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(出版者 / Publisher)

法政大学人間環境学会

(雑誌名 / Journal or Publication Title)

人間環境論集 / 人間環境論集

(巻 / Volume)

18

(号 / Number)

2

(開始ページ / Start Page)

1

(終了ページ / End Page)

28

(発行年 / Year)

2018-02-28

(URL)

<https://doi.org/10.15002/00014428>

Theories of the Body surrounding Reproduction:

Elizabeth Grosz and Questions of Bodily Boundaries

生殖をめぐる身体論

——エリザベス・グロスと身体の境界について

Eiko Saeki

When and where does one's life begin? Where do the corporeal boundaries of the fetus and pregnant woman reside? What kind of implications do the regulatory mechanisms of classification, which demarcate the boundary of personhood, have in gender dynamics in society? While the advancement of scientific knowledge is generally believed to bring about more answers to fundamental questions of our bodies, it seems it also poses more questions than the answers it provides. With advancement of biomedical knowledge and technologies, we have gained more control over both the beginning and end of life, but this has also challenged our perception of life and personhood.

In regards to the beginning of life, knowledge about the process of pregnancy led to various methods of birth control, which allowed many women to take control over reproduction (Ross and Salinger 2017; May 2010). Furthermore, a number of treatments were introduced for men and women who face reproductive challenges (Harwood 2007; Spar 2006). Biomedical technology also enabled the birth of a human without male and female intercourse or a legally recognized mother carrying the fetus to term; egg and sperm donation (Almeling 2007; 2011) and surrogacy

(Markens 2007; Teman 2010; Twine 2011) are gaining recognition as legitimate means for reproduction in some countries. This is not to suggest, however, that there is a consensus on the notion of genesis of life, or accepted means of reproductive medicine.

While increasing awareness of reproductive rights allowed more people (particularly women) to take control over their reproductive decisions, including termination of unwanted pregnancy, expanded recognitions of “the fetal citizen” appeared as a counter narrative. Such notion was legally institutionalized in countries including Ireland, where the government constitutionalized rights to life for the fetus in 1983, granting equal rights to life for the fetus and the pregnant woman. Other countries, including Hungary, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Madagascar, Paraguay, and the Philippines followed, by including “fetal rights” in their constitutions (de Londras 2015:243). In anti-abortion narratives, the uterus came to be treated as if it were a public arena and the fetuses are regarded not just as persons, but right-bearing citizens (McCulloch 2012). In Poland, for example, abortion was declared unconstitutional, treating the fetus as the “purest citizen,” whose rights would weigh more than those of the women (Holc 2004). This resonates with anti-abortion rhetoric in the United States. Although the United States does not constitutionally grant personhood to the fetus, those who are against abortion often base their argument on the notion of fetal personhood. Claims for fetal rights establishes fetus’ “independent relationship with the state that bypasses the pregnant woman” (Roth 2000:3).

In contemporary Japanese society, abortion debates do not take central roles in public discourse as they do in other parts of the world, but issues surrounding reproduction are far from uncontroversial. There are debates on reproductive technologies, and the consequences of the

readily accessible information produced from them. In recent years, an increasing number of people take the noninvasive prenatal genetic testing (NIPT), which allowed medical professionals to detect the chance of genetic abnormalities with mere blood test. According to the report by the NIPT Consortium, 46,645 women took NIPT between April 2013 and March 2017, of which 803 people received the positive result. 675 women took further examination for confirmation, and among 605 women who received positive results, 567 (94%) chose abortion (Asahi Newspaper, September 16, 2017). Critics argue that medical professionals have women take such an exam without fully preparing them to face the results. A study suggests that women who underwent NIPT had higher score for depression and anxiety compared to those who did not (Suzumori et al. 2014). Genetic counseling is available for those who elect such exam, but this is about briefing of medical information, and not about ameliorating mental and psychological stress pregnant women experience in relation to the testing and their results (Wada 2014). Others are concerned that such screening functions as a form of eugenics. The Network for Neuromuscular Disorder (Shinkei Kinshikkan Nettowāku) publicly denounced the practice of such testing, along with the use of preimplantation genetic screening (PGS), in the process in vitro fertilization.

