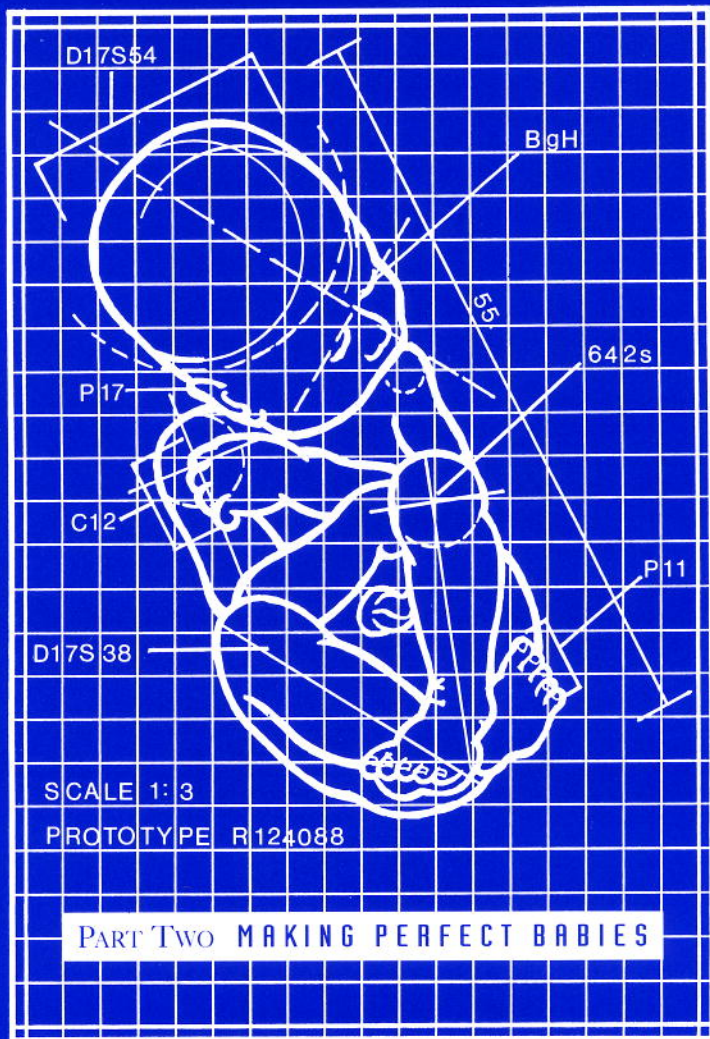


MAKING PERFECT BABIES

# ON THE EIGHTH DAY

PERFECTING MOTHER NATURE



VHS

113C  
9192 046



National  
Film Board  
of Canada

Office  
national du film  
du Canada

# MAKING PERFECT BABIES

From cloning cows, to patenting human genes, the rapid growth of genetic knowledge and its application through biotechnology is changing every aspect of our lives. The scientists who create the technology and the biotech companies that exploit its use are in the process of acquiring previously unimagined power to reshape nature, and with it, human society. They argue that we cannot stop the process, that the quest for scientific knowledge cannot be curtailed. They claim that they can control the forces they are about to unleash.

But can human society control a technology whose impact may outstrip even that of the nuclear bomb?

*Making Perfect Babies* offers a critical look at genetic technology and its potential application in the area of human reproduction. Through an examination of techniques like Preimplantation Diagnosis — genetic diagnosis of a human embryo before pregnancy begins — the film raises important questions about the social and economic forces that drive their development and use. It suggests that if we begin to genetically select which children will and will not be born, we will alter not only how we reproduce but also how we think and, ultimately, who we are.

The idea of selecting out “genetic undesirables” has a long and tragic history. By tracing that history, *Making Perfect Babies* reveals the links between the old-style, pseudo-science of selective breeding called Eugenics, and the new genetic technology. By examining the Eugenic values that led to the implementation of forced sterilization laws in North America and Nazi Germany’s Racial Hygiene Program, the film questions the values influencing current developments in genetic technology.

*Making Perfect Babies* suggests that in our desire to produce “perfect” human beings, we may be heading toward a future where children are viewed as commodities and women as instruments of “quality control.” At the moment, our capacity to selectively breed human beings is limited. But by examining the application of genetic technology in its place of origin — the barnyard — the film demonstrates that the day of genetically engineered human beings may be fast approaching.

In a world of perfect human beings, social attitudes toward the disabled could become much worse. In *Making Perfect Babies*,

Director and Researcher  
**Gwynne Basen**

Editor  
**Dominique Scotte**

Director of Photography  
**Marielle Nitolsawska**

Narration Writer  
**Erna Buffie**

Series Collaborator  
**Varda Burstyn**

Film Graphics  
**Joan Churchill**  
**Robin Bain**

Sound Editor  
**Jacqueline Newell**

Narrator  
**Kathleen Fee**

Rerecording  
**Shelley Craig**

Music  
**Air Tango**

Music Editor  
**Chris Crilly**

Producer for Cinéfort  
**Mary Armstrong**

Producer for Studio D  
**Nicole Hubert**

Executive Producer  
**Mary Armstrong**

Executive Producers for  
NFB  
**Ginny Stikeman**  
**Rina Fraticelli**

A Cinéfort Inc. production in  
co-production with Studio D  
of the National Film Board  
of Canada and the  
Canadian Broadcasting  
Corporation with the  
financial participation of  
Telefilm Canada.

Distributed by  
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Canada

Color  
50 minutes 49 seconds

Order numbers:  
C 0192 046 (film)  
C 9192 046 (video)

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Montreal, Quebec H3C 3H5

people with disabilities talk about how the new genetic technology may affect their lives and why they have joined forces with women's groups, environmentalists and others to try and alert the public about the potential danger.

