

33. Nancy Gager and Cathleen Schurr, *Sexual Assault: Confronting Rape in America* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1976), p. 244.

34. Susan Estrich proposes this: *Real Rape*, pp. 102–103. Her lack of inquiry into social determinants of perspective (such as pornography) may explain her faith in reasonableness as a legally workable standard for raped women.

35. See *Director of Public Prosecutions v. Morgan*, 2 All E.R.11,1. 347 (1975) [England]; *Pappajohn v. The Queen*, 111 D.L.R. 3d 1 (1980) [Canada]; *People v. Mayberry*, 542 P.2d 1337 (Cal. 1975).

36. Richard H. S. Tur, "Rape: Reasonableness and Time," 3 *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies* 432, 441 (Winter 1981). Tur, in the context of the *Morgan* and *Pappajohn* cases, says the "law ought not to be astute to equate wickedness and wishful, albeit mistaken, thinking" (p. 437). Rape victims are typically less concerned with wickedness than with injury.

37. See Silke Vogelmann Sine, Ellen D. Ervin, Reenie Christensen, Carolyn H. Warmson, and Leonard P. Ullmann, "Sex Differences in Feelings Attributed to a Woman in Situations Involving Coercion and Sexual Advances," *Journal of Personality* 47 (September 1979): 429–30.

38. Estrich has this problem in *Real Rape*.

39. E. Donnerstein, "Pornography: Its Effect on Violence against Women," in *Pornography and Sexual Aggression*, ed. N. Malamuth and E. Donnerstein (Orlando, Fla.: Academic Press, 1984), pp. 65–70. Readers who worry that this could become an argument for defending accused rapists should understand that the reality to which it points already provides a basis for defending accused rapists. The solution is to attack the pornography directly, not to be silent about its exonerating effects, legal or social, potential or actual.

Mothers, Monsters, and Machines

Rosi Braidotti

Figuring Out

I would like to approach the sequence "mothers, monsters, and machines" both thematically and methodologically, so as to work out possible connections between these terms. Because women, the biological sciences, and technology are conceptually interrelated, there can not be only one correct connection but, rather, many, heterogeneous and potentially contradictory ones.

The quest for multiple connections—or conjunctions—can also be rendered methodologically in terms of Donna Haraway's "figurations."¹ The term refers to ways of expressing feminist forms of knowledge that are not caught in a mimetic relationship to dominant scientific discourse. This is a way of marking my own difference: as an intellectual woman who

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has acquired and earned the right to speak publicly in an academic context, I have also inherited a tradition of female silence. Centuries of exclusion of women from the exercise of discursive power are ringing through my words. In speaking the language of man, I also intend to let the silence of woman echo gently but firmly; I shall not conform to the phallogocentric mode.² I want to question the status of feminist theory in terms not only of the conceptual tools and the gender-specific perceptions that govern the production of feminist research but also of the form our perceptions take.

The "nomadic" style is the best suited to the quest for feminist figurations, in the sense of adequate representations of female experience as that which cannot easily be fitted within the parameters of phallogocentric language.

The configuration of ideas I am trying to set up: mothers, monsters, machines, is therefore a case study—not only in terms of its propositional content but also in defining my place of enunciation and, therefore, my relationship to the readers who are my partners in this discursive game. It is a new figuration of feminist subjectivity.

Quoting Deleuze,³ I would like to define this relationship as "rhizomatic"; that is to say not only cerebral, but related to experience, which implies a strengthened connection between thought and life, a renewed proximity of the thinking process to existential reality.⁴ In my thinking, "rhizomatic" thinking leads to what I call a "nomadic" style.

Moreover, a "nomadic" connection is not a dualistic or oppositional way of thinking⁵ but rather one that views discourse as a positive, multilayered network of power relations.⁶

Let me develop the terms of my nomadic network by reference to Foucauldian critiques of the power of discourse: he argues that the production of scientific knowledge works as a complex, interrelated network of truth, power, and desire, centered on the subject as a bodily entity. In a double movement that I find most politically useful, Foucault highlights both the normative foundations of theoretical reason and also the rational model of power. "Power" thus becomes the name for a complex set of interconnections, between the spaces where truth and knowledge are produced and the systems of control and domination. I shall unwrap my three interrelated notions in the light of this definition of power.

Last, but not least, this style implies the simultaneous dislocation not only of my place of enunciation as a feminist intellectual but also accordingly of the position of my readers. As my interlocutors I am constructing those readers to be "not just" traditional intellectuals and academics but also active, interested, and concerned participants in a project of research and experi-

mentation for new ways of thinking about human subjectivity in general and female subjectivity in particular. I mean to appeal therefore not only to a requirement for passionless truth but also to a passionate engagement in the recognition of the theoretical and discursive implications of sexual difference. In this choice of a theoretical style that leaves ample room for the exploration of subjectivity, I am following the lead of Donna Haraway, whose plea for "passionate detachment" in theory making I fully share.⁷

Let us now turn to the thematic or propositional content of my constellation of ideas: mothers, monsters and machines.

For the sake of clarity, let me define them: "mothers" refers to the maternal function of women. By *WOMEN* I mean not only the biocultural entities thus represented, as the empirical subjects of sociopolitical realities, but also a discursive field: feminist theory. The kind of feminism I want to defend rests on the presence and the experience of real-life women whose political consciousness is bent on changing the institution of power in our society.

Feminist theory is a two-layered project involving the critique of existing definitions, representations as well as the elaboration of alternative theories about women. Feminism is the movement that brings into practice the dimension of sexual difference through the critique of gender as a power institution. Feminism is the question; the affirmation of sexual difference is the answer.

