NOTE TO USERS

The original manuscript received by UMI contains pages with slanted print. Pages were microfilmed as received.

This reproduction is the best copy available

UMI
TROUBLING IMAGES: REFLECTIONS ON PHOTOGRAPHY, PEDAGOGY AND POLITICAL PRACTICE

by

Karyn Elizabeth Sandlos

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts
Department of Sociology and Equity Studies in Education
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto

©Copyright by Karyn Elizabeth Sandlos 1997
The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author’s permission.

L’auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de cette thèse sous la forme de microfiche/film, de reproduction sur papier ou sur format électronique.

L’auteur conserve la propriété du droit d’auteur qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

0-612-29174-X
TROUBLING IMAGES: REFLECTIONS ON PHOTOGRAPHY, PEDAGOGY AND POLITICAL PRACTICE

Karyn Sandlos
OISE/University of Toronto Department of Sociology and Equity Studies
Master of Arts, 1997

This thesis is a study in methodology. Avery Gordon has written, “In order to write within a question concerning exclusions and invisibilities...requires a methodology that is attentive to what can’t be seen, but what is powerfully real; attentive to what appears dead, but is powerfully present; requires attending also to just what the subject of analysis is” (1990:493). Here, the ‘subject of analysis’ is a photograph of a dead woman which takes on multiple theoretical, ethical and political dimensions. I ‘trouble’ with this image in the attempt to lay out a framework for thinking about the relationship between reading practice, political practice - in the context of reproductive politics - and research. I am interested in how divergent readings of images can be understood and theorized within the context of particular political movements which (presumably) require investment in the articulation of a shared political agenda. Images-as-symbols of political struggle often speak to ‘who’ particular movements understand themselves to be. These images-as-symbols might also afford insight into how the ‘subject’ of political struggle is constructed - and might be continually re-(imag)ined - through particular representational strategies and practices of looking.
Because graduate work is such solitary labour, it feels important to acknowledge the contributions of those who have nurtured me and this work, either directly or indirectly, over the past two years. You have, in various ways, broken down that isolation and helped to sustain me in the production of this thesis. I can never thank Betty-Lou and Hank Sandlos enough for their love and solid presence in my life. You have expected nothing and everything from me, and you have supported me fully - even though we see things quite differently. Thanks go to: My sister Lisa for believing in me unconditionally, and for being my friend and gentle safe haven. My brother John for his friendship and wonderful, calm advice in times of struggle and disillusionment. My Grandmothers, Lily and Anna, for showing me how always to want everything. My Uncle David for being who he is.

I thank Sara for many years of ferocious friendship and for the places of understanding we continue to find together. I thank Cheryl, Kate, Michele, Sheila and Kiran for being beside me, especially when that has been a difficult place to be.

I am indebted to Kathleen Rockhill and Kari Dehli for your invaluable contributions to this work; for the attention you have paid to its' (and my own) development, and for the many ways in which you have each made academe feel productively uncomfortable. Many thanks go to Roger Simon for his encouragement and for the
thoughtful conversations we have shared. Thanks to Ann Bradbury and Chris Hiller for being so intensely present in my life for the past two years; and to Wendy Fischer, Doreen Fumia, Catherine Phillips, Margot Francis, and Moon Joyce for making graduate work feel, at times, like a collective struggle.

My gratitude and respect go to the women who participated in the focus group for helping me 'think through,' and for the risks you have each taken in the process.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .................................................................................................................. ii  

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ......................................................................................... iii

Chapter

1. A PLACE TO BEGIN...BE IN... .............................................................................. 1

2. (IN)VISIBLE OPPOSITIONS: LOOKING FOR THE STATE WITHIN PRO-CHOICE POLITICS .............................................. 31

3. REMEMBERING GERRI SANTORO: UNSETTLING THE IMAGE OF ABORTION DEBATES ................................................. 63

4. POTENT SOIL: TALKING WITH PRO-CHOICE ACTIVISTS .............................. 94

5. TRANSITORY VISIONS AND PRODUCTIVE COLLISIONS .............................. 130
CHAPTER ONE

A PLACE TO BEGIN... BE IN...

Eagle eyes, my mother calls me. Looking, always looking, only I don’t have enough eyes. My sight is limited. (Anzaldua, 1987:50)

The way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe. (Berger, 1972:8)

In describing childhood photographs of herself, Valerie Walkerdine writes, “Lurking behind the pretty, quiet and well behaved little girl is the terror of a monster who can never be let out to public view” (1990:149). Like Walkerdine, I am interested in monsters. I think about how ‘monsters’ lurk below the surfaces of images, periodically and inevitably emerging to interrupt the ‘reflections’ through which individuals and communities come to recognize themselves (or fail to recognize themselves). I am interested in what the concealment of ‘monsters’ secures for the ways in which communities construct themselves against “what they cannot bear to know, or what they must shut out to think as they do” (Britzman, 1995:156), and moreover, what

1 A note on the use of excerpts from literary texts and other quotes...It is important to me that this text reflect many voices besides my own, and many opportunities to ‘read’ and interpret in different ways. Trinh T. Minh-ha speaks of the rhetorical space which is opened up when poetic and theoretical writing intermingle within text. Trinh writes, “Yes, perhaps not straight poetry, but let’s say that poetical language is important to my critical work. People used to see theory and poetry as being miles apart, but I see the interaction of theoretical language and poetical language as capable of creating a new ground in which clear-cut oppositions are again thwarted. The mutual challenge between the two languages helps to alleviate the presumption and mystification existing on each side” (1992:172).
representational de-authorizations might accompany the emergence of monsters?

I would edit Berger's words to read, 'The way we see things is affected by what we think we know or what we think we believe.' Or perhaps, 'The way we see things is affected by what must remain invisible in order for us to see as we do.'

This thesis is about images - images and motion and the 'loco-motions' of looking. It represents two years of intense self questioning and the unsettling of my own epistemological foundations. It began with a walk down Bloor St., in Toronto, Ontario. Well, not really. It began well before that, but that is where this writing will begin. I moved to Toronto from a medium sized town in southwestern Ontario in September of 1995. I had always lived in 'medium sized' towns. This was my introduction to an urban existence.

Prior to my move to Toronto, I worked at the local shelter for assaulted women and children for five years, and as an advisor in the 'Sexual and Gender Harassment Office' at a University for one year. It was in these spaces that I began to 'see' the ways in which 'what the community cannot bear to know' is concealed (Britzman, 1995:1) Part of my work as activist/educator was to engage with 'the community'2 in the context of

---

2 I am aware that use of the term 'community' can enact an homogenization of the spaces in which people gather to do the work of education for social change. I use the term 'community' to refer to the 'moments' of community which can materialize when (possibly but not necessarily) otherwise disconnected individuals gather for a specific purpose, or in the name of a specific event. By way of example, I am thinking about a small gathering of Catholic and non-Catholic, pro-choice and 'undecideds' (mostly white, mostly women but not exclusively, and mostly over the age of 25) individuals who gathered one evening several months ago in a Catholic church in Toronto's east end. The speaker for the evening was Frances Kissling, president of the American organization,
workshops designed to promote awareness of assault, harassment and discrimination against women and children. I would conduct these workshops using flip charts, overheads of facts, sheets of statistics, and videotapes of personal testimony: the visual 'evidence' that the social problem of violence against women and children exists.

I continually questioned the effectiveness of the work I was doing in contributing to the development of 'critical consciousness' by making 'social injustices' and the material effects of dominance visible. I imagined 'power' as being at the disposal of particular individuals, groups, and institutions at the expense of other individuals and groups, and 'social injustice' as the material effect(s) of this inequitable distribution of power and resources. In this way, I was able to see myself as 'social change educator' located by and large outside of the relations of power which I thought education could 'work' to render visible. I imagined a causal relationship between 'showing' people that social injustices exist, and their ensuing shifts in consciousness and increasing social concern. During those years, I lacked the time and the resources to reflect deeply on how I might think differently about a practice of education which didn't seem to be 'working' to convince people that 'social injustices' require 'social change.'

Upon later reflection, I began to wonder how the 'frames of reference' through which I see the world served to structure and limit the possibilities for what I thought I knew and believed, and how these frames subsequently shaped my practice as 'educator.' Donna Haraway writes, "Feminist objectivity is about limited location and situated 'Catholics for a Free Choice.'"
knowledge, not about transcendence and splitting of subject and object. In this way we might become answerable for what we learn how to see" (1991:190). Haraway's description of 'situated knowledges' pushed me to begin puzzling with the complex and contradictory questions I had begun to ask of my own practice as educator; for these "contradictory moments in feminist analysis" - I felt myself developing "a wariness of their resolution" (1991:111).

I began to reflect on the ways in which I had come to 'see' myself as an 'educator,' and to imagine the work I was doing as the practice of 'education for social change.' Thinking of myself as a 'social change educator,' required the imagined existence of a 'social changee.' Who or what was I thinking I might change, and how? I wondered how the constructs through which I had come to know myself worked to structure my thinking in ways that imagined 'social injustice' and 'social change' as apprehendable - and therefore alterable - realities and socialites, while managing not to see myself as deeply embedded within them.

Certainly, I brought to the work of 'social change education' some awareness of the privileged locations which I inhabited and continue to inhabit. Yet I realize now that my ability to do the work of 'social change' had everything to do with the relations of dominance I thought I was educating against. The road I have travelled to 'higher' education and to social change work in education has been paved by socially organized dispensations of privilege and opportunity. My undergraduate tuition was financed by my parents, who could afford to relieve me (at least at the undergraduate
level!) of the burden of heavy student loans. I suspect (and I have been told) that I have been hired to do the work of social change education on more than one occasion because I ‘look’ non-threatening to the (mostly white, straight) people who have formed the hiring committees. I am unmarried and have no children, which allows me to devote the majority of my time toward graduate studies, and to obtain the scholarship funding which will in part finance my Doctoral degree. The work of my graduate degrees, in turn, enables me to research and write from within the academy on the subject of social change education and political practice.

This kind of accounting for my location does, at times, feel immobilizing. It is my way of trying, as Donna Haraway discusses, to "own my history" in the name of performing ‘non-innocent,’ and (perhaps) "useful political work" (Lancaster, U.K., field notes, 07/18/97).

A month prior to my move to Toronto, I took an introductory course in photography. The session on ‘portraiture’ is particularly relevant to this writing. It was the month of July and the room was poorly ventilated and cluttered with equipment and fluorescent studio lights. I knew little about the subject of ‘portraiture,’ apart from my assumption that it must be about the ‘art’ of photographing people in various contexts. (I had visions of Sears portrait studios and the elementary public school photographs which were an annual ritual of my white, middle-class public school education and upbringing.)
While we waited to make our own 'portraits,' the instructor passed around several books of photography as examples of the subject at hand. One of these books was a collection of Annie Liebowitz's well known portraits of musicians. Also present was a copy of the photo-essay, *Mary-Ellen Mark: A 25 Year Retrospective* (1992). For the next hour I was absorbed by these arresting images of people situated in 'bizarre' realities. From the circus performers in India, to the institutionalized psychiatric patients, to the homeless families living in cars, to the autistic children and their families - these were photographs which defied any previous notions I might have had of what a 'body' is or does, or of what a portrait 'looks like.' Through these portraits I was confronted with images of bodies located so far outside of the socially organized codes, criteria and visual grammars through which I had/have learned to make sense of images (Dehli, 1997, personal conversation) that they were virtually unrecognizable to me.  

At the time, however, I was not thinking about this viewing on these (theoretical) terms. I suspect that had I been asked to describe the viewing experience, I would have struggled to find words which could begin to describe how or why I felt drawn to those images. I remembered them long after the course had ended, as they continued to 'trouble' me in ways that I could not clearly define or articulate.

---

3 Judith Butler makes use of Foucault's notion of 'regulatory ideals' to describe normative categories through which bodies become marked. On the category of 'sex,' Butler writes, "...sex not only functions as a norm, but is part of a regulatory practice that produces the bodies it governs, that is, whose regulatory force is made clear as a kind of productive power, the power to produce - demarcate, circulate, differentiate - the bodies it controls" (1993:1).
A month later I moved to Toronto to begin graduate work in the field of 'Adult Education.' I anticipated becoming 'more skilled' in doing the work of social change through education by completing a graduate degree. Although I had lived in close proximity to Toronto before, this was my first experience of living in a large city. I took up residence in an apartment located a leisurely twenty minute walk away from OISE. The option of a subway commute was available, but I often found myself walking to school amidst the lights and busyness of Bloor Street West. There was so much to see.

It was on Bloor Street that I began to 'see' the differences between Toronto and small town southern Ontario 'reality-scapes.' The geography of my neighborhood in Toronto reflects a diversity of faces and places unlike any other in which I have previously lived. More visible, too, are the lived 'realities' of poverty, homelessness, racism, gender based and homophobic violence that had been so well hidden (for some) in my former community.

I remember a particularly vivid image. I was riding a bus. I can't remember what route it was, only that it wasn't one of my usual routes. It was late - I was going to a bar to meet some friends. A person with short, platinum blonde hair got on the bus wearing a shimmering blue shirt and black pants. I was instantly transfixed - not by the hair or the outfit - but by the blue tone of her/his skin. And by the needle tracks that marked the majority of visible skin. And something else. I couldn't locate her/him. I couldn't make the gender categories work. Couldn't stop staring. Couldn't stand myself if I didn't.
Through my work as 'activist/educator,' I had come to imagine myself as one who was familiar with the material effects of systemic injustice, and, by and large, as one who 'helps' others to cope with the 'uncopeable.' On my walks down Bloor Street, I realized that I had never seen anyone sleeping on the street in sub-zero weather before. I was shocked by how shocked I felt. I remembered the photographs I had seen of bodies under other extreme circumstances taken by Mary-Ellen Mark. I realized that I wanted to photograph these bodies in the street. The desire to photograph street-based realities stayed with me on my wanderings around Toronto, yet when opportunities arose, I was unable to snap the shutter. There were times when I was even unable to make eye contact with the potential 'subject' of my photograph - usually when they were looking directly at me.

The unresolved tension which emerged between my desire to photograph and my inability to act on that desire compelled me to begin asking other photographers if my experience resonated with their own. I can recall two responses in particular. The first was that 'anything visible in a public space is fair game for the photographer.' The second was that 'one could always offer the 'subject' a few bucks in return for a pose.' These responses served to generate more complex questions. I began to think about the relations of power at play in the construction and deployment of photographs. Was it possible that photographs which represent the material effects of 'social injustices' work to reinstate these material effects and relations of power through the act of representation?
The problem was further complexified when I began to think about my own complicity within these relations of power, both as photographer and as viewer. I wondered how the draw I felt to images of bodies was mobilized. Later I began to consider the mechanical production of the photographic image, and later still, the complex ways in which the interactions between photographer, subject and viewer are infused with particular ideological assumptions. How do particular power/knowledge networks inform identifications and shape both experiences of 'reading' photographs and the ways in which viewers 'understand' and problematize an understanding of that experience?

The metaphor of photographic relations enabled me to re-think power in relationship to 'truth' and 'knowledge' in the Foucauldian sense in which:

...we are forced to produce the truth of power that our society demands, of which it has need in order to function: we must speak the truth; we are constrained or condemned to confess or discover the truth. Power never ceases its interrogation, its inquisition, its registration of truth: it institutionalizes, professionalizes and rewards its pursuit. In the last analysis, we must produce truths as we produce wealth, indeed we must produce truth in order to produce wealth in the first place. In another way, we are also subjected to the truth in the sense in which it is truth that makes the laws, that produces the true discourse which, at least partially, decides, transmits and itself extends upon the effects of power. In the end, we are judged, condemned, classified, determined in our undertakings, destined to a certain mode of living or dying, as a function of the true discourses which are the bearers of the specific effects of power (Foucault, 1980: 94).

What do documentary images authorize and conceal? What fictions and fantasies of social change do they permit viewers to entertain, and, following Britzman (1995), by what means, tactics and practices do documentary images conceal that which must be
shut out so that these fantasies might be continually secured? These questions mark several shifts in my rapidly developing fascination with how "...seeing might enable me to comprehend the relationship between my personal activities and my politics" (Butler, J., and Scott, J., ed., 1992:23). I began to understand my desire to make photographs of bodies in the street as inextricably connected to my desires and investments in activist work that wanted to render visible in educational contexts the material effects of sexual and physical violence, racism, and class-privilege. Some time later I would extend this analysis to include my own socially produced investments in voyeurism and visual apprehension - as a means of locating myself as viewer - in relation to who I think I am, and who I think I am not.

For me, the first eight months of graduate school were profoundly destabilizing. Suddenly, nothing was as concrete as the sidewalk looked and felt under my feet. Much of what I had come to ‘know’ and take for granted about my personal and political investments and involvements was thrown into upheaval. My foundations were shaking in the face of many questions and no answers. Questions followed questions. I locate myself within this writing as engaged in a struggle with ambivalence; by this I mean the relinquishment of many previously and dearly held certainties which are at once personal and political.
Methodological Meditations

Not a story about me through their eyes then. Find the beginning, the slight silver key to unlock it, to dig it out. Here then is a maze to begin, be in. (Ondaatje, 1970:20)

The attempt to trace my experience of arriving at and taking up a research problem which is concerned with the pedagogical possibilities and potentials of the photographic image, is intended to provide a piece of narrative ‘data’ which is produced through my ‘experience of looking’ and my ‘readings’ of photographs, through which I want to explore the underpinnings of my fascination with images of bodies. My engagement with this fascination is ‘framed’ here through Butler’s question, “How then can one think through the materiality of bodies as a kind of materialization governed by regulatory norms in order to ascertain the workings of heterosexual hegemony in the formation of what qualifies as a viable body? How does that materialization of the norm in bodily formation produce a domain of abjected bodies, a field of deformation, which, in failing to qualify as fully human, fortifies those regulatory norms?” (1993:16).

Butler writes, “Performativity describes this relation of being implicated in that which one opposes, this turning of power against itself to produce alternative modalities of power, to establish a kind of political contestation that is not a ‘pure’ opposition, a ‘transcendence’ of contemporary relations of power, but a difficult labor of forging a future from resources inevitably impure” (1993:241). Thus the complex ways in which I am implicated in this research will become the research, as I become researcher and co-subject (along with a photograph and my ‘experience’ of ‘reading’ it) in my
inevitably partial analysis of how I am produced as ‘viewer,’ as ‘researcher,’ and as ‘social change educator’ throughout the production of this text.

Parts of this thesis will take on the appearance of autobiographical writing. I will tell some stories about my self/selves that feel important to this analysis and that will become sources of narrative ‘data.’ The purpose of this labor is to excavate the connections between my work and how I am embedded in and implicated in this work. I see this autobiographical narrative as data, in that I regard it not as a representation of a ‘real’ self that I bring to this writing, but rather, as an exercise in writing which pays attention to a politics of self-definition (Gilmore, 1994).

Donna Haraway calls for a methodological approach which incorporates ‘ethnographic risk’ as a mode of theoretical attention in which one’s self is at stake for becoming something else through the research process. (Lancaster, U.K., field notes, 07/18/97) Following Haraway, in relation to this data I will attempt to trace the evolution of how I may have come to ‘think myself differently’ through my research, and how ‘thinking myself differently’ might inform my practice as educator and researcher in new ways. Joan Scott writes:

...the project of making experience visible precludes critical examination of the workings of the ideological system itself, its categories of representation (homosexual/heterosexual, man/woman, black/white as fixed immutable identities), its premises about what these categories mean and how they operate, its notions of subjects, origins and cause. (1991, in Butler, J., and Scott, J., ed., 1992:25)
In this writing I am concerned with how the constitution of experience can be made 'transparent' rather than merely 'visible.' Reading practices would attend, then, to particular power/knowledge networks and frameworks of possible deployments, while possibly illuminating how the technologies which authorize visual and other forms of representation as the 'Truth' of experience might be de-authorized.

This writing is a study in methodology on multiple levels. I ask how to think through the relationship between (so called) documentary images which seek to represent a 'real' experience, and how such images get (multiply) read and taken up as symbols within the context of political movements. Speaking vastly, I seek to map out the discursive landscapes and image repertoires through which movements come to understand themselves in relation to a shared political objective or set of objectives. Speaking particularly, I question the implications of taking up as political symbols, documentary images which allow for the making of universalizing claims about collective experience within specific social and political contexts. This chapter, then, will lay the framework for thinking through the relationship between documentary photography, experience, and reader. It will 'set the stage' for a thesis which attempts to theorize the relationship between a particular photograph and the multiple readers who are connected to that photograph through their experience and their activist work.

A year ago, when these theoretical questions were in the very early stages of formulation, a colleague[^4] who (I think) may have had a clearer sense than I did of the

[^4]: I want to thank Moon Joyce for an important conversation.
shape and direction of this work, introduced me to a photograph. It was an introduction that was to have a profound and prevailing effect on what was to become ‘my’ research. The photograph had been mysteriously leaked from a coroner’s archives in the early 1970’s, and had landed momentarily in the pages of Ms. magazine. It was a black and white image of Gerri Santoro’s dead body, post illegal abortion and murder.

There is something about the way this image ‘captures’ the body of Gerri Santoro that has enabled it to become an historically significant and politically pivotal symbol for pro-choice movement in the United States and Canada. Perhaps this enabling was due to Santoro’s anonymity. Perhaps it was due to her obscured face. Perhaps it was/is the absence of a name or a face that can account for the power of this image to serve as a universalizable representation of the material effects of women’s restricted access to reproductive choice, within the fraught field of debates over abortion and reproductive freedoms. Perhaps. But I suspect an attempt to ‘understand’ the loco-motions of this image must employ a more complex analytical approach.

It would be difficult to locate a political landscape on which images have played a more central role than they have in debates over reproductive choice. I use the terms interchangeably - choice, reproductive freedoms, abortion debates - as if to suggest that each substitution does not also signify and mobilize competing struggles over the meaning of the terms used to demarcate the political terrain. Debates over reproductive freedoms are waged both discursively and through their material effects on bodies; and within the moments and spaces where discourse and bodies collide and become marked
I understand ‘reproductive freedom’ to be inextricably linked to all other struggles for women’s self-determination, as well as the struggles of queer communities seeking to live their sexual and reproductive lives in defiance of smothering codes of sexual morality and heterosexual hegemony. Due, in part, to this interest in ‘intersecting’ political projects, I chose to research from this photograph, beginning at the surface, and proceeding to dig downward. This thesis is an attempt to pause momentarily in this analysis - to look up, and around, and backwards and forwards, searching for points of saturation - that which I must and am able to say now.

As this work evolved it became clear to me that my own ‘reading’ of a photograph, and my efforts to understand the complexities of its discursive travels over time, felt insufficient. I wanted to engage more eyes, minds and hearts in the struggle to understand what it means to read a photograph, and to invest in it’s symbolic power to represent a movement for social change. I wanted to hear from women for whom the photograph of Gerri Santoro had been powerful in some way and at some point in their history, as activists within pro-choice movement. I wanted to hear specifically from

---

5 I use ‘discourse’ throughout this thesis to refer to Foucault’s description of how power and knowledge are constituted in and through one another to produce ‘regimes of truth’ that mask or disqualify certain knowledges while privileging others. (1980:82-83)

6 Linda Gordon writes, “...reproductive freedom cannot be isolated from other human freedoms. Reproductive patterns everywhere are determined by sexual morality, by the over-all status of women, by class formations, and by the nature of the struggles for social change” (1977:404).
women who could act as informants for my research - providing readings and perspectives on the photograph within the broader context of pro-choice political organizing - which would differ from, challenge, and enrich my own. I approached four pro-choice activists with a collective involvement in pro-choice struggles which spans over thirty years. We spent over five hours one evening in conversation over a photograph and a video. I am indebted to these women for their willingness to engage in the difficult work of thinking and talking through questions which are intended to shake some of the foundations upon which the work of pro-choice organizing rests.

