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Re-Presenting Reproductive Rights: A Matrixial Approach to the Abortion Debate

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Preface: The State of/and Reproductive Rights in the 1960s and 70s

On April 30, 1965, the cover of *Life* magazine presented a fetus at eighteen weeks, an "unprecedented photographic feat in color."[1] (fig. 1) A red-hued figure enclosed by an amniotic halo, arms crossed gently over its torso as if in peaceful slumber, floats atop the inky black of the page. To the right of the figure, the pink fleshy membrane of the placenta spills over the image's edge, anchoring the fetus to its maternal environment. The text of the article begins by describing the image as "the first portrait ever made of a living embryo inside its mother's womb." However, upon careful reading of the text, this relationship of embryo and womb is complicated, even tenuous. As the photographer Lennart Nilsson provides a visual tour of a developing embryo, the magazine confesses that other images, splashed in full cover across sixteen pages, depicted embryos that "had been surgically removed for a variety of medical reasons." (fig. 2)

While sonographic technology had been available since the late 1940s and early 1950s, uncertainty in regard to the safeness of exposure to high frequency sound waves (as in the case of X-ray technology) as well as the inaccessibility of commercial equipment, limited its use in general obstetrics. In the early 1960s, when ultrasound equipment became commercially available, ultrasound imaging began to be explored as a means of visualizing, measuring, and tracking the fetus as the pregnancy progressed. At the time of the April 1965 *Life* cover, the sonogram images would have been familiar only within a medical context. By moving the photographs outside of a techno-medical context and inserting them within public discourse, the images took on a different ideological connotation. By invoking the paternalistic authority of technology, science, and obstetrics (in the 1960s, an undeniably male-oriented field), the terrain of pregnancy, which prior to this historical moment had been focused on the lived and felt experience of the pregnant woman,

entered into the scopic realm; the fetus now became an object of scrupulous observation, examination, and surveillance.

In the political climate preceding the landmark Supreme Court decision of *Roe v. Wade*, the image of the fetus played an important role in informing the public consciousness in regard to pregnancy and natality. As the magazine cover intimates, the ability to capture visually prenatality was immediately correlated with the depiction of "life," despite the fact that Nilsson's photographic subjects were actually autopsied embryos. Barbara Duden, in her brief analysis of the historical understanding of pregnancy remarks "The fetuses we live with today were first conceived not in the womb, but in visualizing technologies."[2]

Analyzing the legal arguments and precedents set by the series of court cases in the early 1970s, culminating in the 1973 Supreme Court decision, reveals the framework through which reproductive rights were considered, as well as what concerns were brought up on either side. When *Roe v. Wade* was presented in front of the Texas district court, Jay Floyd, assistant attorney general for the state of Texas, and his boss, Robert Flowers, wanted to make the correlation between abortion and murder, pleading the case on largely moralistic terms, but found no legal precedent to do so. The 1854 Texas law concerning abortion made no mention of the fetus, and could be read as precluding the governmental obligation to protect prenatal life in its exception that permitted abortion by "medical advice for the purpose of saving the life of the mother."[3] N.E.H Hull and Peter Charles Hoffer, in their overview text on the case, *Roe v. Wade: The Abortion Rights Controversy in American History,* note that, **"**The legal precedent of the protection of fetal life didn't exist. Instead, the basis of the existing law was to protect pregnant women from abortionists."[4] Looking closely at the terms used (and not used) in this century of legal discourse illustrates how the terms of reproductive discourse are constantly shifting, and how the social perception of pregnancy and the fetus is historically, geographically, and otherwise contextually contingent. While arguments about

life beginning at conception were already being made within religious groups, most notably within the Roman Catholic tradition, this had not yet been the province of legal determinations.[5] Sarah Weddington, representing Roe, argued that "life was an 'ongoing process'—it should not be tagged to impregantion, any more than to the creation of the sperm in the man or the egg in the ovaries."[6] However, following Roe, the anti-abortion forces felt the necessity of introducing a conception of fetal rights. In a closely related case *Doe v. Bolton*, Ferdinand Buckley, a Roman Catholic lawyer from Atlanta, filed a motion to be appointed the guardian ad litem for the unborn fetus in question.[7] While this move was largely symbolic and aimed at generating publicity rather than carrying legal merit, it demonstrates a radical shift into the territory of the legal protections of the fetus. Although the state of Georgia ruled that while "the fetus might have the potential of becoming a human being…nothing in federal law made it an independent being at conception, and therefore the woman's right to end the pregnancy outweighed any interest of the fetus or the state in forcing her to carry the pregnancy to term,"[8] the groundwork that pitted the rights and bodily autonomy of a woman against the rights and bodily autonomy of the fetus was beginning to be articulated in legal, religious, and social spheres, and began to shape the public understanding of abortion rights.

When *Roe v. Wade* made its way to the Supreme Court, the state's case asserted the "humanness" of the fetus and its entitlement to legal protections. What is most interesting, as Hull and Hoffer point out, is that this argument, while previously couched within a religious framing, now borrowed the authority and presumed objectivity of science. The state supplemented their argument with medical findings that proved the fetus was independent and alive from conception, frequently referring to the fetus as an "unborn child." In their brief, the state included twelve photographs of a developing embryo, made possible by recently developed intrauterine camera technology. The size of the fetus was consistently enlarged, up to a factor of ten, without mention of any post-production manipulation. The state introduced amicus briefs from medical experts in order

to strengthen the scientific basis of fetal autonomy, claiming that the "the unborn person is also a patient," and again illustrating their point with blown-up fetal images.[9] The *viability* of the fetus, a term that begin to enter discursive circulation in regard to when the state had the obligation to intervene in the interest of the fetus, was closely associated with its *visibility*.

