontline of divided imaginaries; that very little of the foregoing *unruly and practical conversation* can be accomplished with the *just war* over food imaginary as it unjustly refuses, in even material reality, hybridity; and, in turn, proposes

not confrontation but safe *retreats* for large(r than ever) American *Butterflies* under the threat of a *terrifyingly* (unlabeled) *pink slimed, in vitro*, GE and so forth *global food regime*... Instead of *unruly and practical representation* of the possibilities of a cross-pollinated agri-culture, to mean, a quasi-agrarian *assemblage*, what we too often get are food wars imaginaries—which, as I attempt to show throughout the project, too often operate upon easy, and therefore murky, elisions, of *social relations with spatial relations*... A post-structuralist quasi-agrarianism seeks to challenge such *Work of Purification* to be far more complexly, socially, naturally, assembled than self-evident in *spacing*.

The complex social natural world, which monoculture conventional-industrial agri-culture gone *global* unquestionably continues to (re)territorialize, has necessitated *quasi-agrarian* representation that utilizes less space-time for valuing *this* and *that* locked within a divisive geographical imaginary than for imagining the possible geometries of future US agriculture assemblage. Such representation is open to GE, though not *simply*, nor *as* simply a newer form of the oldest agricultural biotechnology of hybridization, but with accountable, regulated creation and application complexly located as one of innumerable social natural tools of many available. Unfortunately, the most popular imaginaries of US agriculture today often portray GE to only be a new, mysterious and thus uncontrollable synthetic process akin to agri-chemicals (Ronald & Adamchak, p. 38)—and like this just another conventional-industrial homicidal and eco-rape conspiratorial *trick* for short-term profit that should *not* be tolerated (like a *zero percent* tolerance) in assemblage of *any* manifestation of the organic project, neither BIG nor small, and certainly not *local/ist*... Too often, it is too easy to see why. For instance, some critics reasonably argue that assembling GE biotechnoscience with other agricultural practices would mean that no other imaginary of the sustainable could be ventured beyond the usual

monoculture conventional-industrial agri-culture gone global; that we can't fix the problems *created by the system* with the same tools of the problematic system (Vasilikiotis, 2000). Quasi-agrarianism resists positing, in turn, that these last insights are *wrong*, and/or that GE is *right*. On the contrary, quasi-agrarianism seeks outwardlooking imaginaries that remain open to possibilities. It challenges us to consider if, in the first instance, we should, or even can, confront, the inarguably problematic *global food regime* with a food wars *imaginary* of *Frankensteinien* GE corn plants actively seeking the blood of Monarchs, honeybees and human immuno-competency. To date, the most salient imaginary of US agriculture, i.e., the new agrarianism, is more likely to confront challenges as complex as the responsible development, use and regulation of food biotechnoscience (which will continue to be implemented whether it is cadenced or not) by proposing that all GE should be denounced and ceased outright; or that GE should be avoided, and thus left *over there* for others to regulate, manage and consume whilst local/ist projects compassionately disengage or its advocates avoid *those* supermarkets (or *those parts* of the supermarket). Quasi-agrarian (re)vision and representation would be open to GE possibilities simply by *not* denouncing them outright, and/ or confronting the, again, less than desirable conventional-industrial system via configuring assemblages. Thereby, a quasi-agrarian representation names and confronts quasi-objects with an ethic marked more by inquiry than denunciation; more by fuller assemblage than compassionate retreat. It attempts to retain an outwardlookingness in the face of global climate change and population increase—rather, an accountability that does not reject globalization as a flattening force but acknowledges it as only *one* of many trajectories that demands geographies which discourse the intrainfluence of space and place, society and nature.

Far, far away from the *place of the local/ist*, from the *place-bound home*, there are more people on earth than ever before. Population is a significant trajectory of any social natural assemblage of agriculture-agrarianism(s), and (GE) commodity corn (over)production today. Population cannot be denied. But, population control arguments, if taken outside of the parameters of exploring particular place-based access to voluntary birth control measures, for instance, can be dangerous from the first instance they are proposed... especially considering that the places with the least means and access, which often happen to be the places of some of the richest natural and wild resources, are locked in a *power geometry*—a hook-up of multiple space-time and place trajectories of everything from economics and politics, to culture and religion. Ittis' population control arguments, for instance (in Kimbrell, 2002, p. 106-120), are an important part of a much broader conversation about agriculture-agrarianism(s), and (GE) commodity corn (over)production today, but like most others' likened positions can become dangerously close to *lethal impositions* of privileged Western *Norms and Rules for All Being* if not taken in the proper light. *Toward Cornotology* forwards that our inquiries must begin with accountability for *quasi-objects*, and while population is a salient factor (re)territorializing these last, coming at it from a *different angle* means we confront the social natural world and (re)produce representations more accountable to these last (which change thus in turn)—especially accountable to a continually rising percentage of a global middle class, which is demanding more meat-based protein in its diet... meat-based protein, it is noted, at such a dramatic rate and level that it has become just about entirely dependent on commodity corn.

How can organic systems, as they operate now, supply that demand? McWilliams (2009) argues that setting aside the land needed for *grass feeding* such meat-in-demand is completely implausible, and far more damaging to the environment than the CAFO system. I could not

agree more, though shifting the focus of this argument to, of course, commodity corn. *Where* and *how* would we grow all the commodity corn in demand (in lieu of *waiting for* waning demand) if production shifted into organics? Can organic commodity crops even subsist in the context of global climate change, as well as the GE commodity corn crops *entirely* proved to do with the 2012 drought? Can the most *local/ist* models be adopted for effectively feeding an increasing *global* population? Suggesting that we, instead, sidestep these questions by demanding that conventional-industrial agriculture simply ends (as if it is not an enormous part of national and state-based economies); and/ or that somehow the system, and the biotechnoscience, just *stops* as is, I often find to be an imaginary where space and time are or can be *reversed*, with particular populations transported back into some, rather mythical, agrarian past—*Throwingback* as with PepsiCo sodas—whilst other countries’ emergent middle classes are enlightened that *they* just do not (or should not) get to enjoy *their just protein deserts* like many-to-most Americans have enjoyed for well over fifty plus years (i.e., a timeline *before* more Chinese, for instance, could now afford it). Such an imaginary and representation I argue is not most fully accountable to *life as it is really lived* all over the world...

Looking at the demands of a rising global middle class leads to issues of population growth in general. Talking about population growth, incidentally, does not always portend some terrible justification for all sorts of racist, sexist, and so forth, control-based arguments through time; nor that population-level arguments are the end-all impetus for all agricultural arguments as they are for Ehrlich... Talking about population growth also does not instantly equal some rather ignorant argument for *more* food—that the world needs *more* food—which is how such contentions are usually dismissed outright amidst the current *food wars* climate. Obviously, the world has plenty of food—but a big problem with distribution and access, etc. Quasi-

agrarianism seeks not greater *quantities*, but representations open to all possibilities for the most efficacious way of *growing* ‘X’ amount of quantity. Actually, quasi-agrarianism has nothing to do with *growing more food*... Population growth is one important aspect of the material-discursive context to (re)vision agricultural method/ological assemblage, and makes clear that we must (re)vision representations that encompass biotechnoscience, and accountably consider if and how biotechnoscience, in assemblage with other tools, can best feed and care for the world’s population. Unfortunately, the material-discursive food wars absolutely throw into question whether or not such biotechnoscience can be applied in this way, or even fully available, in the future. Also, with more population, there are also more people with the least options than the middle class who nevertheless deserve the benefits of the latest innovations and expertise which are too often generated by entities outside of their access, be that nearer or farer in any given network. These are the populations who also must endure the greatest ecological impacts driven by mostly Western and wealthiest nations; and Western driven science regimes of the past. Western driven climate change along with innumerable other trajectories unquestionably *limits* options for food (re)production all over the world, in some cases, even curtailing any particular place’s ability for food systems localization. If the greatest environmental degradation is mostly related to climate change, and can undeniably be charged the wealthiest nations but experienced most intimately by the poorest, it would be a greater injustice to advocate for only food systems localization that is most impossible in some places *because of* previous Western externalities; to deny *any* developments that could potentially offer the most options for stability in such an uneven global context endlessly (re)created by those with the most power. Failing to acknowledge the impacts made upon space-time of a much longer network due to relatively more local, to mean, Western or national, scale’s actions, is to reify notions of impermeable borders; a

place called home; and *retreat* from global times (drawn broadly from McWilliams, 2009; Ronald & Adamchak, 2008; Specter, 2010). But it has also meant the propagation of all sorts of alternative food, free trade, *compassionate consumerism*, and so forth projects and movements which *do*, in fact, very necessarily acknowledge impacts of local actions upon larger space-time. What if GE was included in these globally more attuned representations and efforts to build longer assemblages, rather than discounted as a global/ conventional-industrial aligned evil to dismiss? What if GE was, if nothing else, left *open*, represented to be, in qualified ways, *another creative way* to more *locally confront* such global issues?