In the field of infertility treatment, ones that include the third person's involvement are particularly controversial. Infertility treatment using medical students' sperm donation began in Japan as early as 1948, and children born with such procedures started to question the legitimacy of such process, arguing for children's rights to know the donor and their genetic heritage (Tsuge 2003). Gestational surrogacy is another contested practice (Semba 2008). There is no legal guideline or regulation on this, while the Japan Society of Obstetrics and Gynecology has professional guideline of not allowing the use of such reproductive assistance (Position

on the Surrogate Conception, Japan Society of Obstetrics and Gynecology, 2003). There have been a few reported cases of surrogacy in Japan, but with relative lack of availability and acceptance at the societal level, most of those who seek such services in Japan go overseas (Hibino 2016). Especially the case that involved celebrities received tremendous media attention in the early 2000s and sparked debates over ethical concerns as well as the definition of legal parents and the meaning of the family.

Contentious issues surrounding bodies have been debated primarily in the field of bioethics, playing a significant role in policy debates. While poststructuralists are typically not considered as major contributors in the field of bioethics, they provide powerful tools to deconstruct the fundamental assumptions and regulatory mechanisms behind various forms of classification. They also offer potential directions in which we can theorize matters that are so fundamental to our lives.

Based primarily upon the ideas presented by the leading feminist philosopher on the body, Elizabeth Grosz, this paper examines the possibilities that allow us to expand our conceptualization of the bodies in transformation, exploring how to account for perpetual change of the body. The phrase “bodies in transformation” can be considered redundant, as technically speaking, every body is in transformation. Yet, some types of bodily transformations have more political stakes than others, and I will highlight the bodies whose change has tremendous amount of political and moral stakes. This paper focuses on the bodies around reproduction: the pregnant body, the male body, and the fetal body.

I will begin the discussion with the dominant approach taken in scholarly work to studying the body. In particular, I will engage with the conceptualization of the body based on Cartesian dualism, and discuss its critiques and alternative perspectives. Following that, the paper will focus on the questions of the bodies surrounding reproduction. Engaging

with and problematizing Cartesian dualism, I will analyze the ways in which gendered bodies and the fetus appear in discourses surrounding reproduction. I will further explore possible ways in which production can be theorized beyond the assumption rooted in Cartesian dualism.

Cartesian dualism and scientific production of knowledges about the body

In the theorization of the body, Descartes' distinction between soul and nature, and the parallel contrast of mind (thinking substance) and body (extended substance) have played an influential role. These categories were considered mutually exclusive and the mind/soul was detached from the body/nature (Grosz 1994:6). Accordingly, the body has been squarely positioned in the realm of science as a knowable object, and it has been largely neglected as a subject of analysis in humanity and social sciences for a number of years. This exclusive reliance on science in questions around bodies resulted in the hegemonic belief that the most "accurate" answer to the conundrum of bioethics can be found in science, in which knowledge is frequently treated as objective and disinterested.

Science does not operate outside the social, however (Bijker et al. 1987). As Grosz states, "The sciences themselves are not immune to – indeed, they depend for the very mode of their formulations and operations on – everyday assumptions and beliefs of scientists and others regarding knowledge, power, desire and bodies" (1994:x). Similarly, the philosopher Brian Massumi writes, "From the very beginning, science operates in investigative contexts that are highly culturally, socially, and economically predetermined" (2002:236).

Grosz and Massumi both argue that nature (bodily movement and sensation) and culture (products of the mind; knowledge) cannot be theorized separately. Massumi insists on the continuity of culture and

nature, and points out that in order for researchers to claim their finding to be scientific, they have to artificially impose cutoff points between nature and culture (2002:237) so that they can argue that their research has nothing to do with the realm of culture.