This point is particularly important in the light of modernity's imperative to think differently about our historical condition. The central question seems to be here: how can we *affirm* the positivity of female subjectivity at a time in history when our acquired perceptions of "the subject" are being radically questioned? How can we reconcile the recognition of the problematic nature of the notion and the construction of the subject with the political necessity to posit female subjectivity?

By *MACHINES* I mean the scientific, political, and discursive field of technology in the broadest sense of the term. Ever since Heidegger the philosophy of modernity has been trying to come to terms with technological reason. The Frankfurt School refers to it as "instrumental reason": one that places the end of its endeavors well above the means and suspends all judgment on its inner logic. In my work, as I mentioned in the previous chapter, I approach the technology issue from within the French tradition, following the materialism of Bachelard, Canguilhem, and Foucault.

By *MONSTERS* I mean a third kind of discourse: the history and philosophy of the biological sciences, and their relation to difference and to different bodies. Monsters are human beings who are born with congenital mal-

formations of their bodily organism. They also represent the in between, the mixed, the ambivalent as implied in the ancient Greek root of the word "monsters," *teras*, which means both horrible and wonderful, object of aberration and adoration. Since the nineteenth century, following the classification system of monstrosity by Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, bodily malformations have been defined in terms of "excess," "lack," or "displacement of organs."⁸ Before any such scientific classification was reached, however, natural philosophy had struggled to come to terms with these objects of abjection. The constitution of teratology as a science offers a paradigmatic example of the ways in which scientific rationality dealt with differences of the bodily kind.

The discourse on monsters as a case study highlights a question that seems to me very important for feminist theory: the status of difference within rational thought. Following the analysis of the philosophical ratio suggested by Derrida⁹ and other contemporary French philosophers, it can be argued that Western thought has a logic of binary oppositions that treats difference as that which is other than the accepted norm. The question then becomes: can we free difference from these normative connotations? Can we learn to think differently about difference?¹⁰

The monster is the bodily incarnation of difference from the basic human norm; it is a deviant, an a-nomaly; it is abnormal. As Georges Canguilhem points out, the very notion of the human body rests upon an image that is intrinsically prescriptive: a normally formed human being is the zero-degree of monstrosity. Given the special status of the monster, what light does he throw on the structures of scientific discourse? How was the difference of/in the monster perceived within this discourse?

When set alongside each other, mothers/monsters/machines may seem puzzling. There is no apparent connection among these three terms and yet the link soon becomes obvious if I add that recent developments in the field of biotechnology, particularly artificial procreation, have extended the power of science over the maternal body of women. The possibility of mechanizing the maternal function is by now well within our reach; the manipulation of life through different combinations of genetic engineering has allowed for the creation of new artificial monsters in the high-tech labs of our biochemists. There is therefore a political urgency about the future of women in the new reproductive technology debate, which gives a polemical force to my constellation of ideas—mothers, monsters, and machines.

The legal, economic, and political repercussions of the new reproductive technologies are far-reaching. The recent stand taken by the Roman Catholic church and by innumerable "bioethics committees" all across Western

Europe against experimentation and genetic manipulations may appear fair enough. They all invariably shift the debate, however, far from the power of science over the women's body in favor of placing increasing emphasis on the rights of the fetus or of embryos. This emphasis is played against the rights of the mother—and therefore of the woman—and we have been witnessing systematic slippages between the discourse against genetic manipulations and the rhetoric of the antiabortion campaigners. No area of contemporary technological development is more crucial to the construction of gender than the new reproductive technologies. The central thematic link I want to explore between mothers, monsters, and machines is therefore my argument that contemporary biotechnology displaces women by making procreation a high-tech affair.

Conjunction 1: Woman/Mother as Monster

As part of the discursive game of nomadic networking I am attempting here, let us start by associating two of these terms; let us superimpose the image of the woman/mother onto that of the monstrous body. In other words, let us take the case study of monsters, deviants, or anomalous entities as being paradigmatic of how differences are dealt with within scientific rationality. Why this association of femininity with monstrosity?

The association of women with monsters goes as far back as Aristotle who, in *The Generation of Animals*, posits the human norm in terms of bodily organization based on a male model. Thus, in reproduction, when everything goes according to the norm a boy is produced; the female only happens when something goes wrong or fails to occur in the reproductive process. The female is therefore an anomaly, a variation on the main theme of man-kind. The emphasis Aristotle places on the masculinity of the human norm is also reflected in his theory of conception: he argues that the principle of life is carried exclusively by the sperm, the female genital apparatus providing only the passive receptacle for human life. The sperm-centered nature of this early theory of procreation is thus connected to a massive masculine bias in the general Aristotelian theory of subjectivity. For Aristotle, not surprisingly, women are not endowed with a rational soul.¹¹

The *topos* of women as a sign of abnormality, and therefore of difference as a mark of inferiority, remained a constant in Western scientific discourse. This association has produced, among other things, a style of misogynist literature with which anyone who has read *Gulliver's Travels* must be familiar: the

horror of the female body. The interconnection of women as monsters with the literary text is particularly significant and rich in the genre of satire. In a sense, the satirical text is implicitly monstrous, it is a deviant, an aberration in itself. Eminently transgressive, it can afford to express a degree of misogyny that might shock in other literary genres.

Outside the literary tradition, however, the association of femininity with monstrosity points to a system of pejoration that is implicit in the binary logic of oppositions that characterizes the phallogocentric discursive order. The monstrous as the negative pole, the pole of pejoration, is structurally analogous to the feminine as that which is other-than the established norm, whatever the norm may be. The actual propositional content of the terms of opposition is less significant for me than its logic. Within this dualistic system, monsters are, just like bodily female subjects, a figure of devalued difference; as such, it provides the fuel for the production of normative discourse. If the position of women and monsters as logical operators in discursive production is comparable within the dualistic logic, it follows that the misogyny of discourse is not an irrational exception but rather a tightly constructed system that requires difference as pejoration in order to erect the positivity of the norm. In this respect, misogyny is not a hazard but rather the structural necessity of a system that can only represent "otherness" as negativity.

