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The Kindness of Human Milk: Jess Dobkin's Lactation Station Breast Milk Bar

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The Kindness of Human Milk

Jess Dobkin's *Lactation Station Breast Milk Bar*

WANT TO GO OUT FOR A DRINK? That question conjures venues ranging from noisy, smoke-filled roadside beer halls to sophisticated Scotch and wine bars. Any of these options sounds appealing, depending on one's mood. However, if the beverage offered for patrons to sniff and savor is not alcohol but milk—and milk not from cows' udders but from women's breasts—the response might swing from attraction to disgust. This shift arises from complication more than from opposition, since disgust here is a complicated form of attraction. The word *disgust* evokes a visceral sense of expelling something from one's body—spitting something out. But to spit something out, I must first put it into my mouth to decide whether it is appetizing. Thus, even if a thing is disgusting, it is nonetheless (which in this context also means “therefore”) tempting.¹ A desire to promote such complexity made me seize the opportunity to host Jess Dobkin's *Lactation Station Breast Milk Bar* in the gallery that I curate at the Ontario College of Art & Design (OCAD) in Toronto.

Part of an extensive performance series organized by Paul Couillard to investigate the five senses, *Lactation Station* transformed OCAD's unassuming white cube gallery into an unusual combination of day care center, groovy lounge, and media spectacle.² The softly glowing bar that Dobkin placed at the back of the room pulled these diverse strands together and provided the “station” from which the artist dispensed modest samples (it was a tasting, after all) of breast milk donated by six women.

Working with a local publicity firm, Dobkin had circulated a press release well before the event, which invited audiences “to ‘quench their curiosity’ by tasting samples of pasteurized human breast milk at *The Lactation Station Breast Milk Bar*.”³ The press release's emphasis on pasteurized milk minimized the element of sensationalism while assuring the public that the event would meet food-safety requirements.⁴ At the same time, the release was provocative, as pasteurization cannot remove the element of shock surrounding the proffered drink's origin. Thus the release

vacillated between respectability and provocation. It quotes Dobkin as saying she hopes that audiences will discuss the “challenging and most intimate” maternal rite of breast-feeding “with a sense of play and without judgment.” But then it notes that the artist is a “lesbian single mother of a one-year-old daughter” whose performance was partly funded by the Canada Council for the Arts, an obligatory acknowledgment of the council's support that plays on the tendency of this agency to be accused every few years of affronting public decency.⁵

Stirring the pot of controversy comes easily to Dobkin, who, for more than a decade, has infused her performances with sex and humor. Her early piece *Eat Out* (1996) introduced food into this mix by capping an evening of performance and dining with “a live cunt-eating contest for dessert.”⁶ A few years later, she literalized the use of the term “sweater puppets” as a colloquialism for breasts when she produced *Presenting the Two Boobs In: “Hanging Out”* (2003). After augmenting her nipples with strategically placed eyes and mouths, she tied strings to them so that she could manipulate her breasts for a marionette show in which the Two Boobs negotiated “the complexities of their relationship.”⁷ Around the same time, to suggest that the United States should follow Ontario by legalizing same-sex marriage, Dobkin dressed as a bride and hit the streets of New York to marry “countless men, women, pets, fire hydrants, and street signs” for *An Ontario Bride Seeks American Wives* (2003).⁸

Clearly, Dobkin's performances rely heavily on humor and personal experience, and *Lactation Station* is no exception. In an interview just before the event, she traced the impetus for the piece to her inability to breast-feed her daughter. The consequent wrestling with what she calls “an unattainable expectation of what it meant to be a good mother” awoke in her the awareness that not all moms find breast-feeding rewarding.⁹ Exploring this realization led Dobkin to other issues: weaning, feelings about one's milk, the breast's awkward status as a symbol both sexual