Even as I write this, I hesitate, and must loop back. This is a two year study which makes some preliminary forays into questions of representation and pedagogy at the intersection between reading and political practice. Throughout this work I will negotiate the tension which arises out of the need to make situated claims while entertaining the possibility of broader implications. Donna Haraway writes of the need for a feminist reclaiming of partial vision as the sense through which epistemological ‘objectivity’ might be realized. My aim is not to contribute to the overabundant bodies of knowledge which seek to make universalizing claims about a generalizable ‘feminism’ or a homogeneous pro-choice ‘movement.’ 7 Haraway writes, “Partial perspective can be held accountable for both its promising and its destructive monsters”

7 For a discussion of the history of the ‘birth control movement’ in the United States, see Linda Gordon (1977:xiii-xviii). I am most interested in Gordon’s description of how ‘the movement’ in the U.S. has been comprised of different ‘organizational phases’ and many political pockets of differently located women organizing around divergent interests and investments in reproductive freedom. Gordon also treats ‘feminism’ as a ‘definitional problem,’ rather than a static referent for a singular political movement.
My aim, then, is to write out of the partiality and historical contingency of my own knowledge claims while paying heed to the technologies, both discursive and material, through which I come to know what I think I know about the questions I engage with here. I am acutely aware that the political terrain upon which I take up these questions - the terrain of choice/anti-choice struggles - is fraught with real and potentially destructive monsters. I am aware that any small crack in the armor of pro-choice movement(s) creates the potential for vulnerability in the face of anti-choice attack. I am aware also, of the potentially destructive moves that get made when political collectives are immobilized in their capacity to maintain a self-reflexive and historicized critical engagement. In my efforts to trouble some of the certainties upon which pro-choice movement rests, I am troubling my own (un)certainties vis a vis my own 'pro-choice' stance. In this way, I hope to contribute to the small but courageous body of work by feminist writers seeking to carve out new and intentional spaces for thinking about and practicing a politics of choice that questions its own foundations even as it asks how future movement might be imagined.  

---

8 In thinking about how these 'intentional spaces' for dialogue on reproductive freedoms might materialize, my research has been inspired and informed by the very timely article, "Late Term Abortion: Speaking Frankly." In Gillespie, M. (Ed.) Ms., Vol. V11 # 6, 1997, pp. 64-71. Also see Ann Finger, Past Due (Seattle: The Seal Press, 1990), and Kathleen McDonnell, Not an Easy Choice (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1984).
Reflections on Plastic - Thinking Photography and Pedagogy

What does it mean to read a photograph within discourse? How to pay attention to the technologies through which documentary images are legitimized and authorized? This is a methodological question which weaves its way through this writing.

Some months ago I began to imagine what a ‘pedagogy of photography’ might resemble and enable. What I wish to engage with throughout this thesis is the potential for photography to ‘work’ as a pedagogical tool - not as a representation of an unquestionable ‘Truth’ - but rather, as a tool for exploring how viewers come to know what we think we know within particular social, political, and educative contexts.

Simon and Giroux write:

In our view, expanding the possible contribution schooling might make to citizens and their communities requires a renewed attention to the representational practices that constitute our social imaginations. As particular ways of ordering social and physical realities, these practices simultaneously enable and constrain practical political action. Framing the ‘possible and desirable,’ they shape the terrain of cultural politics informing notions of knowledge, significance and desire. (1992:12)

I am interested in what it might mean for photography to ‘interrupt’ dominant discursive practices, and whether photographs of bodies can provide ‘pedagogical opportunities’ for said interruptions, within the limits of the discourses through which the range of possible readings might well be prescripted in ‘uninterruptable’ ways.

In the effort to engage with my own reading practices, Deborah Britzman’s formulation of a ‘Queer Pedagogy’ has been instructive in how I might begin to imagine what it
means to 'stop reading straight,' or to begin to read in ways that might "...account for the relations between a thought and what it cannot think" (1995:151). In her articulation of what the imperative to 'stop thinking straight' might enable for reading practices, Britzman cites Shoshana Felman's "three analytical practices" as useful "techniques for thinking the limits" of our own intelligibilities. Felman theorizes a methodology of reading which takes up "practices of reading for alterity," "practices of engaging in dialogue with the self as the self reads," and "practices of theorizing how one reads" (1995:163).

As I attempt to think through the concept of 'reading practices' and its implications for this work, I am aware that the limits to what I can know are in part produced through viewing relations, which are in turn shaped by the normalizing practices which regulate and reproduce relations of power, through (re)articulations of fixed categories of identity such as race, class, gender, sexuality and ability. These categories work to (re)produce the 'normal' through the refusals and exclusions which render particular subjects as outside of the shifting frames of normalcy. It feels important to historicize socially constituted reading practices within practices of colonialist image making, in which 'abject' bodies - the bodies of first peoples, 'diseased or disabled' bodies, and the bodies of women - have been featured as the objects of ethnographic, medical and aesthetic inquiry.9 These 'othering' practices work in conjunction with the

9 I caught a glimpse of this history of colonialist image making during a visit to the Museum of Montreal's "Body in the Lens" exhibit (1997) which I discuss further in the final chapter of this thesis.
institutionalization of a documentary 'genre' to constitute the discursive boundaries which structure looking. Felman’s practices of 'reading for alterity' might pay attention, then, to the means and discourses through which alterity is produced through documentary images.

Britzman argues, “It is precisely this centripetal force, a cultural insistence to put back into place boundaries at all costs, that education is obligated to exceed” (1995:152). Elspeth Probyn has written, "For Foucault, the relation between the image and the gaze of the looker can be rendered 'drole'...in the sense of something strange, avid, not quite graspable" (1995:9). I am interested in exploring how photography might ‘work’ within a ‘queer’ pedagogy to enable the thinking through of how bodies come to be recognized or refused within the repetitions of ‘normalcy.’ To cite Butler’s formulation on the discursive limits of ‘sex’ as a determinant of what comes to ‘count’ as a body, how might photography and reading practices ‘work’ as, "... an enabling disruption, the occasion for a radical rearticulation of the symbolic horizon in which bodies come to matter at all?” (1993:23). How might a ‘queer’ pedagogy of photography begin to take up questions and representations of bodies as “...more a point of departure than an end point in the struggle (?)” (Trinh T. Minh-ha, 1992:140).

(So Called) ‘Documentary’ Photography

PAULITA MAXWELL: THE PHOTOGRAPH

In 1880 a traveling photographer came through Fort Sumner.
Billy posed standing in the street near old Beaver Smith’s saloon.
The picture makes him rough and uncouth.
The expression on his face was really boyish and pleasant. He may have worn such clothes as appear in the picture out on the range, but in Sumner he was careful of his personal appearance and dressed neatly and in good taste. I never liked the picture. *I don’t think it does Billy justice.* (Ondaatje, 1970:19, bold face mine)

How do the discursive practices through which ‘documentary’ photography is legitimized operate? Wetherell and Potter argue that discourse and ideology work “...primarily as a form of practical action, instantiated in policy statements, in the statements of political spin doctors, in memos, in speeches, in documents, in newspapers, in conversations, accounts, explanations, versions, anecdotes and stories” (1992:61). In this formulation, the ways in which photographs are read, described, discussed, categorized and displayed (or not) can provide insight into how discourse is “...active, compelling and a pervasive part of the fabric of social life” (1992:61). Luce Irigaray’s description of the dynamics of discourse speaks to the imperative to ‘reenact’ and ‘interpret’ visual encounters with photographs as the effect of multiple discourses. Irigaray writes of:

...the necessity of ‘reopening’ the figures of philosophical discourse...One way is to interrogate the conditions under which systematicity itself is possible: what the coherence of the discursive utterance conceals of the conditions under which it is produced, whatever it may say about these conditions in discourse. For example the ‘matter’ from which the speaking subject draws nourishment in order to produce itself; the scenography that makes representation feasible, representation as defined in philosophy, that is, the architectonics of its theater, its framing in space-time, its

---

10 I place this line in bold face because I think it serves as a useful metaphor for a number of the central problems of this thesis. How to ‘do’ justice to an image? To the subject of an image? How to think through how images of bodies come to matter as symbols for political struggles?
How then does photography 'work' within the 'specular economy' to become both the (re)producer and the product of discourses of power and knowledge? Butler writes, "Performativity is thus not a singular 'act,' for it is always a reiteration of a norm or set of norms, and to the extent that it acquires an act-like-status in the present, it conceals or dissimulates the conventions of which it is a repetition" (1993:12). Is there a performative relation at play in viewing relations as they intersect with documentary images? Can this relation be theorized as the repetition (or possible disruption) of discursive practices of normalization?

As I have mentioned, any attempt to understand that which legitimizes 'documentary' photography within a discursive framework requires attention to the usage of this form of photography within specific historical and contemporary practices and contexts. Solomon-Godeau writes, "Like all mass media, photography is routinely made - or employed - to affirm, confirm, and promote the interests, the beliefs, the social and sexual relations of the class that possesses it. And as a corollary (for how could it be otherwise?), I would submit that the history of photography is not the history of
remarkable men, much less a succession of remarkable pictures, but the history of photographic uses" (1991:xxiv).

An historical review of the genre of 'documentary' photography exceeds what I am able to accomplish here. Were I to make the attempt, it would surely prove interesting to trace the repeated 'failure' of efforts to theorize a definition of 'documentary' photography as distinct from other categories of photography (Solomon-Godeau, 1991). 'Documentary' photography has invariably been defined and understood against definitions of high art culture in which "Many still hold onto a mystical concept of 'visionary art,' and any preoccupation with or attempt at exposing ideology is rejected as 'corrupt' -lacking pure vision, hence being no real Art" (Trinh, 1992:139). The refusal of 'documentary' photography as art is enabled by the assumption that 'documentary' forms work to expose real relations of power. Traditional 'documentary' is understood as a representation through which the 'reality' of social injustice is exposed and in which the individual 'subject' is seen as providing fixed, transcendent and unmediated access to 'The Truth.'

Ideologically infused notions of 'documentary' photographs as images of the 'real' constitute the foundational ground upon which the 'subject' of such photographs is perceived as providing direct and unmediated access to 'experience' or 'reality.' This foundational claim effaces the mechanical and ideological processes through which a photograph is (often very purposefully) produced. Joan Scott problematizes the notion of the transparent subject when she writes:
When experience is taken as the origin of knowledge, the vision of the individual subject (the person who had the experience or the historian who recounts it) becomes the bedrock of evidence upon which the explanation is built. Questions about the constructed nature of experience, about how subjects are constituted as different in the first place, about how one’s vision is structured - about language (or discourse) and history - are left aside" (1992:25).

In this writing I am preoccupied with how images which are taken up as symbols for political organizing become both strategic and constraining of a movement's ability to see itself and what it wants. My project concerns itself with troubling how images which enable the making of universalizing claims about 'experience' might also suggest that 'experience' is enclosed entirely within the frame of what can be seen.

**Documentary Images as Political Symbols**

*I have seen pictures of great stars,*

*drawings which showed them straining to the center*

*that would explode their white*

*if temperature and the speed they moved at*

*shifted one degree.* (Ondattje, 1970:41)

A fundamental ideological function of the documentary image then, lies in its unquestioned role in the transmission of factual occurrences and the materiality of lived experience. Solomon-Godeau writes that, "In part, this derives from the fact that photography, like all camera-made images such as film and video, effaces the mark of its making (and maker) at the click of a shutter" (1995:180). Since the mid to late 19th century, documentary photographs have been used as 'evidence' by the media, in police archives, curricular materials, courts of law, public health campaigns, and by
anthropologists interested in capturing the ‘other.’ The popularity of the expression ‘seeing is believing’ attests to the authoritative status of the visual image as a representation of ‘The Truth.’ It may also lend insight into how documentary images have become powerful and strategic symbols for resistance movements seeking to challenge social injustice and inequality.

Yet, through Martha Rosler’s discussion of documentary photography as "...representative of the social conscience of liberal sensibility" (1981:71), I gain further - and somewhat uncomfortable - insight into documentary images and viewing relations. Rosler writes of the ideological assumptions of social work discourse as productive of a “Documentary photography which has been much more comfortable in the company of moralism than wedded to a rhetoric or program of revolutionary politics” (1981:72). Photographs of individual ‘victimhood’ do little to depict the systems of domination and social control through which ‘victims’ are produced. Reading Rosler, I begin to see the ways in which I am enabled to feel concern, and even outrage over images of individual ‘victimhood’ while remaining comfortably reassured that my work in ‘social change education’ is somehow contributing to the amelioration of the conditions of ‘victimhood.’ As Rosler writes, “Documentary is a little like horror movies, putting a face on fear and transforming threat into fantasy, into imagery. One can handle imagery by leaving it behind. (It is them, not us.) One may even, as a private person, support causes” (1983:73).
Marking Terrain

I am researching and writing this thesis out of a photograph of a dead woman which became an important and pivotal symbol for pro-choice organizing in the United States and Canada after its emergence into public view in 1973. This is a photograph which has travelled across time and space; it has been differently framed and resurrected, and has left political and ethical resonances in it wake. This thesis is about images and motion, and the locomotions of looking at images. It variously questions how 'effective' political strategies might also bring about closures on what can be thought and said in the name of political organizing.

This thesis is, in fact, a study in methodology. As Avery Gordon has written, "In order to write within a question concerning exclusions and invisibilities...requires a methodology that is attentive to what can't be seen, but what is powerfully real; attentive to what appears dead, but is powerfully present; requires attending also to just what the subject of analysis is" (1990:493). Here, the 'subject of analysis' takes on multiple dimensions. In this writing, I want to lay out a framework for thinking about the relationship between reading practice and political practice. I am particularly interested in how divergent readings of images can be understood and theorized within the context of political movements which (presumably) require investment in the articulation of a shared political agenda. Images-as-symbols of political struggle often speak to 'who' particular movements understand themselves to be. These images-as-symbols might also afford insight into how the 'subject' of political struggle is constructed through particular representational strategies.
Throughout this thesis, I am also tracing the question of how reading images within discourse can draw attention to a number of ethical, conceptual, political and research problems. In chapter two, I tell a story about the (real and imaginary) ‘gap’ between the ‘state’ and those governed by its powers of regulation.¹¹ I ask how identity and identifications figure within reading practices and pro-choice political organizing when ‘rule’ and ‘resistance’ are understood to be mutually constitutive. In chapter three, I explore how images of dead fetuses and dead women in opposition construct certain un/intelligibilities within abortion debates. I weigh the ethical tensions associated with the deployment of Gerri Santoro’s image as a symbol for pro-choice organizing, and consider the pedagogical and political possibilities which are opened up with the emergence of the video Leona’s Sister Gerri. Chapters three and four are preoccupied with the question of how the history of Santoro’s image can serve as a tool for the present and for carving out a future for pro-choice organizing. In chapter four, I ask how images which incite ‘risky conversations’ within ‘intentional spaces’ might illuminate the horizon of pro-choice political organizing. In this chapter I engage in a number of ‘risky’ conversations including excerpts from the focus group I conducted with pro-choice activists, and a ‘risky’ conversation in which I re-think my initial reading of the video Leona’s Sister Gerri. Chapter five considers viewing practices within histories of colonialist image making and the discourses through which images

¹¹ Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing has helped me to think about “the story of the gap.” She writes, “It is important to recognize that attention to this gap does not tell the whole story” (1993:26). Her work has been important for me in grappling with the complex ways in which the ‘state’ and those governed through its powers of regulation are mutually constitutive. As Lowenhaupt Tsing describes it, “Village politics contribute to making the state. The categories of state rule are actualized in local politics” (1993:26).
are understood to be part of the political horizon or not. In this final chapter, I reflect on a possible expansion of the image repertoires through which connections might be forged across struggles to attain reproductive freedoms for women and other human freedoms.

*Who are you who will read these words and study these photographs, and through what cause, by what chance, and for what purpose, and by what right do you qualify to, and what will you do about it...*(Agee, J., and Evans, W., 1960:32)

Can readings which ‘think the limits’ of photographic representation amplify “the relations between a thought and what it cannot think?” (Britzman, 1995:151) What kinds of questions does the authoritative status of documentary photography rely upon us *not* to ask of it?

I am interested in frames and ‘frameworks’ and the struggle to ‘see’ what they authorize. I imagine photography as a pedagogical tool within a political praxis which thinks deeply about the ways in which viewers are implicated in practices of looking. I am interested in the discourses which legitimate representational practices and how viewers and political actors might catch glimpses of these discourses within the indeterminate places where regulatory norms fail to materialize in visual representations. I wonder if these are the places in which viewers might ‘think the limits of what we can know’ through radical misrecognitions of the identifications we might hold most dear, or through which ‘what we can know’ might be most heavily proscribed. “What does it mean to imagine that a pedagogy of options gives the options
that it gives?" (Williams, Class notes: 11/04/96). What does it mean to imagine that a political symbol achieves the objectives that it is imagined to achieve?

Renoir's nudes are not at all the world's finest nudes, but even so, when we came to his painting of La Boulangere, Inge wept. She said, 'I hate it because it moves me.' I didn't say that thus are tyrants made, I said, 'It's not the painter, it's the paint. Forget Renoir, hold on to the picture' (Winterson, 1992:22).

This thesis is about images and motion and the loco-motions of looking.
EVER AGAIN

ROBERTA BRANDES GRATZ

THE VICTIM OF A CRIMINAL ACTER BODY WAS PHOTOGRAPHED AND WAS FOUND BY POLICE IN A BARREN MOTEL ROOM; EXACTLY WHEN ABANDONED THERE BY AN.
Desires are constituted through the narratives and storylines, the metaphors, the very language and patterns of existence through which we are ‘interpellated’ into the social world. (Althusser, 1971) Desire, along with rational argument, evidence, storylines and fantasy, are all implicated in our interpretation of ourselves and others, and there are often contradictions between them. While we may find it hard to speak about desire - to pin it down - we may, through a feminist deconstruction of the storylines, metaphors, images and practices through which we know who we are, come to quite different lived patterns of desire, patterns that no longer lock us into the ‘feminine’ or the ‘masculine’ but allow movement amongst a multiplicity of ways of being. (Davies, 1989a, 1990:501)
CHAPTER TWO

(IN)VISIBLE OPPOSITIONS: LOOKING FOR THE STATE WITHIN PRO-CHOICE POLITICS

After all, why should the protest be more delicate than the oppression?
(McQuiston, 1997:16)

Framing the Problem

In response to the question, "Who Needs Identity?" Stuart Hall outlines the problematic of trying to think through concepts of identity in their deconstructed forms. Lacking in alternative theoretical concepts, as Hall writes, "The line which cancels them, paradoxically, permits them to go on being read" (1996:1). Hall further suggests that the irreducibility of the concept of identity is inextricably tied up with questions of agency and politics, wherein the signifier of identity becomes 'essential' to the struggles of political movements seeking to make claims upon the state (1996).

I am interested in how the signifier of identity is constituted within particular spaces and contexts of resistance organizing.

For the purposes of this paper, I wish to keep a tight reign on how I am understanding and deploying the term 'identity' amidst the massive body of theoretical literature which throw the term and its mobilizations into question. I locate my work within

12 Definitions of 'identity' abound within the literature on critical theory and cultural studies. For the purposes of this chapter I am employing Connolly's description, "An identity is established in relation to a series of differences that have become socially recognized. These differences are essential to its being. If they did not coexist as differences, it would not exist in its

31
the context of reproductive politics, and the discourses which clearly demarcate and define the oppositional identities 'pro-choice' and 'anti-choice' (pro-life). In this writing I will explore the constitutedness of the categories 'pro-choice' and 'anti-choice,' while seeking to hold in tension the necessity for political actors to claim clear and unproblematized subject locations on this highly contentious political terrain. I want to address the question of how these fixed categories of 'identity' become central to political strategies seeking to make collective claims on the state, while thinking through some of the 'localized' practices and discourses through which the state and those who would oppose its powers of regulation are mutually (in)formative. Wendy Brown makes the important distinction between the work of formulating "...a critique of oppositional political formation," and the attempt to engage with "...an exploration of the ways in which certain aspects of the specific genealogy of politicized identity are carried in the structure of its political articulation and demands..." (1995:55).

In this chapter I proceed from the assumption that both forms of oppression and the political movements which would seek to oppose them are effects of power.

---

13 I am using the term 'anti-choice' in order to be explicit about my own political alignments. The term 'pro-life' read in opposition to 'pro-choice' suggests that a pro-choice position is necessarily 'anti-life.' I use the term 'anti-choice' as a more accurate reflection of the ways in which those who argue against reproductive freedoms for women in the name of protecting fetal life, are in fact opposed to the attainment of women's sexual and self-determination.

14 Michel Foucault has written, "Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power. Should it be said that one is always 'inside' power, there is no 'escaping' it, there is no absolute outside where it is concerned...?" (1978:95)
Struggles for freedom and justice then, exist within, and often reproduce, the very relations of power from whence arises their necessity. This chapter is underscored by the question of what a pro-choice politic grounded in a critique of its own epistemological foundations might resemble?

I will proceed with some reflections on my own positioning within certain forms of 'localized' discourse and practice in relation to reproductive freedom politics. It has been my observation that while the literature on 'state formation' provides a useful overview of attempts to theorize a 'state,' theories of the state often remain embedded within an abstracted discourse. Such theories, then, can prove difficult to 'ground' within the chaos of 'everyday moments' in which discourses of power and meaning-making both converge and conflict. Arising from some of the literature which treats the production of subjectivities (Althusser, 1971; Hall, 1996), is the question of how desires and investments become mobilized in and through the (limited) range of normative categories of identity available to be 'taken up' by subjects, in ways that enable erasures of lived chaos and contradiction and make possible the representation of coherent politicized categories of identity.

What I wish to explore here are multiple and shifting 'moments' of identification(s)\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{15} Stuart Hall defines 'identifications' as "...constructed on the back of a recognition of some common origin or shared characteristics with another person or group, or with an ideal, and with the natural closure of solidarity and allegiance established on this foundation. In contrast with the 'naturalism' of this definition, the discursive approach sees identification as a construction, a process never completed - always 'in process.' It is not determined in the sense that it can always be 'won' or 'lost,' sustained or abandoned. Though not without its determinate conditions of existence, including the material and symbolic resources required to sustain it, identification is in the end conditional, lodged in contingency. Once secured, it does not obliterate
individuals invest in while they are socially positioned in alignment with particular categories of 'identity.' Within the context of the multiple and conflicting 'identities' comprising political movements, I am interested in the resistances which are made possible by the persistent failure of identities to attach themselves to bodies in fixed and coherent ways. My goal is not to think through a politics in which subject-positions are "multiplied numerically within the existing symbolic order" (Butler, 1993:114), but rather a politics which interrogates the socio-historical production of the very subject-positions it seeks to advocate for within the liberal state. As Butler writes, "It may be useful to shift the terms of the debate from constructivism versus essentialism to the more complex question of how 'deep-seated' or constitutive constraints can be posed in terms of symbolic limits in their intractability and contestability" (1993:92).

My interest lies particularly in the processes through which identities are reproduced through the symbolic constraints on subjectivity individuals encounter as viewers in engagement with visual representations, and how these symbolic constraints fashion the political terrain on which fixed categories of identity are reified and reproduced within different historical moments and within shifting social and political contexts. Central to this writing is an image which has become widely known and symbolically difference. The total merging it suggests is, in fact, a fantasy of incorporation...Identification is then, a process of articulation, a suturing, and over-determination not a subsumption. There is always 'too much' or 'too little' - an overdetermination or a lack, but never a proper fit, a totality. Like all signifying practices, it is subject to the 'play,' of difference. It obeys the logic of more-than-one. And since as a process it operates across difference, it entails discursive work, the binding and marking of symbolic boundaries, the production of 'frontier effects.' It requires what is left outside, its constitutive outside, to consolidate the process" (1996:2).
strategic within North American pro-choice and feminist circles. This image has prompted me to think about the ‘images’ that become our bodies and our practices and through which we are located within the political spaces which we ‘choose’ to inhabit.16

I am asking how to embrace a number of seemingly irreconcilable tensions. How does power circulate within pro-choice politics through an overinvestment in oppositional thinking in the face of a clear and definable anti-choice antagonism? How can this oppositional thinking be understood in relation to how pro-choice organizing participates in the re-production of the very power structures it would seek to contest? These questions are both difficult to pose and to answer. What I want is to understand better the social relations and material conditions through which subjects are produced in relation to questions of reproductive freedom. As Ruth Frankenburg has written, "...we, as feminists, must always remember that we act from within the social relations and subject positions we seek to change...." (1993:5).

In placing ‘identity’ under critique, as Hall makes clear, one inevitably runs into the problem of reiterating the very categories one would seek to challenge. To speak of the categories ‘pro-choice’ and ‘anti-choice’ is to suggest their boundedness and coherence. I suspect that the coherence of these categories of identity is contingent

16 I am thinking about Elspeth Probyn’s (1995:6) discussion of the body as ‘image’ rather than fixed or immutable materiality within space or identity. Probyn cites Bergson (1990) as follows, “…the body as image, ‘is then the place of passage of the movements received and thrown back, a hyphen, a connecting link between things which act upon me and the things upon which I act.’"
upon a host of 'other' identities which are reproduced through pro-choice/anti-choice discourse. These 'other' identities are powerful within the articulation of coherent political identities, and most often go unremarked. I am talking about how 'good' girls, 'straight' girls, and 'white' girls become the unwritten subject of 'choice' debates, and how these identities are secured through the necessary differences against which they are defined.

