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# **The Sexual Politics of Human Cloning *Mothering and Its Vicissitudes***

In this essay I wish to consider the sexual politics of human cloning in relation to alternative visions of motherhood and analyse some of the ways in which the advent of cloning might help change women's lives. Cloning will be seen to possess the potential to contribute to the encouragement of social equality and to the destabilisation of the long-standing patriarchal "economy of the Same," as Luce Irigaray describes it (1990: 74) or, alternatively, to become a genetic weapon of further oppression. The question thus becomes: will the availability of human cloning benefit women or, on the contrary, contribute to the perpetuation of their subordination to a still male-dominated medical and scientific establishment?

While some feminists see the prospect of the implementation of human cloning as a threat to women, in the sense that it might rob them, as they see it, of their only source of power, the unique gift of motherhood, cloning might, on the other hand, enable both men and women to have their cloned offspring independently of either, thus potentially contributing to a greater equality as far as sex roles are concerned.<sup>1</sup> The still dominant perception that women are fundamentally child-carers would undergo a gradual change, since with the introduction of cloning and the development of artificial wombs men and women would be equally able to have their children with or without a companion of the opposite or the same sex. I believe these alterations, which would be operative at both a biological and a psychological level, would slowly create the conditions for similar job and career opportunities for both sexes, since women would not be limited by their anatomy to becoming mothers only by following the traditional modes of reproduction, unless they so chose. The gradual implementation of these new techniques would inevitably create a very different perception of parenting potential, which in turn would lead to a

wholly distinct psychological map for humanity. This new context could no longer be articulated in terms of Freudian explanatory principles as far as human traumas, drives, perversions and taboos are concerned, but would come to reflect radically altered family, social, political and urban circumstances.

I would like to argue thus that recent developments in reproductive technologies might, provided that women struggle to attain their legitimate place as active agents in the decision-making processes, where they are glaringly under-represented, decisively pave the road to concrete and far-reaching changes to women's lives. These new techniques, amongst which I will stress human cloning, have opened up the prospect of a revolutionary change in the way we consider sex roles and gendered conceptions of individuality, although a future society that included cloning technology would foreseeably look very different if envisioned by a woman or by a man. Indeed, as Gena Corea pertinently notes, "in the realm of cloning, as in most reproductive technology, the male is seen as the active principle in reproduction, the female the passive" (1985: 261). She suggests that if it ever became possible, cloning might be predominantly used to promote male urges to self-generate, circumventing the woman's participation. As Corea remarks, "this is the classic patriarchal myth of single parenthood by the male" (1985; 260), a scenario which is given fictional illustration in, for instance, Fay Weldon's *The Cloning of Joanna May* (1989) and in Anna Wilson's *Hatching Stones* (1991). I wish to contest this view by offering and critically examining instances of women's reflections around such visions. I have to acknowledge, however, that it seems likely that if men retain the control of sexual politics, given that they will inevitably be reshaped by these novel reproductive conditions, it seems likely that the feasibility of human cloning and the introduction of ectogenetic births<sup>2</sup> might be used to the furthering of a masculinist political agenda and not be put at the service of women's goals and aspirations.

Since my emphasis in this essay falls on the potential benefits the participation of women in the technological arena may bring to women's lives, I situate myself clearly on the side of such "technophiles," to borrow Nancy Lublin's word (1998: 23), as Shulamith Firestone and Donna Haraway, whose theories I will privilege to help buttress my argument. Lublin defines feminist technophilia as a "veneration for technology because of the belief that it will free women from the burden of reproduction, the primary source of our oppression" and "technophiles" as those feminist thinkers "who are enthusiastic about the supposedly emancipatory nature of technology" (1998: 23). Opposed to these technophiles stand the technophobes, who believe that intervention in reproductive technologies is inherently anti-women. Feminists like Susan Griffin (1984), Mary Daly (1986), and Adrienne Rich (1992) emphasize woman's arguably closer connection with nature and celebrate women's bodies as the source of pleasure and not of oppression, indeed as weapons in the struggle for liberation, in direct opposition to Firestone's (1972) and Haraway's (1991) argumentation, a position I consider reductionist and essentialist.<sup>3</sup>