The questioning of science-centrism and destabilizing of the nature-culture binary also entails a problematization of other interrelated binaries, including the body and the mind. In this line of thinking, the body is no longer a mere container of the mind; we cannot consider the mind and body, or the physiological and the psychological, as separate or in causal relations (Merleau-Ponty 1962). Perception requires both the body and the mind, and experience and perception can never be detached from their relation within space. Perception and thinking can be accomplished only through the body. In short, the mind is always embodied and embedded.

Foucault introduced another critical view in our understanding of the body; one of his central contributions in the scholarship of the body is his attention to the working of power. Introducing the concept of biopower, Foucault demonstrated that our bodies are not free-floating material containers of our mind that are independent from the environment. He demonstrated the ways in which our bodily behaviors are constantly monitored, regulated, and managed in our everyday lives (Foucault:1978). One thing Foucault did not discuss in his discussion of the body, however, was gender dynamics. The hierarchical conception of body/mind is aligned with different types of hierarchy based on social categories of differences, including gender. While male-embodied-persons are signified with their consciousness and culture, female-embodied-persons are reduced to their “unique” physical characteristics and function around reproduction.

Even within feminist scholarship, critical engagement with the body did not happen until the 1990s. This was in large part due to response to “the pervasively misogynistic treatment of women’s bodies, and to various

patriarchal attempts to reduce women to their bodies when these bodies have been conceived in the most narrowly functionalist and reductionist terms” (Grosz 1991:1). When it comes to the body, many took the assumption of Cartesian dualism without challenging it. Even though the very struggle of women comes from their bodily features that culturally and socially define them as female, there has been a tendency even among feminists to assume the Cartesian dualism and the subordination of the body to the mind. As Grosz points out, in feminist literature, “the body is typically regarded as passive and reproductive but largely unproductive, an object over which struggles between its ‘inhabitant’ and others/exploiters may be possible” (1994:9). In particular, egalitarian feminists saw bodies as something that limits women to gain equality; for them, bodies are something they need to erase and overcome. Many of them also took it for granted the goodness of the scientific advancement, seeing it as a something that “frees” women from reproductive functions. The assumption that was the foundation of patriarchy was so pervasive that the challenging of such ideas did not happen until relatively recently.

Ontology of reproduction?

It is the edge of virtual, where it leaks into actual, that counts. For that seeping edge is where potential, actually, is found (Massumi 2002:43).

Reproduction is one of the areas that could benefit from further theorization of the body. Pregnancy and the genesis of life is a complex process, which involves the destabilization of what is perceived as individuals’ bodily boundaries. Sexual intercourse involves mixing of fluids, which already threatens the images of insular self (Davis 1983; Zerubavel 1991:38). Pregnancy challenges the modern notion of subject that is atomistic, autonomous, self-contained, insular, and coherent. In discourses

around reproduction, however, there is a tendency to focus solely on the fetus or the body of pregnant women. While, for example, bioethicists tend to focus on the moral status of the embryo and fetus, feminists tend to focus on women's experience in pregnancy. Analytically speaking, it is possible to consider a pregnant woman's body and her fetus separately, and perhaps, such approach can be more effective than otherwise for political purposes. The modern notion of autonomous personhood allows such imagination possible. In the attempt of making complex processes intelligible, manageable and controllable, we split continuous process into various discrete "stages" and contain it in the specific location, the womb, which is being abstracted and discursively displaced from women's lived body.

However, by definition, reproduction involves both the body that reproduces and the body that is reproduced. Empirically, the emergence of new life still requires a maternal body (after all, the fantasy of ectogenesis has not been materialized, and even if it will be, it is hard to imagine that such machines would completely replace female reproductive "functions" in the near future). Another thing we must remember is that reproduction requires both an egg and a sperm, even though the source of a sperm, a man, is largely invisible in discourses surrounding reproduction.