Above: *The Lactation Station Breast Milk Bar.*

PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVID HAWE © 2006

and maternal.¹⁰ As Dobkin observes in the press release, the ambivalence around these issues stems from how our perception of breast milk shifts: “A substance that nourishes us in our infancy...becomes a curiosity in adulthood.” By producing *Lactation Station*, Dobkin hoped to explore whether, and why, we are curious and to suggest that, in this context, it is neither right nor wrong to want to sample breast milk. “If people do want to taste the milk, great. But why?” she wonders in an interview. “And if you don’t want to taste it, why not?”¹¹

To turn curiosity into discussion, Dobkin re-created as fully as possible the experience of a night out (the chichi bar with low lights, the requisite awkwardly tall barstools, a maître d’ who coordinated the seatings) and served the drinks herself, thus playing on the compulsion people feel to converse with their bartenders. However, unlike the usual situation, in which overworked servers spend their shifts extricating themselves from one rushed conversation after another, this bartender had plenty of time to chat with her patrons despite the briskness of her business. More than three hundred people attended the event, with nearly one

hundred sampling the breast milk, while toddlers played underfoot and television cameras hovered overhead.¹² As I wandered through the crowded gallery, chatting with people and gauging their reactions, I felt that the event provoked an ambivalence that many audience members found interesting to recognize in themselves. They seemed very open to the idea that their squeamishness was culturally or ideologically produced but bemused by the fact that this notion didn’t quell their distaste.¹³

The interest in the event bore out Dobkin’s hunch that our curiosity about breast milk runs deep and that, because breast milk is both nutrient and bodily substance, a certain amount of attraction mitigates the disgust that it provokes. This mitigation explains why Dobkin’s project attracted a more mixed response than other attempts to turn people—or parts of them—into food.¹⁴ When, in 1992, the Australian restaurateur and food writer Gay Bilson publicly proposed to collect about three liters (more than six pints) of her

blood, have it screened for possible contamination, then substitute it for pig's blood in a conventional recipe for blood sausage, outcry made her drop the idea, even though there was no question of harm to self or others.¹⁵

This contrast between the responses to *Lactation Station* and Bilson's proposal suggests that whereas we're unclear whether human milk is food, we're certain that human blood is not. Surely this difference springs from cultural expectations, since, when it comes to other mammals, we tend to consider most, if not all, of the animal—including its blood and milk—as potential food, eliminating bits from our diet in response to social norms or ethical considerations. Regarding humans, we reverse this perspective: nothing is food. Breast milk straddles this difference because we're familiar with the idea of breast milk as food, but that familiarity extends only to a mother nursing her child. Beyond that, we're not sure what we think. Dobkin's gambit was to isolate breast milk from the mother-child relationship by replacing children with adults, a simple switch that highlights our uncertainty about the liquid. Why is it food for an infant but not for someone older?

Nowhere was the resulting ambivalence more evident than in one of the first stories to hit the news following Dobkin's press release. "Funding for 'Lactation Station' Breast Milk Bar Draws Tory Ire," proclaimed Bruce Cheadle's headline, taking its cue from the history that Canadian conservatives share with their counterparts everywhere of despising provocative art. Yet the body of the article painted a contrasting picture, starting from its first sentence: "The federal Conservative government says it won't lay a hand on the Lactation Station Breast Milk Bar."¹⁶

The contradiction between Cheadle's headline and his story—intensified by his punning on Conservatives not laying a hand on this breast-oriented project—neatly summarizes the confusion around *Lactation Station*. Few people expressed unbridled enthusiasm, the exception being a man at the talk Dobkin gave following the performance who chided her for having pasteurized the breast milk that she served. Based on his experience tasting milk from dozens of women, he felt that the pasteurized milk lacked the captivating richness of unprocessed breast milk.¹⁷ Ridicule was slightly more common. Playing on the highly successful "Got milk?" advertising campaign, Jacob Richler in the *National Post* smirked: "'Lactation Station' Begs [sic] the Question: Got Art?"¹⁸ Most journalists, however, found the issues raised by the event too intriguing to dismiss. Even the notoriously inflammatory *Sun* approached *Lactation Station* with curiosity and humor, while the slightly more cosmopolitan *Star's* beer critic, Jon Filson, gamely opined,