Outside of the already obvious flaw in the putative objectivity of the photograph, namely, its susceptibility to various kinds of manipulation, the defense relied on the "power of the visual apparatus's claim to be an 'an unreasoning machine' that produces an 'an unerring record.'"[10] The photograph carries with it an empirical indexicality that cannot be questioned, and is associated with scientific rationality and the paternalistic surveillance of the state. The state presented the images as being able to speak for themselves, demonstrating an uncontestable "lifeness" through their visual similarity to babies. The ways images were interpreted had already changed slightly from the 1965 *Life* article, when the assertion of the connection between embryo and human were not as urgent. In the *Life* article, while vague blobs captioned with "3 ½ WEEKS" give indication to what the "bulges" will eventually become ("The two upper bulges will expand into the two halves of the forebrain…At this stage the four bulges surround a central cavity that will become the mouth"[11]), it hardly carries the force of the state's brief which depicted the "development schedules of the eyes, organs, and the looks of the fetus to show how human they were from the first weeks of gestation."[12]

In the 1960s and 70s, when the terms of the reproductive rights discourse were still distilling and beginning to circulate, the issue of the mother was still very much at the foreground of the discussion. The majority decision for the *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court case found that the bodily privacy of the mother was protected under the fourteenth amendment, and that it was a "fundamental right of single women and married persons to choose whether to have children."[13] Carol Stabile, in her essay "Shooting the Mother: Fetal Photography and the Politics of

Disappearance," provides a close reading of the 1965 TIME cover as representative of the social understanding of pregnancy and motherhood:

> So in 1965, the mother can be shot through, but she does not need to be erased: traces of her presence remain, both discursively and through the inclusion of the placenta in the photographs. In keeping with still dominant ideologies of motherhood, (and I could add, growing discourses in women's rights) the absent body is consistently referred to as "the mother." Reminders that the mother is more than mere surface or screen—that, in fact, she is absolutely central to the processes being described—sprinkle the text: "at 3 ½ weeks, the embryo is so tiny—about a tenth of an inch long—that the mother may not even know she is pregnant.[14]

Thus while discourses of fetal autonomy and fetal citizenship entered in public discourse, the dominant paradigm was still focused on the health and agency of the mother. Fetal images were grounded in their maternal environment, and new legal precedents were set which clearly prioritize the life, health, body, and privacy of the pregnant woman, even if issues of the legal status of the fetus remained unresolved. However, it was already evident the ways in which intrauterine imaging technologies were participating in and helping mold these conversations. Especially when the image left the doctor's office and entered into the magazine page or the courtroom, the visual regime of fetality was being activated to do specific ideological work.

I. The Public Fetus/ The Fetal Person: Reproductive Rhetorics in the 1980s and 90s

Lennart Nilsson's fetal imagery graced the cover of *Life* magazine once again on August 8, 1990. (fig. 3) The cover staged its own retelling of Genesis, captioning the embryo with "The First Pictures Ever of How Life Begins," and "the First Days of Creation." Nilsson's account of the origin story, however, adapts it with a curious reversal. Human life appears to have been fashioned before the heavens and earth. Our primordial being is not placed into the Garden of Eden, but rests in a hazy, out-of-focus orb, enclosed from the nothingness surrounding it.

In 1965, the images of the fetus had been grounded within the space of the maternal womb. Now, as Lauren Berlant describes, the "transformation of representation and scale has pushed the mother into the fuzzy, unfocused part of the picture, throwing her body into a suspension of meaning and value with implications both intimate and national."[15]

The photographs depict the fertilization of the ovum as it is "penetrated" by a sperm, under the title "2 HOURS," (fig. 4) but never explicitly or even indirectly alludes to the agential act of copulation that must have preceded it. The ambiguity in its title removes bodies from the picture. It is its own Big Bang, emerging out of pure nothingness. The womb is ripped of its context, of its place within a woman's body. The electron microscope images, with their unfamiliar textures and terrains, are interpreted with extraterrestial metaphor, "an eerie planet floating through space;"[16] casting the ovum into the realm of the purely imaginary, rather than the distinctly embodied. Repeated allusion to space travel colors the strange images, illegible in their foreignness. They appear as aerial views of unknown lands, landscapes of the otherworldly. (fig. 5)

The nurturing womb of 1965 has turned into a hostile maze, antagonizing the ovum in its journey towards birth. "At almost any point along the way the cells could get stuck in the twists and folds of the fallopian tube, an event more probable if the tube is scarred or damaged from previous

infections or surgery."[17] The relationship between defenseless embryo and the destructive capacity of the woman's body is reinforced in the description of the chemicals emitted by the blastocyst to counteract the immune system within the uterus, without which "the mother's body would identify the genetically different growth as foreign and destroy it."[18] There is already a war raging in the reproductive system, pitting fetus against maternal body.

The few and subtle mentions of the woman's body insist on the disconnect between the developing embryo and its host, informing the reader that "Despite the dramatic changes deep within the woman's body, no chemical messengers tell her fertilization has occurred,"[19] and that "The embryo has its own blood supply separate from the mother's."[20] Already visually divorced from any recognizable maternal space, the fetus is decisively severed from the woman through the text of the article, symbolically cutting the umbilical cord months too soon. As Stabile reiterates, "Both visually and textually, the embryo/fetus enjoys a thoroughly autonomous status."[21] Image and text collude to draw a distinct outline around the fetus, bringing it into focus as a subject in its own right.

Six years before, in 1984, as Reagan was campaigning for his second term, the image of the fetus entered into American home through the television set for the first time in the graphic anti-abortion propaganda piece, "The Silent Scream." In the video, Doctor Bernard Nathanson, a middle-aged white man wearing a light gray suit, speaks to the audience while leaning casually against his office desk. He begins by enacting the dominant rhetorical strategy of the New Right anti-abortion movement: replacing religious justifications for "pro-life" stances with medico-technical objectivity. He describes his own experience as a medical student, before the domain of "fetology," where he was taught "that there was something in the uterus, but it really was an article of faith as to whether or not it was a human being and whether or not that human being had any unique qualities."[22] The religious position, which allowed for skepticism and "lack of faith," was clearly

more tenuous than uncontestable scientific fact. As he explains the intricacies of fetal imagining technology, and how the practice of obstetrics has rapidly developed in the last fifteen years, he informs the audience that "those technologies, those apparatuses and machines, have convinced us that beyond question the unborn child is simply another human being, another member of the human community, indistinguishable in every way from any of us."[23]

Like the 1990 *Life* article, Dr. Nathanson obsessively describes the stages of fetal development, indicating the initial articulations of head, heart, limbs, and hands. Holding fast to a rhetoric of "viability," the impossibly ambiguous term used to describe the moment in which the fetus can live outside of the uterus, Nathanson proclaims that "This little person at twelve weeks is a fully formed, absolutely identifiable human being."[24] Nathanson takes his time describing the nuances of his visualizing equipment, reinforcing the undeniability and scientific objectivity of the cutting edge machines. In doing so, Nathanson establishes himself as a trustworthy authority, supported by technology and science.

Dr. Nathanson then takes us through the steps of an abortion, demonstrating with models and obstetric tools, as a rehearsal for what is soon to come on the screen. (fig. 6) The true performance is the real-time sonogram video, that which Nathanson describes as causing the doctor who had performed thousands of abortions to pledge to never perform another one, and the feminist pro-abortionist filmmaker who after making the film never spoke of abortion again.