Altogether, with increasing populations and wealth there are also increasing demands for healthier food, as well as meat-based protein, which means, in the current paradigm, an increase in grain. Commodity corn production thus must be actualized more locally in an ethical, accountable way—a reality, as ever, intimately tied to its representation. The main point here (ever in the broadest strokes) is that population growth is neither a determinant of the current debate, nor the sole reason to explore representations which remain open to all possibilities of integrating agricultures. Simply, it is this: *far, far away* from the *place of the local/ist*, from the *place-bound home*, population grows and cannot be further denied through yet more arguments put toward *racing into the past*, be that with *Throwback PepsiCo* soda, so to speak; with solely *food systems localization* schema which can be all but impossible in some places due to a whole range of factors presented up to now (also Ronald & Adamchak, 2008); or with the Wendell Berry inspired new agrarianism, Michael Pollan's cornography, or another documentary film casting Monsanto as *Monsatano* and/or the *grim reaper* (see the Nadudvari and Curry, 2006, documentary, *Bad Seed*), perhaps not without cause but only to then, in effect, walk *far, far away*... and often into *Whole Foods*.

GE raises many reasonable concerns, and the quasi-agrarian representation of its quasi-objects must never deny this reality. One of the most feasible concerns involves corporate ownership and patenting. The central debates about this are complex: the most valuable technologies will be further controlled and owned by major agri-corporations who already control and own commercial seed production and agri-chemicals. GE patenting obviously goes hand-in-hand with GE development, and like this becomes the basis from which what many organic practitioners see as a future of an even *stricter* corporate control of all of agricultural production by mega transnational agribusiness (Ronald & Adamchak, 2008, p. 137-138). As is often the case with such agricultural issues, i.e., the development of the latest and most advanced GE tools and products and the consequent questions as to the patenting and other ownership rights and regulation of GE (as ever encompassed by the material-discursive food wars, too), it's not that the fears are wholly ungrounded (though again, that *may* be the case as well), it's what we should do about them—and the representation of the issue and redress—that causes the most heated debates... So, again, does that mean we somehow *cease* the technology to tackle the problem; or find what Ronald (2008) calls “imaginative ways to address intellectual property issues; ways that do not require years of negotiation, expensive lawyers, or overly complex public/ private partnerships to move a crop to market” (Ronald & Adamchak, p. 140)? Is the *precautionary principle* the only way? What other regulatory shifts or changes to patent law are *possible*?

The most outspoken critics of GE and its real/ imagined risks argue that we should *cease* the development, diffusion and adoption of GE in foodways altogether (Miller & Conko, 2004). As the argument goes, because we do not and largely cannot know the long-term consequences of GE for human and nonhuman, really full ecological, health, we should follow the

precautionary principle. The *precautionary principle*, at face value, seems like it would be just a *naturally* good response/ ethic from which all societies should continue biotechnoscientific developments. The principle, rather, “the idea that regulatory measures should be taken to prevent or restrict actions that raise even *conjectural* risks, even though scientific evidence of their existence, magnitude, or potential impacts is *incomplete or inconclusive*” (*my emphasis*; p. 70), under which much of the agricultural production is assembled in the EU (which *certainly* does not have the same histories, societies, cultures and sociopolitical/ socioeconomic agricultural based concerns, *or* immense geography) is often forwarded by many as the proper course for the US USDA, FDA and EPA regulation of GE. In terms of the US, however, the *precautionary principle* can raise more questions than it answers, particularly concerning how much risk can be tolerated given that, in the US today, zero risk, in foodways or really any other fields of biotechnoscience, is the largely implausible benchmark. Crafting policies which account for risks *without* shutting-down biotechnoscience development is *tricky*—and the precautionary principle, as it stands today, can be shown to also be, at least in part, economically motivated, rather than wholly concerned with human and nonhuman health.

For instance, implementation of the *precautionary principle* in the EU, among many positive things, has also effectively skewed the grain market so that often former colonial countries will buy EU grain, deterred by the effective GE risk rhetoric so much as to shut-out US grain *whilst* the EU continues to enjoy many of the *other* benefits of the US biotechnoscientific agricultural paradigm (Miller & Conko, 2004), including the US organics industry. Actually, some aspect of almost all areas of biotechnoscience today has and continues to save countless lives across the globe in innumerable ways, be those connected to medicine, pharmaceuticals, or even F1, F2, and F3 GE crops which have accomplished everything from decontaminating

maize; adding necessary nutrition to rice and other varieties of crops; to developing products that benefit multiple populations via both of these last (Miller & Conko, 2004; Ronald & Adamchak, 2008; Specter, 2010). As it stands now, “most governments have failed to craft policies for regulating gene-spliced agricultural products that balance the risks of *moving too quickly into the future* against those risks of *staying too long in the past*” (*my emphasis*; Miller & Conko, 2004, p. 95). *Good intentions* don’t just *naturally* equate to *good ideas* or *practices* in every possible *assemblage* the world over. US agricultural representations must be at once open and mindful of the meaning, impact and consequences of unqualified arguments for this particular theorem of *precaution*, meaning, to the simultaneous trajectories of US-based geography, history, culture, economics, population and agricultural paradigms which can no more be *simply* compared or reduced to the sociocultural, sociohistorical dimensions, politics, or even economic stimuli, of all other contexts the world over (esp., the EU) than it can be celebrated for having some kind of unproblematic regulatory structure to date.

Patent law, on the other hand, is a c/si(gh)te of balance, or *assemblage*, let’s say, and is arguably the context in which true GE regulation occurs in the US in the first place. Patent law often problematically comes down to questions of *utility*—different forms of utility, different contexts and motivations (namely *general*, *specific*, and *moral*) for inventing and coining useful innovations. Essentially, one cannot receive a patent unless the invention is deemed “useful” on the other side of what Lerner rightfully argues is, today, a utility-question nebulous cloud that has failed to keep up with the challenges posed by the age of biology. Given the status of, and complex questions raised by, various utility case challenges, Lerner forwards the argument that (re)visioned, and “heightened” (p. 1000) standards for what “utility” can even mean in US patent law today could be the conversation, rather, *independent legal tool* through which “sound”

agriculture biotechnology could be at once encouraged and more strictly regulated. These proposed new utility standards would encompass more sophisticated delimitation of the meanings of sustainability, as well as work to dialogue social, public, environmental and so forth health, all toward more fully confronting and accountably representing agri GEOs, and their risks. These last aspects are, at their core, a meaning of *precautionary* based in US patent law and thus more tailored to the especial American context, still in the purview of social justice albeit without discounting biotechnoscience outright given that such discontinuance remains prohibited in the extant regulatory structure, thereby inhibiting revision in any other way. Lerner seeks to refocus attention to questions of whether more stringent rulings will shut-down otherwise efficacious advancements; and/ or whether US patent law can ever actually account for all *future uses* of any given invention even if the proposed use of the invention in conception is accepted as *sound*; or, in conception, if certain criteria, which may be highly problematic and therefore invalidated, means other criteria of the same technology are unnecessarily rejected when they could be *implemented* in a way highly beneficial to the general public. GE can be more efficaciously shaped by such questions concerning current and future US patent law, so that, in an interpretation and application especial to the US context, patent laws can more aptly confront the age biology toward representing, without wholly inhibiting, biotechnoscience which fosters far more benefits than costs for the: 1) environment; 2) humans; and 3) agriculture.

Privatization, Lerner concludes, is what a patent *inherently* is, but does not mean that *privatization* is or has ever been *the* answer to these sticky threads and questions. Privatization, however, cannot be denied as one power-knowledge trajectories among many necessitating sophisticated, social natural representations. Perhaps it just takes a *quasi-agrarian* imaginary to confront and (re)vision *privatization*, at least in terms of US patent law, as a strong and complex

trajectory, or perhaps even a useful c/si(gh)te, for confrontation, naming and fuller regulation, in lieu of an inherently conspiratorial or utilitarian force to be rejected or denied.