### **Shulamith Firestone's utopian vision**

In her radical feminist book *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (1970), significantly dedicated to Simone de Beauvoir, for whom woman's biology and reproductive capacities were also the main causes of her oppression, Shulamith Firestone put forward the general outlines for a future society where women would have the same privileges and prerogatives as men, not being "slaves" to their biological destiny, passive vessels and "two-legged wombs," to use Margaret Atwood's haunting description of women in *The Handmaid's Tale* (1991:146). Not surprisingly, Firestone advocated as an unavoidable cornerstone of her vision the absolute necessity of freeing women "from the tyranny of their biology by any means available, and the diffusion of the childbearing and childrearing role to the society as a whole, to men and other children as well as women" (1972: 238), in what would amount to a radical rewriting of Freud's script according to which "anatomy is destiny." Firestone's book recognizes a causal relation between woman's biology, her reproductive capabilities, and the sexual division of labour. In her political subordination to men, women can be equated to the working class in capitalist society. Using Marx (1976) and Engels's (1986) dialectical and materialist method to analyse the "dynamics of sex war" (Firestone, 1972: 2) and the conditions necessary to effect a feminist revolution, Firestone at the same time criticizes what she considers as the shortcomings of the communist theory as far as the oppression of women as a group in the arena of the class struggle is concerned. As she remarks, "an economic diagnosis traced to ownership of the means of production, even of the means of reproduction, does not explain everything. There is a level of reality that does not stem directly from economics" (1972: 5).

As an alternative, Firestone suggests developing a "materialist view of history based on sex itself" (1972: 5), performing an analysis "in which biology itself—procreation—is at the origin of the dualism" (1972; 8), the sex dualism that is represented by the two categories of woman and man. As Firestone pertinently argues, "unlike economic class, sex class sprang directly from a biological reality: men and women were created different, and not equally privileged" (1972: 8). As she goes on to stress, "although, as de Beauvoir points out, this difference of itself did not necessitate the development of a class system—the domination of one group by another—the reproductive *functions* of these differences did" (1972: 8). It is in this context that, drawing on Biblical imagery, Firestone praises the liberating potential of technology, stressing that the double curse "that man would toil by the sweat of his brow in order to live, and woman would bear children in pain and travail" (1972: 242) would be lifted through technology. As Nancy Chodorow in related vein argues: "Women's mothering is central to the sexual division of labor. Women's maternal role has profound effects on women's lives, on ideology about women, on the reproduction of masculinity and sexual inequality, and on the reproduction of particular forms of labor power. Women as mothers are pivotal actors in the sphere of social reproduction" (1984: 11).

For women to repossess their bodies, Firestone argues, a formidable upheaval in societal structures and engagement with technology is fundamental. Pushing further the parallels with Marxism she has been using, Firestone forcefully declares that:

Just as to assure elimination of economic classes requires the revolt of the underclass (the proletariat) and, in a temporary dictatorship, their seizure of the means of *production*, so to assure the elimination of sexual classes requires the revolt of the underclass (women) and the seizure of control of *reproduction*: not only the full restoration to women of ownership of their own bodies, but also their (temporary) seizure of control of human fertility—the new population biology as well as all the social institutions of childbearing and childrearing. (1972: 10-11)<sup>4</sup>

In polemical vein, Firestone goes on to maintain that “the end goal of feminist revolution must be ... not just the elimination of male *privilege* but of the *sex distinction* itself: genital differences between human beings would no longer matter culturally” (1972: 11).

Firestone further elaborates on this revolutionary vision putting forward what she considers as the desirable measures that would have to be implemented in order to achieve her blueprint for an egalitarian, socialist-feminist society. Firestone’s insistence on the possibility of divorcing motherhood from being solely attached to woman is translated into her anticipatory fantasy according to which:

The reproduction of the species by one sex for the benefit of both would be replaced by (at least the option of) artificial reproduction: children would be born to both sexes equally, or independently of either, however one chooses to look at it; the dependence of the child on the mother (and vice versa) would give way to a greatly shortened dependence on a small group of others in general, and any remaining inferiority to adults in physical strength would be compensated for culturally. The division of labor would be ended by the elimination of labor altogether (cybernation). The tyranny of the biological family would be broken. (1972:11)

As Firestone cogently observes, the end of the tyranny of the biological family would also spell the cessation of the “psychology of power” (1972: 11) on which it is grounded. Female biology, then, would no longer mean motherhood as the only destiny open to most women.