The question is, will their message be heard?

By examining the values behind genetic technology, *Making Perfect Babies* raises serious questions about the way society views women, children and the disabled. It asks viewers to move beyond their own social preconceptions to examine the implications of a technology that could change the world as we know it. It asks audiences if they are prepared to allow science and industry to control the future evolution of the human race.

### ■ SUGGESTED AUDIENCE

Of particular interest to women's groups and organizations, this film would augment courses at the post-secondary level in Medicine, Nursing, Medical Ethics, Science, Philosophy and Women's Studies. It can also be used by community groups and medical professionals as an educational and organizational tool.

### ■ THEMES FOR DISCUSSION

The World Health Organization has called for a moratorium on the expansion of IVF (in vitro fertilization) because of its low success rate and limited studies on its long-term effects. What impact would a moratorium have on developments in genetic technology, such as Preimplantation Diagnosis?

As genetic technology becomes more simplified, women may be encouraged to submit to more tests and will face more decisions about the kind of children they choose to bear. What will this mean for them? For society?

Some people would argue that, for centuries, Western society has viewed women and children as commodities. What do you think?

The Science Council of Canada indicates that the biotech industry will approach a net worth of approximately \$180 billion by the end of the '90s. At the moment, the industry faces few government regulations that limit or direct technological research and application. How can we as a society take a more active role in the direction of scientific and technological research?

The pursuit of knowledge for its own sake or the desire to control and dominate — how are these goals reflected in the science we practice and the technology we use?

From Dr. Frankenstein's monster to the robots in *Blade Runner*, the fantasy of "man-made man" has always made us fearful and uneasy. What is at the base of that fear and unease?

Survival of the fittest has been used to describe the course of evolution in the natural world and human society. How do assumptions about survival of the fittest operate in the development of genetic technology?

## ■ RELATED NFB FILMS AND VIDEOS

*Making Babies Part One* in the series, *On the Eighth Day: Perfecting Mother Nature*, focuses on developments in reproductive technology, its medical application and ethical implications. C 9192 045

*Discussions in Bioethics* A compilation of eight short dramas designed to promote discussion of issues related to medical bioethics. C 0185 131

*People and Science: Waiting for the Flies to Die* A short drama about ethical issues related to research in biotechnology, produced as part of the Canadian Science Video Series. C 0187 114

*Fragile Harvest* A film that looks at the changing pattern of seed development and the impact of genetic selection and engineering on the world's seed pool. C 0186 552

*No Longer Silent* A film focussing on the struggle against injustice towards women in India, including the traditional preference for male children. C 0186 510

*Children of Desired Sex* A documentary which examines why couples in India do not wish to bring a daughter into this world. C 0189 163

## ■ SUGGESTED READING

Menzies, Heather. *Fast Forward and Out of Control*. Toronto: MacMillan of Canada, 1989.

Hubbard, Ruth. *The Politics of Women's Biology*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990.

Vacquin, Monette. *Frankenstein ou les délires de la raison*. Paris: Éditions Francois Bourin.

*Issues in Reproductive and Genetic Engineering: A Journal of International Feminist Analysis*. New York: Pergamon Press.

## ■ HUMAN RESOURCES

The National Action Committee on the Status of Women,  
Toronto, Canada.

The Council for Responsible Genetics, Boston, USA.

FINRRAGE, Feminist International Network of Resistance to  
Reproductive and Genetic Engineering. Cathy High, 138  
Baltic Street, #4C, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11201 USA.

*Now that we have arrived at a level of scientific  
and technological development that we can  
influence the course of our evolution, it is up to us to  
take on this incredible responsibility.*

**Dr. Robert Edwards**

Father of IVF

*The notion that life is a commodity over which we  
must exercise control is an ever-recurring theme in  
patriarchal history.*

**Gena Corea**, author of

The Mother Machine

*It is my judgement in these things that when you see  
something that is technically sweet, you go ahead  
and do it, and you argue about what to do about it  
only after you have had your technological success.  
This is the way it was with the atomic bomb.*

**J. Robert Oppenheimer**

Father of the Atomic Bomb

*We seek a different kind of science and technology  
that respects the dignity of womanhood and of all  
life on earth. We call upon women and men to  
break the fatal link between mechanistic science  
and vested industrial interests and to take part with  
us in the development of a new unity of knowledge  
and life.*

Founding Statement of the  
**FINRRAGE** Women's Emergency  
Conference on the New Reproductive  
Technologies

# MAKING PERFECT BABIES

The power to control human evolution is now within our grasp, thanks to developments in reproductive and genetic technology. But who will wield that power? Will science and industry decide who should and should not be born? Will women have the right to say no to technology?

**A FILM ABOUT  
THE NEW  
REPRODUCTIVE  
AND GENETIC  
TECHNOLOGIES.**

The day a baby can be genetically "made to measure" is still far away, but it is rapidly moving from the realm of fantasy to that of probability. Filmed in clinics and research centres where genetic manipulation of human embryos has already begun, *Making Perfect Babies* offers a critical examination of the new genetic technology and its potential applications. Through interviews with people like scientist and feminist, Ruth Hubbard, and disability activist, Marsha Saxton, the film raises important questions about why the

technology is being developed and how it may affect the lives of women and society as a whole. It warns that we may be heading toward a future in which "quality control" is an acceptable part of human procreation.

Part Two in the series *On the Eighth Day: Perfecting Mother Nature*

A Cinéfort Inc. production in co-production with Studio D of the National Film Board of Canada and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

Director: **Gwynne Basen**

Producer for Cinéfort: **Mary Armstrong**

Producer for Studio D: **Nicole Hubert**

50 minutes 49 seconds

Order number: C 9192 046



Closed captioned for the deaf and the hard of hearing. A decoder is required.

STUDIO  
**D**



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