The theme of woman as devalued difference remained a constant in Western thought; in philosophy especially, "she" is forever associated to unholy, disorderly, subhuman, and unsightly phenomena. It is as if "she" carried within herself something that makes her prone to being an enemy of mankind, an outsider in her civilization, an "other." It is important to stress the light that psychoanalytic theory has cast upon this hatred for the feminine and the traditional patriarchal association of women with monstrosity.

The woman's body can change shape in pregnancy and childbearing; it is therefore capable of defeating the notion of fixed *bodily form*, of visible, recognizable, clear, and distinct shapes as that which marks the contour of the body. She is morphologically dubious. The fact that the female body can change shape so drastically is troublesome in the eyes of the logocentric economy within which to see is the primary act of knowledge and the *gaze* the basis of all epistemic awareness.¹² The fact that the male sexual organ does, of course, change shape in the limited time span of the erection and that this operation—however precarious—is not exactly unrelated to the changes of shape undergone by the female body during pregnancy constitutes, in psychoanalytic theory, one of the fundamental axes of fantasy about sexual difference.

The appearance of symmetry in the way the two sexes work in reproduction merely brings out, however, the separateness and the specificity of each sexual organization. What looks to the naked eye like a comparable pattern: erection/pregnancy, betrays the ineluctable difference. As psychoanalysis successfully demonstrates, reproduction does not encompass the whole of human sexuality and for this reason alone anatomy is *not* destiny. Moreover, this partial analogy also leads to a sense of (false) anatomical complementarity between the sexes that contrasts with the complexity of the psychic representations of sexual difference. This double recognition of both proximity and separation is the breeding ground for the rich and varied network of misunderstandings, identifications, interconnections, and mutual demands that is what sexual human relationships are all about.

Precisely this paradoxical mixture of "the same and yet other" between the sexes generates a drive to denigrate woman in so far as she is "other-than" the male *norm*. In this respect, the phallogocentric economy is not a neutral system, it is a system that induces in both sexes the desire to achieve *order*, by means of a one-way pattern for both. As long as the law of the One is operative, so will be the denigration of the feminine, and of women with it.¹³

Woman as a sign of difference is monstrous. If we define the monster as a bodily entity that is anomalous and deviant vis-à-vis the norm, then we can argue that the female body shares with the monster the privilege of bringing out a unique blend of *fascination and horror*. This logic of attraction and repulsion is extremely significant; psychoanalytic theory takes it as the fundamental structure of the mechanism of desire and, as such, of the constitution of the neurotic symptom: the spasm of the hysteric turns to nausea, displacing itself from its object.

Julia Kristeva, drawing extensively on the research of Mary Douglas, connects this mixture¹⁴ to the maternal body as the site of the origin of life and consequently also of the insertion into mortality and death. We are all of woman born, and the mother's body as the threshold of existence is both sacred and soiled, holy and hellish; it is attractive and repulsive, all-powerful and therefore impossible to live with. Kristeva speaks of it in terms of "abjection"; the abject arises in that gray, in between area of the mixed, the ambiguous. The monstrous or deviant is a figure of abjection in so far as it trespasses and transgresses the barriers between recognizable norms or definitions.

Significantly, the abject approximates the sacred because it appears to contain within itself a constitutive ambivalence where life and death are reconciled. Kristeva emphasizes the dual function of the maternal site as both life- and death-giver, as object of worship and of terror. The notion of the

sacred is generated precisely by this blend of fascination and horror, which prompts an intense play of the imaginary, of fantasies and often nightmares about the ever-shifting boundaries between life and death, night and day, masculine and feminine, active and passive, and so forth.

In a remarkable essay about the head of the Medusa, Freud connected this logic of attraction and repulsion to the sight of female genitalia; because there is *nothing* to see in that dark and mysterious region, the imagination goes haywire. Short of losing his head, the male gazer is certainly struck by castration anxiety. For fear of losing the thread of his thought, Freud then turns his distress into the most overdetermined of all questions: "what does woman want?"

A post-Freudian reading of this text permits us to see how the question about female desire emerges out of male anxiety about the representation of sexual difference. In a more Lacanian vein, Kristeva adds an important insight: the female sex as the site of origin also inspires awe because of the psychic and cultural imperative to separate from the mother and accept the Law of the Father. The incest taboo, the fundamental law of our social system, builds on the mixture of fascination and horror that characterizes the feminine/maternal object of abjection. As the site of primary repression, and therefore that which escapes from representation, the mother's body becomes a turbulent area of psychic life.

Obviously, this analysis merely describes the mechanisms at work in our cultural system; no absolute necessity surrounds the symbolic absence of Woman. On the contrary, feminists have been working precisely to put into images that which escapes phallogocentric modes of representation. Thus, in her critique of psychoanalysis, Luce Irigaray points out that the dark continent of all dark continents is the mother-daughter relationship. She also suggests that, instead of this logic of attraction and repulsion, sexual difference may be thought out in terms of recognition and wonder. The latter is one of the fundamental passions in Descartes' treatise about human affectivity: he values it as the foremost of human passions, that which makes everything else possible. Why Western culture did not adopt this way of conceptualizing and experiencing difference and opted instead for difference as a sign of negativity remains a critical question for me.

It is because of this phallogocentric perversion that femininity and monstrosity can be seen as isomorphic. Woman/mother is monstrous by excess; she transcends established norms and transgresses boundaries. She is monstrous by lack: woman/mother does not possess the substantive unity of the masculine subject. Most important, through her identification with the fem-

inine she is monstrous by displacement: as sign of the in between areas, of the indefinite, the ambiguous, the mixed, woman/mother is subjected to a constant process of metaphorization as "other-than."