"Breast milk has a silky mouthfeel, leaving a slight film—but much less even than the skimmiest milk from a cow."¹⁹

Dubious but not dismissive, these responses reflect the tenor of the discussion around breast-feeding. In fact, the day before Dobkin distributed her press release, a feature in the *New York Times* detailed concern among public health officials in the United States over low levels of breast-feeding. The *Times* piece prompted the *Globe and Mail* to highlight the fact that fewer than 15 percent of new mothers in Canada meet the minimum standard of breast-feeding for six months, a source of worry in the Canadian pediatric community.²⁰ These concerns point to two questions that link *Lactation Station* to its context: What meanings attach to breast milk, and how strong are those attachments? The North American medical community fears that we perceive breast milk as ugly, unpleasant, and embarrassing, and that these perceptions are hard to change. However, Rebecca Kukla argues that these views seem intractable because efforts to shift them start from the mistaken assumption that women do not understand the benefits of breast-feeding. "[Y]et we know that American women who don't initiate or continue breast-feeding are generally well aware of the health benefits of doing so," Kukla writes. "In particular, a 2000 study showed that they are just as aware of these benefits as their breastfeeding counterparts."²¹ This paradox—women who don't breast-feed often know they should—springs from a collision between the encoding of the breast as a maternal organ and of breast milk as an infant nutrient, on the one hand, and the competing interpretations of the breast as sexual fetish and of breast milk as abject bodily fluid. We tend to believe, Kukla argues, that mothers make all key decisions regarding their children's health, and that they do so alone. Hence, they take the blame for not breast-feeding. But this view romanticizes breast-feeding as something that happens between an infant and a mother who never leaves home—hardly likely even for the recommended minimum nursing time of six months. If a new mother breast-feeds outside her home, the fact that she is feeding her child will not prevent her from receiving offended or sexualized looks, which are especially disconcerting for women who belong to visible minorities or who have been sexually assaulted. As Kukla observes, "American culture asks women to breastfeed, and holds them morally accountable for doing so," but also asks them to do so while remaining out of view and, lest someone see them, model perfect. However, most, if not all, women are unable to live up to these expectations. So Kukla proposes that, rather than trying "to fix mothers' characters, at the level of their personality and their choices," we need "to

change the socially embedded status of maternal practices so as to make healthy choices more workable.”²²

Assessing the disdain and difficulty associated with breast-feeding in North America, Theresa Agnew, Joanne Gilmore, and Pattie Sullivan report that some anthropologists “suggest that the rate at which a particular cultural group adopts bottle-feeding and decreases breastfeeding [measures to what extent] that culture has replaced its traditional beliefs and practices” with Western ones.²³ Repeatedly, Agnew and her colleagues found, immigrants to North America from around the world gave up breast-feeding due to the difficulty on this continent of combining it with work or school, and because it provoked disapproval.²⁴

The image on the brochure for *Lactation Station* speaks directly to this problem: Can the meanings currently accorded breasts and their milk (which include maternity, sex, nutrition, disgust, nationhood, liberty, and purity) coexist rather than compete with one another? Playfully manipulated to depict Dobkin expressing breast milk into wineglasses on a polished bar, the picture shows the artist naked from the waist up (save for wristwatch and nail polish), her hands cupped over her breasts and the words “Quench Your Curiosity” above her right shoulder. The photograph humorously diagrams Dobkin’s intention to make breast milk a beverage for refined adults. Yet the neatness of the line of milk squirting from Dobkin’s nipple into the glass farthest to her left signals that this stream is computer-generated. Of course, this manipulation is necessary—the visual joke requires a neat stream. However, the fact that Dobkin isn’t producing milk in the photograph also recalls, if inadvertently, that she could not nurse her baby and that the disappointment resulting from that impossibility motivated *Lactation Station*.