As Massumi argues, we cannot separate time and space in conceptualizing our bodies and bodily transformations. This is particularly so in the processes of reproduction. We cannot erase temporality, select a convenient moment for a political agenda, and locate the beginning of life in one specific bodily location. What we need is a way to conceptualize reproduction beyond such a static model. To do this, we need to overcome our desire to locate the beginning and the end of our bodies – both spatially (where it begins and where it ends) and temporally (when it begins and when it ends). As Massumi insists, "Geometrically, a body is a "space-filling

fractal” of a “fourth” dimensionality” (2002:202). He elaborates:

The mouth connects through the stomach and intestines to fold back out the anus. This is one leaky “box.” It’s closer to a Klein bottle: a two dimensional topological figure... We do not live in Euclidean Space. We live *between* dimensions (2002:203).

The bodily dynamics around reproduction may be unthinkable within the framework of the modern notion of personhood. Potentiality invokes anxiety because it is uncontrollable and open-ended, and it goes against our desire to have everything controllable, predictable, and calculable. This may be considered to be threatening because it destabilizes the notion of corporeal limit and reveals the contradiction of the modern subjectivity.

Gendered bodies

The idea of the modern subject with a clear corporeal limit was a powerful notion, an illusion and taken-for-granted privilege available only for the few, at expense of others who were not allowed such imaginary. As Judith Butler states, “The ‘coherence’ and ‘continuity’ of ‘the person’ are not logical or analytic features of personhood, but rather, socially instituted and maintained norms of intelligibility” (1990:23). How exactly does this play out in the politics of reproduction?

Discourse surrounding reproduction entails multiple layers of paradox. In order to formulate a way to conceptualize reproduction based on the notion of bodies that are constantly in a state of transformation, we need to first understand the ways in which gendered bodies have been imagined. Here I will first touch on Grosz discussion of the female bodies, and move on to problematize one of the paradoxes I feel as critical; the invisibility and centrality of men’s corporeality in discourses around reproduction. That is, while seminal fluid is seen as an active producer of the fetus, male

subject (male bodies and their behaviors) escapes from examination, when it comes to the discussion of reproduction.

Female bodies

Grosz observes that women's corporeality is characterized with the flow, seepage, and liquidity, whose uncontrollable nature poses threats to the order. According to Grosz, the girls' transition to adulthood begins when they began menstruating and developing breasts, which signifies motherhood and reproductive capacities, rather than sexual maturity. It is "the beginning of an out-of-control status that she was led to believe ends with childhood" (Grosz 1994:205). If women's corporeality is inscribed with its out-of-control status and it begins with menstruation and development of breasts, it would be safe to assume it reaches its peak at pregnancy, during which the body is filled with fluid, viscous, and half-formed matter that represent uncertainty and ambiguity, and invokes fear and disgust.

Empirical research on gender and embodiment support her argument. The boundaries of the pregnant body are constantly in flux, as Draper (2003:749) described it as being "unbounded," and a number of studies have revealed that that women experienced pregnancy and childbirth as the period in which they lose control over their bodies (Carter 2010; Warren and Brews 2004). In particular, pregnant women often feel that they cannot keep the bodily boundaries intact with potential leakage in various forms, including increasing amount of sweat, vomit from morning sickness, colostrum from breasts, and breaking of water (Longhurst 2000:15). Indeed, taboos surrounding the body tended to be around its openings "where fluid enters and exit" (Zerubavel 1991:38), and public display of such incident is particularly feared.

Pregnancy and childbirths are also the time when many women experience changing sense of self and embodiment. As Marion Iris Young

(1990:46) describes,

She [a pregnant woman] experiences her body as herself and not herself. Its inner movements belong to another being, yet they are not other, because her body boundaries shift and because her bodily self-location is focused on her trunk in addition to her head.

Longhurst echoes, noting, “Pregnant women undergo a bodily process that transgresses the boundary between inside and outside, self and other, one and two, subject and object” (2000:55).

Coming to terms with this “one but not one” status of pregnancy can be challenging in society where it is assumed that one mind resides in one body. Lupton and Shmied (2013) suggested that the intense corporeality of the infant coming out of the body allow those who had vaginal birth without anesthesia to grapple with and resolve such embodiment, whereas those who gave birth with a Caesarean section tend to experience the sense of alienation, struggling to fully grasp the reality of the infant being born.