This last could not be more clearly the case when it comes to GE food labeling laws. Obviously, awareness, let alone *acceptance* of agri-GE is a complex topic at the interstices of access, information, interest, knowledge, economics, lay media rhetorics and so forth—and one that, to reiterate, requires an outwardlooking, more democratic, representation if we are to imagine the future of food beyond war. The FDA has real authority to reverse the current, largely *deregulatory*, trend, in order to hold corporations more accountable; and curb the irresponsible use of GE technology for purely corporate profits. Questions remain, however, about an overt or inadvertent collusion of the federal regulatory patchwork with mega agri-corporate lobbies. So, with, 1) resistance of Congress to overhaul the existing structure; 2) the unclear collusion of the FDA with the industrial agricultural paradigm; and the, 3) inability of the current nexus to both forward useful GE research and practice while necessarily limiting its potentially toxic outcomes (Lerner, 2007, p. 997), potential alternatives to regulating *around* the current, generally out-of-date and often ineffectual regulatory system toward more US-based conceptions of *precaution* in our paradigms, many argue, should be explored, i.e., like a quasi-agrarian (re)vision of US patent laws. As it stands, now, however, the FDA both lacks the authority to overhaul the FDCA, but perhaps more importantly, interprets GE labeling through the FDCA as “misleading.” “Substantial equivalence” is not exactly “precautionary,” but cited critics see the voluntary consultation process, along with this interpretation, as adequate since most corporations have strong motivations to find it *prudent*. The crux of the matter is that corporations, with real responsibility only to their shareholders and the bottom-line, do not *have to be* preemptive or prudent. Again, this last is not to say that *privatization* must always incite

equally as cynical perspectives of corporate motivation, its corruption and greed. All that can be concluded *so-far* is that *confrontational*, to mean a quasi-agrarian like patent law (re)vision, in lieu of an EU-themed application of the *precautionary principle*, for instance, or even flat-out GE rejection in the first instance, could be one of many imaginaries that seek to represent, and, eventually cadence, GE monster proliferation.

As it stands, one of the central claims of my project is that, in terms of geographical imaginary and representation—even that of *Federal* regulatory imagination and representation—the food wars are, most radically, not ‘*just*’ war. There is so much overlap and interimplication of agri-cultures—so many social natural possibilities beyond an overly simplified platform of precaution, like those which could be better actualized in corporate responsibility and patent law, that the most accountable assemblage of their strengths has become far more plausible. Unfortunately, at least to me, as it stands today, the imaginary and representation of food wars allow the most destructive conventional-industrial practices to continue, the most promising conventional-industrial innovations to be rejected and the most limited, narrow, or, more generally, murky views of sustainability to be exalted. The food systems localization in all its varied forms continues to command so much of the popular talk, representation and debate about foodways—continually (re)enforcing and (re)enforced of its *talismanic like importance*—without more fully accounting for how conventional-industrial (GE) commodity corn farming, for instance, so vital for the US economy, and other places all over the world, should best proceed if *not* with GE. Perhaps we can say rather easily, then, that global dependence upon, and demand for, conventional-industrial agricultural products like commodity corn *should* simply *end*; that irradiation is *strange*; and *in vitro* meat muscles exercising in a test tube do indeed seem *monstrous*. Very few would disagree. But is that the most open or *outwardlooking*

politics, rather, a politics *confronting* the myriad of issues presented heretofore of such *terrifying* global times, or merely arguing instead that we should *retreat* from them, into a militant *IP* idea(l)? Seven billion people do not have time to wait for that no less desirable proposition; or for *Whole Foods Market* to take-over the (conventional-industrial) supermarket. *Unplugging*, opting for *ideology over evidence* in order to retreat from the terrifying conventional-industrial driven global food regime lacks the vigor of full confrontation and redress for all that has happened to ecosystems around the globe, or even all that has been lost in my own family's farm; moreover, lacks the most open and outwardlooking vision for strengthening said system that cannot be denied, whether desirable or not, for so many *far, far away* from one particular American family farm or local homestead. Biotechnoscience is no more unquestionably safe than it is the only answer. However, it does not have to be imagined or represented as an *absolutely* terrifying, or *solely flattening*, discourse, from which we must *Throwback* or *retreat*. Still, this last is precisely what many popular imaginaries and representations of a (post)modern, or post geography, world, would have us believe... and no one does such agriculture related post geography better than the new agrarians.

Since the *doomsday decade*, 1970s, and interfaced various material aspects and discourse of the food wars, Wendell Berry's (1977), *The Unsettling of America* has not only (re)configured particular *Southern agrarian distributist* arguments of the 1930s to redress the rise of the global food regime, but his particular geographical imaginary would come to serve as 'the' American agrarianism from which innumerable other writers would base most of their imaginaries thereafter. *Toward Cornotology* argues thus that Wendell Berry is the preeminent force of the new agrarian movement, or new agrarian locavore revolution, comprised of largely likeminded writers and thinkers. Innumerable new agrarians have adopted his imaginary, or in many

perspectives his largely irrefutable (re)vision for healing and health, and by extension, have demonstrated time and again that “Wendell Berry” is ‘the’ *countervailing idea to industrialism*.

Wendell Berry’s works, and the discourse of “Wendell Berry” is the critical break of a much longer American agrarianism(s) tradition through space-time, from which most new agrarians would then draw to (re)present, more or less calmly, their imaginaries of a terrifying global food regime. The great range of topics on which Berry has expressed his views has (re)created more like a *world(view)-as-exhibition* from which everything can be (re)constructed; from where *everything is of a piece*. Like his imaginary, the ongoing new agrarian project seeks to reconfigure space and place, and accordantly exalt the virtue of hyper-rural margins in all their many discursive-material (re)territorializations, but only when the local/ist is particularly limited by as particular tillers and agricultural practices, foremost lacking any and all biotechnoscience of the coordinate, and opposing, center.

To me it seems, as long as, 1) the new agrarian mind is (re)territorialized through a quasi-ecofeminist husbandry and housewifery/ republican motherhood complementarity and so forth; 2) this last is actualized through particular material practices matching those, being perennial polyculture, natural systems agri-cultural works which all (de)limit acceptable technological, mechanical, commercial and otherwise engagement; and, as long as, 3) such practices of the new agrarian mind and body together then underpin the (re)creation and participation in AFN local/ist projects, like farmers’ markets, CSAs and community gardening (even if those are located in the center)—then, and only then, by 1-2-3, can we, in this geographical imaginary, therefore, 4) restore *the curative power of perception*. The latter *curative power of perception* more generally references Berry’s representation of David, the marginal eddy spinning love to the Goliath, a center he imagines as an altogether terrifyingly dystopic global food regime’s homogenous

hegemony of biotechnoscience. What then Berry generally, and most noninnocently, seeks to (re)distribute and restore is more like some other time he basically implies is more or less what *Jefferson* thought about and had intended, i.e., prophecy.

Toward Cornotology's post-structuralist geographical imaginary, drawn from much critical theorization of the social-nature interface, takes to task Berry's geographical imaginary of cores and peripheries, centers and margins, and their coordinate particularities that work together to materially-discursively sever and bind a David place versus a Goliath space-time. My project seeks to contend that all of these last indicators of a distributed scalar structuralist imaginary, i.e., a *Work of Purification*, are like the many modern American agrarianism(s) of the past. Like this, the popular representation of a marginal David has gained great power-knowledge, particularly *by being* David, and like this must be purified and preserved at all costs—just as the conventional-industrial agri-monsters must likewise be purified and preserved at all costs by powerful deregulators in order to continue their increasingly more unaccountable proliferation of vast deserts of desserts. All told, the discourse of “Wendell Berry”/ discourse itself must also be preserved since, and alongside his allies, the Berry world(view) (re)distributes, like all distributism, innumerable evaluations of what are *good* material-discursive agri-cultural forces to the local/ism; whilst distributing innumerable evaluations of what are *bad* material-discursive agri-cultural forces to the global, conventional-industrial agri-cultural tyranny... namely, of commodity crops.

Said particular Wendell Berry world(view) has become a necessary legitimization of local/ism in the face of both conventional-industrial agri-culture and BIG organics, inculcating the LITTLE flip-side of the BIG: an at times unreflexive, thus *neo* neoliberal imaginary that, in its strict bifurcation of space-time and attendant meanings, can then work to limit democratic

participation on the part of most human and nonhuman actants, or quasi-objects assemblages, just as much as the condition of postmodernity, in those selfsame imaginaries, is purported to do. Is limited democratic participation not precisely the keystone of the particular world(view) of “Wendell Berry,” being, at its root, 1930s Southern agrarian distributist *Antifederalism*? My project has intended to trace the kind of imaginary and representation most widely disseminated today as effective confrontation and cadence of oftentimes quite terrifying and promising quasi-object agri-monsters and found... little more than 1930s Southern agrarian Antifederalism. *Small wonder* that in Berry’s world(view)as-exhibition, biotechnoscience has *little* meaningful differentiation or analysis, reified again and again as a homogeneous mass including but not limited to *inconvenient, uncomfortable, undependable, ugly, stinky, and scary* innovations. For just as assuredly as Wendell Berry doesn’t want to be *encumbered by* something *complicated*, he has passed on that impossible proposition to the next generation of neoagrarianism. Through the many works to follow in such a world(view) imaginary, biotechnoscience will regularly be represented as having no meaningful place.