This amounts indeed to a revolutionary vision, contested by, amongst others, Adrienne Rich who, in spite of her anti-technological stance, similarly engages with Marxist rhetoric in terms which are strongly reminiscent of

Firestone's when she argues:

The repossession by women of our bodies will bring far more essential change to human society than the means of production by workers. The female body has been both territory and machine, virgin wilderness to be exploited and assembly-line turning out life. We need to imagine a world in which every woman is the presiding genius of her own body. (1972: 230)

Unlike de Beauvoir (1977) and Firestone, however, Rich (1992) considers the experience of motherhood as a fundamental reservoir of pleasure and power. According to Rich, not only do not women's biology and her reproductive capacities necessarily lead to oppression, but they can be a potent source of *jouissance*, of libidinal pleasure, an aspect which is not taken into account either by de Beauvoir or Firestone. In turn, Christine Battersby's argument in *The Phenomenal Woman* (1998) works as a partial corrective to de Beauvoir's and Firestone's demand for a radical alteration of and alternative to the vision and representation of woman's body as exclusively devoted to pregnancy and maternity. Battersby's feminist metaphysics includes "an emphasis on birth" (1998: 4) and, in her book, Battersby explores "the theoretical grounding of a self which is born" (1998: 4). As Battersby acknowledges, "women have very good reasons to feel uncomfortable with any attempt to link female identity to reproductive capacities" (1998: 5). However, as she goes on to assert, "the hypothetical link between 'woman' and 'birth' that matters is 'If it is a male human, it cannot give birth', not 'If it is a female human, it can give birth'" (1998: 4). Battersby further argues that "the dominant metaphysics of the West have been developed from the point of view of an identity that cannot give birth, so that birthing is treated as a deviation of the 'normal' models of identity—not integral to thinking identity itself" (1998: 4). What I wish to stress here, in response to Christine Battersby's feminist metaphysics, is the need to start theorizing the patterns of individuation and identity of a being who might literally not be born,<sup>5</sup> but rather develop inside an artificial womb.<sup>6</sup>

The fact that there are two virtually opposed views about women's reproductive powers and how society should deal with them, however, does not mean that Firestone's (1972) radically new concept of woman's role in society cannot coexist with more traditional feminine participation in procreation and childrearing. On the one hand, there are those feminist thinkers who, like Adrienne Rich (1992), see woman's biology and her childbearing responsibilities as conducive to a sense of empowerment over their own bodies and, to a certain extent, over men. However, in this respect we need to ask why, then, in spite of the traditional sacralization of motherhood, women are very often drastically restricted in their societal expectations precisely because of those very reproductive capabilities. As Rosalind Pollack Petchesky pertinently asks:

Can feminism reconstruct a joyful sense of childbearing and maternity without capitulating to ideologies that reduce women to a maternal essence? Can we talk about morality in reproductive decision-making without invoking the spectre of maternal duty? (1998: 79)

It is these problems that both Firestone (1972) and Haraway (1991), in their different theoretical strategies and practical suggestions, try to solve.

### **“Not of woman born”**

Donna Haraway’s “ironic political myth” (1991:149) of which the cyborg is the main protagonist, provides a series of helpful ideas that can be said to roughly work in the same direction as some of the possibilities that human cloning holds for women in terms of a political strategy to help furthering their position in a masculinist society.

According to Haraway, cyborgs<sup>7</sup> “have more to do with regeneration and are suspicious of the reproductive matrix of most birthing” (1991: 181), a scenario that is dramatized in for instance Marge Piercy’s Mattapoinsett section in *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1983) and Lisa Tuttle’s (1998) “World of Strangers,” where “the reproductive matrix of most birthing” is deconstructed. I thus situate my argument about the potentially empowering consequences for women of human cloning along the lines laid down by Haraway, who describes her cyborg myth as being about “transgressed boundaries, potent fusions, and dangerous possibilities which progressive people might explore as one part of needed political work” (1991:154).