Importantly, this photograph juxtaposes these maternal meanings with sexual ones. Dobkin’s nakedness and coy placement of her hands play on the syntax of laddish magazines like *Stuff* and *Maxim*. The splayed fingers of her right hand signal the fullness of her breasts (or at least of her right breast); the resulting sexual charge is accentuated by the bar being high enough to cover her pubic region but low enough to reveal the absence of a telltale waistband, thus hinting that the artist is nude below the waist as well as above it.

By showing us Dobkin as an attractive, relatively young woman, the picture says that—for better *and* worse—we are bound to see her sexually, at least in part. At the same time, by confronting us with the artist as a lactating mother, the image shows us something that we would prefer not to see at all. As Kukla points out, we expect moms to nurse out of sight, and even the literature produced by breast-feeding

advocates generally features idealized images in which “mother and infant are locked into a dyadic and private relationship of mutual attention that excludes the rest of the world,” and that the rest of the world excludes in turn.²⁵

It is hard to imagine these meanings—sexual and maternal, with their competing complements of attraction and disgust—either disappearing from Western society or coexisting peacefully here, even though the history of breasts shows that their associated meanings can alter dramatically over time.²⁶ One example of these shifting fortunes is the rise and fall of spirituality’s association with mothering and nursing. This trajectory began in the Middle Ages, when, as Caroline Walker Bynum details in *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, “phenomena such as Eucharistic devotion, fasting, food multiplication miracles, and lactation visions” became important aspects of women’s spirituality.²⁷ This link had much to do with the connections among women, food (both its denial and its provision), and nurturing. However, a surprising outgrowth of these ties is the description of male religious leaders—abbots, prelates, bishops, even Christ—as nursing mothers. In her astonishing essay “Jesus as Mother and Abbot as Mother,” Bynum shows that men writing in this tradition—which was not aimed at women, despite the association of food with female spirituality—used nursing as a trope to fold nurturing into their conceptions of pastoral concern. Medieval medical theory held that a mother was the ideal nurse for her child because breast milk was thought to be processed blood. Therefore, Bynum argues, “What writers in the high Middle Ages wished to say about Christ the savior who feeds the individual soul with his own blood was precisely and concisely said in the image of the nursing mother whose milk is her blood, offered to the child.”²⁸ This language depended on a desexualized, defeminized understanding of mothering, which isolated nursing from its biological context so that it could link to the “general conception of leadership, authority and pastoral concern.”²⁹ Significantly, these nurturing authorities were exclusively male; female writers avoided this imagery. Spiritual literature positioned women devotees as Christ’s brides, and, Bynum says, there is “little evidence that the popularity of feminine and maternal imagery in the high Middle Ages reflects an increased respect for actual women by men.”³⁰

Art historical accounts of breasts and breast-feeding also suggest that meanings attributed to breasts and breast-feeding shift over different eras and locations. For instance, in “Motherhood According to Giovanni Bellini,” Julia Kristeva charts a gradual physical and emotional separation of Madonna from Child throughout Bellini’s career in the fifteenth century, moving from intimacy to indifference,

fear, and hostility. “It appears as though this aggressivity were rising to the mother’s throat,” Kristeva writes of the *Madonna and Child* of 1487 in the collection of the Museu de Arte de São Paulo, “but, in fact, it is the infant that abruptly reveals it when, eluding the hands of the henceforth weary mother, he grabs her by the neck as if to strangle her—the guilty mother.”³¹ Seeing the seeds of this antagonism in Bellini’s paintings of thirty years earlier, when Christ as child seems to fret at the Madonna’s close embrace, Kristeva proposes that his fluctuating ideology and own growing maturity over the succeeding decades create a context in which Bellini can express more openly his notion of the mother-child relationship as a hostile one.