I will attempt then, to begin to 'pull apart' the complex web of social and psychic processes of identification through which identities become attached to bodies, while individual subjects invest in, and inevitably fail to fulfill, the categories that define them. Making use of selections from the body of theory known (within sociological writing) as 'state formation,' I will discuss the production of subjectivity as central to an understanding of 'state formation,' understood here as the ideological work of 'politically organized subjection' (Abrams, 1977; Henriques et al., 1984; Corrigan, 1984). I will then make some preliminary remarks on 'state (de)formation,' or a 'political agency' that seeks to challenge the mobilization of fixed categories of identity and the 'innocence' of political resistance in the making of claims upon the state.

**State Formation and the Fictioning of Identity**

Stuart Hall's discussion of 'Who Needs Identity?' is worth returning to here, in its illustration of the problematic which arises in the struggle to 'unfix' categories of identity, while still speaking or acting from a fixed position (as individuals or
collectives) in a way that becomes meaningful or strategic in making claims upon the
state. In understanding the limited possibilities that essentialized categories of identity
make available, it would seem desirable, then, to find a way to 'think beyond' the
paradox which Hall articulates (1996).

I am not conceptualizing the 'state' as a coherent subject which is separate from, and
acting upon a social body. I want to think about the state as an ideological and
material system of power which works in and through processes of regulation,
through which subjects are constituted and ordered, but never in a 'fixed' or coherent
way. Further, I want to suggest that it is the 'idea' of the state as a coherent decision
making body that enables processes of production and regulation to work in and
through subjects, producing illusory distinctions between subjects and governing
bodies. Notions of the state as distinct decision making 'body' then, can be
understood to produce a series of fictional boundaries "...between Constraint and
Consensus; Force and Will; Body and Mind; Society and Self. In sum: the objective
and the subjective" (Mao, 1966, in Corrigan, ed., 1984:265). These fictional
boundaries work on and through the historical materiality of state practices,
apparatuses and institutions in the production of socio-political fields of racializing,
sexualizing, classing and ablizing practices of inclusion and exclusion.

I am thinking, also, about the complicated and messy ways in which the state is
constituted through 'localized' practices and politics and the participation of subjects
within them. Within a formulation of the state as productive of individual subjects,
power is understood to work not only through the imposition of rules, regulations, laws, and political processes of decision making upon citizens, but through the positioning of citizens within a limited range of 'subjectivities' within which they are capable of bearing, as Rose and Miller note, "...a kind of regulated freedom" (1992:174). Individualized subjects, then, can be seen as implicated within discursive practices; the processes of subjectification through which 'identifications' are perpetually under (de)construction within landscapes of inclusion and exclusion through which bodies attain or fail to attain cultural viability (Hall:1996). This discursive 'work' of identifications might best be explored through the example which follows.

State Formation: An 'Everyday Moment'

I grew up in a white middle class suburb on the outskirts of Toronto in the years 1977 - 1986, when I left to begin university studies in another city. The high school I attended and the group of friends I formed there, by and large, reflected this white middle class positioning back at me. When I was a teenager I used to have (variations upon) the following conversation with my friends or with my older sister from time to time: 'What would you do?,' we would ask each other in slightly hushed tones, our eyebrows raised in anticipation. 'If you got pregnant, would you keep the baby, or give it up for adoption...or would you have an abortion?'

The irony of this moment is that I'm fairly certain few of us were sexually active during those years. If we were, it was within the confines of the very early stages of
sexual exploration. The assumptions operating within this conversation, however, were very clear: we would become progressively more sexually active (with male partners), with the possibility of becoming pregnant; we would have ‘choices’ available to us, and we might have to make a ‘choice’ about whether or not to have a child, and whether or not to raise that child ourselves.

We never questioned our ability to ‘know’ with certainty what we would do in the event of an unwanted pregnancy; neither did we reflect on the social and moral imperatives that made ‘knowing’ desirable. It felt important to ‘know,’ because ‘knowing’ was a clear indication of our political alliances, our religious beliefs, our career aspirations (teenage women with children are not typically seen as ‘successful’ within a white middle-class conceptualization of what it means to succeed), the degree of autonomy we enjoyed from our parents’ power to make decisions on our behalf, and our general preparedness for an ‘unplanned’ pregnancy should it occur. Within that moment of conversation, we positioned ourselves to approximate a gendered white middle-class identity, even as we entertained the inevitability of the multiple ways in which we would exceed the limits of this identity. Moreover, we articulated a clear ‘position’ on abortion from within the nexus of multiple and conflicting ‘positionalities’ through which we negotiated a multiplicity of desires.

What fascinates me was the way in which the imperative to ‘know’ worked to shape our desires (for heterosexual sex; for education, for a career path, for a clear political position on abortion...) to fall in line with a limited and ideologically delineated set
of choices amongst which we 'should' have already 'chosen' in lieu of the event ever occurring at all. As Butler notes, "There is then no prior position which legislates, initiates, or motivates the various efforts to embody or instantiate that position; rather, that position is the fiction produced in the course of its instancings" (1993:109).

I write this moment into this analysis as a way of thinking about 'state formation' as the practices through which subjects are constituted in accordance with the ideological functions of state regulation. Within this moment of conversation, I am positioned as a subject within the symbolic repetitions of 'normalcy' through which my desires become constituted and channeled toward a limited range of identifications, the citing of which marks the reinvestment of the symbolic law through which my desires become mobilized in particular ways (Butler:1993).

As Petchesky suggests, the imperative to take a 'position' (pro-choice/anti-choice) within abortion debates becomes a 'badge of identity,' signifying investment in particular sets of values, from women's self determination to defense of the traditional (patriarchal) family (1990:xiii). Within this ideologically proscribed space, the assumption of a political 'stance' on abortion requires an oversimplification of the ambivalences, contradictions and shifting positionalities which constitute the relationship between bodies and abortion debates.\footnote{In Chapter three, I talk more extensively about 'ambivalence' and 'contradictions' in relation to abortion debates and recent Canadian legal cases.} I am theorizing 'abortion debates' as a site of ideological contestation through which 'identities' struggle for articulation.
Pro-choice organizing operates in and through the amplification of categories of identity which are both clearly marked and presumably understood, and which rely on unmarked categories and locations for their coherent articulation. Those of us who claim a pro-choice stance might be tempted to think we know what it means to be pro-choice, yet the terms of 'choice' shift across different historical moments and within different feminist spaces. Petchesky writes of how pro-choice movement, and white class privileged women within it as the deserving subjects of 'reproductive rights' and 'choice,' has been constructed against notions which hold women of color as sexually promiscuous, exotic, 'bad' girls. In this construction, white women can embody the location of 'good girl,' with all of its accompanying reproductive entitlements (1990:xx). Sexual freedom as it may pertain to white, straight women, bears little relevance to the very different freedom struggles of women of color, women with disabilities or lesbian women. What has gone under-remarked is the extent to which 'good girl' and 'white middle-class girl' intersect as a sight of dominance within struggles to attain (and constrain) reproductive freedoms for all women.

Questions of the state become particularly pertinent in relation to pro-choice political organizing, a struggle which has largely been waged on the terrain of state apparatuses such as publicly funded health care, state regulated medical procedures and the law. Returning to the problem of state formation in the context of the above reflection presents an opportunity to understand the complex trajectories of power through which the operations of the 'state' can also be understood as constitutive of the beliefs, actions and desires of subjects who conceive of themselves as choosing agents.
Taking seriously the 'idea' of the state as productive of fictional distinctions between objective and subjective dimensions of the social and the political, gestures toward the ideological function of representations (or 'mis'-representations) of economic and political domination which legitimate regulation by making it appear as if subjects enjoy an unlimited degree of freedom to choose (Abrams:1977). But as Butler articulates, "At stake is a way to describe this deeper and perhaps irrecoverable sense of constitutedness and constraint in the face of which the notions of 'choice' or 'free play' appear not only foreign, but unthinkable and sometimes even cruel" (1993:92).

State Formation Within the Field of Representation

Important for this analysis (and so worth running the risk of repeating myself) is the notion of the 'state' not as a unified body of decision makers, but as a site of ideological struggle or disunity which represents a fictional coherence. My approach is one which seeks to understand the operations of the 'state' through the (localized) "...mechanisms by which social interests find representation..." (Mitchell, 1991:82). I seek to theorize the state by making use of images in order to conceptualize power as a force which imposes itself upon individuals not in the manner of external constraint, but as a force which regulates individuals by producing them as political subjects (as viewers) within representation (Mitchell, 1991:93). These are the 'suturing' effects described by Hall (1996) as "...the effecting of the join of the subject within structures of meaning" (6).
Yet within the context of pro-choice organizing, attention must be paid to both the clearly visible and mutually productive representational and material forces which constitute anti-choice opposition. Although the majority of Canadians are presumed to favor women's 'right' to make decisions about our reproductive functions and responsibilities, resistance to the materialization of this 'right' takes on a multitude of forms, which do indeed appear to impose themselves '...in the manner of external constraint.'

A history of struggles over abortion rights in Canada is, in part, a history in which clinics have been bombed and picketed, doctors have been assaulted with weapons and shot in their homes, women seeking abortions are continually harassed by anti-choice factions, reproductive health service providers have been arrested and jailed, and abortion clinics have been repeatedly shut down by police and the courts.

Representations of women seeking abortions or failing to perform themselves in accordance with socially acceptable notions of womanhood and motherhood continue to haunt the popular press. How can the existence of these powerful 'authorities' be understood within the context of my efforts to theorize the state? Undoubtedly, these violent interferences in women’s struggles for sexual and self-determination must be disarmed. It is important to know which arm of the 'state' is flexing its muscles in

---

18 In response to this work Kari Dehli has pointed out that the provision of abortion as a 'free' service available to all women has very different consequences for women without means to purchase or access abortion services that for those who do. I will discuss 'access' in a Canadian context further in Chapter 5.

19 For a useful historical summary of pro-choice/anti-choice activity in Canada see "Chronology of Court Cases: Dr. Morgentaler and Others." (Childbirth By Choice Trust Publication, Toronto).
opposition to choice, if we are to develop resistance strategies which question the mechanics of how particular state practices differ in their operations and effects. Several recent court cases challenge the notion that Canadians, by and large, support a woman's 'right' to control her reproductive functions and responsibilities, and complicate the assumption of a nation-wide 'pro-choice' stance.\(^{20}\) If the majority of Canadians are presumed to be pro-choice, how did these cases end up in court? Can this be understood only as an effect of the current right-wing political climate?\(^{21}\) Indeed, some recent legal and political shifts do draw our attention. The cases of Brenda Drummond, Cynthia Dobson, and Ms. G in Canada,\(^{22}\) alongside current Congressional debates over late term abortion in the US,\(^{23}\) indicate that the question of 'fetal rights' figures powerfully within the contemporary political spectrum. These cases raise the question of which reproductive 'choices' are collectively sanctioned to be the domain of 'women,' and which 'choices' are state sanctioned territory?

\(^{20}\) On January 28, 1988, the Supreme Court of Canada struck down Canada's abortion law (section 251 of the Criminal Code) ruling it as unconstitutional. The Justices found that the law violated Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms because it infringed on a woman's right to 'life, liberty and security of the person' ("Chronology of Court Cases: Dr. Morgentaler and Others," Childbirth by Choice Trust Publication, Toronto).

\(^{21}\) Preston Manning, leader of the official (anti-choice)opposition Reform Party in Canada has recently called for a nation-wide referendum on abortion. This issue is currently under debate.


\(^{23}\) Over the next few months, The United States Congress and many states legislatures, ranging from Montana to Pennsylvania, are expected to consider bills to ban late term abortion. Recent debates at the federal level over H.R. 1833, the so-called 'Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act,' passed by the 104th Congress and vetoed by President Clinton, have resulted in a renewed debate over the laws, medical procedures and the lives of the women who require them (The Center for Reproductive Law and Policy publication, 1997). Also see FMF Feminist News, http://www.feminist.org/news/newsbyte/may97/0516.html, 05/16/97).
Moreover, which women are positioned to make which choices and how?

The cases I am referring to have pushed the Canadian legal system to begin to question and redefine its own powers and limitations. Perhaps the most prominent case is that of ‘Ms. G,’ an Aboriginal woman from Manitoba whose pregnancy prompted a legal challenge in response to her solvent addiction and the potential harm to her fetus. Over the issue of ‘potential harm,’ Ms. G was temporarily detained against her will in a rehabilitation facility. Ms. G’s three other children are in the custody of family service agencies. (Kastner, S. 1996:A2) A second case is that of Brenda Drummond, a twenty-eight year old woman from Carleton Place, who was charged with attempting to murder her unborn child with a shot from a pellet gun to his brain at eight months in utero. Drummond gave birth to a son just two days later.²⁴ (Cox, W. 1996:A8) A third case is that of the recent ruling that a four year old Moncton child can seek damages from his mother for injuries he suffered due to negligence while in utero. The child’s grandfather is bringing the case against his daughter, Cynthia Dobson, who was responsible for the head on car collision which caused severe injuries to herself and to her child. The child’s injuries were permanently disabling.

---

²⁴ The Drummond case is particularly complicated in a legal sense. Brenda Drummond was charged with attempted murder. Under Section 223 of The Criminal Code in Canada, a child becomes a human being after it has completely left the mother’s body. Because Ms. Drummond’s fetus/child was still in the womb at the time of injury, her lawyer is arguing there is no victim. (Canadian Press Release, The Globe and Mail, 22/07/96:A7)
These cases serve to remind us that we cannot speak in terms of 'choice' without simultaneously addressing the social, economic and legal landscapes on which speaking of women's 'choice' becomes impossible or even cruel (Butler: 1993), and that 'choice' takes on radically different meanings within the specific context of particular realities and circumstances. Perhaps these cases might also remind us that the ability to participate in pro-choice political struggles often requires a certain degree of social and economic autonomy in the first instance. Women for whom survival is an open and persistantly present question may have difficulty finding the time and the resources to volunteer for political causes. In the context of the cases cited above, 'choice' becomes meaningful in multiple ways; indeed, in light of these cases, 'choice' might not prove to be a useful term at all. Unless, of course, we want to think about what the use of 'choice' as political speech might secure.

Looking for the State

As I have mentioned previously, identifications are never fixed, but take the form of temporary and shifting alignments within the range of possible or culturally viable categories of identity. Of continued interest here are the dynamic processes through which identities are formed ..."at the point of suture, between on the one hand the discourses and practices which attempt to 'interpellate,' speak to us or hail us into place as the social subjects of particular discourses, and on the other hand, the processes which produce subjectivities which construct us as subjects which can be 'spoken'" (Hall, 1996:6).
How, then, can a photograph which serves as a visual representation of a political movement be 'read' through practices of state formation, wherein ideologically constructed categories of identity both converge, conflict, and present momentary coherence? How might reflection upon moments of constitutedness within viewing relations further an understanding of the possibilities for the performance of moments of state '(de)formation:' to enable the articulation of political claims which refuse the re-mobilization of categories of identity, but instead speak to the 'constitutedness' of those categories and our position as subjects within that unstable field of constraint?

A Symbol ofResistance? Troubling With the Image

Several months ago a graduate student and friend who was aware that I was doing research on photography presented me with an article entitled "She Had a Name. She Had a Family. She was Leona's Sister Gerri" (Brandes-Gratz, R., 1995:72-74). My gaze was immediately drawn to the photograph accompanying the article, which depicts a woman's naked body, displayed from the rear and slumped forward over her knees in the corner of a room. Her legs straddle a pile of bloodstained rags. One arm is extended, grasping a white cloth. The woman's face is completely concealed (Ms., Nov/Dec 1995:72).

Although I hadn't yet read the accompanying article, I presumed that this was a picture of a woman who had died from a rape or a botched abortion procedure. Upon reading the article, I found that the latter speculation was the case. Initially, in response to the image, I was beset with questions. Who was this woman? Why was she alone? What
desperate circumstances lead her to this violent and tragic end? How did this moment come to be immortalized within this image? Who held the camera? Who made decisions about where this photograph would later be displayed? But in retrospect, I am uncertain whether these questions came to me after some of the answers were made available through the accompanying text. What I am able to recall from my initial reading is an overwhelming sense of horror.

John Berger describes photographs like the one of Gerri Santoro as having an 'arresting' effect upon the viewer who is 'brought up short' by the horror of the image (1980:38). Berger points out that 'photographs of agony' enact a 'double violence' through the isolating effects of the moment itself and the secondary isolation which takes place when the moment is captured on film. Berger argues that this 'double violence' does little to awaken concern; rather it is experienced as the viewer's own political isolation and disempowerment, reducing the range of possible responses to a depoliticized set of acts, such as the making of individual donations to high profile causes. What can fail to occur in response to the image, Berger notes, is an analysis which draws into question the social and political conditions through which the image came into being; in effect, a resultant challenge to the viewer's lack of political freedom.

It is interesting, however, in the context of Berger's analysis, to reflect on how the photograph of Santoro became an icon for pro-choice movement in North America, subsequent to its publication in Ms. (1973). The collective response of pro-choice
communities in taking up the image of Santoro as a powerful political symbol exceeded the limits of individual concern, problematizing Berger's presumption of a 'universal viewing response.' Displayed on placards at countless pro-choice demonstrations, this 'photograph of agony' became one strategic site from which pro-choice movement made collective claims on behalf of women's restricted access to reproductive 'choice.' Yet the use of this image as political signifier invites a return to my initial series of questions about Santoro's identity and the origins of the photograph, and a re-posing of the question of what it is that this photograph 'makes us see.'

In 1973, the photograph of Gerri Santoro became meaningful within the context of pro-choice/anti-choice debates in which the fetus and the pregnant woman's relationship to it were, and continue to be, profoundly shaped through visual images made available through advanced reproductive technologies such as amniocentesis and ultrasound. Pivotal in constructing the ideological terrain of the debate were (and still are) pro-life films and still photographs such as The Silent Scream, wherein the fetus is depicted as a human being, independent of the body of the woman. In response to outrage-eliciting images of dead fetuses emerging from anti-choice movement in the early 1970's, a photograph of a woman dead from a botched abortion became a timely and important opportunity for pro-choice movement to make (politically) visible 'women's' restricted access to reproductive choice. Yet a universalized symbol of 'women's' collective oppression has particular implications for the processes of identification and identity formation (Dehli, 1991:45). As Dehli has written:
It has been important for individual women and for women's movements proudly and defiantly to claim a positive identity as women, rejecting the negative identifying practices of dominant social institutions and discourses. Nevertheless, like others, I have trouble with the assumed fixedness and often ahistorical character of the categories feminists use to identify ourselves and each other (Riley, 1988), and with the ways that the category 'woman' glosses over differences among women (Spelman, 1988; hooks, 1984).

Since my initial viewing of the image of Santoro, I have shown the photograph to many friends and colleagues, the majority of whom have shared a vague recollection of having 'seen the image somewhere.' The most typical response to the image is one in which the viewer expresses shock and concern by saying, for example, 'Oh yes, that was an awful thing,' generally while pushing the photograph away. On a recent visit to the office of a major pro-choice lobby group, upon mention of the photograph, I found that one of the front line staff members for that organization keeps the image tacked to a bulletin board above her desk as inspiration for her work.

These are two very different responses, which are suggestive of the impossibility of controlling the message of any image, and the problematic presumption of a 'universal' viewing experience, amidst the underlying tensions between rule and resistance which constitute viewers (differently) in relation to politicized images. Although it has been taken up as a symbol of resistance, the photograph of Santoro can also be understood as an ideological site of struggle with enabling and constraining effects. As Valverde and Weir suggest, "...by focussing on the relationship between rule and resistance in particular struggles, one can use an analysis of regulation to shed light on resistance movements, and vice versa" (1988:34). At stake for me is a multistranded analysis of
the way the photograph 'works' on the viewer (differently, on differently situated viewers) at the level of identifications within particular social/historical moments. A related question is how the image becomes implicated within ideologically fixed and polarized positions of opposing sides of abortion debate, such that even dedicated supporters of 'choice' might find reflection on the constraining effects of the photograph informative in thinking through strategies of resistance.

Political Moves/Political Tensions

McQuiston's thought provoking question, "Why should the protest be any more delicate than the oppression?" (1997:16) becomes useful in thinking through the implications of visual campaigns seeking to address injurious social conditions. The use of this quotation here is intentionally ironic. In order for the image of Santoro to work effectively as a political symbol in response to images of dead fetuses emerging from anti-choice movement, it was imperative that the photograph enable the making of strategic and collective claims on behalf of reproductive freedom for 'women.' The anonymity of the image (Santoro's face is hidden) made possible this process of resignification. Yet as a representative image of 'women's experience' of restricted choice, the photographic figure of a dead white woman emerges from and reinstates notions of the white female subject as a universal category for understanding women's collective experience in the face of an unwanted pregnancy, in relation to which the lived realities of a diversity of women are decentered. In this construction, 'woman' and 'whiteness' are inextricably linked yet perhaps under-remarked.
As Petchesky observes, the taking up of abstract notions of individual subjects as 'rights-bearers' emerges from a liberal discourse of individualism which creates the 'fiction' of a coherent and universal subject which becomes the foundation for universalizing claims (1990:394). As representative of a political movement which has historically been shaped through the 'experience' and interests of white, heterosexual, middle-class women, this photograph does little to disrupt the symbolic flow through which 'women's experience' gains cultural and political viability. Read in the context of anti-choice discourses - which are largely constituted through the interests of white, heterosexual, middle-class men (as opponents of 'choice') - this photograph can also be read as a symbolic re-centering of white women as the valued territory upon which the 'state' maintains regulatory control over both women's reproductive and sexual freedom(s).

This centering of a white woman as symbol for reproductive freedom is constituted against the abject realm of a 'de-centered' woman's experience, which works to invade other sites of symbolic meaning in a multiple and trajectorial fashion. As Petchesky writes, "Abortion is the fulcrum of a much broader ideological struggle in which the very meanings of the family, the state, motherhood and young women's sexuality are contested" (1990:xi). The photograph of Santoro, then, enters in to a symbolic context in which access to abortion clinics threatens the construction of white women's sexual freedom.

25 I thank Kari Dehli for pointing out the possibility of a slip and erasure here. What I want to avoid is suggesting that women of color, working class women, women with disabilities and lesbian women have not been actively involved in histories of pro-choice organizing. I do, however, want to suggest that the work, issues and interests of white, class privileged women has been most visible in the movement's representations of 'it'self.
innocence, by furthering the struggle for sexual independence and a subsequent host of contingent reproductive freedoms.

In effect, the image of Santoro can be 'read' as the 'consequence' of women's restricted access to 'choice,' or as the 'consequence' of white women's transgression from the boundaries which define socially acceptable conduct. As coherent categories of identity rest, in part, on the performance of culturally viable forms of conduct, the performance of 'unacceptable' forms of conduct within the symbolic is required as their constitutive outside. Petchesky's important analysis of white women's sexual innocence as constituted against the historical and contemporary objectification of women of color points to the importance of marking and naming the centering of representations of white women as symbols for pro-choice movement (1990:xviii-xxi). This amplifies the tension between the need to make universalizing claims on behalf of 'women' while symbolically countering pro-life images of fetuses, and the symbolic exclusions these political 'moves' require for their articulation.

The Fictions of Identity: Living with Contradictions

In the attempt to explore further Petchesky's notion of abortion as the fulcrum of a 'much broader ideological struggle' over the meaning of social constructs such as 'the family,' 'the state,' 'sexuality,' and 'motherhood,' I return to my earlier reflection on the 'moment' of conversation which I recall having had repeatedly as a teenager. In my 'theorization' of this moment of conversation, I reflected upon the importance of 'knowing' unequivocally what 'we' - as white, middle-class, presumed to be straight
teenagers - would do in the face of an unwanted pregnancy, and the ways in which our 'decision' was reflective of many other aspects of our 'identity' in that moment. Yet within that moment of conversation, the 'options' were heavily proscribed, even as we 'thought' we were making choices. At no point did we question the assumption that we might become pregnant, requiring a further assumption that we would engage in heterosexual sex practices. Simultaneously, our 'choices' (as young, white, middle-class women who were expected to postpone pregnancy until we were well established within heterosexual marriage,) were indicative of our career (class status) and marital aspirations, and our investment in maintaining appearances of sexual propriety. Within this configuration of 'middle-class' imperatives, our 'choices' were inextricably bound up with our 'positioning' and the maintenance of the appearance of that positioning.