Donna Haraway analyzes scientific discourses as both constructed and as “instruments for enforcing meanings” (1991: 164). In tune with Firestone (1972), Haraway argues that “one important route for reconstructing socialist-feminist politics is through theory and practice addressed to the social relations of science and technology, including crucially the systems of myth and meanings structuring our imagination” (1991: 163). The relations between science and technology constitute a material reality which women need to be aware of—not fear or disparage. These relations are “rearranging” categories of race, sex and class; feminism needs to take this into account. Indeed, Haraway’s analysis of “women in the integrated circuit” tries to suggest, without relying too much on the category of “woman” (as a natural category), that as technologies radically restructure “life” on earth, “women” do not, and are not, through education and training, learning to control these technologies, to “read these webs of power” (1991: 170). A socialist-feminist politics must therefore address these restructurings. As Haraway pertinently points out: “Who controls the interpretation of bodily boundaries in medical hermeneutics is a major feminist issue” (1991: 160). Her often reiterated exhortation for women to participate in the making of science is inextricably linked with the control of webs of power, since it is “the production of science and technology that constructs scientific-technical discourses, processes, and objects” (1991: 169) and is instrumental in

the creation of “the new world, just as it has participated in maintaining the old one” (1991: 68).

In related vein, Haraway addresses the issue of women’s victimization, remarking that the traditional plots that shape western culture

are ruled by a reproductive politics—rebirth without flaw, perfection, abstraction. In this plot women are imagined either better or worse off, but all agree they have less selfhood, weaker individuation, more fusion to the oral, to Mother, less at stake in masculine autonomy, a route that does not pass through Woman, Primitive, Zero, the Mirror Stage and its imaginary. It passes through women and other present-tense, illegitimate cyborgs, *not of Woman born*, who refuse the ideological resources of victimization so as to have a real life. (1991: 177) [emphasis mine]

Haraway’s discussion of cyborg politics, although not referring to human cloning in particular, can be said to pertinently apply and buttress the argument I have been developing here. She states: “Sexual reproduction is one kind of reproductive strategy among many, with costs and benefits as a function of the system environment. Ideologies of sexual reproduction can no longer reasonably call on notions of sex and sex role as organic aspects in natural objects like organisms and families” (1991: 162). From this perspective, then, human cloning, I believe, can be seen as a potentially liberating alternative to the rigid boundaries imposed on women by those ideologies of sexual reproduction.

Firestone’s “cybernetic feminism” (1972: 238) and Haraway’s vision of a “socialist-feminist culture” (150) can then be brought together in a productive symbiosis which will help us reflect on the fictional works named above which, through prophetically anticipating many medical and technological procedures and their repercussions on human life will provide an invaluable imaginative blueprint with which to critically assess imminent developments and their implications as far as the sexual politics of the near future are concerned.

### **Women’s science, women’s bodies**

The discourse of science has been the object of scrutiny on the part of many feminist critics, who have seen it as heavily male gendered and catering mostly to male political agendas. Evelyn Fox Keller (1984) and Sandra Harding (1992) are amongst the most influential critics of what they see as the sexist way science has operated so far. Drawing principally on the work of Nancy Chodorow (1984) and Dorothy Dinnerstein (1976), one of Evelyn Fox Keller’s main arguments is that the predominant philosophy of science practices and techniques is strongly masculine and individualistic. In order to counterbalance that attitude Fox Keller, like Haraway, calls for a greater participation of women in the research and practice of science so that those sexist paradigms can be changed.<sup>8</sup>

Sandra Harding, for her part, argues for the need “to produce a feminist science—one that better reflects the world around us than the incomplete and distorting accounts provided by traditional social science” (1992: 318), taking into account the specifics of gender, race and class, which inevitably give form to one’s experience of the world around us. Following on from this insight, Harding defends a type of scientific practice based on an ethics of care, of greater relational habits not grounded on exploitation and, like Fox Keller, alerts women to the need for a more active agency in the construction and practice of science.

Evelyn Fox Keller’s (1992) notion of a gender-neutral science found a strongly receptive echo in many feminist activists, who demand the kind of policy that will be sympathetic to women’s needs and aspirations. Indeed, as Catherine MacKinnon contends, in order for women to achieve greater control of their bodies and hence a greater political power to subvert male domination, they should be able to start exerting that control earlier. As she insists: “If women are not socially accorded control over sexual access to their bodies, they cannot control much else about them” (1993: 616).