This rising suspicion of maternity anticipates a shifting perspective on nursing and breast milk. “[T]he milk of the Virgin has not been a symbol of a constant, fixed content,” writes Marina Warner in her foundational study *Alone of All Her Sex*, “and its varying and often extraordinary shifts of meaning contain a microcosmic history of Christian attitudes toward the physicality of the female.”³² Through the medieval and Renaissance eras, the meaning of Mary’s milk moved from material to spiritual, from wisdom to mercy, until, Warner says, it came “to represent [Mary’s] intercession on behalf of mankind” through a deepening focus on the significance of her having borne Christ. Yet, as the sixteenth century unfolded, breast-feeding became increasingly associated with peasantry and shame, an emerging snobbery that cast images of *Maria Lactans* into disfavor. Combined with a growing unease about the naked female body, this change made the Virgin’s bare breast seem “indecorous,” Warner observes, and led Pope Paul IV to order the painter Daniela da Volterra to start “clothing the nudes in the Sistine Chapel—hence his nickname *il Braghettonne* (the Trouserer).”³³

Despite this decline in images linking nursing to Christian spirituality, humanity (at least in the West) has not, over the last five centuries, grown steadily more squeamish about things associated with becoming and being a mother: puberty, menstruation, sex, female anatomy, birth, breast-feeding, soiled diapers, and so on. In *A History of the Breast*, Marilyn Yalom shows that the eighteenth century began by valuing the unused breast but ended by extolling breast-feeding’s virtues:

At no time in history—barring our own age—have breasts been more contested than in the eighteenth century. As Enlightenment thinkers set out to change the world, breasts became a battleground for controversial theories about the human race and political systems. Before the century was over, breasts would be linked, as never before, to the

very idea of nationhood. It is not too far-fetched to argue that modern Western democracies invented the politicized breast and have been cutting their teeth on it ever since.³⁴

The ideal “of the ‘unused’ bosom, dependent on wet nursing for its youthful preservation,” gave way to praise for mothers who nursed their children. One prominent, if inconstant, advocate was Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who promoted breast-feeding in *Émile*, his 1762 treatise on education.³⁵ The benefits of breast-feeding would not capture the French imagination more broadly for another three decades, but then they did so forcefully. In June 1793 the French government decreed that it would withhold state support from indigent mothers who did not breast-feed and would help unwed mothers who wanted to nurse.³⁶ A few weeks later, this decree acquired an extraordinary allegorical counterpart: for the Festival of Regeneration, Jacques-Louis David designed a fountain in the form of an Egyptian goddess, water streaming from her breasts. “A crowd of astonished Parisians watched as each of eighty-six commissioners drank a cup of water from the goddess’s flowing breasts,” Yalom writes, “and the president of the National Convention, Hérault de Séchelles, proclaimed: ‘These fecund waters which spurt from your breasts... will consecrate the oaths that France swears to you on this day.’”³⁷

These legal and allegorical uses of breast-feeding accompanied an increase in practice: in 1780 roughly 10 percent of mothers nursed their children; by 1801 the number was 50 percent.³⁸ And, as Kathryn Calley Galitz demonstrates by tracing the iconography of breast-feeding through the mid-eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in the art of Jean-Baptiste Greuze, Adélaïde Labille-Guiard, Henriette Lorimier, and others, the art of the post-Revolutionary era followed the same trajectory.³⁹

For our purposes, the most interesting of these artists is Lorimier, who is also the most obscure and, in this context, least conventional. In 1804 she attracted attention with a picture entitled *Une Jeune Femme faisant allaiter son enfant par une chèvre* (*Young Woman Having Her Child Nursed by a Goat*). Now extant only as an engraving published the following year in the *Annales du musée et de l’école moderne des beaux-arts*, the painting depicts a mother in a rough cottage watching her child nurse from a goat (see page 71). By combing through the criticism of the time, Galitz shows that this picture tugged at the heartstrings of nineteenth-century critics, who assumed that a woman would have a goat nurse her child only if she could not do so herself, and they lamented the sadness of a woman deprived of mothering’s tenderest moment.⁴⁰



H. Lorimier pinx.^t

LeBas Sc.