While women feel that they lose control over their bodies during pregnancy, they also experience heightened sense of responsibility to exert control over their bodies. They receive (unwanted) comments, advice, and even touch by others, reinforcing the notion that their bodies are considered semi-public property (Longhurst 2005). In Japan, medical discourse stresses the significance of pregnant women’s physical health and behavior as primary contributor (rather than genetic and other biological factors), affecting the health of the fetus (Tsipy 2007). Women feel responsible to monitor and manage their body so that they could carry their pregnancy to term successfully, protecting the preborn person inside them (Lupton 2012; Wetterberg 2004). Ettorre refers to such self-sacrificing acts during pregnancy as “reproductive asceticism” (2009:246). This notion begins even

before the pregnancy, as Karpin (2010) critically explained with the notion that women feel pressure to protect “pre-conceived embryo.”

The fetus’s physical separation from its maternal body at delivery does not necessarily suggest the end of the blurred boundaries between the mother and her child. Acts of care, most notably, breastfeeding gives the sense of “interembodiment” for mothers (Lupton 2013). While breastfeeding has been celebrated as the symbol of intimacy and connection between the mother and her infant and some women do experience such connection in positive manners, others resented it as unwanted constant demand of feeding, which was experienced with the “feeling of encroachment of body/self” (Shmied and Lupton 2001:245). Shmied and Lupton (2001:245) continued that

In their accounts of devourment, intrusion and alienation, the demands of their bodies made by their babies and the uncertain or blurred boundaries between a mother and her breastfeeding baby were experienced as intolerable. These women sought to regain control over their lives, over their bodies, to regain their sense of autonomous self. For many women, there was comfort in a return to a dualist understanding of mind and body, self and Other.

The notion that the pregnant body being out-of-control can also be observed from the fact that being fit during the postpartum period is typically described as “getting the body back” (Dworkin and Wachi 2004; Earle 2003; Upton and Hans 2003).

Male Bodies

In contrast to female bodies and their out-of-control status, the male body is seen as autonomous, atomistic, and under control. In terms of reproduction, Grosz wrote that “seminal fluid is understood primarily as

what it makes, what it achieves, a causal agent and thus a thing, a solid” (1994:199). Such view can be found as early as the time of Aristotle, who considered maternal body as passive formless matter to which more concrete specific contour, the sperm, enters (Aydemir 2007).

Descartes famously theorized the notion of the mind-body dualism, but even before that, there was widely accepted notion in Europe that consciousness was part of male reproductive role. Anatomical drawings of genital system of the male body by Leonardo Da Vinci represent the widely accepted notion on reproduction in his time (Noble et al. 2014). His drawing from sometime between 1480 and 1492 showed two ducts in the penis, one of which was connected with the testes, while another being connected to the spinal cord. Noble et al. (2014:3) explained that it was based on “the idea that there was direct connection from the nervous system, from the brain through the spinal cord, to the penis, perhaps so that an essential component of the male seed, presumably originating in the brain, could be transmitted during intercourse.”

In the history of Western science, the central role of the male reproductive materials did not change until relatively recently. That is, the notion of preformation (i.e., the semen contained preformed human, or *homunculus*) was dominant until the eighteenth century, when its influence was replaced with the theory of epigenesis, which explained the beginning of life with cell differentiation and the formation of organs (Pinto-Correia 1997).

Even with such drastic change in scientific understanding of reproduction, however, it appears that not much has changed in terms of people’s popular imagination since the time of Aristotle. Emily Martin’s (1991) study of medical texts revealed the ways in which eggs and sperms were anthropomorphized, reflecting upon gendered norms and stereotypes in the broader society. Sperm was characterized with heroic activity, while

eggs were said to be passive.

The assumptions of a man as the active producer, as well as the notion of seminal fluid as the core of the emerging individual remain pervasive. Paradoxically, however, in the discussion of reproduction, male bodies are almost always absent. This dynamic can be observed even in the commodification of reproductive materials. In her study of egg agencies and sperm banks in the US, Rene Almeling (2007; 2011) demonstrated that eggs and sperms have been commodified differently with differing expectations imposed to male and female donors. While the process of egg donation involves the element of emotional labor, and expects altruism and “maternal characteristics” from donors, basic requirements for sperm donors are mostly based on the “quality” of the sperm.