Within the social reproduction of categories of identity, 'appearances' or 'representations' become paramount. Solomon-Godeau writes of the material, social, and psychic investments through which the 'idea' of middle-classness is upheld, even as individual desires and anxieties repeatedly exceed the appearances of middle-class harmony and material comfort. Solomon-Godeau explores this notion through Connie Hatch’s photo essay entitled 'The De-Sublimation of Romance' (1991). She suggests, 26

26 Wendy Brown provides insight in relation to my discussion of the fiction of 'middle-classness.' Brown writes, "If there is one class that articulates and even politicizes itself in late modern North American life, it is that which gives itself the name of the 'middle class'...Poised between the rich and poor, feeling itself to be protected from the encroachments of neither, the phantasmatic middle class signifies the natural and the good between the decadent or the corrupt on one side, the aberrant or the decaying on the other. It is a conservative identity in the sense that it semiotically recurs to a phantasmatic past, and imagined idyllic, unfettered, and uncorrupted historical moment (implicitly located around 1955) when life was good - housing was affordable, men supported families on single incomes, drugs were confined to urban ghettos." (1995:61).
quite provocatively, that the identifications of the white middle-class viewer occur in the indeterminate spaces where the viewer 'sees their reflection' in the lived contradictions that arise when desires and anxieties inevitably contradict social constructions of middle-classness. As Butler writes, "Identifications, then, can ward off certain desires or act as vehicles for desire; in order to facilitate certain desires, it may be necessary to ward off others: identification is the site at which this ambivalent prohibition and production of desire occurs" (1993:100). Indeed, the family depicted in the photo essay repeatedly fails to perform their middle class identity without 'slipping up' on the contradictions which emerge between their desire and the channeling of that desire within middle class identities of (patriarchal) family and social and material success.

In theorizing my own reading of the photograph of Santoro I enter into this difficult conceptual field of 'identifications,' described by Hall as the suggestion of a recognition of shared characteristics or sameness between individuals or groups, resulting in a shared sense of solidarity or allegiance. Hall points out that a discursive approach to understanding identifications would claim that this recognition of sameness is never a complete fit; it is, in fact, a "fantasy of overdetermination." The discursive work of the consolidation of identifications is the articulation of symbolic boundaries of a constitutive abject realm against which difference can be measured (1996:2-3). Of importance are the moments of constitutedness and constraint I am able to glimpse as I reflect on myself as viewer in relation to the photograph of Santoro within the discursive landscapes of reproductive 'choice.' Paying attention to the 'slippages' in
which categories of identity and the performances of those categories fail to achieve coherence, I will remark on implications for the making of political claims which interrogate the categories of identity through which interests are brought to bear upon the state.

The Political Signifier as Mirror of Identifications

Butler's notion of 'performativity' as the "forced reiteration of norms" (1993:94) becomes insightful in relation to the moment of conversation I repeatedly return to in these pages. The 'assumptions' (as I have referred to them) of participation in heterosexual sex, marriage, career, family and sexual propriety can be understood as repetitions of the imperatives of normativity. Within that moment, abortion becomes a necessary tool to facilitate the maintenance of this fiction. The repetition of this set of norms constitutes a field of constraint in which desiring outside of this domain of normalcy becomes radically unthinkable (and for many, radically enticing).

Within this field of constitution and constraint, I can 'see myself' reflected against the image of Santoro. She 'exists' within the abjected symbolic realm that I must not enter into, as the 'bad' woman/mother/daughter who has participated in a host of sexual and social transgressions. More radically, I identify with the image as a symbol of white woman's fictional innocence and the need for women's sexual self-determination. Understood as the signifier of these multiple and conflicting identifications, Santoro’s image is a site where the constitutedness of identity and the fiction of coherence is exposed.

56
Viewing Relations and the Production of the Political Subject

Returning to Hall's concept of identities as formed at the 'point of suture' between practices that 'hail us into place' as social subjects, and the processes which produce subjectivities and construct intelligible categories of identity which 'can be spoken' (1996:11), the combined analysis of the 'moment of conversation' in relation to the photograph of Santoro, provides a point of entry into the complex social and psychic web of enabling and constraining conditions I enter into as viewer and emerge from as political subject.

The image of Santoro offers multiple 'points of entry' for the viewer, which are constructed on a social terrain which throws the notion of 'choice' (or the existence of the free political subject) into question. As I have mentioned, within the nexus of moral imperatives which constitute the legal, economic and social constraints within which women make decisions about unwanted pregnancies, the notion of 'choice' becomes a fragile concept. Following that, images of dead women and dead fetuses in symbolic and political juxtaposition produce absolute categories of personal and political allegiance, through which the complexity of issues which underly debates over reproductive freedoms, and the shifting alliances and ambivalent positions which characterize many women's decisions about abortion, are reduced to ridiculously simplified moral questions of right and wrong. A debate which integrates the 'messiness' of questions of women's right to control their own bodies with questions of early human life, in ways that challenge the limits of legal frameworks which pit 'women's rights' against 'fetal rights,' is rendered unintelligible. Within these limited
options for political viability, notions of the political subject as 'choosing' a position on abortion are questionable at best.

**Representations of Political Movement: Re-imagining Resistance Strategies**

I hesitate to make generalized claims about 'political movement,' choosing instead to focus my attention on particular 'moments' of state regulation, formation, and ultimately de-formation. I will partially contradict that commitment, seeking to hold in tension the need for specificity and my own desire to think through Butler's claim, worth quoting here at length, within the larger context of pro-choice organizing:

> The contemporary political demand on thinking is to map out the interrelationships that connect, without simplistically uniting, a variety of dynamic and relational positionalities within the political field. Further, it will be crucial to find a way both to occupy such sites and to subject them to a democratizing contestation in which the exclusionary conditions of their production are perpetually reworked (even though they can never be overcome) in the direction of a more complex coalitional frame. (1993:115)

Again, McQuiston's words, "Why should the protest be more delicate than the oppression?" provide an important question about how resistance movements construct themselves in relation to and often in reaction to external opposition. As Petchesky observes, "The urge to create a rhetoric that universalizes women's claims and connects them to some larger source of validation (human rights, the right of personhood) is on some level indispensable for any disenfranchised or marginalized group seeking recognition as more than just a 'competing interest'" (1990:395). Yet it is this very struggle to make connections with 'larger sources of validation' through which notions of the 'state' as distinct body find articulation, effectively re-mobilizing the constraints
through which subjects seeking recognition fail to interrogate the socio-historic production of the very subject-positions in need of political affirmation.

Petchesky points out that abortion debates fail to “...generate joyful, proud symbols...” (1990:396) amidst a symbolic onslaught of coathangers, fetuses, and violated bodies. Are images of dead women the 'obvious' response to images of dead fetuses? Yet to be imagined is what an alternative and strategic visual representation of 'choice' would resemble.

Stuart Hall writes, "Though they seem to invoke an origin in an historical past with which they continue to correspond, actually identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being: not ‘who we are’ or ‘where we came from,’ so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves” (1996:4). What would images of the ‘possibilities for becoming’ within women’s full access to reproductive freedom resemble, and how might such images hold in tension the contradictions and exclusionary moves inherent in attempts to ‘represent’ women’s collective interests? Could images which ‘call up’ the viewer within the indeterminate spaces of political ambivalence strategically complexify the goals of pro-choice movement, while disarming the certainties of anti-choice rhetoric? Perhaps additional possibilities lie in how we look, and how we come to understand what our looking makes of us.
I visualize, for example, the blurry beginnings of images which depict differently positioned young women engaged in conversations about abortion, which explore the symbolic and productive implications for identity which inevitably emerge within the broader context of lived experience. If, as Petchesky put forth, abortion is '...the fulcrum of the ideological struggle in which the very [meaning] of ...young women's sexuality [is] contested' (1990:xi), what role can pro-choice images play in how young women come to see themselves as sexual beings? I imagine, also, differently positioned front line activists in pro-choice movement reflecting on and discussing their 'readings' of the photograph of Gerri Santoro and the ways in which the photograph informs their work. This conversation would 'work' the viewer's relation to the image and to the larger debate, inviting a series of resultant and irresolvable tensions which constitute the ideological struggle of abortion debate and the relationship of the political subject to that debate.

Petchesky asks, "What dynamic possibilities for feminist movement exist within the tension that arises when individual desire continues to exceed socially organized 'need'?" (1990:400). Cutting across the 'moments' of state formation I have engaged with here, I emerge repeatedly as a 'subject' caught up in the turbulent space of categorical 'identity' imperatives and the excesses of my own desire. In conversation with my teenaged friends, I engaged with multiple 'constraints' in the taking up of a personal and political 'position' on abortion, made possible only through my investment in a particular set of positionalities and the foreclosure of other possibilities. As viewer, I engage with a photograph of a dead woman amidst a complicated and messy set of
identifications through which distinctions between my 'self' and my 'political self' dissolve, leaving me scrambling for a foothold on the precarious political ground where resistance and complicity coexist.

In closing I return to the photograph which has haunted me since my initial viewing, in the context of Probyn's words, "...it is important to emphasize that images work not in relation to any supposed point of reference but in their movement, in the ways in which they set up lines of desire...This image is queer because I queer its relation to other images and bodies" (1995:12). I wonder how the image of Gerri Santoro might be ressurected from the realm of empty signifier to become a flesh, bones, blood and guts referent to the complicated processes by and through which bodies come to approximate culturally viable ideals, and how these ideals shape the very political movements which seek to contest them. The flesh, bones, blood and guts of this awareness will be the materialization of the viewer-as-political subject in relation to Santoro's image, and the strategic questioning of what this image fixes and unfixes.
Women's hard-won right to have a legal abortion is in trouble, deep trouble.

At best, it is being seriously challenged. At worst, it may be effectively crippled or even withdrawn altogether.

This may come as a shock to the reader who has been lulled into a false sense of security since 1973 when the Supreme Court established the right of a woman to have a safe, legal, early abortion.

At the time of the Supreme Court's landmark abortion decision, I wrote an article for this magazine, entitled "Never Again" (April, 1973), in which I warned: "The Supreme Court victory will not be complete until dignified and safe abortions are available to all who seek them, poor women as well as those who can afford the current inflated price; until we have defeated the ingenious maneuverings that are already being tried to forestall compliance . . . until all state laws pertaining to abortion are wiped from the books, and abortion is no longer treated differently from other medical matters." We are far from that goal. Consider these sobering facts:

*The Hyde Amendment, which passed once in 1976 and is now being challenged in the courts, has been reintroduced as part of the 1977-78 Labor/HEW appropriations bill. It specifies that federal funds (Medicaid) may not be used for abortions. By the time you read this, unless the Supreme Court rules that it is unconstitutional, the Hyde provision may have been approved again, effectively foreclosing abortion as an option for poor women.

President Carter and his HEW Secretary Joseph Califano are determined to do everything possible to keep from spending federal dollars on abortion. Their claim is that effective contraception programs can eliminate the need for abortion—but as long as women still have unwanted pregnancies, talking about birth control is a classic case of closing the barn door after the horse has escaped.

*In 1975, an estimated 224,000 to 734,000 women were unable to get a safe, legal abortion. In some states the lack of a nearby abortion facility forces women to travel great, expensive distances to get one.

While public hospitals cannot legally deny a woman an abortion, the fact is that 80 percent of all public hospitals in the country refuse to terminate pregnancies. Some will only perform abortions medically necessary to save a woman’s life. Others claim their staff refuses to perform them for moral or religious reasons. Still others have closed their ob-gyn services altogether.

Recently, Abortion Rights Mobilization, a legal rights organization based in New York, has started a campaign of federal court cases to force public hospit-
...Memory speaks:

You cannot live on me alone
you cannot live without me

I’m nothing if I’m just a role of film

stills from a vanished world...

Left for another generation’s

restoration and framing I can’t be restored or framed

I can’t be still I’m here

in your mirror pressed leg to leg beside you

intrusive inappropriate bitter flashing...(Rich, 1991:44)
I have changed the title of this chapter numerous times. The current title implies several things which I am uneasy with and seem as of yet unable to resolve through a catchy sentence or two. Firstly, it suggests the possibility of unmediated access to the memory of a woman whose death as a result of an illegal abortion procedure was captured on film in 1963, and made public through pro-choice pamphlets and a 1973 issue of Ms. Magazine. The ‘anonymous’ photograph of Gerri Santoro’s dead body became - and continues to circulate as - a powerful signifier for reproductive choice, appearing on placards at demonstrations over the past two decades, often underscored by the political slogan ‘Never Again.’

This chapter is dedicated to a consideration of what it means to forget Gerri Santoro, and to the problematic project of her remembrance. I will attempt to draw out some of the complexities and ethical problems associated with how Santoro has been remembered - indeed which have structured the very terms of her remembrance - while thinking through possible implications of these practices of remembrance for pro-choice movement’s participation in contemporary abortion discourse.
The second problem I have with the title of this paper is that it suggests that there is one coherent body of public dialogue going on that can be called 'Abortion Debate.' As Janet Hadley writes, and as I will attempt to explore in this writing, there is no one ‘debate’; rather more of a "...slanderous cacophony... (in which)... the language has been cut loose from its moorings - life vs. murder; motherhood vs. infanticide; family values vs. selfish individualism; the rights of the fetus vs. the rights of the woman. Slogans on a badge. Linguistic feats are performed with words such as choice, life, (and) rights..." (1996:xii).

I am interested in how language and images both shape and are shaped by the discursive field of ‘abortion debate,’ structuring the dichotomies through which ‘women’s experience’ of unwanted pregnancy is socially and ideologically organized, regulated and understood. What counts as ‘experience’ within the courts, the medical system and within feminist struggles is produced by and through discourse - the regulatory violations of a signifying system and its accompanying erasures and exclusions (Haraway, 1991:109). I want to raise questions here about how historically conscious practices of pro-choice participation in the struggle to attain reproductive freedoms for ‘all women’ might bring an awareness of the symbolic and material disjunctures of abortion discourse and women’s complex realities to the debate. Simultaneously, I ask how to think through the risks involved in waging political campaigns in which specificity, heterogeneity, and the limits to representation are allowed to be seen.
In this chapter I will 'look at' the photograph of Gerri Santoro's dead body and a video entitled *Leona's Sister Gerri*, and examine how these two images continue to construct the terrain of reproductive politics. Of interest to this project are the pedagogical problems and possibilities which arise from the taking up of these two texts both independently and in reflexive relation. Some readers will be familiar with the photograph and possibly the video. Many will not. My aim is not to convey in writing what the photograph 'says;' but rather to tell a story about my own experience of reading the image, and how I understand my reading to have shifted in relation to the video later on. I will attempt to sketch out the discursive terrain which, I assert, structures - without determining - my responses to the photograph and the video. My intention is to invite others to enter into a viewing dialogue with these images in response to this writing, provoking discussions in which viewing practices and their implications for political struggle can be challenged, contested, and expanded in scope and possibility.

**The Visual Terrain of Abortion Debate ('Life' Magazine!)**

Still images of fetuses have been powerful in constructing the ideological landscape of abortion debate since a decade before the 1984 emergence of *The Silent Scream*, the first moving image which attempted to portray a twelve week old fetus as, "... assuming all of the subjective attributes of an eight year old child" in real time video ("The Silent Scream - A Study in Deception," CARAL Publication). As Peggy Phelan observes, "Fetal imagery, a persistent and ubiquitous force in the abortion debates, is important because it upsets the psychic terrain which formerly located all
reproductive visibility within the body of the pregnant woman. Once that independence is established, fetal imagery itself becomes vulnerable to all the potential manipulations of the signifying system" (1993:132).

Images of fetuses have become central to the ideological construction of the fetus as a child/subject with an ontological and biological existence which is independent from the body of the woman/mother. In this symbolic configuration, women become passive carriers of the fetus; in effect, female/maternal storage facilities. Images of fetuses as separate from women’s bodies materialize within anti-choice discourses which hold the ‘rights’ of the fetus over the ‘right’ of women to make choices in the face of an unwanted pregnancy. Conversely, pro-choice political strategies necessarily put forth women’s unequivocal ‘right’ to control our bodies and our reproductive functions.

Advances in reproductive technology further complexify the symbolic work of fetal imagery within abortion discourse making possible, for example, a recent photo essay in Life magazine which “...documents the embryonic journeys of a varied group of vertebrates, including pigs, monkeys, chickens and humans...providing a glimpse of how our earliest ancestors made us what we are today” (1996:38). Here, the fetal image becomes a sinister representation the ‘dawn of life.’ The text asks, “What does it mean to be one of us?,” amidst a visual aura of innocence and
Photographs such as the ones depicted in the *Life* photo essay lend a chilling sense of scientific and documentary authority to claims that fetuses can be unproblematically regarded as forms of early human life upon which societies *should* bestow freedoms and protections under the law. This raises questions about what might constitute an equally powerful visual response on behalf of women’s reproductive rights, freedoms and protections? How to render women’s reproductive entitlements equally as legitimate in the eyes of a viewing community, and what limits to the possibilities for representation are constructed within these very terms? How do violent and often re-traumatizing images which seek to authenticate a ‘real’ experience simultaneously mobilize competing and often irreconcilable sets of interests, and how and when are strategic moments of resistance borne out of these disjunctures?

**Visual Incoherences**

As I have mentioned, I am researching and writing out of a photograph of a dead woman which has become widely recognized as a symbol for pro-choice movement since its emergence into the public sphere in the mid 1960's. Upon first viewing, I was absolutely struck by the photograph, but I was unable to understand why my reaction was so profound. Through my years spent working in feminist

---

27 In the final chapter of this thesis I make some preliminary forays into questions of how fetal imagery works to construct a particular social ‘we’ in different contexts.
organizations providing services to women survivors of male violence, I believed that there was little that could shock me. Inhabiting the privileged position of 'listener' rather than 'teller' of these stories of violence, I have wondered to what extent I became 'numb to the ongoing narrative' in order to perform a supportive role. Even closer to home, in my daily confrontations with sexism and the struggle to live with and beyond fear of male violence, I considered myself familiar with my own sense of vulnerability. The image of Santoro's dead body blew apart any sense of comfort I might have imagined in that familiarity. Within the moment of viewing, I became unfamiliar to myself.

The stark, black and white photograph of Gerri Santoro makes clear that the woman's body in the frame is dead from a rape or an abortion procedure gone wrong. Displayed from the rear, she is slumped forward in bent knee position, straddling a pile of bloody rags. She is not in a hospital or clinic. She is not accompanied by medical personnel or family. She is alone. Upon first viewing, I wanted to know more about this woman. What were her stories? What desperate circumstances lead her to this violent end? How did her death come to be captured on film, and particularly in a way which compounds her degradation? Who held the camera; who chose the angle of the photograph; who later made decisions about how and where this photograph would be made public? And perhaps most importantly, when I already know that countless numbers of women die as a result of restricted access to safe and legal abortions, why have I, and how have I become invested in the woman depicted in this photograph and the particulars of her life?
Since my initial viewing, I have become aware that the photograph of Gerri Santoro has unsettled my taken for granted frames of reference and has thrown into question what I thought I knew and understood about ‘women’s experience’ of unwanted pregnancy in relation to the larger public discourse of abortion. I will attempt to trace some of these shifts as this writing proceeds.

Certain images are powerful enough to invade the consciousness of a viewing community and remain etched on a collective psyche. This appears to be one such image. Since the first time I saw the photograph of Gerri Santoro’s dead body in a 1995 issue of Ms. magazine, I have initiated conversations with friends, family and colleagues in which the mere mention of this image and its surrounding controversy has elicited a vague but distinct recollection of ‘having seen that picture somewhere.’ Through this talk, it rapidly became evident that my own response to the image formed part of a larger, more collective public encounter.

Convinced that this photograph holds the power to leave a lasting impression on some viewers, I became interested in exploring further the complexities of this viewing dynamic. Faced with the photograph of Gerri Santoro, I felt compelled to respond in some way through an engagement with the struggle to fill in the gaps of my understanding. Inevitably, the search for answers generated more complex questions.
A Sticky Image

On the failure of testimonies of historical trauma to convey the "tangibility of past events across time and space," Simon and Eppert write "The inevitable betrayal of the testimonial act means that narratives and images of historical trauma are commonly shot through with absences that, in their silence, solicit or 'ask' questions" (Unpublished ms., 1996). For my purposes in this writing, I appropriate Simon's concept of the 'sticky image,' which is useful in thinking through the photograph's "...facility for accumulating associations and questions that not only make an image memorable but also perturbing and inciting" (1996:7). Simon and Eppert argue that a commemorative pedagogy begins with incongruities which enhance the image's interest and extend the visual concern they provoke, while refusing to be settled through some master framework or narrative of understanding. Further, the 'associative potency' of an image, or the degree of figural ambiguity which invites a multiplicity of associations, readings and responses, refuses the certainty of any singular reading of an image. (1996:8)

Initially, I read the photograph of Santoro as a closed narrative; a body claimed both by the violence of women's restricted access to reproductive choice, and by the objectifying gaze of the coroner's archival lens. Yet apart from questions concerning the events leading up to Santoro's death, I did begin to wonder how the photograph unsettled (and continues to unsettle) what I thought I knew about my own position within women's struggles for self-determination. I recall again my initial reading being one of unresolved questions. I recall a sense of urgency to
respond, to understand, and to have my questions resolved. On the one hand, I might have retreated from this image along with the countless other images and media reports of the violence of women’s lives which I glance at daily; accounts of women missing, women assaulted, and women found dead. On the other hand, I felt a pressing need to pay close attention to the irresolvable gaps in my own understanding in the face of this image.

As my relationship to the photograph changes over time, (here I mean, I feel an increasing familiarity, but no less fascination), I began to wonder how this image works on multiple levels as a symbol of ‘choice,’ both to reproduce and disrupt dominant and homogenizing representations of women seeking abortions. I wondered how the ‘memory’ of Santoro is initialized and maintained within a viewing community in relation to this stark, seemingly hopeless, pedagogically and politically contentious image; and in particular when the image is interpellated into the discourses of abortion debate.

Later on, in relation to the video Leona’s Sister Gerri, my own responses to the photograph underwent a radical reconfiguration, prompting the question of what shifts are made possible for the relation of a larger viewing community to the memory of Santoro through the production of the video? What are the obligations of a viewing community to the memory of Gerri Santoro, and more specifically, of pro-choice communities which take up her image as a political symbol? Conversely, toward what set of obligations does the memory of Santoro propel pro-choice
movement, wherein a connection to the past becomes indelibly linked to a political performance within the present, and toward an imagined future?

A History of the Photograph and Video

In response to powerful and outrage-eliciting images of dead fetuses emerging from pro-life movement in the early 1970's, a photograph of a woman dead from an illegal abortion procedure became a timely and important opportunity for pro-choice activists to make visible the material violence of women's restricted access to reproductive choice.

This photograph was taken at the scene of Gerri Santoro's death in a hotel room in Connecticut in 1963. Her male partner, Clyde Dixon (who was not her husband), had attempted to perform an abortion and then fled when it became clear that Santoro was dying. This photograph was later believed to have been leaked from the office of the County Coroner, released in pro-choice pamphlets and later published in a 1973 issue of *Ms.* magazine, and again in a 1977 issue of *Ms.* Dixon threw himself on the mercy of the courts and received one year plus a day in prison, after which time he returned to his wife and children. Santoro left two children behind.

The 1973 publication of the photograph in *Ms.* sparked a controversy over the ethics of publishing a photograph of a dead woman without the permission of her family, and in the absence of any accompanying information which would speak to the woman's specific circumstances. In fact, the journalist responsible for the article
accompanying Santoro’s image could not, at the time of publication, account for the origins of the photograph, the location of the crime, or the identity of the woman. Through the recollections of the editorial staff of Ms., it becomes clear that the decision to publish the photograph was rationalized on the basis of the woman’s identity being obscured. In the eyes of the staff of Ms., this was an image of an unknown woman who had met the fate of countless women with restricted access to safe, affordable and legal abortions.