In this context, I believe the possibility of having their own cloned child would be a potential way to possess greater control over their bodies and reproductive choices, as I suggested above. As Michelle Stanworth in related vein notes, the

thrust of feminist analysis has been to rescue pregnancy from the status of the “natural”—to establish pregnancy and childbirth not as a natural condition, the parameters of which are set in advance, but as an accomplishment which we can actively shape according to our own ends. . . . In the feminist critique of reproductive technologies, it is not technology as an *artificial* invasion of the human body that is at issue—but whether we can create the political and cultural conditions in which such technologies can be employed by women to shape the experience of reproduction according to their own definitions. (1987: 34-35)

Indeed, it is never too much to stress that cloning would only be fully empowering for women if it went on a par with social and economic independence, as well as political parity, so as to ensure that women’s problems would receive the adequate amount of attention that would go with appropriate representation in the institutional organs with power of decision. This aspect is equally stressed by Michele Barrett who, in *Women’s Oppression Today* (1980), observes that “the way in which the biology of human reproduction is integrated into social relations is not a biological question: it is a political issue” (1980: 76).

Similar concerns are articulated by Firestone who acknowledges that

though the sex class system may have originated in fundamental

biological conditions, this does not guarantee, once the biological basis of their oppression has been swept away, that women and children will be freed. On the contrary, the new technology, especially fertility control, may be used against them to reinforce the entrenched system of exploitation. (1972: 10)

This powerful call for woman's effective participation in medicine, biology and in all the stages of the decision making process is one of the most forcefully articulated requirements put forward by feminists in their struggle for social equity and justice. Hilary Rose is similarly critical of the "pervasive conservatism [which] lies at the heart of the debate about the so-called new challenges to ethics posed by the new science and technology of reproduction" (1998: 172). As she goes on to observe, the "problem for feminists is that we want to resist specific oppressive technologies while at the same time working to change nothing less than the values and structures of science. Thus our debates must be located within an understanding of the biologically determinist direction of modern science and medicine which contain within them fixed notions of woman's and man's natures" (1998: 172).

In related vein, Luce Irigaray, whose trajectory includes a long-standing involvement with the Italian feminist communists and the women of the Italian left-wing parties, as well as with issues related with women's bodily experiences, is worried that instead of helping to free women from their subordination to patriarchy, the recent reproductive technologies might further accentuate the traditional view that "the framework for women's existence is exclusively maternal" (1993a: 135). Irigaray further remarks that "there's a real risk that some women, who call themselves freed from their nature such as it was defined by patriarchy, will once again subject themselves body and "soul" to this variant on their fate called artificial procreation" (1993a: 135). Irigaray's doubts find powerful vocalization:

Test-tube mothers, surrogate mothers, men engendering futuristically (in their intestines): what next? Will all this help us get away from the pressure to have children, our sole sexual "vocation" according to the patriarchs, so as to get to know ourselves, to love and create ourselves in accordance to our bodily differences? (1993a: 135).

Cloning, I believe, would provide a possible answer to Irigaray's distrust of some new reproductive technologies, which she fears might go on reproducing the same male webs of power.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, in "So When Are We to Become Women?" Irigaray observes:

Today's scientists poring over their test tubes to decide a woman's fertility or fertilization very much resemble theologians speculating about the possibility of a female soul or about the point at which the

fetus' soul comes into existence. The approach is similar, perhaps worse. And if need be, some of these scientists will be women. (1993a: 134-135)

The prospect of human cloning has effectively forced renewed attention on the sexual politics of reproductive technologies as well as the potential social and family-related scenarios they may bring about.