This dismaying narrative returns us to *Lactation Station*, with its foundation in Dobkin's disappointment at being unable to breast-feed and the flood of contradictory meanings that gathered around that experience. These contradictions show up in the complexity of the situation in post-Revolutionary France, which abhorred wet nurses but applauded the story of a mother who suckled her child from a goat. The amusement, disgust, and fascination that played, often simultaneously, around *Lactation Station* is a twenty-first-century version of that indecision. However, there is plenty of variety in this polyvalent field, and it's unlikely that the same ideas and emotions cluster around breast milk now as they did one, two, or eight centuries ago. For one thing, wet-nursing (and its new cousin, cross-nursing) is resurgent. For another, this resurgence underlines the idea (previously anathema) that any breast milk beats no breast milk.⁴¹ But if science should produce a baby formula with all the benefits of breast milk, as it is trying to do, then perhaps even the most enlightened among us will return to seeing nursing as unnecessary, embarrassing, and disgusting.⁴² ◻

NOTES

1. Here I draw from Julia Kristeva's influential phrase: "that impetus, that spasm, that leap is drawn toward an elsewhere as tempting as it is condemned." Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1980), Leon S. Roudiez, trans. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 1.
2. Called "Five Holes," the project included *Lactation Station* in its concluding series, "Matters of Taste"; see www.performanceart.ca/5holes/home.html.
3. "Quench Your Curiosity at the Lactation Station Breast Milk Bar," DW Communications, 14 June 2006.
4. The announcement actually underplayed the precautions Dobkin took. She worked with Dr. Jack Stewart—founder, in 1984, of Canada's first hospital-based breast-feeding clinic—to ensure that the samples were collected, stored, screened, and pasteurized according to clinical standards.
5. The most prominent examples of such controversy in the last twenty years involved the exhibition of Barnett Newman's *Voice of Fire* at the National Gallery of Canada in 1990 (which focused on the \$1.76 million that the gallery paid for the painting) and the same institution's exhibition of Jana Sterbak's *Vanitas: Flesh Dress for an Albino Anorectic* in 1991. See *Voices of Fire: Art, Rage, Power, and the State*, Bruce Barber, Serge Guilbaut, and John O'Brian, eds. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996). Johanne Lamoureux offers a more recent perspective in "La Robe de chair de Jana Sterbak: l'allégorie par la viande," *Revue d'esthétique*, no. 40 (2001): 161–168. I am grateful to Jim Drobnik for pointing out this reference, and for many other useful comments on my text.
6. www.jessdobkin.com/pages/archives/eat_out/eat_out.html.
7. www.jessdobkin.com/pages/archives/Two_boobs/twoboobs_1.html.
8. Jess Dobkin, "Marriage Certificate," 2003, at www.jessdobkin.com/pages/archives/ontario_bride/wedding_5.html. The Canadian government passed legislation legalizing same-sex marriages in June 2005; see www.cbc.ca/canada/story/2005/06/28/samesex050628.html. This legislation followed decisions in the Ontario and British Columbia Courts of Appeal (in June and July 2003) that the previous law prohibiting same-sex marriage was unconstitutional; see "Ontario Men Wed Following Court Ruling," www.cbc.ca/news/story/2003/06/10/ont_samesex030610.html; and "B.C. Court Backs Same-Sex Marriages," www.cbc.ca/news/story/2003/05/01/samesex_bc030501.html.
9. Anthony Reinhardt, "Expressing Herself about Breast Milk," *Globe and Mail*, 13 July 2006, A12.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. There were twenty seatings, with five people at each. Mariko Tamaki, "Kiss and Tell [interview with Jess Dobkin]," *Kiss Machine*, September 2006, 64.