In 1994, Leona Gordon, sister of the deceased, contacted Roberta Brandes-Gratz, author of the 1973 Ms. article. Gordon shared her initial sense of shock over the publication of the photograph, and her refusal to look at the issue of Ms. for many years. Later, as the abortion debates intensified with Roe v. Wade, Gordon decided that her sister’s picture “...had been put to good use, graphically illustrating what no words could” (Ms., Nov/Dec 1995:72) In the attempt to address the impact of the publication of the photograph of Santoro on her family and community, and to reconstruct a larger narrative of Santoro’s life, Gordon worked with director Jane Gillooly to produce a video entitled Leona’s Sister Gerri. Through a community’s mobilization of a very different collective memory of the ‘anonymous’ Gerri Santoro, I believe this video dramatically alters the initial controversy in ways that have yet to be explored for their theoretical, political or pedagogical significance.
Marking the Terms of Memory

The response of Santoro’s family to the publication of the photograph makes curious the assumption that the woman in the photograph was ‘anonymous’ or unidentifiable. An interrogation of this assumption is linked to an understanding of the terms on which the memory of Gerri Santoro was publicly reconstructed through the photograph and the limits to memory which are inherent in this reconstruction.

Political movements often converge around memories which enable activists to put forward images of a homogeneous identity which invites collective identifications and which enables the making of claims upon the state. Memories of past events, then, are often, if not always, mobilized according to the needs of the present. In 1973, the image of Santoro was intended to respond to images of dead fetuses with all of the material and documentary legitimacy required to compete with fetal imagery on its own terms. It was intended to bring women’s bodies back in to the symbolic field of abortion imagery, rupturing the ideology of fetal autonomy, while making the consequences of women’s restricted access to reproductive choice visible. But the question which went unaddressed in 1973, and which remains relevant to contemporary feminist struggles is, at what price is Santoro forgotten? At what cost is Santoro’s body remembered as ‘a body,’ taken out of historical context, wrenched from her community, depicted as unidentifiable, and dead from an illegal abortion on an anonymous hotel room floor?
‘Women’s Experience’ in Two Dimensions or Less

Central to this analysis is the issue of how the ‘anonymous’ image of Gerri Santoro served the urgent need for a symbolic representation of ‘choice’ so effectively. How has this particular body come to represent - or mis-represent - ‘women’s experience’ of restricted access to reproductive choice? What does it mean to give primacy to the ‘evidence’ of Santoro’s dead body as a political strategy, and what limits does this strategy impose on the structures of memory and the possibilities for continually re-imagining political strategies directed toward a more just future?

I have discussed in the previous chapter, that as a representation of ‘women’s experience,’ the photographic figure of a dead white women emerges from and reproduces discourses of the white female subject as universal structure or category of understanding ‘women’s experience,’ in the face of which the ‘experiences’ of differently located women are decentered and difference is symbolically effaced. Angela Davis points out in her important and still pertinent essay, “Racism, Birth Control, and Reproductive Rights,” (1981:202-221) that the notion of ‘reproductive rights’ holds radically different meanings for poor women, women of color, Aboriginal women, women with disabilities, and lesbian women than it does for the white middle class heterosexual woman whose interests form the center of abortion debates.

Feminist analysis calls for the need for broadly defined prerequisites for reproductive freedom (Gordon, 1976; McDonnell, 1984), incorporating not only
access to safe, legal and affordable abortions, but also sex education and the availability of contraceptives; employment, affordable housing and child care; monitoring of advances in reproductive technology; and educational and political campaigns which advocate for the reproductive rights of all women, including women living with HIV and AIDS to choose, or decline, motherhood (Davis, ed., 1988:5-6). Davis makes clear that a woman’s social location can determine whether the issue at stake is her right to have an abortion or her right to give birth.

In light of broad based definitions of reproductive freedom, the emergence of the photograph of Santoro into the visual field of abortion discourse re-constitutes a rather perilous field of politics and representation. As representative of a political movement which has historically been shaped by the interests of white, straight, middle-class women, the photograph does little to disrupt the flow of this representation of ‘women’s experience.’ It is arguable that the ‘erasure’ of Gerri Santoro’s identity enables this homogenization of ‘women’s experience,’ symbolically enacting countless other erasures. Momentarily displacing the figure of Santoro from the image of ‘choice’ raises the question of whether the photograph would have attained a similar symbolic status if the woman in the frame was visibly non-white, or non-able-bodied? How, then, does the image of Santoro, taken out of context, plastered on to placards and held high at pro-choice demonstrations, call for cultural representations of a more complex configuration of reproductive freedoms for women?
Irreconcilable Interests

Lacking an accompanying narrative of the ethical considerations which preceded the publication of the image in *Ms.*, the publication of the 'anonymous' photograph of Santoro suggests that this attempt to represent women's restricted access to choice was unproblematic. The erasure of Santoro's identity points to the erasure of the specificity of her experience in the face of an unwanted pregnancy, curtailing the construction of a memory of Santoro as a subject worth knowing. The image of Santoro's dead body becomes evidence of a generalizable women's experience; a representation of the 'real' which is compounded by the evidentiary tradition of documentary and archival images. Thus the parameters of memory are constructed through a complicated dialogic in which 'the real' interacts with a presumed, but erroneous anonymity. And here I return to the question, at what price is Santoro forgotten?²⁸

In the video *Leona's Sister Gerri*, Santoro's daughter Joannie repeatedly expresses her grief and rage over the publication of the photograph of her mother's dead body, and over the lack of consultation with the family regarding the decision to publish

²⁸ I want to acknowledge the contributions of Kathleen Rockhill and Kari Dehli to this particular aspect of this analysis. There is a tension underlying this work which is worthy of further development, and which is beyond the present scope of this thesis. The tension has to do with the question of whether the recuperation of a 'self' which 'is' Gerri Santoro is actually the point I want to pursue. Now, as I approach the final stages of this writing, I am more concerned with the cultural production of 'Gerri Santoro;' that is to say, the 'selves' that she becomes within the needs of the present, through the productive effects of discourse. This theoretical move invites ethical questions. Indeed, it resonates with the decision of *Ms.* Editorial staff to publish an image of an anonymous dead woman for political purposes. What are the ethical implications for feminist theory and practice of certain postmodern theoretical stances which are interested in the production of subjectivity over the recuperation of the 'real' story of individual subjects?
the photograph, highlighting the powerful impact of the publication on the lives of those who knew and loved Gerri Santoro. Throughout her commentary in the video, Joannie recognizes the inevitability of the photograph acquiring meaning within the social and political milieu into which it was released. Her concern rests, primarily, with the mobilization of anti-choice biases against women seeking abortions as 'some scum' becoming attached to the image of her 'beautiful mother.'

The commitment to confidentiality which legitimized the publication of the photograph of Santoro in a 1973 issue of Ms. amounts to a strategic process of re-signification to serve a particular political purpose. Yet the use of the photograph of the 'anonymous' body of Santoro enacted a disservice to her family and her community, even as it enabled the waging of an important visual campaign. These irresolvable claims signal the competing interests associated with any attempt to represent the real of 'women's experience' in ways that do not systematically reduce, conflate, and selectively privilege those interests under the auspices of the 'real.'

**Implications for Contemporary Struggles**

How then does the photograph of Santoro in all of its reductive capacity press upon pro-choice participation in contemporary struggles? Read for its limitations, how can the image of Santoro challenge the construction of the subject of contemporary debates?
Images of dead women and dead fetuses, symbolizing opposing sides of abortion debates, establish absolute categories of understanding through which the complexity of issues facing debates over reproductive freedoms are reduced to ridiculously simplified questions of right and wrong. In this conceptualization, the fetus becomes 'other' to the body of and interests of the woman in the face of an unwanted pregnancy, thus constructing the legal problem of competing claims and competing rights. As Peggy Phelan suggests, "The debate over abortion rights is an extreme example of the violent struggle that comes from our continuing commitment to categories of isolation, separation, and division" (1993:170).

A symbolic configuration which reproduces the woman/fetus dichotomy perpetuates notions of a coherent female subject; a body which can be regulated according to policies, laws and medical practices; a body which can be represented through political campaigns. Further, the fetus/woman dichotomy suggests the coherence and boundedness of competing 'sides' of abortion debate holding clear positions on the complicated issues at play. As with the two dimensional surface of Santoro's 'anonymous' image, contradictions abound beneath the ideological veneer of abortion discourse. At the intersection between politics and private life, pro-life and pro-choice positions often collide. As Michele Lansberg noted when the Supreme Court of Canada struck down the abortion law in 1988, "Every one of us who fought for reproductive choice over the years knew of outspoken right-to-life doctors who quietly performed "D&C's" for their trusted, middle-class patients. Every one of us knew at least one story of some anti-choice legislator or crusader whose wife or
daughter or cousin or girl friend quietly asked around for Dr. Morgentaler’s address” (The Globe and Mail, 30/01/88:A2).

How can the subject of abortion debates be differently imagined? Peggy Phelan asserts, “In order to conceive of the continuous subject we need to return to the schism between the real and the representational, the lacuna between body and being” (1993:170). The female subject - and in particular the pregnant female subject - defies notions of bodily coherence, posing a flagrant challenge to any and all attempts to represent her. How can pro-choice politics strategically mark this schism? What would it mean for pro-choice movement to claim a discourse that more readily speaks to the disjunctures between women’s radically dissimilar experiences of unwanted pregnancy and the limitations inherent in legal, medical and political frameworks of representation? What would be at stake for contemporary pro-choice movements to claim a discourse of the ambivalences and contradictory alliances emerging from women’s narratives of unwanted pregnancies, and from larger communities struggling to find a foothold within the debates of the present?

In her 1984 analysis of abortion debate, Kathleen Mc Donnell raised the political conundrum which remains as a challenge to contemporary movements for women's reproductive freedom. Mc Donnell asks:

Is a re-evaluation of the feminist position on abortion really needed? Many feminists, including many active in the abortion rights struggle, would say no, because the issue is still essentially the same: the need for women to control our own bodies and our reproductive capacity, so that we can achieve
full liberation as human beings. And of course they are right. On some level the struggle is and will continue to be exactly the same, until we have achieved real reproductive freedom. Others may argue that this is not the time to introduce new, potentially divisive elements into the feminist discussion of abortion, because we must pull together to combat the rise of the Right and a growing anti-feminist backlash. They are right too. We do take a risk if we open up the agenda on abortion. Much like the current debate on pornography and the role of censorship, re-examining abortion holds the fearful possibility of splitting the women’s movement and giving ammunition to our enemies. (1984:23)

Mc Donnell clearly articulates the political vulnerability an ‘opening up’ of the abortion agenda could invite. Yet, amidst a host of unprecedented legal and ethical questions emerging from contemporary debates, in which Phelan’s schism between the ‘real and the representational’ demands our attention, what does it mean for pro-choice movement(s) to fail to strategically push the limits to representation? Can pro-choice organizing be open to newly configured gains and losses amidst an already dangerous, already risk-laden, already divisive political field?

In response to my own line of questioning, I won’t profess to provide a coherent framework for how to proceed. What might prove more useful is an attempt to locate my references to the incoherent female subject in the three current legal cases which I have discussed in the previous chapter. The cases to which I refer are those of Ms. G, Brenda Drummond and Cynthia Dobson. In the eyes of state sanctioned legal and medical restrictions, these cases suggest that through the ‘real experience’ of wanted or unwanted pregnancy, women become unrecognizable as subjects within

29 See Chapter 2, pp. 46-47.
reductive and compartmentalizing public discourses of law, medicine, media and politics.

In June of 1997, Ms. G’s case went before the Supreme Court of Canada and is currently under deliberation. The case, which is clearly no longer about Ms. G (who has already given birth), will set a precedent over the right of the state to infringe upon a woman’s rights in the best interests of her fetus. Brenda Drummond received a suspended sentence for ‘failing to provide the necessities of life,’ by neglecting to inform doctor’s that her child, once born, had a pellet in his brain. The Dobson case is currently under appeal.

Caught in the crossfire of a host of ill defined, poorly and inconsistently applied, and competing sets of rights and legal precedents, Ms. G, Brenda Drummond, and Cynthia Dobson are made, even as they are lost. Peggy Phelan points to the:

...central failure of discursive representation...in which the possibility of a continuous subjectivity...is everywhere repressed by the institutions of law, medicine and politics - all of which presuppose singular social subjects as the foundational units of their discursive economics. (They assume fluency in singularity rather than sociality.) Those who are working for reproductive rights and those who work against them also presuppose this framework. (1993:170)

Taken out of the specific context of their circumstances and of social and economic cycles which complicate wanted or unwanted pregnancies, these three women become fragmented and symbolically erased through the materiality of legal, medical, and political discourse, bringing to mind the violations through which Santoro’s image became at once an ‘anonymous’ image and a political signifier.
These are the cases which call for a re-evaluation of the pro-choice feminist 'position' demanding, perhaps, that generalizable claims be constantly checked against case specific feminist 'positions' (McDonnell, 1984:57). Facing feminist theorists, Kathleen Mc Donnell argues, is the challenging question of how to “allow the fetus to enter in" (1984:53) to a conceptualization of women’s bodies that does not pit one set of interests or rights over another - those of the woman over the fetus or vice versa.

In Canada, feminists have fought and won the battle to legalize abortion, making abortion ‘an issue between a woman and her doctor.’ Pro-choice feminists recognize, however, that the battle is far from over. What is required is a radical and continuous reconsideration of how to proceed. What are the possibilities for a re-thinking of a feminist position on reproductive freedoms; a position which would question the coherences upon which its own stability rests? How to strategize through, and as a challenge to "...a legal and psychic discourse dedicated to defining separations, distinguishing split subjects, and settling schisms." As Phelan puts forth, "This yawning incoherence will continue to trouble the realization of reproductive rights while it remains unmarked" (1993:169-170).

I have argued that the photograph of Gerri Santoro symbolically reproduces homogenizing categories of 'women’s experience,' while perpetuating mythical disjunctures between fetuses and the bodies of pregnant women, and subsequently figuring within the construction of the possible in abortion debates. I have given
partial consideration to the perils of allowing incoherence to venture forth. I recall reading the photograph of Santoro as a closed narrative, fraught with associations of ‘wayward women’ and overly simplistic notions of reproductive freedom. I recall as well my desire to resolve the incoherences which arose in my own perilous viewing engagement with this image. In response to the video Leona’s Sister Gerri, incoherence continued to have its way with me.

In his analysis of the Holocaust photograph entitled ‘Mother of the Wire Fence,’ Karl Plank observes “On its own, the photograph cannot answer the questions it poses. We must gather many images to understand this single one” (1994:5). The video Leona’s Sister Gerri performs this gathering most effectively through a juxtaposition of personal testimony and layers of visual imagery, bringing the photograph into a narrative which is dedicated to a more complex memory of Santoro. This ‘shift’ in viewing relation simultaneously creates the possibility for movement across the visual and ideological terrain of abortion debates, challenging a viewing community to integrate a re-configured ‘memory’ of Gerri Santoro into the reductions of abortion discourse.

Complicating the Narrative: Re-Figuring Collective Memory

I have stated that political communities often converge around shared notions of identity which are constructed through memory and its omissions. Collective memory is, however, no more stable than the meaning of any singular image. Simon describes collective memory as an ongoing, organic, living deposit across groups of
people who share a common frame of reference in relationship to some event over space and time (Field notes: 1996). The video *Leona’s Sister Gerri* creates a space in which various communities of remembrance, sharing the common reference of Gerri Santoro and her image, enter into dialogue with one another and with the viewer. Most striking for me is the extent to which Santoro’s family, friends, and the staff of *Ms.* magazine grapple with their own investments in forgetting Santoro and the circumstances of her death, even as they speak to the inevitability of memory. Following Deborah Britzman (1995), Santoro’s ‘communities’ contend with "what they cannot bear to know" (1) and "...what they must shut out in order to think as they do" (1995, 156).

*Leona’s Sister Gerri* is in many aspects a montage-like reconstruction of the life of Santoro retold through the eyes of those who knew her and loved her. Through memory, Santoro’s family and friends re-negotiate their own positioning amidst the choices and forces which shaped Santoro’s experience, ultimately leaving her isolated from her community and dead on the floor of a hotel room. In its foregrounding of the secrets, silences, and the moral imperatives that perpetuated the violence of Gerri Santoro’s life and death, *Leona’s Sister Gerri* presents a complicated and messy narrative, transgressing the repressive associations which haunt the photograph while effectively disrupting attempts to secure the ‘real’ of Santoro’s experience. The narrative of the video shifts from that of the photograph, in its refusal of attempts to ‘read’ or produce the photograph or a community’s re-telling as a resource for a closed and generalizable narrative of one women’s
'experience' as representative of larger communities of women (Haraway, 1991:113).

As viewer, my investments turn on a desire to see the photograph of Santoro repositioned to invite a historicizing and reflexive encounter - to enable the backward glances which might inform a politics of the present and future. In *Leona’s Sister Gerri*, the anonymous photograph of the ‘wayward woman’ becomes contextualized within a larger narrative of experience which is clearly produced through the social milieu in which Santoro’s ‘choices’ are shaped. Throughout the video, Santoro’s positionality shifts at different moments and within different contexts from survivor to victim, and from object to subject, disrupting the uncomplicated imposition of moral imperatives on the life of the woman represented, and marking a restoration of subjectivity where there had been a symbolic erasure.

Amidst a re-telling of the life of Gerri Santoro by many voices within the video, as viewer I was positioned to confront the instabilities and incoherences which emerged through my futile attempts to neatly categorize the narratives of many of the women who knew and loved Santoro under the political umbrella of either pro-choice or pro-life movement. Gerri’s daughter Judy Blare provides insight into the complex

---

30 Here I am referring to Kathleen Mc Donnell’s discussion of the discourses of blame that become attached to abortion seeking women over the presumption of, “...their sexual activity, their ‘irresponsibility’ about birth control, and their rejection of their childbearing and nurturing role” (1984:135).
ideological tensions which shape her views on abortion in her attempt to articulate a clear pro-life position which is shot through with contradictions. Throughout her narrative, Blare embraces ‘positions’ ranging from liberal notions of our ‘God given right to a choice,’ to moral and religious condemnation of abortion and the possibility of retribution for the abortion she herself had as a teenager.

How to make sense of Blare’s narrative? Drucilla Cornell observes, “...I assess that the meaning of abortion is completely singular to the history and circumstances of each woman” (1995:66). A close look at Judy Blare’s comments reveals the impossibility of understanding her views on abortion within a political framework which makes women’s experience meaningful through homogenizing binary narratives, while demanding clear alliances to one side or the other of the abortion debate. At the same time, Blare’s failure to arrive at a clear ‘position’ on abortion “...offers a vision of why this issue sits so uneasily on the national conscience” (in Brandes-Gratz, 1995:74). *Leona’s Sister Gerri* reaches across the chasm which separates the opposing sides of abortion debates, creating space for a viewing community to enter into ambivalent conversations which seek to honor the irreducible complexity of our obligations to women and to questions of early human life.

**A Commemorative Pedagogy of Witnessing: From a Static to a ‘Living’ Image**

How do the photograph of Santoro and the video *Leona’s Sister Gerri* in reflexive relation enable pedagogically and politically significant shifts in the visual terrain of
abortion debates, unsettling taken for granted frames of reference and ideologically produced categories of experience and meaning making? How are viewing practices reconfigured in relation to these two visual texts, inviting a possible re-thinking of how cultural production and pedagogy might be mutually informative within pro-choice struggles?

Simon defines 'commemorative practices' as, "...an ensemble of educative acts, not aimed at simply establishing, affirming or correcting 'the record', but intended to be a practice(s) which enables a living memory, one that dialectically presses on the sense of one's future purposes and possibilities" (1996, unpublished ms.:2).

Since photographs must always represent a kind of memorialization of a moment passed, the photograph of Gerri Santoro might be understood as a ‘memorialization’ or freezing of the image of Santoro’s body within a particular moment in time. Alternatively, Leona’s Sister Gerri invites a viewing engagement with a ‘living memory’ in which photographs are used within the video in the practice of rememoration of a life that was in effect ‘erased’ even as it was ‘memorialized’ in death. Kaja Silverman writes, “Whereas photography performs its memorial function by lifting an object out of time and immortalizing it forever in a particular form, memory is all about temporality and change...it apprehends the other less as a clearly delineated object than as a complex and constantly shifting conglomeration of images and values” (1996:157). In the video, memory is made even as it is revealed as an ongoing process of collective re-construction.
*Leona's Sister Gerri* constructs an organic, living, always 'in the process of becoming' image, through backward glances which afford new insight into the ethical obligation of *Ms.* magazine to the life of Gerri Santoro in 1973, and the continued obligation of a viewing community to the memory of Santoro. The video offers the viewer layers of narrative and images of Santoro which are both analyzed and historicized within a political framework of the pro-choice movement, the acquisition and publication of the photograph, and its subsequent rise to the status of political symbol. Embedded within the 'living' video image of her life, the stark photographic image of Santoro after her death, which intermittently provides a visual backdrop for the action of the video, is revealed in all of its reductive capacity.

Leona Gordon's 'inability to forget the horrible things that have happened to us' marks both the ethical possibility and the political imperative of a shift from a static to a living memory of Gerri Santoro. In the words of Karl Plank, as witnesses to the video *Leona's Sister Gerri* viewers might develop "...an awareness that the aftermath claims all for the mending repair" (1994:5). The life of Gerri Santoro is a life worth remembering, indeed, a life that we must remember if, as a viewing community, we are to embrace our collective grief and mobilize ourselves toward an understanding of the photograph of Gerri Santoro in which, as John Berger suggests, we "...incorporate photography into our social and political memory, instead of using it as a substitute which encourages the atrophy of any such memory" (1980:58).
How then to integrate a memory of Gerri Santoro into a politics of the present and future? There is no simple answer. As viewer of the photograph and the video, I felt compelled to engage in an interrogation of my own assumptions, a reframing of my questions, and a relinquishing of my investment in any attempt at 'understanding' the 'experience' of this woman that I had initiated in response to the photograph alone. Rather, the question becomes, how is Santoro's 'experience' mediated through the language and narratives which constitute abortion discourse? In addition, the photograph and the video in reflexive relation have compelled me to interrogate my own pro-choice position and its inherent contradictions anew. Unable to 'correct the record,' I remain immersed in the incoherences which will inform the 'future purposes and possibilities' of this project (Simon, unpublished ms., 1996).

Do the photograph and the video in conjunction invite viewers to consider how our own position of difference is implicated in our struggle to understand Santoro's life in complex terms which are not specifically our own, and which create space for movement within the absolutes which structure abortion debates? What additional pedagogical frameworks are possible, for whom, and in what contexts? These are some of the questions which remain.

(In)Conclusions

I can't complete this chapter without marking the limitations of my own theoretical and methodological approach. The ethical problems emerging from attempts to represent are multilayered in this writing, and in the act of publicly presenting this
work.\textsuperscript{31} I have brought my own identifications and investments to my engagement with a photograph of a dead woman and used this engagement to construct a theoretical argument. I have challenged something called 'pro-choice movement' to a re-thinking of its assumptions and investments in this photograph, amidst the partiality of my own interpretation of those assumptions and investments. I will continue to invite communities of my colleagues to engage with a photograph and a video that may invoke traumatic associations, creating a space in which pedagogical and ethical questions will collide and demand to be sorted out.

Gerri Santoro's life is more than can be represented in one photograph, or in one video, or in one academic paper. It is here that the limits to representation reveal their dynamic potential. The movement from memorialization to memory across the photograph of Gerri Santoro and the video \textit{Leona's Sister Gerri} is the movement from a static, unidimensional story of secrecy and shame to a living story of a community's struggle to come to terms with the irresolvable interests which bind their investments in a shared memory within the present. In the words of Sethe, in Toni Morrison's \textit{Beloved}, the memory becomes 'a story to pass on' (Hirsch, 1993, in Neuman and Stephenson, eds., p. 10). The memory of Santoro is a story that must be continuously passed on, if the words 'Never Again' are to have meaning. These two words constitute the claim of Gerri Santoro's image on a viewing community, a claim which can never be settled, as our relationship to Santoro is re-

\textsuperscript{31} In Chapter 4, pp. 119-120, I discuss further how I weigh out the ethics and pedagogical dilemmas of re-circulating images such as this one within academic contexts.
mobilized and remembered each time we are summoned to attention by the meaning of her life and her image for the fraught field of reproductive politics.
I

In April 1973, a photograph of a naked, bloodied woman on a motel room floor, dead from a botched abortion, illustrated an article I wrote for Ms. magazine. I knew nothing about her. She simply represented the potential fate of any woman who did not have access to a safe and legal abortion. Today, I am embarrassed to admit that I didn't even think about who the victim actually was. She was any one of us. At the time, the millions of women who, for millions of different reasons, had had abortions did not dare admit it, even to close friends. Revealing the identity of the woman in the photograph would have been viewed as another kind of crime. So I thought then. Today, everything is different.

The sister of the dead woman entered my life a year ago, turning that interesting and meaningful but long past journalistic experience into a profound and provocative new one. It was not the first time that that gruesome picture had come back to haunt me, but it was the most unsettling.