The question of male bodies remains largely unanswered. Even in the general discussion of the body, specificity of male bodies is rarely interrogated. Grosz states:

Perhaps the great mystery, the great unknown, of the body comes not from the peculiarities and enigmas of female sexuality, from the cyclically regulated flows that emanate from women’s bodies, but from the unspoken and generally unrepresented particularities of the male body... [T]he specificities of the masculine have always been hidden under the generality of the universal, the human... Thus what remains unanalyzed, what men can have no distance on, is the mystery, the enigma, the unspoken of the male body (1994:198).

The absence of men from discussions of reproduction may seem strange at first glance, given the centrality of seminal fluid in the masculine imagination of reproduction. However, with the idea of the body as an autonomous and insular entity, even sexual intercourse cannot be adequately theorized. Thus, it is necessary that the battle of reproduction

is contained and fought in a pregnant women's body. Accordingly, responsibility around reproduction, including contraception, is applied almost exclusively to women's behaviors.

The invisibility of privilege is evident here. Ray Chow argued that even when stories were narrated by the female protagonists, the narrative center could be the white man whose power was invisible and unchallenged (2002:164). A similar dynamic can be observed here. Even though seminal fluid is said to represent the creation of new life, reproduction is discursively positioned in the realm of the feminine. Reproduction is discussed as women's issues, and men are detached from the discourse, and at times treated as if they are irrelevant for reproduction. This does not mean that they are excluded from the narrative, however. In fact, while they are invisible in the discourse, it still works to their advantage, to keep their bodies clean and insular, and allow the masculine subject to remain as the narrative center. Difference is marked only on the female bodies, and specificity of the male bodies and male privilege remain invisible. While women's sexuality, behaviors during pregnancy, and childrearing practices are publicly interrogated, men's sexuality remains in the private sphere which is protected from the state intervention, and their participation in childrearing process is not considered as critical as that of women.

Highlighting that reproduction entails both male and female bodies, and the destabilization of bodily boundaries, I have shown the contradiction of the modern notion of subjectivity and argued that we need a theory of bodies and reproduction that includes male bodies. It is ironic that reproductive activities had to be excluded in the theories of the body and the modern subject, even though the continuation of species was possible only through reproduction.

The following sections will discuss the relationship between the pregnant woman and her fetus, but this time, I will focus on the working

of fetocentric rhetoric and displacement of women in the discourse around reproduction, by introducing a few empirical cases. I will then revisit Cartesian dualism and examine one of the notions relevant to the discussion of reproduction, namely, the binary of productivity and (unproductive) reproduction. I will problematize the narrow and gendered notion of productivity that is signified with the mind and the culture.

The contested status of the fetus

As I have discussed, there is the tendency of focusing either on the fetus or the woman. While femininity is typically defined with reproductive functions, when it comes to debates around reproduction or medicalized births as well as treatments, what occupies the center stage is frequently the fetus. Bioethical discussions frequently highlight the contested moral status of the fetus and embryo. Feminists have documented the ways in which the existence of the woman as a person becomes invisible in medicalized hospital births or in the use of various forms of reproductive technologies. In such situations, women's bodies are seen as a vessel or a container.

If a pregnant woman is a vessel, what it contains is fluid and viscous, and the core of the politics is how to define such highly ambiguous contents of the vessel. Needless to say, the definition of such an ambiguous being varies significantly cross-culturally and cross-historically. Today, rapidly advancing technology has made prenatal testing and antenatal screening widely available for many pregnant women, and images produced with these technologies have played significant role in shaping people's perception of genesis of life. Most notably, the invention and improvement of sonography made the image of the fetus readily accessible, and it has encouraged the creation of the notion of the fetus as an individual (Petchesky 1987). These technologies have challenged ideas about personhood, the moral status of

the embryo and fetus, and women's status as well as the notion of family (Sleeboom-Faulkner 2007:203).