Wendell Berry offers hope to many, perhaps even love. He also offers a power-knowledge of the locavore sensibility, a food wars imaginary of folding tables in protest of looming, seemingly inveterate conventional-industrial monsters, moreover of a right living and right eating lifestyle philosophy for the center and periphery alike materializing as food systems localization projects. The material (re)territorializations of Berry’s places are imagined as the David at the margins, somehow thus the self-evidently more natural and sustainable agri-cultural practices (re)producing the boundaried, to mean inherently, highest quality products. Essentially, the *Berry Prophecy Project’s ideology in lieu of evidence* represents the local/ism as reinforcing healthfulness; that anyone can be healthy and redeemed by taking-up particular agri-

cultural practices and/ or local/ist projects discursively bound to the marginal place—practices which deny varietal forces of space-time in turn. Like this, Berry’s *backwardlookingness* is complexly *noninnocent*. It purports a *direct, billiard ball* ideological interpellation—a *Reality*, but really another representation, of course, that we all nevertheless can *know by seeing*.

Granted, neoagrarianism(s) *en masse* could not be all the *same*, or drawn from Berry in the *same* ways—if *directly* at all. Still, the *diverse* interpretations and method/ologies of this imaginary and its countless representations largely accomplish a roughly *uniform* set of principles and conclusions ever within the constellation of Berry’s world(view). What I call the *Berry Prophecy Project* intends to provide a real world example of *quasi-agrarian* critical reading practices—an analytical tool which could be operationalized well beyond the current project to examine the new agrarian and likewise geographical imaginaries and representations of US agriculture. It illuminates how post-structuralist geography can be applied in the analysis of neoagrarianism since doomsday; as well as how post-structuralist geography can work in general to assemble confrontational, quasi-agrarian material-discursive quasi-objects in other projects. It also shows that a *new new* agrarian imaginary is taking center stage...

Michael Pollan seems to be inspiring a new agrarian continuum all his own, with well-researched and eloquent arguments which seductively illuminate as much about *Global Tyranny Space*, often with *cornographic* imagery and articulations, as they banish (GE) commodity corn—and really *all* commodity crops—to its outer regions. If, in his representation, *freaky, made strange*, or *deviant* and uncontrollably damaged and damaging (GE) commodity corn—and really *all* commodity crops—simply *should not exist* in the first instance, then how are we to confront the terrifying agri-monsters he not only so aptly describes, but ensures *will continue to*

proliferate with no accountability and thus entirely *out of control* all while we take his advice and, basically, sit down to a family meal of *Real* food?

Wendell Berry's *conversation*, and the new agrarianism, esp., as it continues today via Michael Pollan and documentary films like *King Corn*, (re)creates an indefatigable occularcentric miasma (re)producing less *just food* than inveterate and endless food wars: *the cult of the future*, in the words of Berry when describing modernity, particularly biotechnoscience, pitted against, by contrast in his perspective then, *the cult of the past*. The unaccountable shuttling back and forth between absolutist poles (re)produces *neoliberal* and unreflexive *neo neoliberal* imaginaries of an altogether flat geography—a *dead geography*, more like, that (re)distributes all *sociality* to the center, all *nature/* naturalness *out there* to the periphery... *Neither neoliberal* nor *neo neoliberal* imaginaries enlighten of *the power of place* by proclaiming either that place doesn't exist; or, that place exists but only in *particular* ways *always already* bound to marginality *before* situated negotiations. On such a landscape, rather within a representation of particular geographical terms, conditions, and axiographics, only a biotechnoscience that *deconstructs* as particularly positioned extant mysteries can be constructive. Any biotechnoscience that *constructs* new quasi-object monsters, like GE commodity corn, has *always already* been set-up to be suspect, suspected of unnaturalness and thereby prime for denouncement, demonization and grounds for *en masse* retreat (what I call the *GE Corn Effect*). Is not the most basic question thus: how can we confront the material-discursive realities of commodity cropping, and particularly GE commodity corn realities within the Berry world(view) and *new agrarian* continuum, or now through Pollan's *cornographic* imaginary, when in either the most dangerous of quasi-objects are imagined, and represented, to be *beyond* the realm of imagination itself, and like this, should not exist in the first instance?

Since the doomsday decade, neoagrarian imaginary and representation has continued to *abstract* our thinking about an undoubtedly increasingly *abstract* twenty-first century *social natural* US agri-culture.

And now, I am standing on the front porch of our rural Iowa commodity corn farm, which today is inputting 100% GE seed, whilst all of the imaginaries of the *Berry Prophecy Project* continuum are troubling my *vision* of the *cornscape* before me. I *see* it worth also asking: Is there nothing to be gained from a social natural perspective that can also honor the meaning and significance of global space and permeability of borders other than colonialist destruction? Is there no other freedom, health or spirituality possible in the world than (re)connecting with a particular view of *nature* that mostly denounces all activities and strategies other than those already surveyed and disciplined by the new agrarianism? Is there nothing to be said of the *freedoms* afforded by biotechnoscience, including everything from fuller interconnectability, rather the sharing of crucial information and vital technologies which can *also* be quite conducive to fuller lives lived free of isolation, disease, pain and death? In the words of Specter (2010), the other side of *an honest day's work with one's hands* in this particularizing, purifying and unrelenting world of new agrarian values is a "a life spent kneeling in sodden rice paddies or struggling fourteen hours a day to collect cotton balls or snap peas" (p. 124). He wonders, cannot freedom *also* be attained through cyborg monsters, of social nature geographies which confront and assemble representations of a multitude of agricultural practices, including those of biotechnoscience, which, *assembled*, could liberate massive amounts of people "from an existence governed by agony, injury, and pain—one that most farmers, and most humans, have always had to endure" (p. 124). Must this last *always* signify a complacency, or even laziness, of a postmodern welfare state which, in adopting advanced biotechnoscience, is

represented as the force corrupting not only agriculture, but nonhuman *nature* itself, as well as human nature, i.e., *what people are for*? Is not withholding, even perhaps with a noble precaution, innovations from societies with the least access around the world another form of risk, or otherwise characterized as Western colonial privilege? Is the new agrarianism the most useful US agricultural *value system* in a thoroughly social natural world where the real and unreal, even in terms of food, (re)make each other every day? Should the assessment of US foodways or of “food” more generally be continually (re)positioned *outside* of the purview of other embodied social natural knowledges, including everything from social networks to pharmaceuticals and the veritable *crime scene investigation* of global climate change?

The overarching point of these imperative quasi-agrarian queries is that the absolutely unforgiving impermeability of the most *neo* neoliberal geographical boundaries, or unreflexive local/ism, might also inhibit democratic participation on the part of most (non)humans inasmuch as the most neoliberal condition of postmodernity is imagined to do. Just because the Western new agrarianism has determined that the “Green Revolution” is over and it’s time to *go back to the land*, and/ or into organic, local/ist projects, doesn’t mean that the rest of the world should have to return to back-breaking agri-cultural labor free of often life changing, life saving, biotechnoscience advances which, if nothing else, can also free-up at least some time of a lifetime spent otherwise laboring to the death for what amounts to an oftentimes unjust food supply after all. The latter point is not some kind of seamless, billiard ball flowing logic resultant from *all* neoagrarian representation. Instead, I merely seek to point out the latter to implicate the need for more open, outwardlooking quasi-agrarian representation—an ethic of confrontation and naming to be taken in our (re)vision, our imaginaries, our representations of US agriculture which *do* have implications for places all over the world.

To enact a truly sustainable agri-cultural vision, imaginary and representation toward the agri-cultural future, for the future, we must confront the material-discursive social nature of multiple, coeval trajectories *well beyond the place of home*. If the *ecological steering mechanism* of our reading and crafting of representation moves toward both accountability to human and nonhuman situatedness with/in “natures and societies, humans and nonhumans, knowledges and materials, singularities and multiplicities, territories and relations” (Murdoch, 2006, p. 198), which is to say, with/in a human-nonhuman assemblage of supposedly split material-discursive realities, then ever attendant embodied sensual and discursive performances of social natural places will never *arrive* to a *singular* text, imaginary or representation as the *only* answer or hope. We need to look to the social natural *world*... In the words of Massey (2005) yet again, “Coming at it from another angle hints at what it might mean to argue *not* that the world (space-time) is like a text but that a text (even in the broadest sense of the term) is just like the rest of the world” (p. *original emphasis*; p. 54). Quasi-agrarianism, instead of another Representational theory, or another system of value and utility evaluations submitted to *supplant* American agrarianism, traditional and/or new, instead *seeks*—and *seeks to* look to the world, rather what is *always already* happening in the social natural world, for its ethic of possibility. In the twenty-first century social natural world, biotechnoscience is *also* happening, imagined and represented as another cultural, creative, tolerant and natural activity of many others necessitating (re)vision, naming and regulation in the most outwardlooking of representation. An embodied, sensual, place-based desire for confrontation of, not retreat from, our social natural foodways means “food” (re)production and consumption can be also represented as “just” another creative, real and imagined, social natural advent of innumerable many that must be for more fully accounted with the best possible tools of our material-discursive, social natural

cyborgian lives of spiraling space-times and places, structures and agencies endlessly (re)making each other on an everyday basis. There are no essences to which we can return, so may we take a confrontational, outwardlooking, place-based ethic into our social natural foodways.