After his dramatic build up, the viewer might be disoriented by the fetus as it appears on the television set at the end of Nathanson's pointer: a hazy constellation of impressionist dabs. (fig. 7)The doctor carefully points out the anatomy of the figure on the screen, providing his own captions so the audience can decode the image. As the suction tube is introduced into the base of the uterus, Nathanson describes the aggressive rearing of the "child," indicating that it knows that its

life is in danger as it attempts its futile escape. The moving image is paused in a freeze frame, "See the child's mouth wide open in a silent scream."

The disconnect between image and narration becomes clear here, as the caption projects its own meaning onto the image. The critical response to the film corrected the assumptions of the video, especially those that carried the most persuasive weight. The fetus would not yet have had air in its lungs, so the "silent scream" of the title of film can operate only metaphorically. Additionally, the fetus would not yet have developed a cerebral cortex, and thus would not have the ability to process any sensation of pain. While the movement of the fetus is described as intentional, and motivated by fear, self-preservation, or physical suffering, the "fetal movements at this stage are reflexive and without purpose.'[25] The film uses symbols of authority and the activation of a specifically coded image practice, at the expense of medical accuracy, in order to present its argument.

He refers again to his props, three-dimensionalizing the black and white sonogram on the screen. The image hardly speaks for itself: the narration overlays its own optics that tell the viewer where to look and what to see there. While presented as document or evidence, it, as Petchesky describes, "embeds ultrasound imaging of pregnancy in a moving picture show."[26] The video clearly functions as support for the anti-abortion agenda, and relies on specific messages to make a political and moral statement about reproductive rights. Yet, "the medical authority figure—paternalistic and technocratic at the same time—delivers these messages less by his words than by the power of his image and his persona."[27]

The medical authority seemed not to speak only for the fetus—he was the voice of the best interests of the woman as well. The only shots of a woman in the entire half hour program are brief cutaways to a patient receiving an abortion on a hospital bed, our view of her from the hips down only, her legs splayed while a surgeon performs the operation. The mother has become "empty

space."[28] The visibility of the fetus has all but erased the womb, thereby effacing the pregnant woman and her embodied existence.

The National Right To Life Committee, the oldest pro-life organization in the country, founded in 1968, produced the video and distributed it to television networks, where it was aired at least five times in one month, as well as to schools churches, state and federal legislators. While the National Right To Life Committee had been in existence for decades, its involvement in media outreach such as the "Silent Scream" signified a radical new orientation of anti-abortion movements.

The early 1980s witnessed a transformation in conservative politics and the rise of the New Right. Under Reagan, anti-abortion organizations switched their strategies and tactics from defensive to offensive. Petschesky elaborates, "Beginning with the 1984 presidential campaign, the neoconservative Reagan administration and the Christian Right accelerated their use of television and video imagery to capture political discourse—and power."[29] The fetus and its place in the American image stream became a powerful tool for the anti-abortion agenda. The ultrasound image was reappropriated. Even in private contexts, a pregnant woman viewing the sonogram in a doctor's office, without the moralizing narrator describing its parts, is interpellated by the way fetal imagery is inscribed in public discourse.

In 1979, leaders of the New Right began two new anti-abortion groups: the American Life Lobby, and the Moral Majority, the latter founded by evangelist Jerry Falwell.[30] A firm anti-abortion stance, networked with notions of the family and sexuality, became a driving force through which right-wing politicians attempted to consolidate state power. In the economic recession and high unemployment rates of the 1970s, Reagan promised a revolution that would refocus American values, and abortion and family issues became a symbol of traditional conservative goals. While campaigning for his second term, Reagan published *Abortion & the Conscience of the Nation*, a book that clearly outlined his anti-abortion stance and his view of abortion as being incompatible with

American democratic ideals. With a preface by Wanda Franz, the President of the National Right to Life Committee, the book was a harbinger of the role that reproductive rights would eventually play in the conservative political discourse of the 1980s and 90s.

Lauren Berlant, in the introduction of *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City,* describes the political terrain of the 1980s as relying on the idea of the "intimate public sphere", a product of the Reaganite right wing conservative agenda that created a "familiar politics of the national future."[31] Reproductive rights, and especially the image of the fetus, became wrapped up in the construction of citizenship, the symbol of a shared national imaginary. The fetus, as a site for the construction of a national identity, as well as a symbol of American futurity, was engaged to carry the ideological burden of a New America and "the good life." The womb became a screen to be projected on, containing an image of ideal citizenship. As Berlant writes, "because it appears to be personhood in its natural completeness, prior to the fractures of history and identity, the fetus is supposed to be a solution, from the origin of human existence, to the corporeal violence that plagues America today. It has become an index of natural/national rights with respect to which adult citizens must derive their legitimation."[32] The fetus has entered politics, but was not delimited by reproductive rights discourse. The image of the fetus was called on to be a part of the revolution: anti-abortion propaganda such as the "Silent Scream" enacts a resituation of human history and American law from the perspective of the fetal body.

The fetus, as unmarked ideal citizen, as emblem of the "good life," is also constructed as the individual who is the most vulnerable, the most oppressed, and the most in need of governmental intervention. The increased visibility of the fetus, and the place of the fetal visual economy within the public and social sphere, has allowed the "intimacy of the womb [to be] transformed into a landscape for public inspection."[33] There has been a linguistic shift, wherein now, "the noun "fetus,"…has assumed imperative connotations. It now refers to an object in need of care that

demands test, diagnoses, protection and management."[34] The construction of the fetus an object in need of care is the primary tactic in which the New Right has exploited shifting conceptions of citizenship to include a new identity category of personhood, utilizing rhetorics of minority politics:

> By merging the American counterdiscourse of minority rights with a revitalized Providential nationalist rhetoric, the pro-life movement has composed a magical and horrifying spectacle of amazing vulnerability: the unprotected person, the citizen without a country or a future, the fetus unjustly imprisoned in its mother's hostile gulag. The movement has fundamentally altered the aggregate meaning of nature, identity, and the body in the construction of American nationality.[35]