13. A good survey of these audience reactions is on the DVD Dobkin produced of the event.

14. The grim fascination around the case of Armin Meiwes, who killed and ate Bernd-Jürgen Brandes in 2001 with the latter's consent, is unsurprising, especially since this instance involved murder and/or suicide. See Luke Harding, "German Court Finds Cannibal Guilty of Murder," *Guardian*, 10 May 2006, at www.guardian.co.uk/germany/article/0,,1771382,00.html; Luke Harding, "Now Cannibal Will Tell His Story," *Guardian*, 1 February 2004, at <http://books.guardian.co.uk/news/articles/0,,1137139,00.html>.

15. See Deborah Lupton, *Food, the Body and the Self* (London: Sage, 1996), 123; and Gay Bilson, *Plenty: Digressions on Food* (Camberwell: Lantern, 2004). Somewhere between Dobkin and Bilson is the artist Chrissy Conant, who made caviar from her ova (see Jim Stark, "Chrissy Caviar," *Gastronomica* 8:2 [Spring 2008], 69–71).

16. Bruce Cheadle, "Funding for 'Lactation Station' Breast Milk Bar Draws Tory Ire," *canada.com*, 19 June 2006, at www.canada.com/topics/news/national/story.html?id=0d957684-336c-4fc3-b125-b764123f62d5&k=70914.

17. One press outlet that shared this enthusiasm was the prominent Toronto weekly *Now*, which gave the event its highest possible rating and named it one of the ten best visual arts events of 2006. Stephanie Rogerson, "Sense and Sensibilities: Fado Performance Gives New Meaning to the Term 'Good Taste,'" *Now* 25, no. 47 (20–26 July 2006); David Jager, Stephanie Rogerson, and Fran Schechter, "Top 10 Art Shows," *Now* 26, no. 17 (28 December–3 January 2007). See also Sasha, "Love Bites," *Eye Weekly*, 13 July 2006; and Sandra Alland, "Performance Art: The Lactation Station," *Xtra*, 6 July 2006.

18. Jacob Richler, "'Lactation Station' Begs the Question: Got Art?" *National Post*, 14 July 2006. A similar perspective is found in Mike Strobel, "Lactation Smacktation: A Phlegm-filled Fluids Fest—Complete with Boogers 'n' Mash and Eye Gunk Pies—Is a Much Better Idea," *Toronto Sun*, 21 June 2006.

19. Jon Filson, "Taste Test," *Toronto Star*, 14 July 2006, D6. The response in the *Sun* is Michele Henry's "Belly up to the Boob," *Toronto Sun*, 14 July 2006, 12. See also Alwynne Gwilt, "Mother's Milk, Straight with a Twist," *Toronto Star*, 14 July 2006, D6; Mike Fuhrmann, "Performance Artist Offers Breast Milk Tastings," *Toronto Star*, 15 June 2006; Judy Stoffman, "Art School Serves up Breast Milk with Cocktail," *Toronto Star*, 16 June 2006; Zosia Bielski, "Breast Milk on Tap as Performance Art," *National Post*, 16 June 2006; Deirdre Kelly, "Drink Safe?" *Globe and Mail*, 8 July 2006, M2. Interestingly, Kelly initially was very hostile to the project but calmed down as she researched the article.

20. Roni Rabin, "Breast-Feed Or Else," *New York Times*, 13 June 2006; André Picard, "Second Opinion: Most Mothers Quit Breast-feeding Far Too Soon," *Globe and Mail*, 15 June 2006. Lisa Deanne Smith and, especially, Sarah Mulholland gathered much of the material here and in the preceding four endnotes.

21. Rebecca Kukla, "Ethics and Ideology in Breastfeeding Advocacy Campaigns," *Hypatia* 21, no. 1 (Winter 2006): 162. The *Hypatia* citations are to the special issue "Maternal Bodies," edited by Kukla.