The result was the fetus "becoming a public figure with a life separate from the pregnant woman" (Isaacson 1996:460). While the fetus requires the pregnant woman's body for its growth, her existence becomes invisible in the discourse of fetal personhood. Tracing the changes of language in the medical textbooks, Isaacson (1996) demonstrated that the concept of the *fetus-infant* emerged and gained acceptance as a scientific category. The creation of the category, *fetus-infant* was enabled by the erosion of the boundaries between infant and fetus, and the extension of infancy to fetus-hood. In this framework, the fetus was conceptualized as a specific type of infant. What happened was the reorganization of classificatory scheme.

Fetocentric perspectives not only gives "rights" to the fetus, but also separates them from mother's rights, and sees their relation as antagonistic (Hardacre 1997:4). Women's bodies can be seen as even obstacle or danger in some case. For example, Casper (1997; 1998a; 1998b) documents the ways in which the patient of the treatment shift from a pregnant woman to the fetus in fetal surgery, in which physicians operate on the fetus while it is connected to a pregnant woman's body. Casper points out how doctors see women's bodies as a barrier they have to break through in order to reach their patient. While the procedure is highly invasive to a woman's body, her altruism and the sense of sacrifice is expected and taken for granted in saving her "child."

Even when pregnant women do not experience a medical procedure, such as fetal surgery, she is constantly reminded that what she is carrying is an innocent and fragile person; women's behaviors are monitored and placed under close surveillance. In the United States, a number of women who used illicit drugs while being pregnant have been prosecuted and

arrested for the reason of committing a form of child abuse and neglect (Humphrie 1999). The surveillance of pregnant women is of significant societal interest, and at times, clinical symptoms are created to enable such surveillance. The establishment of fetal alcoholic syndrome (FAS) is a case in point. Armstrong (1998; 2003) documents the process in which moral entrepreneurs constructed the clinical and moral diagnosis, revealing the questionable aspects of what is presented as scientific findings about FAS such as: the use of arbitrarily selected small number of cases as evidence; conflation of “alcoholism” and “alcohol use”; the use of religious texts as “historical evidence”; erasing of the possibilities that there are other factors affecting mental retardation and birth defect; use of authority as medical doctors; and establishment of the causal relation without scientifically rigorous research. What is evident in the rhetoric shown above is the appearance of fetal personhood and simultaneous disappearance of women’s personhood.

Revisiting Cartesian dualism

Frequently, critics of fetocentrism argue that in such settings women are treated as the container of the fetus; women are objectified and their personhood is stripped away. However, if we revisit the central thesis of Cartesian dualism and hierarchical alignment of mind and body, and male and female, it becomes clear that the container status of a pregnant woman does not start with her pregnancy. If we follow the logic of Cartesian dualism, the body is a container to begin with for both men and women, and it would be misleading to argue that women’s body ceases to become a mere container at the time of pregnancy and childbirth. The gender difference, then, is that while the mind is considered as the property of male social actors; women do not have access to it. Thus, while male body contains the mind, female body is empty if she is not pregnant. It

is not that the humanity of the woman is erased while her fetus gaining personhood. Rather, it does not exist to begin with.

In Cartesian dualism, the mind is the only thing that produces. The mind is the only thing that signifies humanity. However, if we take reproduction seriously, we have to face the fact that bodies do produce. The reproduction is the process of bodies producing the very (potentiality of) a human. If reproduction is not the bodily production, what is it? While most of what bodies shed is considered abject (Kristeva 1982) and treated as dirt, an infant, as well as the breast milk that nurtures the infant, occupy their proper place, and they probably are some of the only non-abject “products” human can potentially shed from our body. Rather than treating reproduction as an exception, perhaps, we can begin the theory of the body from reproduction.

Here, Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of the body becomes essential. As Grosz argues, in their view, “the body, bodies, flows in bodies rather than ‘subjects,’ psychic beings, are what produce” (1994:181). This is a perspective which allows us to decenter the subject and deconstruct the subject-object binary aligned with that of the mind and the body. Everything we produce is produced by and through our bodies. With the focus on flows in bodies, it also enables the conceptualization of bodies as processes.