Transformed into the recto and verso of new national identity, the oppressed yet ideal citizen, the fetus takes the stage as American icon. The fetus, rather than the pregnant woman, became the patient. These shifts in the social understanding of fetality, and the success in establishing a concept of fetal personhood, especially as tied to larger nationalist politics, rested on the establishment of a "mode of 'representation' that merges the world's political and aesthetic senses, imputing a voice, a consciousness, and a self-identity to the fetus that can neither speak its name nor vote."[36] While representation in this sense is not specific to the image, visual depictions of the fetus served as the foundational framework upon which new meanings of pregnancy and fetus grounded themselves. The new family photo album began with the spectral sonogram photograph, the fetus rendered visible in hazy shades of gray. Berlant continues, "When the fetus became available to photograph, making 'life' miraculous in a new way, it came to occupy a new scale of existence, often taking up an entire frame like a portrait. In the process of becoming bigger, it pushed the externally visible bodies involved in reproducing it outside of the family picture, making the mother and the father, I think, ancestors before their time."[37]

II. Art and Activism: Feminist Art Practice and its Place Within Public Discourse

In 1989, the National Organization for Women (NOW) organized a March on Washington in support of the abortion rights movement. The march drew five hundred thousand supporters who came together to protest the Supreme Court hearing a case that could potentially overturn the Roe v. Wade decision. NOW called the event a "March for Women's Lives," reappropriating, but still maintaining, the binary established by the anti-abortion right that invoked the word "life" to position fetus against mother. Feminist activist groups attempted to reclaim the concept of "life" by resettling it within a concern for women's bodies and their choice.

The war that raged over women's reproductive systems continued through visual print media. The artist Barbara Kruger designed the poster for the NOW march: a black and white photograph split down the middle, with the right side in negative. The image is interrupted with bold red and white text declaring "Your body is a battleground." (fig. 8) In her choice of language, Kruger acknowledged the increasingly militarized posturing of the anti-abortion movement.

Carol Mason, in her book *Killing for Life*, explores the way anti-abortion strategies shifted in the wake of the Vietnam War. She describes a "New War" culture that justified extremism in its pursuit of justice, rewriting history and ignoring the emotional, political, psychological, and material costs in both Vietnam and the United States. New War culture ushered in the "cult of the warrior," the glorification of John Rambo as the hero-ideal. Mason links this paramilitary culture to shifts in the rationale for opposing abortion, as well as the means of politically contesting it. The terms of the abortion debate became more steeped in warlike imagery: "This shift is true of all sorts of anti-abortion efforts, from national membership and lobbying organizations (who are considered to be mainstream or moderate), to protest groups such as Operation Rescue (whose name evokes a

military maneuver), to individual vigilantes in the Army of God, who bomb abortion facilities and terrorize abortion providers (and who are considered to be extremists)."[38] The 1980s saw the rise of the "new abortion warrior," the metaphor horrifically literalizing with the bombing of an abortion clinic in Pensacola, Florida in December 1984.[39]

As reproductive discourse became increasingly militaristic, anti-abortion groups drew a comparison between abortion and genocide, an analogy all the more troublesome in the wake of Holocaust deniers in the United States in the 1980s. Using tactics that Berlant enumerates in her discussion of the establishment of the intimate public sphere, in which the fetus becomes the vulnerable citizen in need of protection (see section I), the far right anti-abortion groups conflated the fetus with the victim of ethnic cleansing, thereby morally indicting not only the abortionist or woman having the procedure, but any citizen that stood idly by while abortion was allowed to continue in this country. In 1997 the Genocide Awareness Project (GAP) began touring around colleges in the United States, displaying posters of aborted fetuses, magnified to five or six feet, next to images of a mass grave in a German concentration camp.[40] Certainly, the right wing had activated abortion discourse in such a way that made Kruger's words resonate—the terms of this debate were now "life" and "death," and it raged across the bodies of American women.

Kruger's poster also served as meta-commentary on popular visual language and the use of mass media as a means of advancing an anti-abortion agenda. In Kate Linker's monograph on Kruger, *Love for Sale*, Linker writes, "Kruger proposes to intervene in stereotypical representations, disrupting their power, displacing their hold, and clearing a space for enlightened awareness. To this end, she operates within the multiple sites through which signs circulate."[41] In addition to abortion specifically, Kruger addressed political issues such as consumerism and the objectification of women. By taking up as her medium the materials and modes of display of the conventional mass

media, especially in reaction to political issues that found their audience through those techniques Kruger brought attention to the ideological mechanisms that advanced political agendas.

In another reproductive rights poster campaign by Kruger, she produced a number of images that featured photographs of men with the word "HELP!" across their chests. (fig. 9-10) At the bottom of the image, there is a block of text that appears to be in the voice of the male subject. Under a picture of a cross-armed white man in a suit the poster reads, "HELP! I've worked hard. Business is booming and I've decided to enter politics. The campaign is going really well but I just found out I'm pregnant. What should I do?" Under the picture of an African American teenager in a denim jacket and backward baseball cap a caption reads, "HELP! Graduation is coming up and I've got a job lined up. I want to get my life together. But my girlfriend is seeing other guys and I just found out I'm pregnant. What should I do?" The relationship of image and text creates a jarring moment of discomfort when the male narrative is interrupted by the concern of pregnancy and how to handle it, yet there is also a moment of recognition—a familiar scenario with the gender switched. This moment of disjuncture creates a space for the recognition of an absence, specifically that of female voices, especially in regard to the maintenance of rights concerning their own bodies. As Miwon Kwon notes, "What Kruger achieved with the improbably textual imposition of a pregnancy upon the images of male bodies is to insist on the presence of *female* subjects despite their absence from view, interrupting the presumption of masculine subjectivity as the ground of the representation. But more than this, the artist also insists on pregnant female *bodies*, as physical and biological, therefore as real and political."[42] Kruger attempts to draw attention to the lacuna of visual representations of pregnant women, especially in comparison to the media saturation of fetal imagery.

Kruger's work also holds traces of psychoanalytic feminist thought, indicating the influence of European theory in 1980s American feminist activism. The strands of critique that were being

transplanted from the continent included a return to Lacan and Freud, and a criticism of Freud's idea of the relationship between sexual differentiation and visible difference, and the reliance of symbolic structures on the phallus. The feminine is marked by absence, excluded from the masculine symbolic realm of meaning-making. These were themes that were being explored by thinkers like Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, and Hélène Cixous in feminist psychoanalytic circles in France.