In the binary structure of the logocentric system, "woman," as the eternal pole of opposition, the "other," can be assigned to the most varied and often contradictory terms. The only constant remains her "becoming-metaphor," whether of the sacred or the profane, of heaven or hell, of life or death. "Woman" is that which is assigned and has no power of self-definition. "Woman" is the anomaly that confirms the positivity of the norm.

Conjunction 2: Teratology and the Feminine

The history of teratology, or the science of monsters, demonstrates clearly the ways in which the body in general and the female body in particular have been conceptualized in Western scientific discourse, progressing from the fantastic dimension of the bodily organism to a more rationalistic construction of the body-machine. The monster as a human being born with congenital malformations undergoes a series of successive representations historically, before it gives rise, in the latter part of the eighteenth century, to an acceptable, scientific discourse.

The work of French epistemologist and philosopher of science Georges Canguilhem and of his disciple Michel Foucault is extremely useful in studying the modes of interaction of the normal and the pathological, the normative and the transgressive in Western philosophy. For Canguilhem, the stakes in theory of monstrosity are the questions of reproduction, of origins: "how can such monstrous creatures be conceived?" The conception of monsters is what really haunts the scientific imagination. Whereas psychoanalysts like Lacan and Irigaray argue that the epistem(ophilic) question of the origin lies at the heart of *all* scientific investigation, Canguilhem is interested in providing the historical perspective on how the scientific discourse about monsters emerged. He argues that teratology became constituted as a discipline when it required the conceptual and technological means of mastering the pro/reproduction of monsters. In other words, the scientific and technological know-how necessary for the artificial reproduction of human anomalies is the precondition for the establishment of a scientific discipline concerned with abnormal beings.

This means that on the discursive level, the monster points out the major epistemological function played by anomalies, abnormalities, and pathology:

in the constitution of biological sciences. Historically, biologists have privileged phenomena that deviate from the norm, in order to exemplify the normal structure of development. In this respect the study of monstrous births is a forerunner of modern embryology. Biologists have set up abnormal cases in order to elucidate normal behavior; psychoanalysis will follow exactly the same logic for mental disorders. The proximity of the normal and the pathological demonstrates the point Foucault made in relation to madness and reason: scientific rationality is implicitly normative, it functions by exclusion and disqualification according to a dualistic logic.

The history of discourse about monsters conventionally falls into three chronological periods. In the first, the Greeks and Romans maintained a notion of a "race" of monsters, an ethnic entity possessing specific characteristics. They also relied on the notion of "abjection," seeing the monster not only as the sign of marvel but also of disorder and divine wrath. The practice of exposing monstrous children as unnatural creatures was inaugurated by the Greeks. Thus Oedipus himself—"swollen foot"—was not "normal," and his destruction should have been in the order of things.

More generally, classical mythology represents no founding hero, no main divine creature or demigod as being of woman born. In fact, one of the constant themes in the making of a god is his "unnatural" birth: his ability, through subterfuges such as immaculate conceptions and other tricks, to short circuit the orifice through which most human beings pop into the spatio-temporal realm of existence. The fantastic dimension of classical mythological discourse about monsters illustrates the paradox of aberration and adoration that I mentioned earlier, and it therefore inscribes an antimaternal dimension at the very heart of the matter.

We can make a further distinction between the baroque and enlightened or "scientific" discourses on monsters. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the monster still possesses the classical sense of something wonderful, fantastic, rare, and precious. Just like the madman, the dwarf and other marvels, it participates in the life of his/her town and enjoys certain privileges. For instance, dwarves as court jesters and fools can transgress social conventions, can say and do things that "normal" human beings cannot afford to say or do.

The imagination of the times runs wild as to the origins of monsters as objects of horror and fascination, as something both exceptional and ominous. The question of the origins of monsters accompanies the development of the medical sciences in the prescientific imagination; it conveys an interesting mixture of traditional superstitions and elements of reflection that

will lead to a more scientific method of enquiry. Out of the mass of documentary evidence on this point, I will concentrate on one aspect that throws light on my question about the connection between monstrosity and the feminine. Ambroise Paré's treatise¹⁵ on wondrous beings lists among the causes for their conception various forms of unnatural copulation ranging from bestiality to everyday forms of immorality, such as having sexual intercourse too often, or on a Sunday night (sic), or on the night of any major religious holiday. As a matter of fact, all sexual practices other than those leading to healthy reproduction are suspected to be conducive to monstrous events. Food can also play a major role; the regulation of diet is extremely important and implicitly connected to religious regulations concerning time, season and cycles of life.¹⁶

Bad weather can adversely affect procreation, as can an excess or a lack of semen; the devil also plays an important role, and he definitely interferes with normal human reproduction. Well may we laugh at such beliefs; many still circulate in rural areas of Western Europe. Besides, the whole fantastic discourse about the origins of monsters becomes considerably less amusing when we consider that women paid a heavy price for these wild notions. The history of women's relationship to "the devil" in Western Europe is a history too full of horrors for us to take these notions lightly.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the baroque mind gave a major role to the maternal imagination in procreation generally and in the conception of monsters particularly.¹⁷ The mother was said to have the actual power of producing a monstrous baby simply by: (a) *thinking* about awful things during intercourse (it's the close-your-eyes-and-think-of-England principle); (b) *dreaming* very intensely about something or somebody; or (c) *looking* at animals or evil-looking creatures (this is the Xerox-machine complex: if a woman looked at a dog, for instance, with a certain look in her eyes, then she would have the power of transmitting that image to the fetus and reproducing it exactly, thus creating a dog-faced baby).