Drawing here from the thinking of Stanford synthetic biologist Drew Endy, a self-proclaimed “whimsical futurist” (in Specter, 2010, p. 247) who deals in nothing of an approach to science or the future that is even remotely whimsical, there are no essences, or territories which are immutable or somehow discursively severed from other trajectories that provide safe retreats from social natural life as it is *always already* continuing to unfold. Our maps have always had to shift to account for social naturalness through time, forever (re)territorializing both nonhuman territories and human mapmakers in the process. Anyway, maps not only represent, but, and as all representations, are ever *active* in the reproduction of territories, i.e., co-constitutive, relational, in process. In some cases, however, we are far more *reluctant* to keep looking for new routes... particularly when conventional maps arrive to the territory of agriculture and food—where new maps, far beyond tactical military operations and actually being those yet to be at all closed-off at boundary points, or divided in two, are perhaps needed the most. Food and agriculture seem to demand, above all other products and (re)productions, ethics of value and thinking that rely on more strict definitionals of space and place, the global and the local, and, above all, society and nature—and in doing so, often fail to confront the increasing complexity of social natural realities of (re)production and consumption through time; rather, often fail to continue the quest for maps which only (re)territorialize through time as negotiated interrelations of readers, territories and risks.

Perhaps this last is because, again as Manning (2004) explores, food, like sexual intercourse, is a basic human need, playing out in vastly differentiated, public and private ways.

But, both of these so-called basic human needs have changed so dramatically through the massive hook-ups and (re)territorializations of space-time and place that now we must be compelled to (re)consider how *basic* those needs have actually become; moreover, how *basic* must be the processes and practices through which humans (re)produce food *and* (re)produce, given everything from advanced GE that can subtract agri-chemicals or add nutritional content to the basic equation; or, the *in vitro* processes and other capabilities which both continue to dramatically (re)negotiate the *basic* boundaries of human (re)production via both food and sex. What should the *maps* of such vast, assorted and assembled *territories* look like? In the words of Latour (2010) in a different context of geography and cartography in the digital technology age, *we* need the (re)vision; rather, humans *must* shift from a mimetic to a *navigational interpretation of maps*, being a geography where...

you resume the course of navigation, and everything *is on the move again*...

Maps now strike you as not what represent a world ‘out there’ but as the dashboards of a calculation interface that allows you to pinpoint successive signposts while you move through the world... It is not, of course, the ‘outside world’... Needless to say it is also not the ‘subjective symbolic’ world of human intentional subjects... **No, the world in which you now try to navigate... is the real world...** Since there is no good and accepted term—which in itself is odd since it is the only world we all inhabit, humans as well as nonhumans!—we will use... *multiverse*.

This shift has the unintended consequence... **of freeing maps from their relationship to a spurious definition of territory**. This, in turn, may give a realistic nonsubjective meaning to a whole set of practices that until then had to

be divided between an ‘objective reality’ ... and ‘subjective layers’ that had to be added in order to accommodate subjective interpretations... This might throw a new light on several topics... the entrenchment of the division between ‘human’ and ‘physical’ geography... **A whole set of new features, such as anticipation, participation, reflexivity, and feedbacks, might now be included in a navigational definition of maps.** (*original emphasis; my emphasis*, p. 595-596)

Yes, we can continue to retreat into imaginaries and representations of food wars—retreating from a terrifying landscape of so-called *simulacra and simulation*, or *Global Tyranny Space*—or, we can (re)vision our vision of what maps are even of and for in the first instance through quasi-agrarian eyes, ever seeking open meanings of naturalness *drawn from* our embodied knowledges of the *social natural* world always *on the move again* through space-time. The latter allows us a *venery*, in Manning’s purview, that (re)territorializes social and natural worlds. For my thinking here, drawn from all the new agrarianism(s) works (re)visioned along the way, I can submit a parallel between examples of real and unreal, natural and unnatural, food and sexuality.

GE crops and food products, or let’s say *in vitro meat*, if responsibly (re)produced, GRAS, *substantially equivalent* and perhaps even more nutritious given innumerable capabilities to make less food better tasting and more nutritious, can equally excite all of our senses, rather our social natural hunter-gatherer embodied sensuality, just as hyper-womanly forms can excite participants in sexual encounters. If breast augmentation, for instance, which, if responsibly (re)produced, GRAS (so to speak) *substantially equivalent* and perhaps even more gratifying to equally excite our other, hunter-gatherer embodied sensuality/ sexuality, are ersatz breasts thus

unreal, unnatural or undesirable? It is largely with/in our value systems, the new agrarian mind, as it were, today, that abstracts such significations, particularly when it comes to basic human needs like food and sex. Is the *typewriter* a more embodied writing experience, *marital complementarity* coitus a more *wholy* and healthy sexual experience, and food (re)produced with particularly limited practices *truly* a more natural, sustainable and quality nutrition experience that *always already* deems equally as lush and rounded unnatural GE corn ears and augmented breasts as somehow, *essentially*, unnatural, unfamiliar and thus impure, unhealthy and less gratifying processes and products; bodies and sexuality? Our selfsame social natural bodies' memories, responses and sensory experiences and reactions to GE foods or monstrous human forms tell us otherwise. In the *liminal in-between* places of society and nature, structure and agency, the discourse and sensuality, and the extremes of the *food wars* implicated in these last, the moment before naming and representation can provision a sensual and stable full-bodied future just as (un)real as a particular, place-bound petrified *Reality* of the prophet, esp., when assembled with other projects and performances of (un)naturalness. Endy speaks about essences, foodways, biotechnoscience, health experiences and how we should seek to *value* these last in the twenty-first century beyond *value systems* which seek to *discover* essences. His words enlighten of the need for outwardlooking representations, or maps to be *only* navigational interpretations that celebrate an openness to possibility *on the move again*. In such representations, meanings or essences of nature and/ or naturalness are never discoverable and *only* (re)visible: no more or less than a continuing project of boundary negotiation...

That is where we are with this technology. The thrill is real—but so are the *fears*.

We are surfing an exponential now, and even for people who pay attention,

surfing an exponential is a really tricky thing to do. And when the exponential

you are surfing has the capacity to *impact the world in such a fundamental way*, in ways we have never before considered, what do you do then? *How do you even talk about that?... People need to know what is possible... silence isn't going to help us prevent... or respond. We need to be talking.*

My guess is that our ultimate solution to the crisis... will be to *redesign ourselves so that we won't have so many problems to deal with*. But note... you can't possibly to begin to do something like this *if you don't have a value system in place that allows you to map concepts of ethics, beauty, and aesthetics onto our existence*. (my emphasis ;p. 252-254; 246; 247-248)

Overall, such a *value system*, or representation, that acknowledges but does not *stop* with preexisting values, seeks meanings of and for a social natural world *always already* twisting and turning *on the move again*: it doesn't need to be written but *engaged*. Quasi-agrarianism seeks to be part of such continuing projects in not proposing another Euclidean geometry, stagnant mapping or method for evaluating or valuing those aspects attributed society and those attributed nature, but by representing the intratransference that continues to (re)territorialize both—as well as human and nonhuman actants—as everything and nothing more than *on the move again*.

By contrast, within the new agrarianism, *the only true picture of Reality is Reality itself*. Wendell Berry wants us to go *back to the thing* itself, with no mind to how there is no-thing already “made,” closed or somehow set aside from its situatedness in relational geographies—be those from the longer networks of biotechnoscience to more individual performances of personal genetics, histories, stories, sensualities and so forth. There is no *discovery* possible of the last bastions of naturalness in the world, being of course, particular (organic) agricultural practices and particular (organic) foods: these last are no more gateways to purifying naturalness than they

are the only way(-out) possible. For in this last new agrarian mind, all other embodied knowledges and sensuality of the social natural world are (re)visioned to be terrifying, unreal, alienating and so many other configurations heretofore that some of the most promising projects oriented with/in, drawn from and moving toward a social natural twenty-first century foodways are denounced outright as unnatural. *Small wonder* that today we have far more in the way of a closed-off *value system* of (impossibly) *knowing by seeing*, and a coordinate *food wars* to go along with it, than we have a monstrous *accountability*, meaning, imaginaries and representations drawn *from* the performances and structures of quasi-subjects and quasi-objects; and drawn *for* such monsters and/through monstrous *sensuality*—situated knowledges—that, in terms of imaginary and representation, cannot rely on, or exalt, predetermined geographies and coordinates of risks and naturalness *before* their assemblage. There is great promise and possibility in the throwntogetherness of the real and unreal, (un)natural—in quasi-objects—or, anyway, it's *always already* happening in the world. This is about championing *confrontation* in our representation of foodways; how we can assemble divisions and represent them as cogent possibilities for how we negotiate, and what we learn from, the life and death of quasi-objects.