A call came through Gloria Steinem's office alerting me that Leona Gordon, sister of abortion victim Gerri Santoro, was looking for me. She wanted to find out how I had acquired the 1964 photograph for the 1973 article. I was shaken and instinctively anticipated hostility.

Instead, I encountered a pleasant and talkative New England woman from a large farm family, eager to help piece together her sister's story for a television documentary. Her questioning of me actually took up less of our extended conversation than her long and complicated saga of a typical American family in which several of the women had had abortions. Leona seemed as anxious to impart the full story as to know about the photograph. She reminded me of too many of the tragedies I had covered as a young newspaper reporter, when the bereaved seemed almost grateful for the opportunity to share their grief instead of slamming the door in the face of an inconsiderate reporter. Until she had seen it in Ms., Leona did not know of the picture's existence in the files of the Connecticut coroner.

For years, Leona told me, she was shocked that her sister's picture had been used. She would not look at Ms. Then, slowly, as the abortion debate turned uglier and uglier, and women who made the painful choice to have an abortion increasingly became the object of derision and scorn, Leona's feelings changed. The picture had been put to good use, she decided, graphically illustrating what no words could. Leona became a pro-choice activist and joined demonstrations in New England.

On one side of her placard she placed the magazine photo and on the other earlier photos of Gerri as a young woman, alive, smiling, fun-loving. "This is my sister," the caption read. Our extended phone conversation continued through the life stories of Leona, Gerri, and Gerri's two daughters. No longer was I ignorant of the story behind the photograph, nor did I wish the world to be. Suddenly, I was realizing how easy it was to find oneself in Gerri Santoro's position 30 years ago. In a new way, she was symbolizing the dilemma of countless women. And, to boot, Gerri Santoro's two daughters and my own daughters are about the same ages.

A talented filmmaker, Jane Gillooly, has now given a different life to the photograph in her documentary Leona's Sister.
hard to make a stand

Old James Dean Monroe Hands out flowers a the Shop-N-Go Hopes for Money but all he gets is fear. And the wind blows up his coat and this he scribbles on a perfume note “If I’m not here, you’re not here.” And he says, “Call me Miscreation, I’m a walking celebration,” And it’s Hard to make a stand Hard to make a stand Hard to make a stand. My friend, o lawdy, Went to take care of her own body, And she got shot down in the road. She looked up before she went, Said, “This isn’t really what I meant” and the Daily News said “Two With One Stone.” And I say, “Hey there Miscreation, bring a flower time is wasting.” We got loud guitars and big suspicions, Great big guns and small ambitions, And we still argue over who is God. And I say, “Hey there, Miscreation, bring a flower, time is wasting” I say, “Hey there, Miscreation, we all need a revelation.”

sheryl crow
Images brand you, burn the surrounding skin, leave their black mark. Like volcanic ash, they can make the most potent soil. Out of the seared place emerge sharp green shoots... (Michaels, 1997:218)

The previous two chapters of this thesis represent my efforts to navigate some of the more difficult ethical waters of reproductive politics, and to engage with questions which, as I have discussed, potentially open up spaces of risk and vulnerability for pro-choice political organizing. Writing out of this awareness, chapters two, three and four are underscored by a sense of disquiet. This chapter is an attempt to create a multi-stranded dialogue between some of the questions raised in the previous chapters, and narrative data emerging from a focus group I conducted with four pro-choice activists. This dialogue will interface with yet another conversation, the one in which I ask myself how a politics of interpretation - of knowing and being known (Lather, 1991:86) - is implicated in my research design? In this chapter, I want to think about some of the elements which structure the production of knowledge within the focus group (Lather, 1991:75) and the possible ways of thinking about this research if I were to broaden its scope later on.32

---

32 On the subject of feminist knowledge production within the academy, Dehli (1991:46) insists that this work not be reduced to arguments that academic feminism is "...'bad' because the women who do it are mostly white, middle class and heterosexual." "Instead...," Dehli submits, the task is to "...understand the material conditions and social relations by which such knowledge is produced." I am interested in how an accounting for the ways women are differently positioned
This chapter is written, then, out of my attempt to represent some of the ways in which talking with four pro-choice activists has informed and complicated this research. Several months ago, while I was engaged in the writing of what would eventually become this thesis, it occurred to me that I had not yet gathered all of the ‘data’ I felt was required. I had been making some preliminary forays into questions of representation and pedagogy at the intersection between reading and political practice; using, as a point of reference and inquiry, the photograph of Gerri Santoro which I have discussed extensively in the previous chapters. I realized then that I wanted to engage more eyes, minds and hearts in the visual/political dialogue I was immersed in. I realize now, that I was and continue to be concerned with conducting research in which ‘theory’ and ‘practice’ become mutually productive and difficult to compartmentalize as if they were somehow distinct.33

In June of 1997 I conducted a ‘focus group’ with four pro-choice activists who were interested in talking with me and with one another about the photograph of Gerri Santoro and the video Leona’s Sister Gerri in relation to their activist work.34 As I

within the social organization of knowledge production, “…leaves room for politics and for change” (1991:46) in academic and spaces and beyond.

33 Patty Lather writes of “…bringing practice and theory to a productive crisis,”(1996:528) which engages “…the relationship of theory and practice, language and power, and the need for new languages to create spaces for resistance and the (re)construction of knowledge/power relations” (1996:527).

34 I contacted several pro-choice organizations in Toronto in search of activists who would be willing and interested in volunteering their time and energy to this research. The activists chose to participate on the basis of their interest in talking about the relationship of Gerri Santoro’s image to their activist work. I wanted to keep the number of women in the group small, as this research is in its’ very preliminary stages. While I did not ask the women in the group to ‘locate themselves’ in relation to race, sexuality and class, the discussion was generated primarily, although not
have mentioned at the end of chapter two, I wanted to have a conversation which would 'work' viewer's relation to the image(s) of Gerri Santoro and to larger abortion debates, resulting in a series of irresolvable tensions which constitute the ideological terrain of choice/anti-choice debates and political subject(s) within it. We met for several hours at the home of one of the activists, where we looked at a photograph, talked, ate pizza, watched a video, and talked some more. I admit that although I was the 'official' facilitator of the group - and accordingly I came equipped with a tape recorder and a list of research questions which I wanted us to 'cover' - I was unsure what would happen that evening or what form(s) our conversation would take. Following Lather, I was interested in how a group interview might "...provide tremendous potential for deeper probing and a reciprocally educative encounter" (1991:77).

The 'deeper probing' I desired was multilayered. As I have mentioned, I wanted the women in the focus group to engage with questions I am raising throughout this research - to act as informants from their various location(s) within pro-choice activism. I wanted also, to create an opportunity for an 'intentional dialogue' (Brown, 1995:50) through which our various readings of the photograph of Gerri Santoro and the video Leona's Sister Gerri could begin to resonate. Lather writes, "Through dialogue and reflexivity, design, data and theory emerge, with data being recognized as generated from people in a relationship" (1991:72). Here, 'data' is exclusively, by a group of white middle-class activists and one academic/researcher. In future groups I would want to think further about the question of location in relation to viewing the image of Santoro, and how this might inform the selection of participants.
understood as the stuff through which I might make lucid the discourses which structure the possible of our telling and seeing, and the apparatuses of interpretation through which my re-presentation through writing is inevitably partial (Lather, 1991:72, 79, 91).

In this writing and re-telling of a 'story' of the focus group I will not be making use of ‘actual’ or invented names or identities. I will, however, be deploying the words of the women who participated in the focus group in constructing a theoretical analysis of language and the politics of meaning making within pro-choice discursive fields. This approach may seem brutal and impersonal, and it does indeed raise the question which Lather articulates, "...how to produce an analysis which goes beyond the experience of the researched while still granting them full subjectivity. How do we explain the lives of others without violating their reality?" (1991:79) On the other hand, research which is interested in how ‘reality’ is constituted through images, language, practices, ‘evidence,’ and the stories we tell ourselves and others, does, indeed, need to follow different investigative pathways.

Picking Up Threads

In April of 1997, I presented the previous chapter in conjunction with the History and Memory Speaker’s Series at OISE/U of T. In the context of that presentation I discussed how images of fetuses and images of dead women become authorized through the discourses which afford so called ‘documentary’ images an evidentiary status which is simultaneously equated with access to the ‘real.’ Images of (live and
dead) fetuses and dead women are resurrected, literally and figuratively, within the fields of law, medicine and politics. Neat dichotomies are discursively structured and messy bodies and lives fall between them. In response to anti-choice visual rhetoric, pro-choice visual campaigns have been positioned to negotiate a series of tensions: What might constitute a powerful visual response on behalf of women's reproductive rights, freedoms and protections? How to render women's reproductive entitlements equally as legitimate, as immediate, and as 'real' in the eyes of a viewing community? In the context of the focus group, I wanted to push a strategic self-consciousness further in asking what limits to the possibilities for representation are constructed within these very terms?

It feels important to say something about how I understand this work to be 'pedagogical,' in relation to the pedagogical framework which I set up in the initial chapter of this thesis. As I have mentioned, I will attempt to construct a chapter which enters into dialogue with some of the questions I have raised in the context of chapters two and three, in light of a focus group discussion. My aim, in this writing, is to bring these various conversations together, while peeling back the layers of my research as they unfold through this assemblage. Inviting input into my work has illuminated these layers: multiple readings, pedagogical questions/problems and political/ethical tensions. Hariman writes, "Pedagogy should be construed less as an interesting application of theory and more as a means for reconstructing the arena for intellectual debate" (1989:226, in Lather, 1991:125). What I hope to create with this chapter is a multi-stranded conversation which is self-conscious of its own
structures, filters, and frames. Following Britzman, my aim is to question "where thought stops" (1995) in order that those of us participating in and differently invested in the focus group might continue to think as we do. I will say more about how I understand the insurgent potential for intentional feminist spaces for dialogue (Brown, 1995:50) as this writing proceeds.

As I had hoped they would, discussions with my academic and activist colleagues have alerted me to some of the 'hot buttons' that I will inevitably push in this writing - such as the contradictions and tensions which emerge in encounters between political activism and academic work. Rather that skirting around these 'hot buttons,' I want to encounter them head on. I am interested in how the 'potential risks and vulnerabilities' for pro-choice movement might also be understood to reveal in important spaces for political re-imagining and re-construction. And, as Lather suggests, "Pedagogy is fruitful ground to help us address questions of how our very efforts to liberate perpetuate the relations of dominance at the micro level of local resistances" (1991:125-126). I am interested, also, in examining how this research participates in both the domesticating and resistant potential for pro-choice organizing.

This chapter represents my efforts to situate my research in relation to the political perspectives and readings of women activists which challenge and contest my own. Our investments and involvements, at the time of this writing, are quite different. I am not currently working on the front lines of pro-choice activism. I am not seeing
the material effects of women's restricted access to choice on a daily basis. At present I am reading, theorizing, and writing. Those days on the front line are, however, not so far behind me. This raised questions for me at various moments within the focus group as my position shifted between one of 'suspicious' researcher/academic to one of pro-choice feminist 'ally.' Some of the women I talked with in the focus group shared with me (and I remember) the virtual impossibility of finding the time and the space amidst the demands of front line work to reflect on the theoretical dimensions of pro-choice activism. We had much to discuss. The 'most potent soil' of our discussion was rich with how we did not always 'see things' the same way.

The potential 'hot buttons' I will explore in this chapter include my own temptation to make broad generalizations about something called 'pro-choice' movement, when I am not in a position to make such sweeping claims. In this writing I want to examine a very limited and situated discussion of themes emerging from the focus group as they 'talk back' to the discussion in chapters two and three. In this way I intend to enter into dialogue with myself as researcher, as well as with the voices of my activist and academic colleagues. The scope of this thesis does not permit me to reflect our discussion in its entirety, nor does it permit me to theorize the narrative data to the extent that I might wish to later on. Within the parameters of which I am able to utilize excerpts from the focus group in this writing, it is important to be clear. This work is my interpretation of those discussions. I have selected sections which, I feel, enrich my struggle to think through complexities and to hold on to the
multiple tensions which form the crux of this work.

I organize this chapter around a series of themes and questions: How can multiple and conflicting readings of a photograph be understood within the context of a political movement requiring investment in the articulation of a (presumed) set of shared goals and ideological objectives? What does it mean to create intentional spaces for dialogue around reproductive freedoms? What kinds of conversations might become (im)possible and in what contexts? How can the 'risks' which accompany these conversations be strategically calculated? (Including the 'risks' I take in this work!) How can backward (historicized) glances illuminate the horizon of pro-choice movement? What pedagogical/political role can images play in this illumination?

Not Just a Story Through My Eyes: Beyond the Surface of the Image

Chapters two and three form, in part, a consideration of the political and ethical tensions which emerge when a photograph is taken up as a generalizable symbol for 'women's experience' of restricted access to choice. In the case of the image of Gerri Santoro, the 'tension' arises out of the urgent need to expand the (predominantly fetal) image repertoire of abortion politics in the U.S. during the 1960's and 1970's to include women's bodies. Not unproblematic, however, is the question of which body came to represent 'women,' how, and what are the symbolic and political implications of that representation?
In my discussion with pro-choice activists, I became interested in how the different ways in which activists who identified as 'pro-choice' interacted with the photograph, which was differently read and understood to bear on a politics of choice. For two of the activist/participants, the central 'issue' for pro-choice political organizing is, and has always been, access to safe, legal and affordable abortions. Access to abortion was understood by all present to be located within a broader landscape of access: to birth control, sexual health education and services, and economic resources for women. Yet our discussion began to reveal in contradictions and divergent perspectives when one activist submitted:

...I mean let's face it the choice movement is not what it was...things have changed a lot from, say the late eighties...we're a lot lower profile...you know it's not the media attention thing that it used to be...so I think that, you know, abortion having been realized and access improving has changed the landscape considerably and the issues are different now...although they are the same at the same time...the practical issues that women are facing aren't dramatically different... (Field notes: 05/06/97:10)

We returned repeatedly to the question of how the photograph of Gerri Santoro 'works' symbolically within this changing political landscape.

"The issues are different now, even though they are the same at the same time..."

I re-write the above statement while paying attention to what appears to be an important contradiction. As I had anticipated, the focus group did not reveal in any singular 'reading' of the photograph of Gerri Santoro. The women who participated in the group have been active in pro-choice organizing collectively for well over two decades. Their involvements in pro-choice activism have included both paid and
unpaid work in abortion clinics, advocacy work, political lobbying, and policy
development. Their views and interactions with the photograph of Santoro
traversed historical and contemporary landscapes of pro-choice political organizing,
occasionally illuminating the discursive struggle to define a movement and it's
political objectives over an ever shifting and changing political terrain. As one
activist reflected in response to the question of how the image of Santoro
‘represents’ a contemporary politics of choice:

Well it certainly doesn’t speak to imaging technologies. It doesn’t speak to you know the other side of the coin, all these couples who can’t conceive. You know we have to look at a far broader scale for those issues. But it does, again, bring back the need for choice, and safety within whatever choice it is, and I think it says that very clearly. A question that I have, just to throw a monkey wrench in, would it have had the same impact if it were not a white woman...? (05/06/97:19)

And as several activists responded at once:

Would a coroner even have been there to take the photo?/That did cross my mind earlier when you said it's a white woman, she's about my age./That relates to me I know the privilege of being white, would it have been such a strong image if it had been a black woman, an Hispanic woman.../An Aboriginal woman... (05/06/97:19)

In the previous chapter I raised repeatedly the question of whether the photograph of Santoro could continue to stand as a symbol for a contemporary politics of choice. My perspective is that the photograph serves as a difficult and problematic symbol for reproductive freedoms, with the potential to invite identifications which support a universalizing and reductive view of women's 'experience' of restricted access to choice. Yet simultaneously I acknowledge the power of Santoro's image to serve as
a unifying symbol for a movement seeking to make visible the material effects of
women's restricted access to abortion services. As one activist mentioned:

...I think every one of us know...have experienced...are aware of...this is all of us. That's all of us in that picture, or it's all of us sitting around here talking. So I'm really clear, and I think that I'm one of those people who is able to be...you know this is my path. I'm very clear that the issue is choice, and making sure it's there...
(Field notes: 05/06/97:7)

Clarity of shared purpose can be politically useful, necessarily strategic and
unifying. However, as I have discussed in chapter three, I am concerned with how
images reproduce opposing sides of abortion debates, while reducing the complexity
of the issues which are at stake. I wonder how images-as-political-symbols get read
in ways that prevent us from holding complexities and seeing the contradictions of
our viewing engagements; indeed of our own complicated political alignments and
investments?

For some time now, I have been asking myself how I can assume a clear and
unproblematized position that I want to call 'pro-choice'? How is the photograph of
Gerri Santoro understood to represent a political agenda which pivots around
'choice,' particularly when the meaning of 'choice' seems anything but fixed or
static? One activist recounted a story of a recent pro-choice public event that she
had attended, at which many other 'providers' and activists were present. She
recalled:

...I was one of the speakers of the evening and I...I was one of the
very few people who said the word abortion from the podium...and
I was watching for it and I was listening for it. There were major
providers there, major people in the struggle. And I made a point
of saying the word out loud, so that we all sort of remembered why we're here. And there was some sort of colorful phrasing used in place of the word abortion. There was a lot of 'women have the right to make choice' and 'women the right to have...'; and I said 'women the right to have safe abortions'. And so I see that as a different, difference in the struggle... (Field notes, 05/06/97:12)

When I questioned how the activists understood the absence of the word 'abortion' from that evening's discussion, the responses varied. One participant recalled how the word 'abortion' has historically been a contentious referent for the struggle, "...partly because it conjures up these images." Another activist submitted that the absence of the word 'abortion' might signify the ways in which the political discourse around reproductive rights is changing alongside the recognition of 'abortion rights' as located within a larger framework of women's reproductive health.

Can the image of Gerri Santoro embody all of this complexity? Differently put, can one image reflect the discursive struggle to define and re-define a movement's objectives over time? These questions inevitably point to additional questions about how the image is read, in what contexts, and through the deployment of what particular pedagogical strategies and frameworks?

Shaky Foundations

In chapter one, I raised questions about pedagogical strategies for reading photographs within discourse; paying attention to the production and deployment of images, and to the ideological frameworks within which images circulate. I asked,
how can photographs become part of a pedagogy which thinks the limits of 'what must be shut out in order for us to think/see as we do' (Britzman, 1995).

Ideologically infused notions of 'documentary' photographs as images of the 'real' constitute the foundational ground upon which the 'subject' of the photograph is perceived as providing direct and unmediated access to 'experience' or 'reality.' This foundational claim effaces the mechanical and ideological processes through which a photograph is often very purposefully produced. Joan Scott problematizes the notion of the 'transparent subject' when she writes:

When experience is taken as the origin of knowledge, the vision of the individual subject (the person who had the experience or the historian who recounts it) becomes the bedrock of evidence upon which the explanation is built. Questions about the constructed nature of experience, about how subjects are constituted as different in the first place, about how one's vision is structured - about language (or discourse) and history - are left aside (1992:25).

Scott’s questions are important to this analysis as they signal a conceptual direction for how to think about the ways in which images get read for political purposes. The image of Gerri Santoro has been travelling within and beyond pro-choice circles for over three decades. Pro-choice movement has made use of the 'evidence' of her two dimensional dead body to jet-fuel an important visual campaign. The video Leona’s Sister Gerri ‘brings this woman to life,’ if you will, through a family’s moving memorial reconstruction. Gerri Santoro has been dead for over three decades, but in looking at these two images, perhaps we can continue to think about the ways in which she is still ‘with us.’ As Avery Gordon writes, “I was haunted by something not seen, a woman who was not in a photograph, and I was looking for a field that
gives notice to structures of exclusion and that does not enclose the landscape in only what can be seen" (1990:498).

Several months ago I read Ann Finger’s important book entitled, Past Due: A Story of Disability, Pregnancy, and Birth (1990). Finger writes an autobiographical account of her experience of pregnancy and birth as a pro-choice feminist and abortion clinic support staff whose disability makes her desire to have a child both intense and terrifying. In Finger’s text, the ‘personal’ and the ‘political’ are mutually productive. She asks readers to consider how conversations about pro-choice agendas and new reproductive technologies become irreconcilable. Finger writes:

Thinking about reproductive technology is hard for feminists: it’s one of those issues that doesn’t just divide people within the movement, but divides people within themselves. If we believe in the right of women not to have children, then do we also have to support the right of women to have children? To have access to the technology that will help them do that? What about the fact that the unequal distribution of resources in our society often means that middle-class women will have sophisticated medical techniques available to them, while poor women will struggle to get basic medical care? Can we get access to these technologies without increasing medical domination over women’s bodies? Do these hamper our finding new ways for adults and children to have real connections beyond biological parenting and outside of the nuclear family? What about the very real pain that infertile women feel? Do we think about control of our bodies only in terms of state control, or do we also think of it in ways that are more active? (1990:44)

35 Hereafter referred to as ‘NRT’s.’
Finger insists, also, that questions of disability become central to feminist discussions of how of 'choice' must be understood as inextricably implicated in larger social structures which determine who gets to make what choices and how. As one reviewer remarked, these are conversations that must happen ‘at the borderlands’ (Rapp, 1990, in Finger 1990:dust jacket) between reproductive freedom and a host of other struggles for human freedoms.

The Changing Field(s) of Choice

Guaranteed access to reproductive choice has not always been enjoyed by women in Canada. In fact, it is a precarious right which is constantly under threat for all women, and which is not enjoyed by many women due to the inequitable dispersement of abortion services. The dissemination of information about contraception and some abortions were decriminalized in Canada as recently as 1969. In 1989, Bill C-43 threatened Canadian women's right to access abortions without a physician's approval that the pregnancy poses a threat to the woman's health ("Chronology of Court Cases: Dr. Morgentaler and Others." Childbirth by Choice Trust Publication, Toronto). It is interesting also, to think about what a closer scrutiny of the contemporary social, political and medical apparatuses of 'access' for women in Canada would reveal.

Presently, whether a woman has access to abortion services in Canada is a regional issue. Abortion services are not available living on Prince Edward Island, and women seeking abortions living in rural communities across Canada must travel to
one of the major city centres, requiring access to travel funds and means. As one activist mentioned during the focus group, whether a woman has access to abortion services in Canada requires that she possess a health card. In many major cities it requires that she speak English, or be in a position to obtain service information in her own language (Field notes, 0506/97). A recent study reveals that fewer than half of the hospitals in Ontario provide abortion services. (Coutts, J., 03/04/97:A7)

Where abortion services are concerned there is, then, a major gap between that which is ‘legal’ and that which is readily available.36

As I have written in chapters two and three of this text, many women's reproductive rights are threatened in ways that have little to do with access to abortion services. The most striking contemporary example of this is the case of Ms. G, the Aboriginal woman whose 'fetal rights' case was recently heard before the Supreme Court of Canada, and is currently under deliberation. There are additional questions concerning ‘fetal rights’ which Ann Finger’s writing has pushed me to consider. The tone of these questions is framed by the words of one of the activists, as she struggles to articulate the ambivalences of her pro-choice position(s):

I just did some re-thinking in the last two or three years about the technology and the change that that makes. Cause I think, you know, it does change the nature of the question, from do I want a child to do I want this child...this particular one. And that whole imaging thing that you begin with this particular child much earlier and I’m old enough that it was still a mystery. Who knows how, whether it will be healthy, a boy or a girl, what it will look like, any of those things, so there are more grey areas for me than there

36 As Kari Dehli has pointed out in response to this text, many ‘illegal’ immigrant women do not have health cards; hence, their access to abortion services is severely restricted.
were ten years ago (05/06/97:3).

With the emergence of NRT's, prospective parents can now see the developing fetus inside the woman's womb. Petchesky (1987) has remarked on the cultural production of 'baby's first picture,' which prospective parents may now obtain prior to the birth of their child. There are a series of medical assessments which have been made possible through ultra-sound and genetic technology, such as testing for the presence of Down's Syndrome and Huntington's Chorea (Finger, 1990:36-37). In many cases, visual technologies have been critical in aiding women to make excruciating decisions about later term abortions in the face of fetal abnormalities which are life threatening to either the mother and/or the fetus.37

In these technologically mobile times it is not uncommon for pregnant woman to be asked 'if the baby is a boy or a girl.' Some prospective parents 'choose' to be 'in the know' about their fetuses's gender; others will respond that they 'don't want to know.' The politics of 'what we want to know' about our unborn fetuses are interesting to contemplate. They are overshadowed, of course, by the politics of 'what we don't want to hear, but feel we need to know' in order to make decisions about whether or not to carry a fetus to term. Perfect babies are the desired outcome of every pregnancy - they are the coveted prize at the end of the rainbow. As Ann Finger remarks, "We have set the stage for this new round of struggle: the struggles that arise from expecting our births to be joyful occasions" (1990:41).