If the ontology of reproduction can be theorized, it is the very process of the constant transformation and destabilization of bodily boundaries. Massumi states, “*A thing is when it isn’t doing*” (2002:6; emphasis in original). A thing is a matter in a static state. In order to capture a dynamic entity or process as a thing, we freeze both time and space. If ontology is about “what is” of a thing, we may not be able to capture the dynamics of human bodies using the idea of ontology, especially when the bodies are under tremendous transformation. Reproduction is not a thing. It is the very process of becoming.

Discussion and conclusion

Bringing bodies to the center of analysis, I have explored how Grosz's theory would help us better approach questions about bodies around reproduction. I began this paper by laying out the idea of Cartesian dualism and its critiques. In the following section, I moved on to the questions of reproduction. I have pointed out the tendency of focusing on either the fetus or women, and disappearance of men in the discussions around reproduction.

I argued for the need of theories that allow us to engage with multiple bodies involved in reproduction, namely, men, women, and the potentiality of new life. I have relied upon Grosz's observation of female corporeality that is inscribed as the mode of seepage, and extended the idea to the case of reproduction. I have also made an attempt to decipher the paradox around male bodies in reproduction; the active and agentic characteristics given to the images of sperms, and disappearance of men in the discourse of reproduction.

I then shifted my focus on the contested status of the fetus, by introducing fetocentric perspectives observed in several empirical studies. Finally, I returned to the Cartesian dualism, which I have begun my paper with. I discussed the ways in which Cartesian dualism have enabled, informed and limited our imaginary about reproductive bodies, and explored how we can extend our perspective beyond that.

To engage with bodies around reproduction, while challenging the powerful notion of Cartesian dualism, I have considered men, women, and the fetus as the minimum and necessary central actors. I have also suggested that starting a theory from reproduction, rather than adopting the assumptions of Cartesian dualism and treating reproduction as an exceptional phenomenon, may open up new possibilities in reconfiguring

the conceptualization of the body. However, I feel the bridging of the notions of production and reproduction may entail problematics that could be a source of a serious epistemic violence. Below, I address some of potential issues.

First, theorizing body from reproduction privileges bodies that are capable of reproduction and excludes or marginalizes bodies that do not reproduce. An increasing number of women are forgoing motherhood, and the patterns of life course and family formation have been diversified. Yet individuals with no children face stigma (Park 2002; Rich et al. 2001), and there is a need to critically engage with the possibility that such approach might further stigmatize childfree/childless adults, or it might be used to endorse normative notions of the family.

A related issue has to do with the danger of essentialism. Historically, feminist social scientists have strategically moved away from the body and emphasized the social to avoid essentialism. While the expanding scholarship on bodies is a welcome change, feminist theory of bodies must not be mere modifications of the old notion of essentialism. Critical reflexivity would be required in theorization of bodies around reproduction.

Second, there is a need to carefully consider what it means to theorize the idea of bodies as what it produce, and the continuity of production and reproduction. In the context of the global economy, where commodification of the body generates a tremendous amount of profit for some, at the expense of exploitation of other bodies (Deonandan et al. 2012; Whittaker and Speier 2010), we need to be careful with how we theorize such sensitive issues. In the field of reproductive practices, egg and sperm “donation,” as well as surrogacy are gaining popularity. Together with various reproductive technologies, the meaning of reproduction itself has been changing rapidly, and it appears reproduction has already become “productive,” lucrative enterprise in global capitalism.

Finally, in this paper, I could not leave much room for the discussions of bodily difference beyond gender. I have not considered the bodies and other categories of social differences including race, class, and more broadly, culture. In her book, too, while Grosz states “The body must be regarded as a site of social, political, cultural, and geographical inscriptions, production, or constitution” (1994:23), and repeatedly argues for the idea of the body as a cultural product, she did not make a strong case of how this was so. An elucidation of the workings of culture in the body may be one way in which the field of the body studies can be further enriched.

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