What is the alternative to this last? In the words of Joy, the realistic alternative is to continue to try “to *limit development of the technologies that are too dangerous by limiting our pursuit of certain kinds of knowledge*” (*my emphasis*; in Specter, 2010, p. 260). Specter (2010) rightly wonders in response to such common beliefs, most ardently forwarded by the *new agrarians*, “*When has that worked? Whom should we prevent from having information? And who would be the guardian of those new tools we consider too powerful to use*” (*my emphasis*; p. 260)? I have a certain Kentuckian in mind here who has seemingly been given *all of the keys* to our food futures. Would not a more confrontational, quasi-agrarian representation better

cadence and actualize the quasi-object monsters and possibilities of twenty-first century social naturalness? More than the imaginary of division and war, would not quasi-agrarian representation of US agriculture as an assemblage of both social relations and the natural world, as well as best agri-cultural practices, more fully meet the challenges of multiple, intrainplicating material and discursive realities of the intergenerational tyranny of conventional-industrial agri-culture and the twenty-first century age of biotechnoscience most dangerously entrapping those with the least access and brought to bear on *all* of our porches whether we want to participate or not? A quasi-agrarian representation remains open to all possibilities, a direct counter to ideological interpellation concealed within the Berrian *neo* neoliberal world-as-exhibition, moreover the *Berry Prophecy Project's* promotion of *knowing by seeing*—its ethic of *ideology over evidence*.

Quasi-agrarianism seeks a (re)vision *from behind our eyes*, as it were; or, the flipside of *seeing is believing*, being: a shift in the imaginaries through which we *see*; in the beliefs through which we *see*, i.e., *believing is seeing*. A *quasi-agrarian* steering mechanism for vision and performance in the world is not intended to be a new, or another, map, to overlay the previous imaginary of food wars division. On the contrary, a *quasi-agrarian* steering mechanism, not unlike Murdoch's (2006) *eco-subjective* steering mechanism, seeks to leave believing *open* to dynamic change and becoming in the world; open to the possibilities endlessly afforded by the dynamic intrachanges and situatedness of space-time and place; humans and nonhumans; society and nature: outwardlooking politics—an ethic of confrontation that *knows* only that *meaning making* is an open *story so-far*. Quasi-agrarian representation is a meeting place *in-between*, a place of assemblage and space-time and place intertexts. And like this, a confrontational quasi-agrarianism seeks something, if nothing else, *always already wholly*: conditional questions left

open, outwardlooking politics. The alternative to this last are predetermined geographies/geographies of predetermination, or maps which must delimit boundaries in order to solidify meanings—another set of practices which, like the new agrarianism, can have far-reaching implications for imagining, representing and even delimiting *justice* when it comes to *our most basic needs*.

For example, a recent article by Carmon (2013) explores how one of the self-proclaimed “oldest natural and organic food companies in North America” (Carmon), which purports to create and maintain food *purity*, has also been working as diligently outside of the public eye to end employee contraception benefits by suing the Obama administration for its *Affordable Care Act* mandates. Again, this last has been made far less public than, for instance, the company’s CEO, Michael Potter’s, rather vociferous rejection of GE. The central point to be made here is not that all organic companies fall in this line, but rather that the imaginaries of US agriculture, particularly in terms of space, place and meanings of naturalness, purity and health, made most readily available today by the new agrarianism, have *real world* implications—and *not* just in terms of food. Meaning, in its filing, the company argues that various contraception options “almost always involve immoral and unnatural practices” (Carmon)—going so far as to argue that some forms of birth control interfere with fertilization, and thus end the life of the embryo. Their argument is clearly religious in tone, referencing a specifically Catholic definition of the beginning of life; and precisely *Eden’s* argument about GE foods, citing that their practices and products have been called “tasteful, nutritious, wholesome, principled, unrivaled, nurturing and pure” (Carmon). Essentially, the organic foods company has called contraception a “lifestyles drug,” somehow akin to *Viagra*, while simultaneously publically claiming that its internal relations are as “healthy, respectful, challenging and rewarding” (Carmon) as its commitment to

a “peaceful evolution on earth” (Carmon). The article continues that this is not the only organics based company that caters to “liberal customers” (Carmon) meanwhile extending their claims of food naturalness and purity into other realms, specifically mentioning John Mackey, CEO of *Whole Foods*, who likewise denounced the same healthcare initiative as “fascism” (Carmon). Ultimately, Carmon concludes that any company marketing to a “liberal clientele and then quietly harboring a right-wing agenda” (Carmon) is duplicitous. I can agree on some level, but I think there is another point to be made here—and one about vision, imaginaries and maps that, in the purview of a quasi-agrarian (re)vision presented heretofore, perhaps should not be so shocking after all...

Is it so surprising that any company with such an imaginary of purity and naturalness mappable a *divided* foodways could be at once *conservative* in its other policies? The surprise of the author, and presumably many others, illuminates how the local/ist project is popularly imagined to be *inherently* more respective of social justice *simply because* it aligns itself with various geographical thinking shown to revel in *anything* that the conventional-industrial system is *not*, i.e., the margin, the periphery. Through the quasi-agrarian lens, however, the latter is rendered thus not only unsurprising, but rather predictable given Wendell Berry’s new agrarian geography and attendant propositions. Which is to say, the *Organic Eden Foods*’ imaginary of agriculture and food is *highly replicative* of the Wendell Berry world(view)-as-exhibition of agricultural/ environmental health, gender complementarity and even sexual intercourse as retaining purity through its positionality at the margin, the periphery—Berry’s popular imaginary and writings which have also been called *conservative* but taken up by a purportedly *liberal* food agenda: I wrote about this before. Still, and well beyond American political affiliations, the quasi-agrarian question shifts into whether new agrarian minded imaginaries of predetermined

spatial demarcations and coordinate meanings of global and local, mapped risk and naturalness, danger and precaution, death and life, war and peace and many more so forth, respectively, can more openly name and represent *social natural* performances, where every day meeting places continually (re)produce relations that are not so easily mappable as healthy and unhealthy, pure and impure, or even *right* and *wrong*. Representation has real force in the continual reconstruction of power-knowledge in the world. This could not be truer when it comes to *our most basic needs*. Perhaps it's time for quasi-agrarian (re)vision, imaginaries and representations which don't look *back* to essences that gather their meanings through bifurcated geographies, but look *out* to the world where *most basic needs* are, again, not so basic or divisible after all, i.e., the *social natural* needs of many women to obtain and use birth control for many health and wellbeing needs, namely, menstruation management, so they can be more productive at work; or, more pressingly for my own life and medical history, ovarian cancer prevention. This last is by no means a *new* or *risky* scientific breakthrough, but can appear that way if the center is represented as a homogenous mass of deleterious biotechnoscience... *Where social justice is* always seems to be already living and changing somewhere *in-between*—albeit a place now clouded over by food wars.

Now I am standing on the front porch of our rural Iowa commodity corn farm, which today is inputting 100% GE seed, with all of the imaginaries explored heretofore assembled with my quasi-agrarian imaginary. I feel left here alone, with the relatively few writers of the *liminal in-between*, to somewhat humbly propose that until the material-discursive food wars divide is thoroughly (re)visioned, the strengths of biotechnological means will only continue to be put to some pretty awful monocultural ends—precisely the argument leveled at conventional-industrial agriculture by its *other side*. Until the material-discursive food wars divide is thoroughly

(re)visioned, the seemingly inveterate problems of US agriculture will only be exacerbated with genetic engineering—even making the war appear *just* in various moments of twilight. Instead, seeking representations which can name and consider assemblage of highly varied thinking and tools of these seemingly opposed agri-cultures—their imaginaries, their practices—should really be the quandary around which to collaborate, not dissent. Correlatively, Specter (2010) usefully articulates such collaboration as a *manageable* risk, whereas dismissing GE outright, as well as other aspects of conventional farming, is a far greater risk to take—and one that usually engenders malnutrition and starvation far, far away from the *place of home*, USA. Who to blame matters less than the exploitation, defenses and retreats that need to give... Agriculture, farming practices, whether conventional-industrial or organic, are fundamentally, “an assault on the earth. Tilling, plowing, reaping, sowing are not environmentally benign activities *and they never were*... You can’t turn a crop into edible food without killing pests. And you can’t kill them without poison—*whether man-made or natural*” (*my emphasis*; p. 113). As we reach the limit for how much war we can wage on the environment (p. 113), the food wars must also come to an end, or so echoes McWilliams (2010), concluding that, “until we start substituting pragmatic realism for ideological purism, we’re destined to do little more than reap the bitter fruits of a harvest sown with righteousness and extremism.” Just because this is the *possible* bifurcated system of US agriculture does not make it *inevitable*. Quasi-agrarian imaginaries of the in-between place simply seek to *not know yet*, and *see* the world through such possibilities, ever open to continuing negotiation and assemblage.