I let you imagine the intense emotion that struck a village in Northern France in the seventeenth century when a baby was born who looked remarkably like the local bishop. The woman defended herself by claiming gazing rights: she argued that she had stared at the male character in church with such intense devotion that ... she xeroxed him away! She saved her life and proved the feminist theory that female gaze as the expression of female desire is always perceived as a dangerous, if not deadly, thing.

In other words, the mother's imagination is as strong as the force of nature; in order to assess this, one needs to appreciate the special role that

the *imagination* plays in the seventeenth century theories of knowledge. It is a fundamental element in the classical worldview, and yet it is caught in great ambivalence: the imagination is the capacity to draw connections and consequently to construct ideas and yet it is potentially antirational.

The Cartesian *Meditations* are the clearest example of this ambivalence, which we find projected massively onto the power of the mother. She can direct the fetus to normal development or she can de-form it, un-do it, de-humanize it.

It is as if the mother, as a desiring agent, has the power to undo the work of legitimate procreation through the sheer force of her imagination. By deforming the product of the father, she cancels what psychoanalytic theory calls "the Name-of-the-Father." The female "signature" of the reproductive pact is unholy, inhuman, illegitimate, and it remains the mere pre-text to horrors to come. Isn't the product of woman's creativity always so?

This belief is astonishing however, when it is contextualized historically: consider that the debate between the Aristotelian theory of conception, with its sperm-centered view of things, and mother-centered notions of procreation, has a long history. The seventeenth century seems to have reached a paroxysm of hatred for the feminine; it inaugurated a flight from the female body in a desire to master the woman's generative powers.

Very often feminist scholars have taken this point as a criticism of classical rationalism, especially in the Cartesian¹⁸ form, far too provocatively. The feminist line has been "I think therefore *he* is," thus emphasizing the male-centered view of human nature that is at work in this discourse. Whatever Descartes' responsibility for the flight from womanhood may be—and I maintain that it should be carefully assessed—for the purpose of my research what matters is the particular form that this flight took in the seventeenth century.

Conjunction 3: The Fantasy of Male-Born Children

The flight from and rejection of the feminine can also be analyzed from a different angle: the history of the biological sciences in the prescientific era, especially the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. I argue that the flight from the feminine, and particularly from the monstrous power of the maternal imagination and desire, lies at the heart of the recurring fantasy of a child born from man alone.

We find, for instance, alchemists busy at work to try to produce the

philosopher's son—the homunculus, a man-made tiny man popping out of the alchemists' laboratories, fully formed and endowed with language. The alchemists' imagination pushes the premises of the Aristotelian view of procreation to an extreme, stressing the male role in reproduction and minimizing the female function to the role of a mere carrier. Alchemy is a *reductio ad absurdum* of the male fantasy of self-reproduction.

How can a child be of man born? In a recent article, S. G. Allen and J. Hubbs¹⁹ argue that alchemical symbolism rests on a simple process—the appropriation of the womb by male "art," that is to say the artifact of male techniques. Paracelsus, the master theoretician of alchemy, is certain that a man should and could be born outside a woman's body. Womb envy, alias the envy for the matrix or the uterus, reaches paradoxical dimensions in these texts—art being more powerful than nature itself.

The recipe is quite simple, as any reader of *Tristram Shandy* will know. It consists of a mixture of sperm and something to replace the uterus, such as the alchemist's jars and other containers so efficiently described in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. At other times the matrix is replaced by an ox-hide, or by a mere heap of compost or manure. The basic assumption is that the alchemists can not only imitate the work of woman, they can also do it much better because the artifact, the artificial process of science and technique, perfects the imperfection of the natural course of events and thus avoids mistakes. Once reproduction becomes the pure result of mental efforts, the appropriation of the feminine is complete.

On the imaginary level, therefore, the test-tube babies of today mark the long-term triumph of the alchemists' dream of dominating nature through their self-inseminating, masturbatory practices. What is happening with the new reproductive technologies today is the final chapter in a long history of fantasy of self-generation by and for the men themselves—men of science, but men of the male kind, capable of producing new monsters and fascinated by their power.

Ever since the mid nineteenth century, the abnormal monstrous beings, which had been objects of wonder, have fallen prey to the massive medicalization of scientific discourse. The marvelous, imaginary dimension of the monster is forgotten in the light of the new technologies of the body. Michel Foucault's analysis of modern rationality describes the fundamental shift that has taken place in scientific discourse of the modern era.

By the late eighteenth century, the monster has been transferred to hospital or rather, to the newly established institution of the anatomy clinic, where it could be analyzed in the context of the newly evolved practice of

comparative anatomy and experimental biomedicine. Thus is born the science of teratology. Founded by G. Saint-Hilaire, by the end of the century it had become an experimental science. Its aim was to study malformations of the embryo so as to understand in the light of evolutionary theory the genesis of monstrous beings. Notice that the initial curiosity as to the origin of such horrendous creatures remains, but it is expressed differently.

The experimental study of the conditions that would lead to the production of anomalous or monstrous beings provides the basic epistemological structure of modern embryology. Foucault's analysis of modernity emphasizes the epistemological shifts between the normal and the pathological, reason and madness, in terms of the understanding of the body, the bodily roots of human subjectivity. The biomedical sciences occupy a very significant place in the discursive context of modernity.

Two institutions of learning appear in the modern era—the clinic and the hospital. The appearance of these structures is in turn related to a major theoretical breakthrough—the medical practice of anatomy. In Foucault's archaeological mode, for comparative clinical anatomy to come into being as a scientific discourse, a century-old taboo had to be lifted, the one that forbade the dissection of corpses for the purpose of scientific investigation.