Kruger appropriates the theoretical terms of the *Écriture feminine*, the interest in the inscription of the feminine body and female difference in language and text[43] into her own practice. Kate Linker provides a closer reading: "Many works of Kruger address the theme of absence ('I am your almost nothing' states a work of 1983 and 'You delight in the loss of others' says another of 1982). In a piece from 1983, an image of a woman is overlaid with the words 'We construct the chorus of missing persons,' alluding to the construction of woman as a *category* defined by the phallic term."[44] Kruger attempts to give form to the space of feminine lack, or if not that, draw attention to it as absence. Linker continues, "Elsewhere Kruger adopts the tone of a tease, collaging the proposition 'Now you see us…Now you don't' to an image of a rubber stopper suspended above a drain. Here Kruger gives literal form to the definition of woman as incomplete, partial, not 'whole,' or, more bluntly, a 'hole.'"[45]

However, Kruger felt that feminist theory could only do so much work within the walls of the academy. Wars such as these required women in the streets. Kruger wrote, "The richness and complexity of theory should periodically break through the moats of academia and enter the public discourse via a kind of powerfully pleasurable language of pictures, words, sounds, and structures."[46] Kruger's was an arresting visual language designed for magazine pages and billboards. Its ideological work required being part of a very public culture.

In 1996, Catherine de Zegher, a curator from Belgium who would later become the director of the Drawing Center in Soho, put on a large international show of feminist artists exploring

contemporary issues of visibility entitled "Inside the Visible: An Elliptical Traverse of Twentieth Century Art, in, or, and from the feminine" at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston. Whereas Kruger's form of feminist thought made itself very accessible and very visible, in both its media and iconography, de Zegher explored how issues of feminine visibility are often complicated, obscured, and covered over. De Zegher was interested in the ways in which feminine artistic expression was highly contextual, contingent on local pressures, political climates, and ideologies. She eschewed "oppositional thinking" in responding to the question of difference, and instead attempted to parse its infinite complexity by bringing together a broad and diverse assortment of well-established and up-and-coming feminist artists from varying national backgrounds and artistic practices. The exhibition included American feminist video and performance artist Martha Rosler, the German Dada artist Hannah Höch, the French-American sculptor Louise Bourgeois, as well as Nancy Spero, Eva Hesse, Agnes Martin, Francesca Woodman, Yayoi Kusama, Mona Hatoum, among thirty others. In her introductory essay, de Zegher notes a unifying theme in her selection of artists—that their material processes confront stable conceptions of alterity: "Instead of responding with traditional models and reaffirming obsolete conventions of pictorial representation, some 'internationally less known' (women) artists have articulated independent voices. Contributing next to the restrictive main axis of modernism, they have addressed questions of distribution and audience, or participation and the 'feminine.'"[47] De Zegher highlights "the problematic of the gaze and its relation to the phallic," as a central question in both art and feminist theory, and introduces one of the artists featured in the exhibition, Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger, as a potential corrective. Ettinger, as both a practicing clinical psychoanalyst and painter, explores the "matrixial" as an intervention into the phallocentric models of understanding the self and Other. De Zegher uses Ettinger's analysis to stage the theoretical grounding for the exhibition; as Griselda Pollock writes in her review of the exhibition in the August/September issue of *Women's Art Magazine*, "It is…a key

exhibition that has internalized in its very structure key aspects of feminist theory and its radical revisions of thinking about art."[48] Pollock summarizes Ettinger's concept of the matrixial as that which contests the primacy of the phallic gaze, the product of "Oedipal castration [that] focuses sign and turns vision into an ordering, selecting, separating of unifying function…The gaze which has thus been civilized by the means of the Oedipus complex is a conscious, alienating, cultural tool of Power in the service of the Ego."[49] By contrast, the matrixial is a rethinking of the Freudian/Lacanian Symbolic that allows for space outside the binary opposition of phallus and lack. This space, the matrixial, coming from both a geometric metaphor that resists a dominant/subordinate pairing, and the Latin root for womb, rethinks ego formation through the Lévinasian idea of *encounter*. By returning to intrauterine experience in the late stages of pregnancy, Ettinger posits a relationship of I and non-I within the feminine dimension, a return to the archaic m/Other. Carolyn Shread clarifies, "Matrix gives the feminine an access to meaningful signification where in Lacan's theory this is impossible: Woman, Real, and Thing cannot speak; they are gaps in the Symbolic realm. For Ettinger, signification is possible within a matrixial relationship, through exchanges that transgress the usual construction of subject boundaries."[50] The matrix/womb doesn't *substitute* the phallus, which would merely perpetuate a binaristic conceptual framework. Rather, one's understanding of presence/absence, self/Other, subject/object is constantly being renegotiated: "The Matrix emerges as a supplementary, shifting, retuning, con-current paradigm where a web of meaning is woven by a process the artist-theorist names *metramorphosis*."[51] Metramorphosis is a passage of communication in a shared "borderspace" that permeates the boundaries of the individual subject. Ettinger uses the mutual unfolding of subjectivites occurring in a prenatal symbolic space in order to reconceptualize ego formation outside of the Oedipal self.

In an interview regarding the exhibition with Katy Deepwell, published in the December 1996 issue of *n. paradoxa*, de Zegher further articulates how themes emerging out of Ettinger's work

were integrated into the show. Rather than present a single theme or subject matter as a link between the works, developing the show into an argument emerging from a singular subject position, de Zegher opened herself up to a multiplicity of positions: "The exhibition is more than a single perspective and that, as a curator, one shouldn't put your gaze alone on a work."[52] She continues, "When one chooses to show multiplicity, one also shows fragility, and forms of sharing, collective experience—which could be seen as essentialist—but it is difficult to keep a balance of different characteristics."[53] While her curatorial style was unconventional, and made it more difficult to find other museums to exhibit the show, de Zegher prioritized it's collaborative nature—as a process of co-emergence.

The organization of the exhibition itself was matrixial, constructing a web of relations between artists practicing across space and time, yet maintaining some filiations:

> Built upon associations of ideas, gathering and juxtaposing a wide range of works, the exhibition's method of selection and display evolves from this notion of "beginning," in the sense that its four sections are arranged as a series of investigations of some aspects of this concept. In turn, each section draws from three periods (around 1930s-40s, 1960-70s, 1990s); together they constitute a frame with interconnections. The cyclic development or reinvention of artistic procedures shifting meanings, no the auratic original "as a moment of irretrievable plenitude and truth," motivates the project.[54]

The subdivision into temporal zones constructed a generational inheritance; a theme important to the work of Ettinger, especially in her considering of the cross-generational transportation of trauma. In de Zegher's schema, each time period sets the stage for a search for a new "beginning," or what Edward Said described as "the making or producing difference; but difference which is the result of combining the already-familiar with the fertile novelty of human work in language. Beginning is basically an activity which ultimately implies return and repetition rather than simple linear accomplishment."[55] Thus each era births or ushers in the possibilities of the next, but the relationship between the two temporal moment is co-emergent rather than linear. As de Zegher continues, "This…is developed within the discursive practice, without recourse to transcendental

categories of casuality and determination."[56] Within the structure of the exhibition, de Zegher explored the possibilities opened up by alternative models of subjectivity, knowledge, art production, and temporality that test the boundaries imposed by a normative masculine framework. The exhibition's complication of female visibility/visualization signaled opportunities within American feminist discourse to open up the question of the subject, and models for what that could potentially look like.