### **Motherhood deconstructed**

Motherhood, as has often been noted, has served throughout the ages to glorify woman as mother, but at the same time to subordinate her according to the argument that as men cannot biologically fulfil the function of bearing a child, woman has to consecrate most of her time, as well as her ambitions and inclinations, to the higher good of society, its perpetuation and well-being.<sup>10</sup>

In *Patterns of Dissonance*, Rosi Braidotti points out that woman, “whether she likes it or not, only exists in her culture as a potential mother” (1991: 260), a fact which, if it has been the source of one of the only avenues to empowerment women have experienced throughout the ages, has also simultaneously constituted the basis of their enslavement to anatomy. As Julia Kristeva in related vein observes:

If it is not possible to say of a *woman* what she *is* (without running the risk of abolishing her difference), would it perhaps be different concerning the *mother*, since that is the only function of the ‘other sex’ to which we can definitely attribute existence? And yet, there too, we are caught in a paradox. (1987: 234)

These difficulties inherent in the contested site that is motherhood and the many theorizations surrounding it are described by Patrice DiQuinzio as precisely a “paradoxical politics of mothering” (1999: xvii), one which would “take up a wide variety of issues related to conception, pregnancy, birth, and child rearing, but it would recognize that it cannot offer a completely coherent and consistent position on these issues” (1999: 248). The advent of the new reproductive technologies we have been alluding to would bring into greater relief many of the paradoxes attendant upon these various conceptions of motherhood.

With human cloning and ectogenesis, as well as the sharing of the reproductive capacity with men, I believe that instead of relinquishing the source of power that motherhood has been perceived in some respects as yielding, as some critics would argue,<sup>11</sup> women would, on the contrary, achieve a greater equality by dint of that very interchange of roles, in particular if and when ectogenesis became the norm.<sup>12</sup> The politics of motherhood, thus, would necessarily undergo drastic changes, as would the dynamics of the nuclear family.

Woman has been for so long inextricably associated with motherhood that to contemplate the idea of woman as non-mother would appear as a scandal, socially unacceptable, impossibly revolutionary and potentially deeply threatening to the patriarchal stronghold.<sup>13</sup> Cloning technology applied to human beings would thus predictably have far-reaching effects in all social and family dynamics. Men who decided to have cloned offspring, and assuming that artificial wombs would be available, could thus choose to have their child completely on their own, as if there were no women in the world. Conversely, a woman could do exactly the same, and much earlier, since she would not have to depend on ectogenesis to bear and give birth to a baby, if she so chose.<sup>14</sup> These can be seen as very powerful motivating factors that might lead a woman to opt for having a cloned child, brought to term inside her own womb or in an artificial one, circumstances that would potentially and gradually lead to a greater parity with men and equality of opportunities for women in the social structure, as I have been arguing.

This relative symmetry in access to reproductive roles could lead, nonetheless, to a predominance of a masculinist political agenda, as already mentioned, perpetuating the *status quo* of men in an androcentric society. As J. Raymond observes, the new reproductive techniques can be seen as a powerful means for men to wrest “not only control of reproduction, but reproduction itself” (1985: 12) from women, a point that is also stressed by Michelle Stanworth, who notes that new reproductive technologies “are the vehicle that will turn men’s illusions of reproductive power into a reality” (1987: 16).<sup>15</sup> The implications embedded in these developments as far as women and pregnancy are concerned are thus much more extensive than the consideration of their biological consequences might lead us to suspect. As Michelle Stanworth goes on to note, in tune with my reflections mentioned above, “motherhood as a unified biological process will be effectively deconstructed” (1987: 16).<sup>16</sup>

I believe it is essential, when we stand at the threshold of a new era where different versions of “Brave New Worlds,” to borrow Aldous Huxley’s resonant words, will necessarily emerge, to anticipate and examine at least the general outlines these societal configurations might take.<sup>17</sup>

## **Conclusion**

From the perspective I have been presenting, human cloning can be seen to constitute a very important and empowering step forward for women, a fundamental strategic move on the way to egalitarian rights with men. Might cloning be in fact one of the stepping stones to enable such egalitarianism to gradually arise? I tend to believe so, as long as it is used with the necessary caution and common sense with respect to the unavoidable ethical and moral issues. As many critics have abundantly stressed, however, women have to play an actively participatory role in the forging and implementation of new technological advances in science in general and in the networks of power. There is a pressing need to reverse Haraway’s pessimistic position according

to which there is no place for woman in these networks, “only geometries of difference and contradiction crucial to women’s cyborg identities. If we learn how to read these webs of power and social life, we might learn new couplings, new coalitions” (1991: 170). Woman’s insertion in these webs of power, her greater agency in the scientific and medical arenas, constitute a fundamental step towards the implementation of a political agenda that will contemplate women’s welfare and potential new reproductive scenarios in our cyberspace age.