Western culture had respected a fundamental taboo of the body up until then—the medical gaze could not explore the inside of the human body because the bodily container was considered as a metaphysical entity, marked by the secrets of life and death that pertain to the divine being. The anatomical study of the body was therefore forbidden until the fifteenth century and after then was strictly controlled. The nineteenth century sprang open the doors of bodily perception; clinical anatomy thus implies a radical transformation in the epistemological status of the body. It is a practice that consists in deciphering the body, transforming the organism into a text to be read and interpreted by a knowledgeable medical gaze.

Anatomy as a theoretical representation of the body implies that the latter is a clear and distinct configuration, a visible and intelligible structure. The dead body, the corpse, becomes the measure of the living being, and death thus becomes one of the factors epistemologically integrated into scientific knowledge.

Today, the right to scrutinize the inside of the body for scientific purposes is taken for granted, although dissections and the transferal of organs as a practice are strictly regulated by law. As a matter of fact, contemporary molecular biology is making visible the most intimate and minute fires of life.

Where has the Cartesian passion of wonder gone? When compared to the earlier tradition, the medicalization of the body in the age of modernity and its corollary, the perfectibility of the living organism and the gradual abolition of anomalies, can also be seen—though not exclusively—as a form of denial of the sense of wonder, of the fantastic, of that mixture of fascination and horror I have already mentioned. It marks the loss of fascination about the living organism, its mysteries and functions.

Psychoanalytic theory has explained this loss of fascination as the necessary toll that rational theory takes on human understanding. In the psychoanalytic perspective, of Freudian and Lacanian inspiration, the initial curiosity that prompts the drive and the will to know is first and foremost *desire*, which takes knowledge as its object.

The desire to know is, like all desires, related to the problem of representing one's origin, of answering the most childish and consequently fundamental of questions: "where did I come from?" This curiosity, as I stated in the previous chapter, is the matrix for all forms of thinking and conceptualization. Knowledge is always the desire to know about desire, that is to say about things of the body as a sexual entity.

Scientific knowledge becomes, in this perspective, an extremely perverted version of that original question. The desire to go and see how things work is related to primitive sadistic drives, so that, somewhere along the line, the scientist is like the anxious little child who pulls apart his favorite toy to see how it's made inside. Knowing in this mode is the result of the scopophilic drive—to go and see, and the sadistic one—to rip it apart physically so as to master it intellectually. All this is related to the incestuous drive, to the web of curiosity and taboos surrounding the one site of certain origin—the mother's body.

From a psychoanalytic perspective the establishment of clinical comparative anatomy in the modern era is very significant because it points out the rationalistic obsession with visibility, which I have analyzed earlier. Seeing is the prototype of knowing. By elaborating a scientific technique for analyzing the bodily organs, Western sciences put forward the assumption that a body is precisely that which can be seen and looked at, no more than the sum of its parts. Modern scientific rationality slipped from the emphasis on visibility to the mirage of absolute transparency of the living organism, as I have argued previously.

Contemporary biological sciences, particularly molecular biology, have pushed to the extreme these assumptions that were implicit in the discourse of Western sciences. When compared to the clinical anatomy of the nine-

teenth century, contemporary biomedical sciences have acquired the right and the know-how necessary to act on the very structure of the living matter, on an infinitely small scale.

Foucault defined the modern era as that of biopower; power over life and death in a worldwide extension of man's control of outer space, of the bottom of the oceans as well as of the depths of the maternal body. There are no limits today for what can be shown, photographed, reproduced—even a technique such as echography perpetuates this pornographic re-presentation of bodily parts, externalizing the interior of the womb and its content.

The proliferation of images is such that the very notion of the body, of its boundaries and its inner structure is being split open in an everregressing vision. We seem to be hell bent on xeroxing even the invisible particles of matter.

Philosophers of science, such as Kuhn and Feyerabend, have stressed the modern predicament in scientific discourse. Kuhn points out the paradoxical coincidence of extreme rationalism of the scientific and technological kind, with a persisting subtext of wild fantastic concoctions. In the discourse of monstrosity, rational enquiries about their origin and structure continue to coexist with superstitious beliefs and fictional representations of "creeps." The two registers of the rational and the totally nonrational seem to run alongside each other, never quite joined together.

The question nevertheless remains—where has the wonder gone? What has happened to the fantastic dimension, to the horror and the fascination of difference? What images were created of the bodily marks of difference, after they became locked up in the electronic laboratories of the modern alchemists?

Was there another way, other than the phallogocentric incompetence with, and antipathy to, differences—its willful reduction of otherness, to negativity? Is there another way out, still?

Conjunction 4: The Age of Freaks

As the Latin etymology of the term *monstrum* points out, malformed human beings have always been the object of display, subjected to the public gaze. In his classic study, *Freaks*, Leslie Fiedler²⁰ analyses the exploitation of monsters for purposes of entertainment. From the county fairs, right across rural Europe to the Coney Island sideshows, freaks have always been entertaining.

Both Fiedler and Bogdan²¹ stress two interrelated aspects of the display of freaks since the turn of the century. The first is that their exhibition displays

racist and orientalist undertones: abnormally formed people were exhibited alongside tribal people of normal stature and bodily configuration, as well as exotic animals.

Second, the medical profession benefited considerably by examining these human exhibits. Although the freak is presented as belonging to the realm of zoology or anthropology, doctors and physicians examined them regularly and wrote scientific reports about them.

Significantly, totalitarian regimes such as Hitler's Germany or the Stalinist Soviet Union prohibited the exhibition of freaks as being degenerate specimens of the human species. They also dealt with them in their campaigns for eugenics and race or ethnic hygiene, by preventing them from breeding.

Fiedler sees a connection between the twentieth-century medicalization of monsters, the scientific appropriation of their generative secrets, and an increased commodification of the monster as freak, that is, the object of display.

