

CREATING A GENETIC MONSTER

By Investigating Journalist Jon Rappoport
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In the Jan./Feb. 2004 issue of Mother Jones, Mark Dowie recounts how Dr. Stuart Newman decided to test the willingness of the US Patent Office...

Newman applied for a patent to create a chimera, a monster.

The application was turned down. Newman pushed his claim to see how far he could go, and the Patent Office remained firm. Newman wanted to raise awareness of what some genetics scientists were willing to do—and how wrong it would be to allow it.

Dowie writes: “Newman's patent application is for an intriguing biotechnological contrivance called a chimera [ki-mir-a]. According to Greek mythology, a chimera was a part-lion, part-goat, part-serpent creature that terrorized Lycia until it was slain by the hero Bellerophon. If biotech continues to run amok, warns Newman, such inventions of legend and allegory could actually be invented.

“A biological chimera is a way to hybridize two or more species that won't cross sexually. The exact results are largely unpredictable except for the certainty that the chimera will contain cells of each species proportionate to the numbers placed in the embryo. A creature made from an equal number of cells from two species could look like one species but contain the genes, organs, and intelligence of the other.

“Newman [sought] to patent 'chimeric embryos and animals containing human cells'...taken to its most extreme but not necessarily impossible end, the technology could be used to manufacture soldiers with armadillo-like shielding, quasi-human astronauts engineered for long-range space travel, and altered primates with enough cognitive ability to ride a bus, follow basic instructions, pick crops in 119 degrees, or descend into a mine shaft without worrying their silly little heads about inalienable human rights and the resulting laws and customs that demand safe working conditions.”

Well, three years earlier, as reported in The Telegraph (Sep.27, 2001, “Boy's DNA implanted in rabbit eggs,” written by Roger Highfield), scientists had begun to walk down that road:

“Scientists in China have inserted a boy's DNA into empty rabbit eggs and grown hybrid embryos, it is reported today. A team at the Sun Yat-Sen University of Medical Sciences, Guangzhou, are trying to overcome a practical limitation...Today's issue of Nature reports [about]...Dr Chen Xigu at Sun Yat-Sen...In some of the 100 or so successful transfers to a rabbit egg stripped of chromosomes, an embryo developed to the morula stage, the compact ball of cells that forms after about three days of development. For stem cells to be isolated, the embryos must be coaxed into developing further. In Britain, the Government plans to ban the creation of hybrids.”

Also in 2001, there was another ambitious experiment:

BBC Online (May 4, 2001): "Scientists have confirmed that the first genetically altered humans have been born and are healthy.

"Up to 30 such children have been born, 15 of them as a result of one experimental programme at a US laboratory...

"Genetic fingerprint tests on two one-year-old children confirm that they contain a small quantity of additional genes not inherited from either parent.

"The additional genes were taken from a healthy donor and used to overcome their mother's infertility problems.

"...The additional genes that the children carry have altered their 'germline', or their collection of genes that they will pass on to their offspring...[Note: This means the new abnormal configuration of genes will spread out into the general population, over time, with unknown effects.]

"Writing in the journal Human Reproduction, the researchers say that this 'is the first case of human germline genetic modification resulting in normal healthy children.'"

The superhighway into a genetically designed future isn't just a science-fiction fantasy. Stones on that highway have already been laid down.

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Jon Rappoport has worked as an investigative reporter for 30 years. Nominated for a Pulitzer Prize early in his career, Jon has published articles on medical fraud, politics, alternative health, and sports in LA Weekly, CBS Healthwatch, Spin, Stern, and other magazines and newspapers in the US and Europe.

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