III. The Matrixial: Ettinger's Writing and Artworking

One year before the "Inside the Visible" exhibition, in 1995, Bracha Ettinger published her seminal text *The Matrixial Gaze*. The book elaborates the psychoanalytic, philosophical, and artistic work she had been developing since 1985, and critically disrupts the phallocentricism of Freudian/Lacanian psychoanalytic theory. In this section, I will look to Ettinger's concept of the matrixial as elaborated in this text, as well as her *Eurydice* series from 1992-2006, to explore how her work complicates the anti-abortion visualization and provides an alternative representational model for viewing pregnancy and maternity.

Ettinger begins *The Matrixial Gaze* by explaining Lacan's concept of the *objet petit a*—the partial object that encapsulates the unattainable object of desire. The *objet petit a* indicates a lacuna in the Symbolic order, an irreconcilable gap in which one recognizes her incompleteness or lack. Lacan refers to the gaze as an *objet petit a* par excellence—the gaze corresponds with a desire for a complete self that is mediated by a possession of the Other. What the gaze reveals, however, is the impossibility of self-completion and the illusiveness of the Other. Lacan writes, "From the moment that this gaze appears, the subject tries to adapt himself to it, he becomes that punctiform object, that point of vanishing being with which the subject confuses his own failure. Furthermore, of all the objects in which the subject may recognize his dependence in the register of desire, the gaze is specified as unapprehensible."[57] One will never be able to see oneself as one is gazed upon by another. We look for, and long for, the completed circuit of the gaze, but it is hidden from us; the Other does not look at me from the place where I look at it, nor from the place that I want it to look at me. The separation between self and Other relies on an understanding of ego formation as the primal splitting of subject, and as Griselda Pollock describes, the archaic drive for self-completion comes out of thinking of subjectivity

> through the single prism of castration, that is, through an accumulation of separations, splits, cuts and cleavages, that, captured retrospectively into the traumatizing complex Freud named after the legendary Oedipus, locates sexualization, gendering and access to language in this retroactively and defining constitution of cleft and mourning subjectivity, driven by desire in search of its lost objects.[58]

The Oedipal subject strives for a completed self, even though such a state is only illusory. The Oedipal model leaves no space for sexual difference, and the limitations of the castrative subject lock it into an impossible play of absence and presence. An understanding of the feminine still "must pass the way of the Phallus on the road to meaning."[59] There is no understanding beyond-the-phallus. As Ettinger writes, "The encounter between the eye and the phallic *objet a* of the gaze is a missed encounter. When *I* look, the gaze that is external to me, that is on the side of the *Other*, slips out, goes somewhere; it is always outside, turning us into pictures to be looked at."[60] Ettinger attempts to undo the psychic caesura that defines the Oedipal subject and "challenges the notion of the discrete and singular subject formed by the establishment of the boundaries that distinguish it from an oceanic or undifferentiated otherness of the world or the maternal body."[61] The phallic gaze attempts to possess and reappropriate the Other in the search for a complete Self. The matrixial gaze, Ettinger's counterpoint, locates affective thresholds that occur on the borderspaces between multiple subjectivities. She asks to look beyond the phallus, specifically to the relationship between the interior and exterior of the maternal body as a shared borderline that "always admit[s] of minimal difference without forming absolute severances or submitting to the binaries of the One and the world."[62] Rather than the phallic binary construction that relies on either/or, the matrixial allows moments of both/and between and among subjects.

Ettinger returns to the phantasy of the maternal womb, the co-emergence of unknown others that occurs in the intrauterine encounter. Whereas the Oedipal phallic gaze is a dominating, possessive relation, the Matrixial gaze is a relation "between a subject and another subject who looks at him/her without being observed. Ettinger looks to the mid-twentieth-century French philosopher

Emmanuel Lévinas as a starting point for her understanding of the relationship between subjects. However, while Lévinas orients one's infinite responsibility to the other from the encounter of the face-to-face with the stranger, Ettinger doesn not understand that interaction as necessarily visual. It is *the irreductibility of the Other as a subject* to whom, according to Lévinas, "I am called to respond and toward whom I am responsible."[63] The matrixial indicates an ethical relation of Is and non-Is. As Brian Massumi elaborates, "Ethically, this amounts to an affirmation of the collective, understood as an elemental community," and this elemental, ethical community of otherness comes directly out of the bridge between Ettinger's work and Lévinas' concept of the face-to-face encounter. In Lévinas' account, our sense of Self or Being comes from our encounter with the Other, where we are responsible for/toward the Other, in

> a responsibility that goes beyond what I may or may not have done to the Other or whatever acts I may or may not have committed, as if I were devoted to the other man before being devoted to myself. Or more exactly, as if I had to answer for the other's death even before *being*. A guiltless responsibility, whereby I am none the less open to an accusation of which no alibi, spatial or temporal, could clear me…A responsibility stemming from a time before my freedom—before my (*moi*) beginning, before any present. A fraternity existing in extreme separation.[64]

The "I" first experiences itself as called, and must respond by accounting for itself and its responsibility to the Other. Thus not only is ethics intersubjective, *being* itself is always already a relation among and between subjects. The ethical relation is the condition of possibility for subject constitution; the gaze of the Other is what calls the "I" to ethical relation, establishing an affective imperative that implores the "I" to not kill the Other.

However, in Ettinger's account of the encounter, it is not the face-to-face gaze that establishes the insubjective ethical relation. Beyond the visual, the matrixial gaze functions in rhythms and intensities. The matrixial opens up the gaze to the pathic through the affective threshold of borderspaces. As Pollock explains, "It must invoke a psychic *event-encounter* understood through such concepts as borderspace, borderlinking. Borderspaces are subject to a perpetual

retuning and rehoning, and are thus never stabilized as cut, split, or division."[65] Borderspaces, like the placenta that serves as a barrier but also transmissive membrane between woman and fetus, are defined by a "returning" rather than a disjuncture. Pollock continues, "Returning opens onto acoustic, sonorous, and tactile potentialities that themselves move beyond the limits of bodies and the boundaries between inside and outside, suggesting wavelengths and frequencies that resonate and come into and move out of connection without ever being completely held or lost."[66] The matrixial gaze is thus a gaze that moves beyond the Oedipal scopic drives, outside of the system of visual representation itself.