In “Stabat Mater,” Kristeva claims that “motherhood ... today remains, after the Virgin, without a discourse” (1987: 262). With cloning, however, the fantasy of a virgin maternal might come to be fulfilled, providing a revolutionary new vision to the concept of motherhood and potentially enabling new feminine discourses to arise, alongside Kristeva’s call for a “*herethics*” (1987: 263). As Toril Moi similarly stresses, with relation to “Stabat Mater,” “there is ... an urgent need for a ‘post-virginal’ discourse on maternity, one which ultimately would provide both women and men with a new ethics” (1986: 161).

Following on from Kristeva’s exhortation for the necessity of revising the cult of the Virgin Mary while retaining some of its empowering aspects, I wish to end this essay by suggesting that many threads of that new discourse on motherhood already exist, as I hope has become clear, and will in all likelihood be greatly added to with the inevitable reflections and theorizations that will accompany the advent of human cloning.

At the end of her book *Alone of All Her Sex*, Marina Warner remarks that “as an acknowledged creation of Christian mythology, the Virgin’s legend will endure in its splendour and lyricism, but it will be emptied of moral significance, and thus lose its present real powers to heal and to harm” (2000: 339). It seems to me that, contrary to Warner’s predictions, the impact of human cloning for women in particular is likely to add a renewed vigour to the iconic figure of the Virgin Mary, turning her into a potent symbol of stimulating and reinvented potentialities for women.

<sup>1</sup>The prospect of the introduction of human cloning has produced heated debate and widespread criticism. Amongst the most salient concerns cloning has elicited can be cited the link between cloning and eugenic thinking, raising fears of elimination of those deemed less valuable as well as the creation and reproduction of certain genotypes, possibilities that could lead to a profusion of designer babies and, given time, to a much more uniform population pool. The power to choose who to clone and what characteristics designer babies should possess is inextricably linked with economic and political privilege, leaving out a large part of the world population and inevitably leading to discrimination and imbalances in terms of skin colour and related ethnic issues. Human cloning also raises numerous ethical and religious questions, which address such notions as the inviolable uniqueness of an individual, family

dynamics and the laws that regulate the family unit, as well as what is perceived by some as the highly transgressive act of daring to create life, a gift exclusive to God. For extended discussion of these issues see for instance Ruth F. Chadwick (1987), Daniel Kevles (1997), Matha C. Nussbaum and Cass R. Sustein (1998), John Harris (1998), Tom L. Beauchamp and LeRoy Walters (1999) and Lisa Yount (2000).

<sup>2</sup>For a full discussion of the complex questions involved in ectogenesis see, for instance, Susan M. Squier's *Babies in Bottles* (1994) and Julien S. Murphy's "Is Pregnancy Necessary? Feminist Concerns About Ectogenesis" (1998).

<sup>3</sup>I find these technophobic arguments too dependent on essentialist notions of woman and nature, treating culture and technology as the inevitable enemies of that implied connection with the natural world, itself unavoidably enmeshed in binary, exclusionary dualisms. As I wish to argue, science and technology can benefit women immensely, if developed and applied according to ethical rules drafted by committees in which both men and women are equally represented.

<sup>4</sup>These changes would only happen gradually. Apocalyptic visions of armies of cloned people being "fabricated" for specific purposes is clearly not a part of Firestone's (1972) project, which considers versions of cloning as enabling women to bypass the seemingly inevitable fate their biological position dictates for them.

<sup>5</sup>This much needed theorization remains, however, beyond the scope of this essay.

<sup>6</sup>From which that baby would subsequently be "decanted," to borrow the pejorative terminology Aldous Huxley used in *Brave New World*.

<sup>7</sup>I am here assimilating clones with cyborgs, since the former are the result of laboratory manipulation of cells.

<sup>8</sup>See for instance her *Reflections on Gender and Science* (Keller, 1984) and "From Secrets of Life to Secrets of Death" (Keller, 1990).

<sup>9</sup>In a private conversation with me, in June 2001, however, Luce Irigaray considered the prospect of cloning as "sad" in terms of social and family life.