Contemporary culture deals with anomalies by a fascination for the freaky. The film *Freaks* by Tod Browning (1932) warns us that monsters are an endangered species. Since the sixties a whole youth culture has developed around freaks, with special emphasis on genetic mutation as a sign of nonconformism and social rebellion. Whole popular culture genres such as science fiction, horror, rock'n'roll comics, and cyberpunk are about mutants.

Today, the freaks are science fiction androids, cyborgs, bionic women and men, comparable to the grotesque of former times; the whole rock'n'roll scene is a huge theater of the grotesque, combining freaks, androgynes, satanics, ugliness, and insanity, as well as violence.

In other words, in the early part of our century we watch the simultaneous formalization of a scientific discourse about monsters and their elimination as a problem. This process, which falls under the rationalist aggression of scientific discourse, also operates a shift at the level of representation, and of the cultural imaginary. The dimension of the "fantastic," that mixture of aberration and adoration, loathing and attraction, which for centuries has escorted the existence of strange and difficult bodies, is now displaced. The "becoming freaks" of monsters both dellates the fantastic projections that have surrounded them and expands them to a wider cultural field. The whole of contemporary popular culture is about freaks, just as the last of the physical freaks have disappeared. The last metaphorical shift in the status of monsters—their becoming freaks—coincides with their elimination.

In order not to be too pessimistic about this aspect of the problem, how-

ever, I wish to point out that the age of the commodification of freaks is also the period that has resulted in another significant shift: abnormally formed people have organized themselves in the handicapped political movement, thereby claiming not only a renewed sense of dignity but also wider social and political rights.²²

In Transit; or, for Nomadism

Mothers, monsters, and machines. What is the connection, then? What con/dis-junctions can we make in telling the tale of feminism, science, and technology? How do feminist fabulations or figurations help in figuring out alternative paradigms? To what extent do they speak the language of sexual difference? Where do we situate ourselves in order to create links, construct theories, elaborate hypotheses? Which way do we look to try and see the possible impact modern science will have on the status of women? How do we assess the status of difference as an ontological category at the end of the twentieth century? How do we think about all this?

The term "transdisciplinary" can describe one position taken by feminists. Passing in between different discursive fields, and through diverse spheres of intellectual discourse, the feminist theoretician today can only be "in transit," moving on, passing through, creating connections where things were previously dis-connected or seemed un-related, where there seemed to be "nothing to see." In transit, moving, dis-placing—this is the grain of hysteria without which there is no theorization at all.²³ In a feminist context it also implies the effort to move on to the invention of new ways of relating, of building footbridges between notions. The epistemic nomadism I am advocating can only work, in fact, if it is properly situated, securely anchored in the "in between" zones.

I am assuming here a definition of "rigor" away from the linear Aristotelian logic that dominated it for so long. It seems to me that the rigor feminists are after is of a different kind—it is the rigor of a project that emphasizes the necessary interconnection-connections between the theoretical and the political, which insists on putting real-life experience first and foremost as a criterion for the validation of truth. It is the rigor of passionate investment in a project and in the quest of the discursive means to realize it.

In this respect feminism acts as a reminder that in the postmodern predicament, rationality in its classical mode can no longer be taken as rep-

resenting the totality of human reason or even of the all-too-human activity of thinking.

By criticizing the single-mindedness and the masculine bias of rationality I do not intend to fall into the opposite and plead for easy ready-made irrationalism. Patriarchal thought has for too long confined women in the irrational for me to claim such a non-quality. What we need instead is a redefinition of what we have learned to recognize as being the structure and the aims of human subjectivity in its relationship to difference, to the "other."

In claiming that feminists are attempting to redefine the very meaning of thought, I am also suggesting that in time the rules of the discursive game will have to change. Academics will have to agree that thinking adequately about our historical condition implies the transcendence of disciplinary boundaries and intellectual categories.

More important, for feminist epistemologists, the task of thinking adequately about the historical conditions that affect the medicalization of the maternal function forces upon us the need to reconsider the inextricable interconnection of the bodily with the technological. The shifts that have taken place in the perception and the representation of the embodied subject, in fact, make it imperative to think the unity of body and machine, flesh and metal. Although many factors point to the danger of commodification of the body that such a mixture makes possible, and although this process of commodification conceals racist and sexist dangers that must not be underestimated, this is not the whole story. There is also a positive side to the new interconnection of mothers, monsters, and machines, and this has to do with the loss of any essentialized definition of womanhood—or indeed even of motherhood. In the age of biotechnological power motherhood is split open into a variety of possible physiological, cultural, and social functions. If this were the best of all possible worlds, one could celebrate the decline of one consensual way of experiencing motherhood as a sign of increased freedom for women. Our world being as male-dominated as it is, however, the best option is to construct a *nomadic* style of feminism that will allow women to rethink their position in a postindustrial, post-metaphysical world, without nostalgia, paranoia, or false sentimentalism. The relevance and political urgency of the configuration "mothers, monsters and machines" makes it all the more urgent for the feminist nomadic thinkers of the world to connect and to negotiate new boundaries for female identity in a world where power over the body has reached an implosive peak.

NOTES

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1. Donna Haraway, "'Gender' for a Marxist Dictionary: The Sexual Politics of a Word," in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*, pp. 127-48 (London: Free Association Books, 1991).

2. For an enlightening and strategic usage of the notion of "mimesis," see Luce Irigaray, *Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un* (Paris: Minuit, 1977).

3. To refer to the concept elaborated by the French philosopher of difference, see Gilles Deleuze in collaboration with Felix Guattari, *Rhizome* (Paris: Minuit, 1976).