---

37 For additional information on cases which are recognized as 'untreatable' and 'incompatible with fetal or maternal life' see "Who Would be Hurt by Banning some Late Abortions?" (National Abortion Federation Publication, 1997).
In her article “Gender Artifacts: Technologies of Bodily Display in Medical Culture,” Lisa Cartwright writes compellingly on the manipulation of fetal images by ‘expert’ medical technicians in the making of fetal bodies which conform to the corporeal ‘normalities’ of distinct gender categories. Cartwright cites a 1992 study in which a group of ultrasound technologists were found to be accurate in little over half of the cases in determining the sex of 112 fetuses. In the cases in which the sex of the fetus was difficult to determine from the visual display, rather than admitting interpretive error or impossibility, the technologists cited the woman’s body as obscuring the fetal genitalia and leading to ‘false determinations.’ As Cartwright puts forth, “A certain agency is attributed to the maternal body - the female body, in their view, is a force with the power to subvert the truth of the image” (227-228). This assumes, of course, that there exists a ‘truth’ of the image in the first instance - a truth that can be relied upon in the making of decisions about whether or not to carry a pregnancy to term.

Cartwright makes the striking connection between the emergence of ‘fetal portraits’ and obstetrical research in ultrasound which began to identify ‘structural defects’ in the fetus. One doctor is noted as having remarked, “While the major concern [in obstetrical ultrasound] is fetal anomalies, one cannot ignore the fetal sex organs” (Cartwright, 1995:224). Cartwright’s work suggests a number of implications for the making of ‘choices’ based on the information made available through visual reproductive technologies and the medical experts who administer them.
As the fetal 'body' becomes visually available, it is located within the social and discursive forms through which bodies become normalized and desirable. The ‘perfect baby’ which forms the object of parental desire can now be anticipated and planned for long before that baby enters the world. Yet decisions to terminate pregnancies are also made in the context of information which becomes available through visual NRT’s. This raises the question of what kinds of information about fetuses will it become possible to obtain, and what ‘expert knowledges’ will inform how this information gets used? As Butler writes, “Sex is, thus, not simply what one has, or a static description of what one is: it will be one of the norms by which the ‘one’ becomes viable at all, that which qualifies a body for life within the domain of cultural intelligibility” (1993:2). The work of Ann Finger further compels us to ask new questions about the politics of ‘choice’ in relation to visual technologies, and to think about how this dimension of ‘choice’ could become politicized, rather than left up to the interpretations, whims, and desires of individual parents and medical ‘experts.’

But a Story Through My Eyes, Nonetheless...

My aim throughout this thesis has been to problematize notions of ‘opposing sides’ of abortion debate; to blur the boundaries of this seemingly clear opposition and muddy the ethical and political waters in which these discussions are immersed. My position has been that discussions become all too easily entrenched in absolute and reductionist thinking. This curtails the important work of holding in tension the ethical and political contradictions which inevitably emerge as the terms of
reproductive discourse shift and complexify. In particular, as I have discussed, the 
emergence of visual NRT's issues a challenge to pro-choice movement to address 
difficult questions, while avoiding "the temptation to engage with clever or reductive 
solutions to present problems" (Probyn, Lancaster, U.K., 1997, field notes).

I write out of an awareness that at a material level, opposing sides of abortion debate 
do indeed 'exist.' Anti-choice groups continue to engage in violent campaign 
activity in which clinics are bombed, doctors are shot, and women are harassed. In 
the context of the focus group, one activist commented on a symbolic violence which 
this research potentially perpetuates:

I get a little uncomfortable and I've been very angry about the 
labels the pro-choice movement has received, and like, you know 
the media calling it the two sides as if it's fifty-fifty and down the 
middle in terms of people's attitudes toward choice. I mean the 
vast majority of Canadians are pro-choice and don't give a damn 
what anybody else does with their life. The small vocal minority 
is anti-choice. The other thing that happens in the media and 
sometimes in academia, and it shouldn't happen, is calling pro-
choice people or pro-choice women extremists, extremists on both 
sides. Extremists in anti-choice is someone who believes a woman 
should die rather than have an abortion, even if you know 
continuing a pregnancy threatens her life, like that is indeed and 
ugly, ugly extreme. But to believe in choice, in God's name how 
can that be extreme, but yet we've been labelled extremists on 
both sides, and I know that I've been labelled an extremist in the 
press, and that's why, when you talk about symbols, or pro-choice, 
I, sorry...(05/06/97:21)

My intention is not to conflate these right-wing groups and their activities with the 
work of pro-choice organizations; neither is it my intention to collapse these anti-
choice groups with the much larger public body who identify as anti-choice (but who 
do not engage in terrorist activity), or those who remain unable to take a clear
position amidst the available political options of pro-choice/anti-choice.

I have, however, a keen interest in what kinds of conversations become possible within and beyond pro-choice communities when ambivalences and uncertainties are allowed to enter in. My own experience has been that these conversations 'border' on the impossible. As an audience member in attendance at one of my attempts to present this work in academia commented, "We don't have a language with which to have these discussions..." It is interesting to think about how these conversations are structured through language and discourse, such that venturing into the 'borderlands' becomes laden with risk. For example, often when I am asked questions which resonate with popular discourses of 'poor innocent children' under the guise of discussing (so called) fetal rights, I take sides. 'Let's keep in mind that women's bodies are on the line in this discussion,' I have heard myself say.

Nevertheless, I locate myself within this writing as a 'pro-choice feminist' who is invested in struggling with the ambivalences that I understand to accompany that (ethical?) position. I am aware that the ability to retreat into absolutes and unproblematized commitments to something called 'choice' are in part contingent upon the access to 'choices' that I enjoy. Simultaneously, I come to this research as one who wonders how pro-choice movement can and will address my 'realities' - both present and those which have yet to materialize. The 'choices' I anticipate facing have little to do with unwanted pregnancy and much more to do with the freedom to create family outside of normative or 'traditional' structures, and the
likely encounters with NRT’s that these investments will bring about. The comments made by one activist during the focus group suggest that these questions signal broader political connections:

Back to that question that you first asked, whether it’s (access to abortion services) the issue for all women, I mean I can say personally, I think I’m a really good example because I’m a lesbian who’s directly involved in the abortion rights movement obviously, it has, because I’ve dedicated all this time to it it is has a great deal of meaning to me, but again, like I’ve been constantly saying it is part of a broader issue and, what you’re saying about you know state interference and that kind of thing...and it comes under that...you know state interference in my freedom to choose...whether that be a sexuality thing, or a reproduction thing, or...

As Linda Gordon writes, "...reproductive freedom cannot be isolated from other human freedoms. Reproductive patterns everywhere are determined by sexual morality, by the over-all status of women, by class formations and by the nature of the struggles for social change" (1976:404).

I have been asking myself what it means then, to claim a ‘pro-choice’ position or ‘postitions?’ How does ‘choice’ play out within the context of decisions to terminate pregnancies as a result of fetal ‘abnormalities?’ As I have discussed, visual NRT’s which allow doctor’s to detect fetal ‘abnormalities’ also allow us to ‘see’ the gender of the fetus. Access to these technologies is part of a wider structure of access and exclusion within health care systems which privilege the interests and health needs of white, straight, class-privileged women. What does ‘choice’ mean in the context of recent legal cases in which ‘fetal rights’ has re-emerged with grave implications for reproductive freedom for women? Indeed,
what choices does 'choice' embody, how, and (differently) for whom?

Questions of 'Where I Stand'

Naming myself as a 'pro-choice feminist' was a tension I was acutely aware of in the context of the focus group. While we all located ourselves as 'pro-choice feminists,' an interrogation of that position demonstrated the different ways we understood our alignments and disalignments with it. I was at once an 'insider' feminist activist and an 'outsider' researcher and academic. I was reminded of some of the 'stakes' of this inquiry by one member of the group who discussed how pro-choice and anti-choice factions are often painted with the same 'extremist' brush. These comments point toward a politics of interpretation which takes place at the intersection between academic labour and grass roots organizing. In the wake of these comments, I heard myself scrambling to re-instate myself as 'feminist ally.' The desire to reassure the activists that my objectives were decidedly 'pro-choice' was powerful. Yet as I tried to gather myself to respond I was unsure WHAT response could establish my 'pro-choice place.' I was equally as aware that I could not ensure the activists that my writing and my interpretations of their comments would not be experienced as a violation later on. My work is about the ways in which representation is inherently impure; always an interpretation, always discursively mediated, often with a view toward a particular end.
The Loco-Motions of Looking 38

When I presented a paper on this work at a recent conference in Lancaster, U.K., I was asked how I respond to the observation that there exists a rapidly growing 'cottage industry' of feminist writers and academics engaged in the project of re-mobilizing images of fetuses and other visual representations within the context of academe. How do you understand your participation in this 'industry?', was the question which was put to me. This is an important question which remains on my mind. Indeed, I do see myself as complicit in the reproduction and recirculation of images which are employed within visual campaigns which potentially reinstate hegemonic notions of women and fetuses within pro-choice/anti-choice debate. What becomes important for me then, is HOW I and others think through and participate in the recirculation of these popular cultural and political forms which are, clearly, already 'out there' and available for public consumption.

Can we look at ourselves and our practices reflexively and self-consciously as we look at images? What interests me is the performative 39 aspect of mobilizing and viewing images in different contexts, historical and political moments, and always with different questions in mind. My aim is to question the 'taken for granteds' which accompany an understanding of these images as representative of any

38 In trying to think about the relations between location, looking and motion, I am borrowing from Probyn’s description of the body as loca-motion rather than location; In her discussion, Probyn"...borrows from Anzaldua’s (1991) use of 'loca porque’"(1995:5-6).

39 In defining ‘performativity’ Butler writes, “Performativity is thus not a singular ‘act,’ for it is always a reiteration of a norm or set of norms, and to the extent that it acquires an act-like status in the present, it conceals or dissimulates the conventions of which it is a repetition” (1993:12).
singular, fixed, or coherent meaning. I want to insist that contradictions, political tensions and ethical dilemmas are aired and not-too-easily resolved or laid to rest as relics of history. In this way, it feels important to me that the image of Gerri Santoro remains 'in motion' within feminist visual landscapes, for it is this motion which makes the possibilities for a relationship between viewer and image into a project which is perpetually under construction (Probyn, 1995:9). Images and words, understood to interact with viewers in generating multiple meanings, make for fascinating texts around which we might gather in the name of continually re-generating feminist loca-motion.

There are material forces which do impinge the project of creating space for intentional pro-choice dialogue. The women in the focus group were explicit in their discussion of how difficult it is for pro-choice feminists to find spaces in which to have the conversations which might enable a thoughtful internal critique of pro-choice organizing. Any opening up of a critique of pro-choice political work could potentially invite further anti-choice backlash. There is no denying the risk that accompanies the efforts of any political movement to allow its uncertainties to be publicly seen. Particularly in the case of pro-choice movements, the potential for public discredit is high.

Yet if the most difficult debates within pro-choice movement - those in which those participating in the 'movement' question the very terms of its referent - remain within the 'less risky' confines of pro-choice circles, what results is a dangerous
'privatization' of that which must be relentlessly public and political. If the recent article in Ms. entitled, "Let's Really Talk About Late Term Abortion" feels unsettling, as one focus group participant mentioned that it did, what insights can be gained from a sense of being unsettled by that risky and very public conversation? Wendy Brown writes of an urgent necessity for the creation of feminist political spaces, within which epistemological foundations and identity based strategizing is hotly contested. In these spaces we might, as Brown submits, "...recognize as a permanent political condition partiality of understanding and expression, cultural chasms whose nature may be vigilantly identified but rarely 'resolved,' and the powers of words and images that evoke, suggest and connote rather than transmit meanings" (1995:50).

I recall other divergent readings of the photograph of Santoro. Unlike some of the focus group participants and some of my academic colleagues who have shared with me the ways in which the photograph of Santoro 'could have been them,' I did not experience this direct mirroring effect. In chapter two I recounted a story about conversations I had with friends about abortion, growing up a white middle-class teenager in the suburbs north of Toronto. Not once do I ever recall questioning my ability to access reproductive health, contraceptive or abortion services. Not once do I ever recall imagining encountering barriers to my ability to gain access to the services I needed. Gerri Santoro's time was one in which social stigmas about sexual promiscuity and the unavailability of safe, legal abortions equalled a death sentence for many women. My time and social location have positioned me
differently. Access to sexual health and contraceptive information has paved the way for me toward the degree of autonomy I currently enjoy. It has, in part, enabled me to attend graduate school and conduct this research.

I regard with a certain degree of skepticism images which are understood as symbols for collective struggles with (presumably) shared political agendas over time. My conversation with pro-choice activists suggests that shared agendas are constituted through contradictions and shifting foundations. I see the unstable territory in which political symbols exist as the very territory where we might demand of ourselves an accountability to questions of collective-representation. As McQuiston has written, "Every battle needs identifiable heralds and uniforms; every propaganda campaign needs its visual aids and modes of dissemination..." (1997:9).

We need also to question the political mechanics of how our own visual strategies become 'strategic.'

Shifting the Terms

How can we conceptualize the relation between a thought and what it must shut out in order to think as it does? Differently put, how are visually strategic images constituted in the context of the movements they come to represent, and how might we account for the "...conditions of the object’s appearing" (Lather, 1996:529)? As I have mentioned, the ‘ambivalent’ conversations I gesture toward in this writing are difficult if not impossible to have because they issue a challenge to "...present frames of knowing..." within Choice/anti-choice debates and invite "...possibilities for
thinking differently" (Lather, 1996:536). What is at stake in these conversations? How might the stakes be re-configured?

Thinking about NRT's in the context of pro-choice political organizing requires a conceptualization of women's bodies which (in)corporates questions of technology and early human life. To (in)corporate these elements is to think them through the materialization of the body; how the body takes form within our own political discussions and visual campaigns. A related question is which body becomes 'the' body which is then constituted as representative of wider interests and investments?

Images of fetuses and dead women in juxtaposition mark the ideological break through which women's bodies materialize as 'vessels' for the 'unborn child.' Articulating women's 'choice' as a rallying cry for political organizing has become inextricably connected to the demand for access to safe, legal and affordable abortions. Questioning the shifting terms on which 'choice' is mobilized illuminates this rallying cry as at once strategic and cumbersome. Incorporating difficult and ambivalent questions into our political strategies will mean that these strategies lose their seamless quality. In this way, we might make visible the conditions which have enabled us to speak strategically and to make our political objectives visible.

How can images articulate the connections between women's bodies, abortion, NRT's, and fetal life? How can we make these connections lucid and perhaps even
politically strategic?40 What kinds of images can embody various landscapes of women’s sexual health and autonomy? Even better, how can we make these images ‘sexy,’ and why, how, and for whom would we want to?41

The Horizon of Pro-Choice Political Organizing

At a recent feminist conference, as part of her keynote address, Elspeth Probyn remarked on the “...question of where we are heading, which characterizes the present” (1997, field notes). In the previous chapter, I asked the sweeping and perhaps unanswerable question of whether pro-choice movements can be open to newly configured gains and losses amidst an already risk-laden, already divisive political field? In the context of the focus group, both the present and ‘future’ of pro-choice organizing within one Toronto based lobby group emerged as an open and somewhat ominous question in relation to ‘visual’ politics. One activist remarked:

You know I think umm, now correct me if I’m wrong but I think the reality of pro-choice movement has been white English speaking middle class women...fighting for the right for all women...but...and I’m not saying there has been any movement to keep other women out, I’m not saying that at all...I think we have to look at the physical make up of **** and **** and you know the women working in our own choice clinics here in this city or across Canada, or maybe it’s different in the States, I don’t know...are we seeing ourselves...I mean really seeing ourselves...(Field Notes, 05/06/97)

40 See Haraway (1997:176). I will discuss this image and my reading of its symbolic implications further in the final chapter.

41 These questions signal a possible direction for this work. In thinking about what ‘sexy’ images might comprise, I am interested in the ‘loca-motions’ of how images rub up against each other and with viewers, potentially revealing in curious but useful political connections. I stage a preliminary discussion of this trajectory in the following chapter. ‘Sexy’ images might also offer women viewers multiple points of identification within a larger context of women’s access to reproductive health care. See Chapter 4, p.126.

122
I interpret the meaning of the question ‘are we seeing ourselves’ as necessarily multi-layered. On the one hand it is a question of ‘who’ is active in pro-choice organizing. While this particular feminist struggle may have been largely carried out by white, class privileged women, both Linda Gordon (1976) and Anne Finger (1990) point out that women of colour, lesbian women, poor and working class women, and women with disabilities have been present and active since ‘the (larger) movement’s’ inception. Finger, in particular, discusses the resistances she has faced in her efforts to bring questions of disability into pro-choice conversations (1990:25-26). On the other hand, the image of Gerri Santoro invites the question of how discursive dominance is perpetuated through how ‘the movement’ has represented ‘itself,’ so that the interests of white class privileged women come to represent the interests of ‘all women’ within pro-choice struggles.

Many have written about the reproductive/abortion rights movement as having been very active and vocal during the period of second wave feminism loosely recognized as having taken place during the 1960's and 1970's (McQuiston, 1997:78). Several of the women in the focus group talked about how the pro-choice gatherings they currently attend in Toronto are largely comprised of ‘grey heads;’ women who have been active in pro-choice organizing for several decades. During the focus group discussion, the question of why young women don’t seem to be getting involved in pro-choice organizing was raised, and left unanswered. We wondered collectively how this lack of participation by younger women relates to the changing landscape
of choice ("...the issues are different now, although they are the same at the same
time...")}, in that young, white, urban women seem to have access to abortion,
provided, of course, that they possess a health card and reside near a major Canadian
city. One activist remarked on the implications of this phenomenon:

I feel a bit like we're in this catch 22 situation you know there's
not enough, there's not enough people there's not enough
resources, well there's not enough people...to already take care of
the work that's going on and they're so much work to be done, so
it's just this constant forward motion if it's not later term stuff it's
fetal rights stuff or it's access stuff or this clinic is at risk or you
know, it's just on and on and on and, no one, we just, I feel like we
can't take the time to stop and turn our focus inward but if we
don't stop to turn our focus inward then we're just going to
continue on this way and we're all going to burn out because
there's not going to be any new people to come on board...and this
kind of thing that's what I think so we're kind of in this catch
22...(Field notes, 05/06/97)

I ask how pro-choice organizing might be 'caught' in the investments in the past? If
the issues seemed 'clearer' when safe and legal access to abortion services was the
unequivocal rallying cry, 'clarity,' today, takes on different ethical and political
dimensions. How can the past become a pedagogical and political resource for
carving out a future? I have referred to the 'white' pro-choice movement throughout
this thesis - I make this claim feeling fairly certain in acknowledging that the
interests and agendas of white class privileged able bodied women have been at the
centre of pro-choice organizational agendas. As I have mentioned, this is not to
discount the more diverse content of particular reproductive freedom movements and
the work of women of colour, women with disabilities, lesbians, and poor and
working class women. It is to say, however, that when 'choice' is automatically
equated with 'access to abortion services,' the interests of women for whom access
to abortion is not a central concern are written out of the picture.

How do discourses of dominance, the necessity of political strategy, and the seductions of looking cojoin in the conditions of possibility for visual political campaigns? I recall a conversation I had with two of my colleagues after presenting chapter three to an academic audience at OISE in April of 1997. We had watched excerpts from Leona's Sister Gerri prior to the discussion. I had argued that the video restored subjectivity to the anonymous image of a dead woman which had come to represent 'women's' restricted access to abortion services. My colleagues suggested that this symbolic 'restoration' also has particular effects. Amidst all of the 'transgressions' from acceptable woman/motherhood which flesh out the stuff of Santoro's complicated narrative, the video ends with a recuperation of Santoro as a 'good girl' worth remembering. My colleagues pointed out that the video risks 'telling her story' in ways that suggest that the story is in some way 'complete.' As one colleague commented, "I would rather have looked at that picture and thought of her in a more open ended way. I would have rather imagined the possibilities for who she was." 42

These comments pushed me to take another look at the video and at my own, inevitably impure, analysis. I want Gerri Santoro to be remembered. But if she is remembered, as my colleagues point out, as a 'good girl,' despite her 'transgressions,' this representation inevitably intersects with discourses of white

---

42 Thanks to Catherine Phillips and Kathleen Rockhill for an important conversation.
women's sexual innocence and respectable motherhood, reproducing the discursive boundaries which construct a 'pro-choice' subject. To mark and to name this specific centering of white women as a symbol for pro-choice movement raises the question of how future strategies of resistance which make room for 'bad girls' might be (imag)ined.  

Reflecting back on the focus group discussion about the absence of younger women in pro-choice organizing, I wonder what kinds of images might become seductive for a younger activist audience which is not limited to young white middle-class women? I want to (imag)ine a different scene: One in which images are 'sexy,' in the ways in which they open up many positions for women, many readings, many spaces where desire and identifications can begin to "move all over the place" (Probyn, 1995:12). If Gerri Santoro becomes lodged in our collective memory as a 'story already told,' a story of a 'good girl gone astray,' what other stories might also be considered part of a pro-choice narrative? Is there a place within pro-choice agendas for the 'bad girls' who refuse to be recuperated or rehabilitated on these terms? Alternatively, if Gerri Santoro becomes 'that poor woman' who died of such (undeniably) tragic (and criminal) circumstances, how might the injury become

---

43 I thank Kari Dehli for raising a question which had been on my mind during this research. How do the women involved in the court cases I have previously discussed (Ms. G, Brenda Drummond, Cynthia Dobson) become 'bad girls' through the representations and public discourse on motherhood and reproductive rights? Could their representations be mobilized as 'emblems' for pro-choice organizing in the way that Santoro's image has been? What is it about their narratives which would complicate such representations? Is it necessary to 're recuperate' these women in order to advocate on their behalf? As one pro-choice activist mentioned during the focus group, "Apparently (Ms. G) is pregnant again. And she says that this time is her first planned, and she doesn't want to be known as the sniffing mother" (Field notes, 05/06/97:16).
the identity in the re-making of woman-as-victim? Where is the seduction in this reflection? Where can young women 'see themselves,' and, moreover, see past themselves and toward their horizons of becoming?

Recuperating 'women' as the subjects through which we tell many different and possibly politically strategic feminist stories, "...involves the ethics of navigating the staging of women’s stories, our pains, our desires" (Gordon, 1990:498). The image of Gerri Santoro has travelled extensively within feminist visual landscapes. It has, as one activist commented, "...picked up meaning and lost meaning along the way" (05/06/97). The image has been variously staged, and variously read. In this particular staging, I, like Avery Gordon in her research into 'a woman who was not in a photograph' want to be "...cautious about being complicit in the construction of another white utopian feminist subject" (1990:498). At one time I wanted to know who Gerri Santoro was. Now, I am taken by the question of who, and how she becomes as her images continue to move within pro-choice landscapes. What I want is to remember Gerri Santoro alongside questions which I can't necessarily answer, and problems which I can't necessarily solve. I want her narrative to remain open, complicated, and not necessarily comfortable or clean. I want her image to remind

44 Wendy Brown has written about the "...problematic of pain installed at the heart of many contemporary contradictory demands for political recognition..." I am interested in Brown's discussion of how 'political' culture becomes lodged in 'therapeutic' discourse, even as we acknowledge the importance of providing a hearing for the "...elements of suffering and healing we might be negotiating" (1995:74).

45 Avery Gordon's (1990) article "Feminism, Writing, and Ghosts," has been extremely helpful in my efforts to think through the ethics and politics of "researching out of a photograph of a dead woman."
me simultaneously of what is not in her image, and of the conditions of possibility that fail to tell a whole story in only what is visible.

Accordingly, this chapter fails to tell a whole story in only what is visible. It is in this way that I understand this research to be a staging of the politics and problematics of representation on many levels. It is research which is in the preliminary stages of inquiry and methodological development. It needs, following Lather, "...to be viewed as pieces of a transitory epistemology" (1991:85), which remains open to "...further deconstruction of its operative concepts" (Norris, 1982:48, in Lather, 1991:85).