Julia Kristeva articulated a similar non-visual relationship between mother and child in her concept of the *chora*, which she analogizes to vocal or kinetic rhythm.[67] Sight is selective, focused, originating from a unified subject position through a distance of space. The acoustic register, in contrast, is unordered and unorderable and permeates space, echoing through transmission. Sound that is "directed" outside the maternal body resonates within the womb. Sound specifically allows the body to serve as both permeable and bounding, emphasizing the liminal qualities of bodies. In her 1999 essay, "Weaving A Woman Artist with-in the Matrixial Encounter-Event," Ettinger writes, "In the case of the voice it operates through sound itself and then through the resonance, in an outside that is an immediate inside. The inside is multiplied, again by resonance, and connects to the outside in another mode."[68] The matrixial gaze operates through traces, impressions, and imprints that co-emerging subjects impart on one another through not only sight, but also touch and uniquely sound.

This relationship between unknown Others that come into relation Ettinger describes as a "wit(h)nessing." While witnessing calls to mind an *eye*witness account, wit(h)nessing speaks to an intimate knowledge outside of observation, and instead deriving from shareability and "continual attuning…of distance-in-proximity."[69] Whereas de Zegher explores "inside the visible" in her

exhibition, Ettinger moves outside of the visible, to the process of co-poesis and co-emergence that occurs between I's and non-I's. She looks to the margins of representation, a borderline visibility, that denies the mastering hold of the gaze.

The intrauterine encounter functions metaphorically both as a resetting of the moment in which Lacanian ego-formation is understood, and as restoring the generative/creative potentiality to the maternal body. Ettinger attempts to rectify the neglect and denial of the womb phantasy, and in doing so, addresses the increasing invisibility of the pregnant woman in the wake of the visibility of the fetus. Ettinger enacts a shift in our conceptualization of the Other as a partner in difference rather than an Other of radical, unassimilable alterity:

> I take the feminine/prenatal meeting as the model for relations and processes of change and exchange in which the *non-I* is unknown to the *I* (or rather uncognized: known by a noncognitive process), but not an intruder. Rather, the *non-I* is a *partner-in-difference* of the *I*. The *late* intrauterine encounter represents, reflects, and provides meaning to internal and external realities related to the non-Oedipal sexual difference viewed through the prism of the feminine *beyond-the-phallus*. It can serve as a model for a *shareable dimension of subjectivity* in which elements that discern one another as *non-I*, without knowing each other, co-emerge and co-inhabit a joint space, without fusion and without rejection…A matrixial encounter engenders shared traces, traumas, pictograms, and fantasies in *several* partners conjointly but differently, accompanied and partially created by diffuse matrixial affects; it engenders nonconscious readjustments of their connectivity and reattunements of transsubjectivity.[70]

We do not only inherit the imprints of our biological mother; the traces of the *archaic* m/Other are transmitted in the intrauterine space. The past emerges, enmeshed in our already-experienced-but-unconscious memory. Just as the matrixial complicates the solid boundaries between inside and outside, Ettinger breaks away from linearity and causality in her focus on return and repetition. Matrixial time is that where "the future traumatically meets the past."[71] The matrixial opens up the space for a memory that is otherwise unrepresentable, perhaps even uncognized, to be expressed between subjects. As Griselda Pollock writes, Ettinger "moves beyond the linear time of a historical beginning and end, and opens up both a space of, and a method to move towards, a future that does

not involve forgetting because it cannot imagine cutting, splitting, caesura: hence time is transformed precisely by what appears as attention to a 'pre-historic' – what she will reframe as a pre-birth encounter."[72] In a theoretical line of argument reminiscent of Heidegger's account of ecstatic temporality in *Being and Time*, the past is not a mode of the no-longer, but rather the future is always to come in the mode of recollection in the present. The past as trace, however, especially the trace of trauma, is slippery and ineffable: it, as Chrysanthi Nigianni describes, is "a trace that cannot be represented without fading out."[73] While Ettinger turns to the archaic m/Other, this is not a historical move, as she "departs from the question of *what is earliest*, transforming time and temporality into a key question related to the (im)possibility of thinking and visualizing. Matrixial time is a border-time, meaning the instantiation of thresholds, where borderlines of metamorphosis and transmissibility are at work. Matrixial time as border-time is both elusive and disturbing; a past insisting in the present as a trace."[74] Temporal intervals are reconceptualized as a joining border space.

In her writing, but also directly in her artistic oeuvre, Ettinger looks at the transmission of transgenerational trauma, looking back to her own inheritance as a second-generation Holocaust survivor. This idea, the focus of Ettinger's earlier work, marks the intersection between her psychoanalytic writing, visual art, and her reading of an ethical relation through the practice of compassion. As Judith Butler explains in her essay "Disturbance and Dispersal in the Visual Field," "Some of the earliest and most important of Ettinger's essays and paintings were about this problem of the trace, or what she sometimes calls the 'grain' of another's suffering, what has registered traumatically for another. The question for the child becomes the question for the painter, and in a different way, the question for the theorist as well: how and through what form and material can trauma be registered from and for the other?"[75]

In order to take on this question, Ettinger works at the limits of the representable, often creating what Christine Buci-Glucksmann describes as "images of absence."[76] While *representation* falls into the trap of the objectifying gaze, painting can creates a space "beyond appearance." Ettinger began using the words "matrix" in the titles of her paintings before she codified a cogent psychoanalytic theory of the term in her writing. The exploration of the matrixial occurred first through the *practice* of painting.