4. The notion of "experience" has been the object of intense debates in feminist theory. See for example, Teresa de Lauretis, *Alice Doesn't* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984); Sandra Harding, *The Science Question in Feminism* (London: Open University, 1986), and *Feminism and Methodology* (London: Open University, 1987); Joan Scott, "Experience," in Joan Scott and Judith Butler, eds., *Feminists Theorize the Political* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 22-40.

5. Genevieve Lloyd, *The Man of Reason* (London: Methuen, 1985).

6. Cf. Michel Foucault, *L'ordre du discours* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971); *Surveiller et punir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975); "Les intellectuels et le pouvoir," *L'Arc*, no. 49 (1972).

7. This expression, originally coined by Laura Mulvey in film criticism, has been taken up and developed by Donna Haraway in a stunning exploration of this intellectual mode; see "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," and "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century," in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*, pp. 183-202 and 127-48.

8. I explored this notion of monstrosity at some length in a seminar held jointly with Marie-Jo Dhavernas at the Collège international de Philosophie in Paris in 1984-1985. The report of the sessions was published in *Cahier du Collège International de Philosophie*, no. 1 (1985): 42-45.

9. See Jacques Derrida, *L'écriture et la différence* (Paris: Seuil, 1967); *Marges de la philosophie* (Paris: Minuit, 1972); *La carte postale* (Paris: Flammarion, 1980).

10. On this point, see Alice Jardine, *Gynesis: Configurations of Woman in Modernity*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984).

11. For a feminist critique of Aristotle, see Sandra Harding and Meryl Hintikka, eds., *Discovering Reality* (Boston: Reidel, 1983).

12. The most enlightening philosophical analysis of the scopophilic mode of scientific knowledge is Michel Foucault's *Naissance de la clinique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1963).

13. This is the fundamental starting point for the work of feminist philosopher of sexual difference Luce Irigaray; see, for instance *Éthique de la différence sexuelle* (Paris: Minuit, 1984).

14. Julia Kristeva, *Pouvoirs de l'horreur* (Paris: Seuil, 1980).

15. Ambroise Paré, *Des monstres et prodiges* (1573; Geneva: Droz, 1971).

16. The second and third volume of Foucault's *History of Sexuality* (New York: Pantheon, 1987-1988) outline quite clearly all these regulations in the art of existence.

17. Pierre Darmon, *Le mythe de la procréation à l'âge baroque*, (Paris: Seuil, 1981).

18. See for instance Susan Bordo, "The Cartesian Masculinization of Thought," *Signs* 11, no. 3 (1986); Evelyn Fox Keller, *Reflections on Gender and Science* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

19. S. G. Allen and J. Hubbs, "Outrunning Atlanta: Destiny in Alchemical Transmutation," *Signs* 6, no. 2 (Winter 1980): 210-29.

20. Leslie Fiedler, *Freaks* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1978).

21. Robert Bogdan, *Freak Show* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press 1988).

22. David Hevey, ed., *The Creatures Time Forgot: Photography and Disability Imagery* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992).

23. As Monique David-Menard argues in *L'hystérique entre Freud et Lacan* (Paris: Ed. Universitaire, 1983).

Corporeal Representation in/and the Body Politic

Maura Gatens

The rather awkward title of this paper is intended to draw attention to an ambiguity in the term "representation" as it is used in political theory. First, I want to focus on the construction of the *image* of the modern body politic. This involves examining the claim that the body politic is constituted by a creative act, by a work of art or artifice, that uses the human body as its model or metaphor. The background to this claim is provided by certain seventeenth- and eighteenth-century social contract theorists who argued in favor of the conventionality or artificiality of monarchical political authority.¹ If such authority is neither natural nor God-given but rather based on agreement and convention then it is mutable. The way the metaphor of the body functions here is by analogy. Just as man can be understood as a representation of God's creative power, so the political

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body can be understood as a representation of man's creative power, that is, as *art(ifice)*.

The second sense of "representation" surfaces when considering *whose* body it is that is entitled to be represented by this political corporation. This involves understanding "representation" in the sense where one body or agent is taken to stand for a group of diverse bodies. Here we are considering the metonymical representation of a complex body by a privileged part of that body. The metaphor here slides into metonymy. The relevant background literature to this question is provided by various texts, from the seventeenth century on, concerning the natural authority of men over women and the propriety of taking the male head of households as representative of the concerns of the entire household.²

The first use of "representation"—what I have called the metaphorical concerns the way in which this image effects who is represented by the body politic. To address the first strand—the metaphorical—I will begin with a quotation from a mid-seventeenth-century text that posits, in a manner typical of the period, a detailed correspondence between the parts and functions of the human body and the parts and functions of the political body. The text is the *Leviathan*, the author is Thomas Hobbes. He writes:

by art is created that great LEVIATHAN called a COMMONWEALTH, or STATE, in Latin CIVITAS, which is but an artificial man; though of greater stature and strength than the natural, for whose protection and defence it was intended; and in which the *sovereignty* is an artificial *soul*, as giving life and motion to the whole body; the *magistrates*, and other *officers* of judicature and execution, artificial *joints*; *reward* and *punishment*, by which fastened to the seat of the sovereignty every joint and member is moved to perform his duty, are the *nerves*, that do the same in the body natural; and *wealth* and *riches* of all the particular members are the *strength*; *salus populi*, the people's safety, its *business*; *counsellors*, by whom all things needful for it to know are suggested unto it, are the *memory*; *equity* and *laws*, an artificial *reason* and *will*; *concord*, *health*; *sedition*, *sickness*; and civil war, death. Lastly the *pacts* and *covenants*, by which the parts of this body politic were at first made, set together, and united, resemble that *fiat*, or the *let us make man*, pronounced by God in the creation.³

I want to draw attention to two important aspects of the view Hobbes offers. First, Hobbes claims that the motivation behind the creation of the artificial