Were I to proceed with this research, to broaden its scope, what kinds of questions would inform the process? I begin with questions that have arisen for me within the writing of this chapter. How can I conduct ‘ambivalent’ research which reflects the impossibility of representation, even as it seeks to "...open up the present frames of knowing to the possibilities of thinking differently"? (Lather, 1996:536). How can I explore the gap between the conversations I write about wanting to have, and that which structures them into oblivion? How can I account for the ‘translation’ that is my representation of women’s responses to the photograph and video, and the ways in which it is, inevitably, “disrespectful of its sources” (Lather, 1996:538) and potentially politically volatile? How to construct a text which displays the complexities which I am trying to entertain, rather than providing easy answers or simple solutions? How would I convey these ‘objectives’ to potential research
participants? What are the ethics of conducting research in which "...we all get lost" (Lather, 1996:539): the activists, the researcher, and the woman in the photograph that I have taken the liberty of researching from?

How then to 'mark' the ways in which Gerri Santoro's image 'brands us'; to make way for the sharp green shoots of which Ann Michaels writes? Here is my view towards this 'end.' Pro-choice feminists, like the ones who participated in this research, need to be having the kind of risky conversation that we had, while being open to the vulnerabilities and the accompanying political shifts this talk might invite. If we are, as Lauren Berlant suggests, to engage in a "politics of the long haul, which questions the terms of its referent," (Field notes, Lancaster, U.K., 17/07/97) how we think beyond the frames our own images and symbols impose seems a 'potent' place to begin.
CHAPTER FIVE

TRANSITORY VISIONS AND PRODUCTIVE COLLISIONS

"Race, nature, gender, sex and kinship must be thought together" (Haraway, 1997:309).

How do we read images? This is a question which has troubled me for some time, and which troubles the pages of this thesis throughout. I have brought to this work an interest in viewing practices as they intersect with images of bodies; and in how representations of bodies might interact with practices of looking which serve to reproduce and/or rupture fixed markings of race, sex, class and ability. I am (still) wondering how to think through the relation between visual/cultural representations of bodies and the materialization of fixed, normative categories of identity and community. In the first part of this chapter, I ask specifically how 'we' come to know who and what 'we' are, and who and what 'we' are not - collectively as communities and as individuals within communities - through the raced, sexed, heterosexual, classed and ableist categories of normalization which form the filters, the frames, and the parameters through which we see (differently)? Moreover, how can I engage with images in ways that enable me to 'see' constructions of race, sex, class and able-bodiedness, and how these constructions are mutually constitutive in the marking and mattering of bodies?

130
Michel Foucault (1972, 1978) wrote extensively on the visual as a powerful technology of surveillance, social control, and knowledge production. In addition, much has been written on histories of 19th century medical and ethnographic imaging of the human form (Clarke, 1997; Pultz, 1995). These visual technologies/narratives serve(d) to authorize and perpetuate notions of the sexualized and racialized ‘other.’ The body of the ‘other’ was the (often nude) body of the ‘primitive,’ the ‘freak,’ and (the) woman. A white, class privileged 19th century audience enjoyed both a voyeuristic and potentially titillating encounter with these images (Pultz, 1995).

On a recent visit to "The Body in the Lens" exhibit at the Museum of Fine Art in Montreal, I strolled through a selection of historical and contemporary images curated by William A. Ewing, author of a book entitled, The Body: Photographs of the Human Form. On my wanderings through this exhibit I came up against the realization that this history of images continues to be an active means through which viewing practices are structured and institutionalized. I began to wonder how my approach to contemporary images as viewer can incorporate an (historical) consciousness of the practices through which othering is visually technologized and authorized, even as these kinds of representational practices continue to pervade contemporary Western visual and material landscapes.

In this chapter my visit to "The Body in the Lens" exhibit will collide with some of the questions I have raised in previous the chapters, on how visual images figure
within a history of political struggles over the meaning of and the attainment of reproductive freedom(s) for women. This chapter then, will reflect back on the previous chapters while simultaneously gesturing towards the direction(s) I anticipate I will move in post MA thesis. I am asking myself a number of questions: What is 'reproductive freedom?' What kinds of 'freedom practices' might this notion encompass, and how can visual repertoires be expanded in ways that trouble with the normative structures upon which many struggles to attain reproductive rights rest?

My investments in this writing turn on my interest in making a theoretical argument which troubles with my own innocence as viewer. I am engaged with this writing as a practice which might contribute to the bodies of representational work which seek to create new and ever expanding cultural forms for lived experience - spaces in which the possibilities for identity, family, and freedom are constantly shifting. Even as I write this, I recall the heterosexual, racialized, body beautiful space that was the gallery exhibit in Montreal. Numerous naked white women reclined on their backs. Aboriginal and First nations peoples stood naked before the camera. So called 'deformed' and 'diseased' bodies, displayed next to instruments of measurement, challenged me not to look away. The possibilities for 'identification' in that gallery space were contingent upon a rigidly structured visual landscape of who I am and who I am not. Emerging from that space, I wonder how I can in ways that account for how looking is structured?
My attempt to address these questions, albeit in a preliminary way, will take up a very public image which is at once a ‘body’ within social constructions of, and investments in, its independence and ontological being, and yet not a coherent body at all. In this chapter I will expand upon my discussion of the representation of fetal images within anti-choice discourses as coherent beings upon which societies should bestow rights and freedoms under the law. This thesis has made efforts to trouble with notions of causality between representations and ‘the real.’ In this chapter I am concerned with the visual landscapes of reproductive technologies, and the (body) politics of looking which is constituted and re-constituted on that visual terrain.

At the Montreal exhibit, a technicolor image depicts ‘The head and hands of a human fetus after 19 weeks.’ I overhear a man ask “Wow, how can you give that up?” Another image displays the foot of a human fetus in vivo after eleven weeks. Here, a child asks, “How did it get in the mommy’s tummy?” His mother replies, “That’s a very good question,” while moving quickly past the accompanying image of a “real sperm fertilizing a real human egg.” She clearly doesn’t want to talk with her youngster about sex. At least not here, in front of the rest of us, in a ‘fine art gallery’ where we are surrounded by unsettling images. I observe that the room is full of white people who, like myself, stop to scrutinize the fetal images. There is a sense of something powerful at stake, something tangible, something perceived to be ‘real.’ Everyone lingers here, eyes transfixed, bodies immobile.
This is, indeed, a complicated site of 're-production' and representation. As I have discussed in chapter three, fetal imagery has become an iconic symbol of the origins of life since the emergence of Lennart Nielsson's two dimensional fetuses, which hit the public press in the pages of Life magazine in the early 1950's. Through the proliferation of fetal images which have circulated over the past several decades, 'life' has become a source of knowledge, a system to be managed, and an important signifier of who 'we' are, and who 'we' are not. (Haraway:174) But who is the 'we' that these images aid in constructing?

My aim in this writing is to survey two images which on the face of it might seem to bear no relationship to one another, but on closer scrutiny are connected within the web of discourse which is the visual terrain of reproductive freedom and unfreedom, and by the historical narratives which load them with symbolic power. My intention is to create juxtapositions of images which may afford an opportunity to think through a 'whole which is greater than the sum of its parts.' I am intrigued by the possibilities for expanding the image repertoires which have been associated with pro-choice political campaigns, and in thinking through the potential political and pedagogical utilizations these expanded repertoires might open up. I want to raise questions about how the images I will discuss press on one another and upon the viewer, in beginning to conceptualize 'reproductive freedom' as a construct and a concept that implicates viewers in the struggle to (re)define who and what 'we' are.
In the previous chapter I asked the question of whether visual representations could make visible the connections between women's bodies, fetal life, and NRT's. Anne Kelly's cartoon image appeared in a Norwegian feminist journal in 1992. In this ink drawing we see a woman reclined in the aesthetic tradition of the artistically rendered female nude. (Incidentally, at the Montreal exhibit, there was an entire room devoted to images of naked white women draped over sofas, standing demurely before their full length mirrors, and 'caught' in the act of napping amidst tangled sheets that don't quite conceal their porcelain countenances...) In keeping with that tradition, this cartoon woman is slim, curvaceous, and her skin is milky white. The image of the reclining nude is ruptured, however, in the gesture of the woman's arm, lifted toward a computer keyboard, above which a monitor depicts a fetus which is not floating in space (like Nielson's fetal images), but which is tightly captured within the frame of the computer screen. We might wonder if the woman is about to press 'enter' or 'delete' (Haraway, 1997).

We can surmise that Kelly seeks to provide a humorous commentary on women's relationships to our bodies and our wanted or unwanted fetuses in this age of advancing reproductive technology. I submit that the 'meaning' of the cartoon is implicated in the wider struggle for 'meanings' over how the 'subject' of reproductive freedoms is constituted. The cartoon is heavily coded through the seemingly simple gesture of the raised arm, calling up associations with the image of Adam reaching toward God in the 'Creation of Adam' painted on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. As Adam reaches toward the source of life (God), so too does
Figure 5.1 Cartoon from Norwegian Feminist Journal, No. 3, 1992.
the reclining woman in Kelly’s cartoon reach toward the ‘source of life,’ in the form of the fetal image and all of its symbolic power to suggest itself as a foundational image of ‘life’s origins.’ (Haraway, 1997)

I am asking what sorts of stories do visual technologies - in this case a parody of those technologies - tell ‘us’ about ourselves? Who is the ‘us’ that is called up by the cartoon’s address? In Ann Kelly’s cartoon we see a free floating fetus ‘connected’ by the touch of a fingertip to the body of a woman, mediated by a world of advancing technology. Through her gaze and her touch, the woman bonds with her fetus on screen, transforming the fetal image into a source of multiple identifications. Visual technologies enable collective public connections which have material effects. As Haraway points out, images of fetuses are a source of identification for potential mothers, “...as well as fathers, and Members of Parliament and Congress” (1997:177). “How can you give that up?,” the man at the gallery asked, while looking...

I have posed the question of what normative structures of looking viewers encounter in relation to fetal images, and how those normative structures might be taken into account? Referencing Kelly’s cartoon, Haraway comments, “Reversals and substitutions undo the original, opening the story up in unexpected ways. Themselves forms of repetition, reversals and substitutions make the condition of all repetition obvious “ (1997:186). Turning our gaze back to Ann Kelly’s cartoon, what we see is a ‘reversal’ which calls up associations with the God/Adam
image on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. (The associated 'repetitions' of Christian narratives of heteronormativity are all too pervasive and too boring to survey here - we all know the story.)

The cartoon attempts to turn a series of intersecting narratives on their heads. It is a parody which depicts Eve taking Adam's place as first woman, reaching out to connect with the source of all knowledge and the 'origin of life itself.' It foregrounds the apparatuses of technology through which fetuses come to be represented as free-floating and independent beings. It does, indeed, make visible a technologically mediated relationship between a woman's body and the life of her fetus. In this way, the cartoon disrupts a series of codes which constitute the discourses through which power and knowledge are structured within debates over reproductive freedoms.

Yet the 'meaning' of the image remains perpetually unstable, and, it is arguable, open to an uninterrupted heteronormative reading. I want to avoid indulging myself with an 'innocent' reading that might overlook other ways in which this cartoon is situated within particular visual/political and symbolic landscapes. This image is particularly potent within a politics of reproductive freedom which has historically centered the interests of white straight women, and which rests, for its legitimacy, on notions of the heterosexual family and a normative (hetero)sexual morality. The woman's body is white, and, in her positioning as a reclined, available body, she is easily recognizable as an object of heterosexual male
desire. In chapter four, I have discussed how 'whiteness' as location discursively intersects with traditional 'motherhood' as the domain of straight white middle class women, who become the only women who are 'entitled' to control their reproductive functions. Women of color, poor women, women with disabilities, and lesbian women (not to mention gay men) have never enjoyed a socially sanctioned entitlement to 'reproduce.' As Lisa Cartwright has written on new reproductive imaging technologies in the U.S.:

...during the same period of their ascendancy there have been increasing disparities in access to them: predominantly white upper and middle class patients have access to private, technologically up to date medical practices, while many communities rely on the underfunded, technologically retrograde public health care system (1995:214).

How would the cartoon work (differently) if the body in the frame was a woman's body which defied the normative presence of the desirable white, straight, female body? It probably wouldn't be amusing anymore. I suspect it would become 'strange,' in its defiance of a host of discursively coded visual expectations. It may seem obvious to suggest that perhaps the very bodies which might further this potential disruption are rarely the bodies located within the visual frame of 'reproductive freedom.' Kelly's cartoon can be read as a reassurance that white straight women are still the subject of the discourse, having ever-increasing access to the technology.

Toward the end of chapter three I asked what kinds of 'pro-choice' images might open up spaces for multiple identifications and desires, in particular for young
women seeking to locate themselves in relation to reproductive freedom politics?
Here, I re-pose the question of how images can mobilize possibilities for becoming within women's full access to reproductive freedoms and sexual self-determination?

In October of 1996, an article entitled "Family Matters" was featured in the 'Life' section of Toronto's right leaning daily newspaper, The Globe and Mail. The article takes the reader/viewer into the lives of a gay and lesbian Vancouver family - a radical quadrangle of proud new parents, who have recently given birth to a bouncing baby boy through artificial insemination. The two couples reside in close proximity to one another and are legally married so as to receive benefits and drug plans from their respective work places. They are a family, who, through their practices, defy the heterosexual nuclear family even as they work within legal structures to use the legislation to honor their relationships and reap the benefits that are restricted to heterosexual marriage by law. Boldly displayed in the pages one of Toronto's most prominent dailies, this is an important and radical image.

In the context of The Globe and Mail article, writer Vivian Smith argues that historians have a difficult time pinning down a single configuration of family which remains static throughout history (05/10/96, D1). I concur that a globalized look at specific family structures can only reveal in particular and localized practices and configurations. Yet it won't be 'news' when I mention that these localized practices in the West are structured around a phantasmatic, normative,
Family matters
heterosexual imperative of the nuclear, patriarchal family. Smith does not explore in her article are the historicized practices of kinship which defy heteronormative imperatives, creating a slippage between the written text and the accompanying image. On reading this article, I wondered if Smith is trying to convince readers that this family is not so unusual, not so abnormal, not so ‘out of synch’ with historical trends as they might seem to a predominantly heterosexual, white, class privileged, right-leaning readership? I Smith trying to reassure a presumed audience that this family is (almost) just like them?

Upon first scrutiny the article was far less intriguing for me than the image which accompanied it. "Family Matters," the title claims. Asking how ‘family matters’ within symbolic landscapes seems a critical question within a visual politics of reproductive freedom. Within this symbolic field, the image of the infant in the right corner of the screen is all too familiar. He is suspended in space. Yet he is not a free floating space-child, like Lennert Nielson’s fetuses, or like the giant floating fetus in the final scene of Stanley Kubrick’s 2001. In this family portrait the ‘infant’ is connected to the earth, to family, and more precisely for my purposes here, to his gay and lesbian parents.

The Globe and Mail image is a moment which, perhaps, creates a space where other moments and ruptures can occur. It might, perhaps, make lucid some of the connections which can be drawn across a number of political struggles to attain sexual and reproductive freedoms. Yet even as I am excited by this symbolic rift, I
am aware of the 'we' this image constructs. This family is, if only 'for the record,' legally married, a point which is emphasized in the accompanying article. I am asking myself how this image, located within the discursive context of The Globe and Mail newspaper and the accompanying text, reproduces the white middle class 'safe' image of gay and lesbian families which look like heterosexual families?

**IMAGE:** I recently attended a screening of "Jim Loves Jack," a videotape about the life of pioneering Canadian gay rights activist Jim Egan and his battle to achieve spousal status under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Throughout the tape, Egan and his partner tell the story of their relationship, while the viewer is lead through a series of photographs which trace the couple's 25 year history together. At an awards ceremony honoring James Egan, gay actor/comedian Sky Gilbert comments, "25 years! Do you know how long that is in gay years?" Indeed, through the monogamous, middle-class, devoted and loving representation of the relationship between Jim and Jack, the message seemed to be that queer relationships are OK if it looks like some close version of the heterosexual white middle class family, complete with dogs and gardens and homes in suburbia. **IMAGE:** I think also of Ellen De Generes’ recent world wide media sponsored coming out party. The event was clean, white, asexual, and all (apparently) performed for the sake of providing a role model for troubled gay, lesbian and bisexual youth. It's all very palatable - to a straight, white, middle class audience in particular.
As I begin to round out this series of reflections to a 'completion,' I want to consider the implications of the following quotation for the questions I have raised here. Valerie Hartouni writes:

> Contained in the disruption of conventional meanings and identities and their particular vulnerability to contestation are numerous possible political openings - multiple points of resistance as well as projects of reconstruction. Naming and seizing these possibilities, however, requires imagination, a new political idiom, as well as a certain courage - to eschew an lingering attachment to things 'natural' and 'foundational' and to jettison the essentialism clung to by all extant participants and opponents of the repro-tech drama. It requires the courage to take seriously the socially and technologically produced opportunity to invent ourselves consciously and deliberately, and in this to develop the practical, political implications of the philosophical claim that 'we' are only and always what we make (Hartouni, 1991:51).

The final image in "The Body in the Lens" exhibit is that of an eight week old human fetus resting in the palm of a white man's hand. The hand is large, or at least it appears to be large because it fills the entire frame of the image. This is a photograph of a fetus that was aborted to "save the life of the mother." The placing of this image at the end of the exhibit is far from accidental. I read it in terms of the signifying practices which surround fetal images, which remain embedded within patriarchal/heterosexual/ableist/colonialist systems of meaning making.

The cover of the May 1997 issue of The Advocate, (The 'National Gay and Lesbian News Magazine'), features an image of a floating fetus, emblazoned with the caption "Endangered Species. This child has the gay gene. Will he be aborted because of it?" In chapter four I raised the question of what kinds of
information will it become possible to obtain about our unborn fetuses through visual technologies, and how will this cultural become authorized and mobilized? In particular, I am concerned with what kinds of fetal 'bodies' will attain cultural, as well as material viability, when they are not 'seen' as the 'perfect' (straight, able-bodied, gendered, raced) babies which represent a host of cultural ideals. The cover of the Summer 1997 edition of Natural Parent magazine features a smiling, blond pony-tailed mother proudly holding up her beautiful white infant boy for the camera. I am still thinking about these images and how I found them side by side on a magazine rack in the Toronto Women's bookstore.

In an increasingly right leaning political climate in Canada and the U.S., in which visual reproductive technologies will continue to shape our notions of self and community, I ask what kinds of representational strategies and practices of looking can continue to intervene in the shape of things to come? How will these images challenge or reproduce the foundations upon which reproductive freedom movements rest? How will they continue to rub up against one another, and, in turn, implicate the viewer in practices of looking which re-figure particular political/visual idiom(s)?

Reflections...Refractions...

This thesis has been concerned with documentary images and their depictions of an unmediated 'real' experience, and with how images of the 'real' are interpellated into the discourses of political movement. For the purposes of this thesis, the work
that images do within the context of reproductive freedom politics has provided insight into how the visual participates in the construction of particular intelligibilities and positionings within pro-choice/anti-choice debates. I have explored how ‘identity’ and ‘identifications’ get read through specific moments of ‘state formation,’ and how particular aspects of politicized identity are deeply embedded in the political articulation and claims making of pro-choice/anti-choice debates. Further, I have attempted to theorize ‘state formation’ as a productive force within reproductive freedom projects, through which regulatory practices position particular bodies in particular ways. I have questioned some of the complex ways that one documentary image, which has been taken up as a political symbol for pro-choice movement, can bring about closures on what can be thought and said in the name of political strategizing and resistance.

Throughout this thesis, I have questioned a series of related ‘complicities’ in relations of power and domination. These have included an interrogation of the location(s) of privilege I inhabit in relation to this writing and to my activist work both past, present, and future. I have discussed the work of resistance movements as located within and produced by the very relations of power they would seek to contest and which, paradoxically, necessitate their existence. This assertion demands further thinking through in relation to reproductive freedom debates. Because this particular political struggle is waged primarily on the terrain of the state (eg, law, medical services, police intervention), the work of political mobilizing against state authorities which curtail the attainment of women’s
reproductive freedom will be mutually in/ formative as my research proceeds.

I continue to hold on to what might be read as a naive investment in hope, in future, and in the possibilities for political re-(imag)ining. Perhaps this ‘naive investment’ can account for my interest in questions of images and pedagogy. I see images as particularly promising tools within a project of organizing and educating for the future. Read for their “conditions of possibility,” image-texts can invite viewers to question their encounters with the visual within specific social, political and historical contexts. Following Britzman and Felman (1995), reading practices which pay attention to how ‘alterity’ is constructed through particular images and visual encounters might push the boundaries of what individuals and communities must “shut out in order to think as we do.” As Probyn has written, “The image teeters, skitters between despair and longing; it gathers force just when the conditions of its possibility seem to be about to close in on it” (1995:13). What remains is the question of what images can be continually (imag)ined, how will they be read and understood as part of particular political horizons or not? As this writing draws to a ‘close,’ I continue to think through a developing fascination with how images might signal dynamic interrelationships between seemingly unrelated or distinct political projects.

At a recent feminist academic gathering Donna Haraway spoke of “…the project of making a dirty difference...as non-innocent useful political work by people who own their histories, as well as the histories which are generated through specific
political organizations" (Lancaster, U.K., 1997, field notes). As an example she cited the work of women lobbying for the protection of Claoquot Sound, on Canada’s Western coast. Haraway described these women as engaged in the work of coming to understand how they produce ‘images of nature’ to do particular kinds of political work, and by refusing the nature/culture split which has dominated representations of ‘wilderness worth saving.’ “In doing this,” Haraway commented, “these women enact a ‘dirty engagement’ which is making everyone angry...”

Throughout this thesis I have variously ‘named the institutional markings’ of race, gender, sexuality and ability (Probyn, 1995:5). This has felt necessary in the making of particular arguments about how identity is constituted within normative structures which require the power and privilege laden demarcations of difference for their articulation. I have simultaneously attempted to put forth a critique of how identity becomes foundational within the work of resistance movement. I take seriously Probyn’s assertion that ‘...the strategy of naming the institutional markings...only takes us so far. It is a project of differentiating bodies on account of their locations; a project that speaks of where bodies belong but that can’t quite write out of the desire for other belongings. Important as it is, it tends to slow the body down” (1995:5). Focussing on how identity is constituted within particular socio-political contexts complicates the work of making political claims in the name of equality, freedom, and justice. It can also illuminate dynamic ways of thinking and imagining educational and political projects that don’t end up where...
they started from.

Donna Haraway recently spoke about "...ethnographic risk as a mode of theoretical attention, in which one's self is at stake for becoming something else..." (Lancaster, U.K., 1997) Throughout this thesis I have questioned the possibilities for a pedagogy of images which involves "thinking the relation between a thought and what it cannot think" (Britzman, 1995:151). I understand this self-conscious reflexive approach to reading images as a pedagogical 'mode of attention,' as undoubtedly a 'risking of the self...' I continue to think about who I become through the writing of this thesis, and through my encounters with the images which I have taken up as sources of visual inquiry. In chapter four I have questioned the ethics of doing research in which the certainties of 'self' get lost, perhaps making room for productive uncertainties to venture forth. This thesis has been about images and movement and the loco-motions of looking. I have not 'ended up' where I started from.

I have indulged myself with what some might call 'fantasies' about 'intentional spaces' in which to hold risky conversations about feminist political organizing. I see contemporary pro-choice political organizing as perhaps the 'riskiest' and also the most pressing area of contemporary feminist debate. Reproductive freedoms for women are contingent upon a host of other (economic, sexual,...) freedoms, which intersect with all other emancipatory 'feminist' projects, as well as projects which are not necessarily understood to be 'feminist.' I continue to wonder what
kinds of images can and will emerge from the borderlands between these projects. I wonder too, what kinds of politically insurgent conversations might become possible if the conditions of possibility for particular visual campaigns were also to become visible.

Throughout this thesis, I have posed questions which are both difficult to ask and to answer. When this writing began, I wanted to know more about a dead woman who was in a photograph - a woman who became immortalized within an image which then 'became' that woman and much more. Now, as this writing approaches its 'end,' I am asking different questions. The image of Gerri Santoro continues to circulate within feminist spaces, demanding that attention be paid to a politics of representation and interpretation which 'questions the terms of its referent' (Berlant, 1997, field notes, Lancaster, U.K.). Now, as I approach the 'end' of these pages, I want to continue asking what other kinds of 'dirty engagements' can help educators and cultural and political workers to understand the kinds of work that images do, and don't do, and might do differently.
Reception, of course, takes on a momentum of its own, in excess of intended responses. Moments of failure are particularly important in tracing the kind of work that something does... (Lather, 1996:538)...