22. Ibid., 177 (her emphasis); Bernice L. Hausman explores the issues around isolating the breast-feeding body from its social and physical context in "Contamination and Contagion: Environmental Toxins, HIV/AIDS, and the Problem of the Maternal Body," *Hypatia* 21, no. 1 (Winter 2006): 137–156.

23. Theresa Agnew, Joanne Gilmore, and Pattie Sullivan, *A Multicultural Perspective of Breastfeeding in Canada* (Ottawa: Health Canada, 1997), 6.

24. Ibid., *passim*.

25. Kukla, "Ethics and Ideology in Breastfeeding Advocacy Campaigns," 164.

26. Marilyn Yalom, *A History of the Breast* (New York: Ballantine, 1997), esp. chaps. 3, 4, 7, 8.

27. Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 75.

28. Caroline Walker Bynum, "Jesus as Mother and Abbot as Mother: Some Themes in Twelfth-Century Cistercian Writing," in *Jesus as Mother: Studies*

in *the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 132–133. The issue of Christ's sexuality launched a heated exchange between Bynum and Leo Steinberg. See Bynum, "The Body of Christ in the Later Middle Ages: A Reply to Leo Steinberg," in *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone, 1991), 79–117; and Steinberg, "Ad Bynum," in *The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and in Modern Oblivion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 364–389. Laura Weigert directed me to these resources and made many other useful comments on my text. Lisa Guenther discusses the implications of the trope of the lactating male for current ethics in "Like a Maternal Body": Emmanuel Levinas and the Motherhood of Moses," *Hypatia* 21, no. 1 (Winter 2006): 119–136.

29. Bynum, "Jesus as Mother and Abbot as Mother," 149.

30. *Ibid.*, 143 and passim. Interestingly, numerous paintings, based on Roman legend, depict a grown man drinking his daughter's breast milk. The story goes that the political prisoner Cimonus was condemned to death by starvation. His daughter, Pero (some accounts say Xantippe), was so devoted that she kept him alive by giving him milk from her breasts. The authorities were so moved by this demonstration of filial love that they pardoned Cimonus. This subject of Roman Charity was painted by Rubens, among others. See Lois Marie Fink, "Rembrandt Peale in Paris," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 110, no. 1 (January 1986): 71–90, at 80–81.

31. Julia Kristeva, "Motherhood According to Giovanni Bellini" (1975), reprinted in *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, Leon S. Roudiez, ed., Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine, and Leon S. Roudiez, trans. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981), 259–260.

32. Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1976), 192. Helena Reckitt directed me to this compelling work.

33. *Ibid.*, 203.

34. Yalom, *A History of the Breast*, 105.

35. *Ibid.*, 111.

36. *Ibid.*, 115.

37. *Ibid.*, 117.

38. *Ibid.*, 106.

39. Kathryn Calley Galitz, "Nourishing the Body Politic: Images of Breast-Feeding in the French Salons, 1789–1814," in *Farewell to the Wet Nurse: Étienne Aubry and Images of Breast-Feeding in Eighteenth-Century France* (Williamstown, Mass.: Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1998), 25–36.

40. *Ibid.*, 32.

41. Having had children three months apart, sisters Jasmine and Tara Cairo decided to cross-nurse for convenience. The Beverly Hills company Certified Household Staffing advertises wet nurses along with most other forms of domestic help at certifiedhouseholdstaffing.com. Tralee Pearce, "Breast Friends," *Globe and Mail*, 1 May 2007, L1–2.

42. Lisa Melton, "New Formula for Fit Future," *Chemistry and Industry*, no. 8 (23 April 2007): 6; Stephen Williams, "Something Better for the Mouths of Babes," *Newsweek* 135, no. 13 (27 March 2000): 82. Cf. Rhona MacDonald, "The Continuing Battle over Baby-Milk Formula," *Lancet* 369, no. 9575 (26 May 2007): 1773.

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