I argue that a quasi-agrarian geographical imaginary can liberate the representation of biotechnoscience from the prisonhouse of more structuralist geographies and representations—that biotechnoscience can be imagined as *also just* an endless (re)configuring boundary project,

like all others, a territory only temporarily permanent through its various associations, thus only as (de)limited and boundless as its data privileges certain outcomes while only being able to begin to position testing, or even practice tolerance, for others. Biotechnoscience is no more closed, its datum just true, than it is the only answer. Actually, GE applications may be appropriate for many situations, but, and for good reason, no one has successfully claimed for *all* situations. Having thoroughly penetrated the living world entire, biotechnoscience is undeniably an association of a multitude of associations, or even novel solutions, which have always had to hold many positions at once, i.e., situated knowledges. Pamela Ronald (2008) ingeniously tasks us to confront these hyper-messy biotechnoscientific realities when she asks, “The Swiss Army knife and the molecular scissors are examples along a continuum of new technologies developed through human endeavor and creativity. *Which one of these technologies is truly ‘appropriate’ for agriculture*” (*my emphasis*; p. 59)? We already know which Berry would suggest we *all* choose since *he* refuses to buy a computer. As McWilliams (2009) puts it, “Dreams can be grand, but at some point we must admit their limitations and seek their spirit in more realistic endeavors” (p. 14). In other words, we can choose an imaginary of margins severed from a biotechnoscientifically complex reality with which we all must contend; or (re)vision what biotechnoscience today can even mean in agrarianism(s) discourse in the first place. *Just like the rest of the world*, our *texts* need to actively explore new, *unconsidered possibilities* for the future of productive and ecologically sound agricultural systems without committing to any *particular* story.

At the end of the day, quasi-agrarianism, as a steering mechanism of our vision, imaginaries and representations, also fosters outwardlookingness and hope for (re)visions which by no means, at their base, are wholly new or even profound. Any particular story, or imaginary,

even representation, of US agriculture that fails to acknowledge multiple sides of the most pressing issues, or relies on a spatialization of *anything is good if it is not*, like, *not* mappable the conventional-industrial paradigm, should be considered suspect and confronted. This last by no means discounts the entirety of American agrarianism(s) through space-time anymore than it, in any way, exalts GE, or likewise biotechnoscience, as an inalienable good. An *in-between* place of quasi-agrarianism engenders and proliferates open possibilities—(re)vision which could strengthen AFN representations against accusations of *greenwashing* (see generally Glater, 2006) inasmuch as they could strengthen federal representation and regulation of GEOs. Just anecdotally, I was reaffirmed the need for even the most basic quasi-agrarian (re)vision of US agricultural representation when a professional currently working on *ISO 14001 certification*¹¹⁷ and product life cycle assessments for the environmental projects team of *Louis Vuitton Services*, Paris, France, asked me what the word ‘natural’ means in terms of US organics. Relying mostly on the federal definitional to start my brief description, she off-handedly remarked in turn that it seems implausible for any system or project to eliminate all risk, moreover, to be able to *sell*, anyway, *the image of* a zero tolerance for risk at every single point of the production and consumption paradigm today without being accused of *greenwashing*. The point to be made here is not that organics are *all awash* in greenwashing, but simply that, first, even the organics-friendly environment of the EU has serious questions about US organics’ claims; and two, that opening-up the geographical imaginary, the representation, of US agriculture could allow for

¹¹⁷ *ISO 14000* is a series of environmental management standards developed and published by the *International Organization for Standardization* (ISO) for organizations. Namely, the *ISO 14000* standards provide a guidelines for organizations/ corporations needing to systematize and improve environmental management. Because adherence to these standards is voluntary, their adoption since the first years of the current century has been neither consistent nor widespread outside of the European Union. [see generally the *International Organization for Standardization* (ISO), at <http://www.iso.org/iso/home.htm>]

many possibilities, thereby strengthening throughout the country—and even the world—the various deployed meanings of such very necessary AFN projects, as well as understandings of agricultural terminology, like *tolerance*; and the representation and regulation of GEOs. Such quasi-agrarian propositions simply ask, and mirroring much thinking and phrasing of McWilliams (2010) here, too, that representations leave open the “opportunity to do something that the intensely polarized agricultural world rarely does: think beyond the organic vs. conventional divide...” (McWilliams); and champion the conditional phrase, *what would happen if, for example...*

farmers anaerobically digested methane from fermenting manure and used the energy to produce high grade synthetic fertilizer? What would happen if organic farmers adopted GM crops that led to higher yields and greater nitrogen uptake efficiency? What if conventional growers mixed row crops with specialty crops—crops grown to be fed to people rather than to farm animals or biofuel plants?? What if farmers viewed sustainable farming as an agricultural balancing act, one that drew on the widest variety of possible inputs to achieve the highest yielding and most environmentally sound outputs? These questions only scratch the surface, *but they all demand a perspective that transcends the organic/conventional divide.* (my emphasis; McWilliams)

Quasi-agrarianism is a perspective drawn from Latourian *multinaturalism* inasmuch as it lives and breathes in his *navigational definition of maps... if nothing else, on the move toward* McWilliams’ deployment here of *transcendence*.

Modern American agrarianism(s) recombinant of Old and New worlds, particularly the new agrarianism(s), even as opposed to recent incarnations of virtue ethics, thus perhaps remain

not the most cogent philosophy available for the bridge Paul Thompson (2008) seeks to build “between deliberative critical philosophy and effective applied environmental science... an ecological ethics” (p. 542). Thompson cites Wendell Berry as the “contemporary prophet and spokesperson for agrarian themes as they relate to environmental matters” (p. 529); and further proclaims, based on Freyfogle (2001), that neoagrarianism is an emergent social practice of food systems localization which could be “integrated with environmental science by finding ways to accommodate and even encourage the types of participatory involvement and enthusiasm characteristic of new agrarian enterprises” (Thompson, 2008, p. 542). Granted, Thompson continues, “doing so may have less to do with internalizing a given philosophical argument than it does with being responsive to authentic expressions of material practice in connection with food and food production” (p. 542). However, if one were to imagine US agriculture today in terms of the new agrarianism cited by Thompson, most likely one would find singular representations and conclusions—*predetermined* at a project’s outset. Given its problematic *Work of Purification*, the New (World) agrarian story is *always already* Old (World), closed, therefore mere predeterminations of any new story that could emerge from their application, especially one that can entertain GE in agriculture. To imagine agrarianism(s) as “the third way in ethics, an approach more consistent with ecological thinking at its root” (my emphasis, p. 541) indicates more about *trialectics*, perhaps, than any social natural possibilities that could be excited by integration of the new agrarian geographical imaginary.

Generally speaking, I can understand how the quasi-agrarian propositions put forth here are heated, predominantly in the case of more outwardlooking imaginaries and representations of GE. I, too, perhaps have reservations about more openly representing, or even living in a world where meat can be generated in a lab to meet an astronomically increasing demand no matter the

costs, or where a GE corn plant can take the life of other (non)humans... but this last is *also* the world I am living in. I am far more terrified of a failure to (re)vision contrasts, accepting that how we see has limits/ is far less a phenomenon of absolutes—of brightness and darkness—than patterns, diffracted, than I am by considering the possibilities of GE, esp. when applied to commodity corn. What *appears* to be a GE driven war on human and nonhuman nature alike; *Frankenfoods* battling FoodSheds for control of brands and labels; corn plants somehow genetically designed with capitalist ambitions or homicidal intent, can *all* also be (re)visioned as the many *specters of twilight* fabricated by discursive weaponry and representation, moreover, the *fog of food wars* that now must be dissolved into a *multitude of perishable things*, rather into a *fuller accountability for life as it is really lived* (by seven billion humans with a limited supply of water and arable land but seemingly boundless aspirations for extra meat-based protein) than a romantic agrarian past, literary exegesis on the virtue of retreating into backwardlooking, place-bound family farms or *going home to eat*.