<sup>10</sup>Thus implicitly suggesting that in spite of their alleged superiority men are often found deficient in providing a smoothly running environment for their home and children. Dorothy Dinnerstein (1976), Jane Gallop (1982), and Nancy Chodorow (1978) offer a pertinent critique of patriarchal patterns of socialization in the traditional nuclear family. Chodorow in particular forcefully argues the case for a much greater participation of the father in the raising of the children and the running of the household.

<sup>11</sup>Amongst these could be cited Renate Duelli Klein (1985), Gena Corea (1985a and 1985b), Roberta Steinbacher (1985); with Helen Holmes (1998), Rita Arditti (1984) and Arditti *et al.* (1985).

<sup>12</sup>It goes without saying that these potentialities would similarly provide men with the possibility of having their own children without a woman's help, thus putatively originating the development of an imbalance in the relative number of male and female births, on the one hand, as in Anna Wilson's dystopian novel

*Hatching Stones* and on the other hand the appropriation, or rather, perpetuation of the power of decision over the future shape of society if women are not equally at the centre of the processes of decision-making. This is obviously an extreme scenario, just as the idea that given these tantalizing possibilities women would immediately avail themselves of these opportunities and decide not to become pregnant any more, leaving to the laboratory and the artificial womb the task of bearing their children. This futuristic prospect is many decades away, which is not to say that in the relatively near future many women might not be able to decide, for medical or other reasons, to profit from these new resources, if indeed they become available.

<sup>13</sup>In “Motherhood: The Annihilation of Women,” Jeffner Allen rejects motherhood “on the grounds that motherhood is dangerous to women” (1984: 315) and argues the case for a “philosophy of evacuation” (1984: 315), which “proposes women’s collective removal of ourselves from all forms of motherhood” (1984: 315). As Allen explains the rationale behind her statement: “Freedom is never achieved by the mere inversion of an oppressive construct, that is, by seeing motherhood in a ‘new’ light. Freedom is achieved when an oppressive construct, motherhood, is vacated by its members and thereby rendered null and void” (1984: 315).

<sup>14</sup>I am assuming here that probably the technology for cloning a human being may predictably be developed before artificial wombs become ready for use, indispensable for men to have their cloned babies.

<sup>15</sup>This scenario is given fictional illustration in for example Maureen Duffy’s *Gor Saga* (1981) and Fay Weldon’s *The Cloning of Joanna May* (1989).

<sup>16</sup>In this context, surrogate motherhood is a case in point. In her discussion of surrogacy Lori B. Andrews (1998) considers that the arguments brought to bear on this question are predominantly political and have to do with the fundamental issue of whether the government should have an ascendancy over women’s bodies and regulate them, as is the case with surrogacy. As Andrews synthesizes her position: “Some feminists have criticized surrogacy as turning participating women, albeit with their consent, into reproductive vessels. I see the danger of the antisurrogacy arguments as potentially turning *all* women into reproductive vessels, without their consent, by providing government oversight for women’s decisions and creating a disparate legal category for gestation. Moreover, by breathing life into arguments that feminists have put to rest in other contexts, the current rationales opposing surrogacy could undermine a larger feminist agenda” (1998: 168).

<sup>17</sup>Some fictional accounts which illustrate different versions of the potential scenarios human cloning might give rise to include, amongst others: Mary E. Bradley Lane’s *Mizora* (1890), Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s *Herland* (1915), Gwyneth Jones’s *Divine Endurance* (1984), Joanna Russ’s *The Female Man* (1975), Naomi Mitchison’s *Solution Three* (1975), Pamela Sargent’s *Cloned Lives* (1976), Kate Wilhelm’s *Where Late the Sweet Birds Sang* (1977), James Tiptree Jr’s “Houston, Houston, Can You Read?” (1976), Sally Miller Gearhart’s

*The Wanderground* (1978), Suzy McKee Charnas's *Motherlines* (1978), Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1983), Joan Slonczewski's *A Door Into Ocean* (1986), Sheri Tepper, *The Gate to Women's Country* (1988), Anna Wilson's *Hatching Stones* (1991), Fay Weldon's *The Cloning of Joanna May* (1993) and Lisa Tuttle's "World of Strangers" (1998).

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