Again, concerning the latter, I can understand how such propositions can raise eyebrows or even voices in the current climate of food wars, but *Toward Cornotology* seeks to begin and be *on the move again* with the quasi-object, (GE) commodity corn—the *in-between* place of absolutism and extremism. Asking for/ building imaginaries and representations of US agriculture more outwardlooking than a food war inculcated by strict spatial divides and attendant meanings of the global and local is radical relative to others, however remains quite humble when situated in yet other constellations of critique and comment. For example, Stier and Miller's (2013) recent article about food activism, entitled, "How Much Food Activism is New Age, Airy-Fairy Nonsense?" claims that innumerable authors, writers, and media personalities—whom they call "the Food Police" and "food glitterati," and claim more or less know *nothing*

about food, health and nutrition—are “conjuring up loony notions about how we ought to be eating” (Stier & Miller). They cite the “guru” (Stier & Miller) of this food activist movement as none other than Michael Pollan, whose so-called *faddist* and *elitist* views of raw foods, prepackaged foods, home cooking, and food taxation, like others’ arguments (including those of the popular *New York Times* columnist, Mark Bittman) they not so generously or delicately contend have gone mainstream, and like this have corrupted average Americans’ thinking about food and foodways.

Albeit I can appreciate some of the sentiments, and a bit of the frustration, when it comes to challenging (and being labeled as nothing more in turn than an *organic critic*, or worse, an *angry scholar*... or even an *overly emotional* one) the veritable, as they also imply, *cults of personality* on how exactly *processed foods are inherently bad* and *raw ingredients are inherently safe and healthy*; or how *all* processes often lumped with the global food regime, like pasteurization, transportation and freezing technologies which have all increased general access to safer food products, are, at their essence, capitalism and the free market’s short-term profit-motives incarnate (Stier & Miller), I would strongly caution that such total dismissiveness is also short-sighted. I acknowledge that I have called-out multiple American agrarian imaginaries throughout the course of the project, but the spirit of doing so was to move *Toward Cornotology*—rather, toward more open imaginaries and representations of US agriculture. The current project has never denied that Michael Pollan, for instance, continually presents some of the most well-researched and accessible examinations of US foodways. To dismiss Pollan’s works outright instead of taking the space-time to explore, as I have entirely attempted to do, some of the intricacies of his highly researched and sophisticated geographies in an effort to, only then, explode, his viable works’ conclusions, limitations and opportunities for quasi-

agrarian (re)vision seeking to end this endless food war, works more to reify fortifications of either side than impact the current divide—which I believe the reductive tone and rhetoric of Stier and Miller can most plausibly work to do.

Talking about American foodways today is daunting and often politically-personally charged—perhaps more than other issues on the American studies/ cultural studies/ theoretical geography studies landscape... perhaps even more every day with the international publicity of the world's first *test-tube hamburger* (see generally Ro, 2013), developments which seem to only fuel the current food war debate whilst further confounding those in favor of both localist visions of organics and organizations such as *People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals* (PETA). PETA has come out quite strongly *in favor of* test-tube meat initiatives—going so far as to promise the progenitors of the first successful *in vitro* chicken meat to be brought to market one million dollars (PETA Offers \$1 Million Reward..., 2013). Again, talking about American foodways today is disheartening and often politically-personally charged—even downright alienating: I have my own shortcomings. But quasi-agrarianism demands we be demanding of the demanders, and critical of the critics, too, without becoming one of the two aforementioned extremes... or outright dismissive of *in vitro* hamburger, for example, as if such a knee-jerk reaction will make the technology and its productions *simply disappear*; or more fully account for, and/ or name, both the reasoning behind the technological application (supported by some of the most environmentally minded organizations today) and the concurrent *strengths* and potentialities of the otherwise understandably *terrifying* quasi-object. A perspective of the *in vitro*, etc., as a dystopian tyranny fails to interrogate the social nature interface, and like this denies a more accountable representation and/ or cadence of monsters. Likewise, a perspective of utopian hyper-rurality so totally invested in local/ist projects at the expense of all others that

one could be accused of *self enrichment activism*, which is to say, only taking-up strictly delimited activities (though with rather cloudy meanings) now so that, years later when perhaps still nothing has changed about the highly problematic system, comfortable people can continue to imagine their own contributions without actually ever having had to have disrupted their own lives, will (re)produce *nothing more* than food wars and *only more* unrepresented *in vitro* meats.

And apparently, as of May 2013, even *Mark Bittman* can agree, though in *highly* qualified ways, given a very recent blog spot entitled, “Bad Enough.” Opening his blog by acknowledging that, “Things are bad enough in the food world that we don’t need to resort to hyperbole to be worried or alarmed” (Bittman), the author recognizes at once overwhelming problems with the current system that he does continue to encourage outrage about, but that *certain* representations of a food war he again in no way destabilizes, and even proliferates, nonetheless are not going to most *effectively* redress various grievances. His preeminent reclamation: *ideology over evidence*. Even Bittman is arguing here that reliance upon *opinion*, really, “intuition” when it comes to topics as complex as US food ways today, is not always trustworthy; that “it pays to literally stop and think” (Bittman). Providing an example of recent news rhetoric about how apparently all GEOs are linked with certain cancers, the columnist acknowledges that these often poorly grounded opinions raise more fear than certainty about the science or what should be done about it. He writes, “If I sit down and do my homework all I can really say is with intelligence is that it’s premature to conclude that ingesting food with genetically engineered ingredients is safe” (Bittman), i.e., a far more evenhanded dismissal (though a dismissal nonetheless). Still, Bittman perhaps goes too far as well, and rarely will the writer and I agree on *most* things presented throughout the project, or ever imagine the situation in the same ways. The most valid takeaway message is that while there are many, oftentimes,

well founded, reasons for fear when it comes to various aspects of a vast and highly heterogeneous biotechnoscience, discounting *Monsanto*, for instance, as some *supernatural evil* in lieu of a historically problematic, even negligent or *immoral*, mega corps; or calling the whole of processed, GE based foods *Frankenfoods*, or now, *test-tube* monsters, is, simply, not helping—perhaps not helping the organics/ local/ist cause in the perspective of Bittman, sure, but again: *just not helping*. He concedes, “Exaggerating doesn’t make our case stronger... it’s easy to get caught up in this, but in a way it might make sense to stick to the facts” (Bittman). And yes, Bittman will continue to say how totally deleterious GE foods are; how the food system is more like a “barely controlled anarchy”; and that “all children are “under assault by food marketers” (Bittman)—how all of these aspects are *bad enough* without the exaggeration, and if his particular leanings to one side of the food wars are to succeed then they need to tone down the rhetoric that he mentions and that is *really* his point—yet there remains something to be learned here: there are other ways to wage the same *conversation* without relying on *only* ideologies and feelings; or resorting to *righteousness or extremism*, or here, *hyperbole* and fear-mongering.

All told, Bittman believes in the food war... yet even a food warrior can see that (re)vision of various representations of US agriculture today is necessary for strengthening general public understanding of the issues—granted, for *his* part, so that we all will *reject* them... For my part, I include this article near the end of my exploration to illuminate different calls for (re)vision, so that we all can look *outward*, toward possibilities... for my part, *toward ending this endless food war*.

At the end of the day, I am always standing on the front porch of our rural Iowa commodity corn farm, which today is inputting 100% GE seed, with more doubt than certainty

of what is happening before me. I know less about how to splice genes than I do about soil science—or really anything biotechnoscientific about how the plants before me live and die. In that way, this project is not about exaltation of GE anymore than it is focused on rejecting the co-eval possibilities continually afforded by AFNs. My project is about our geographical imaginaries, and in turn how we imagine, read, *(re)vision* and represent US agri-culture today. If we want to challenge the dualisms of (post)post geography, we must challenge its imaginary, in effect *(re)visioning* how we read and represent US agriculture. Space and place thinking has also worked at various times and as varied manifestations to *enclose* the world into categories through certain geographical imaginations, particularly those, today, of post post modernism, post post geography; as well as *set it free* through other, relational geographical imaginations. Above all others, relational geography is a geography of *(re)vision*, moreover critical analysis of how we imagine the world/ our place with/in, our knowledge(s) of, that world of the human and nonhuman, quasi-objects and thus particularly the social nature interface. Moving *toward cornotology*, rather by adopting more post-structuralist imaginaries, like *quasi-agrarian eco-subjectivity*—a critical *reading* practice—might we move toward outwardlookingness and *(re)vision* the conditional phrase, *what would happen if*; a more *open story-so-far* about associationality, translations of social nature, articulations of quasi-objects... navigation and diplomacy.

How we think about corn matters.

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