Much of Ettinger's artistic practice consists of beginning the process of photocopying from an archive of photographs, but interrupting the machine so that the paper is covered with photocopic dust. Repetition is not reproducibility, but finds its form rather in a shadowy echo, a spectral apparition. She then builds up a multitextured surface, bathing the hazy, disrupted image in swaths of text or oil paints in rich jewel tones. In 1992, Ettinger began her *Eurydice* series. Ettinger took on the myth of Eurydice to articulate a realm of matrixial interaction within artistic practice. The series expanded in installments: approximately the first thirty paintings in the cycle were completed between 1992 and 1996; Ettinger worked continuously on the pieces over this span of time. From 2001 to 2006, she continued the series, adding about ten additional works. The series stages the cyclic, returning nature of the mythic figure, repeating similar elements in several paintings, including images from both family albums and historical record. The shared space of personal and historical speaks to the insoluble boundary between individual and collective memory. In particular, one photograph fades in and out of the series: a bleak scene of naked women, lined up so close together that their bodies begin to blend into one another. Several of the women clutch babies close to their heart, and the women's arms crossed over their chest, either in a self-comforting gesture or soothing an infant, creates a rhythm that undulates across the image. A pregnant woman holding a baby runs in from the right of the picture to catch up with the rest of the group—an action that implies an imminent danger awaiting on the outside of the picture frame as

the women are awaiting their execution. The photographer is unknown, but the photograph was taken in the Mizocz ghetto in Ukraine in 1942. (fig. 12) The image is replicated variously throughout the series; cropped, enlarged, and superimposed in different ways.

In the Greek myth, Eurydice, the wife of Orpheus, is bitten by a snake on her wedding day and dies, descending to the Underworld. Orpheus, unable to cope with the loss of his love, goes to Hades to beg for another chance at life for Eurydice. He charms the gods of the underworld with his music, and they agree to let Eurydice return to Earth with him on the condition that Eurydice must follow behind him, and he may not look back at her until they are both in the upper world. Either because of uncertainty or overpowering desire, Orpheus gazes back upon Eurydice before she has passed the threshold between worlds and thus she must remain in the underworld for eternity.

Orpheus, in his attempt to visually possess the Other, causes Eurydice to be even more inaccessible—he gazes in order to know and to be assured that she is there behind him. In her work, Ettinger posits the potential for an alternative kind of gazing—a Eurydician gaze. This allows for linking rather than separation, and a kind of looking back that remembers and preserves rather than dissolves. For Ettinger, "The figure of Eurydice seems to me to be emblematic of my generation, and it offers a possible way of reflecting on art. Eurydice awakens a space for the rediffusion of unresolved traumas. As she gazes from and into the trauma, she opens up, in a very different way to the gaze of Orpheus, a space for art and embodies a figure of the artist in the feminine."[77]

At the moment in which Orpheus turns back, Eurydice is both present and absent. Her form confirms to Orpheus that she indeed had followed him, but in that moment, she is already lost. Ettinger explores this paradoxical space, and as Butler describes, "in this sphere, we cannot say precisely *whose* drive is transmuted into the visual field; it is not precisely the drive of a subject, since it is in the course of being passed on, or passed through: it is caught up in a matrix in which seer and

seen are neither completely distinguished nor utterly fused."[78] Butler suggests we understand this instance as the matrixial

> A scene that does not reconstruct its parts or unify the painter with her lost and traumatic object; and yet, some pulsion, some drive, does organize and illuminate this scene, alternative depth and surface, radiating colour and line, fading, haunting by figures of uncertain definition; a life-drive diffused through the visual field, focused precisely on what it cannot make live again and what it cannot make whole again. And yet something is living here, living on.[79]

Eurydice, in the moment of Orpheus's gaze back, is fleeting—caught in a borderspace that is trapped between Ego and non-Ego, I and non-I. Ettinger engenders fragile images at the border of the visible, just as Eurydice herself occupies an aporetic space of (im)possibility and (in)visibility. The figures in the series are present, but they are fractured, partial—blurring the boundary between representation and abstraction. "The figure is broken-up, can only appear in this broken way, irretrievable, but not without vital trace."[80] Ettinger's work offers another kind of looking back, one that does not dissolve objects of desire, but instead one that participates in matrixial time—leaving imprints and traces through border-linking. We can engage with an ethical relation with the works where Eurydice is made present once more through remembrance of the past. Looking back weaves together past and present, which combine in her painted surfaces. Combining photograph, paint, and text, the pictures create a multivalent texture that allows for a fluid transmission of language and image. In the early pictures in the cycle, Ettinger frequently overlays layers of image with excerpts of text, mainly passages from Freud and Lacan. This fluid exchange of language and image enacts the process of matrixial borderlinking between Ettinger's theorietical and artistic work.

In *Eurydice, no. 23* (1994-1998), Ettinger crops and enlarges the Misocz photograph, but blurs the clarity of figural separation into spectral shadows of bodies, one of which turns back to look towards the spectator. (fig 13) They are caught between appearing and disappearing—the indexicality of the original photograph is complicated and the viewer must look closely to parse the emerging/receding under-image. The linear relationship between original/origin is diffused, and

between the partial photocopy and the added layers of paint and ink, we are left with only the residue of the photographic document. The sharp, horizontal lines of paint break up the image, but is not an incisive cut of separation. Photograph and paint merge into a shared form. The strokes of paint appear to lie thickly over the delicate grainy photocopied texture, but the paint reveals as much as it covers over. This intelligibility is not perfect, however—what we can recognize in the image as three figures on the right hand side blurs into an abstract play of darkness and light on the left. Like the incomplete, fragmented nature of memory, transmission comes in varying shades of legibility. The viewer must look closely and enter into an intimate relationship with the image in order to question exactly what she sees. This indecipherability solicits a moving, sweeping gaze. The eye scans across the image, attempting to penetrate through the different layers and unravel the way that they interact, but the painting does not foreclose any definitive conclusions. The viewer is given the freedom to share in the construction of meaning of the work, as a physical model for a shared matrixial space.

In the series, Eurydice is again made present, although not as a complete, bounded subject but rather as a trace of shared remembrance. Ettinger depicts the moment where Orpheus's look back causes Eurydice to be pulled back into the depths of the Underworld, the outline of her body already receding into blended photocopier toner and oil paint. However, as Eurydice fades, the women at Mizocz appear. Eurydice's second death becomes inextricably linked with the death of those unknown women, whose fates are already sealed at the moment of the photograph, just as Eurydice begins to disappear as soon as she is met by Orpheus's gaze. Eurydice thus becomes an invocation to an ethics of remembrance and the exploration of the unrepresentable shared traumatic traces of the archaic m/Other.

The surface of the painting is not only metaphorically a womb-like space of shared borderlinking. The play of light and dark, the hazy figurality of the image, and the graininess of the

photocopying process in the picture, as well as many others in the *Eurydice* series, is reminiscent of a sonogram image. One is reminded of the visuals in *The Silent Scream* where the narration played so heavily into the viewer's reading of the film because the image space moved so fluidly between legibility and illegibility. For a moment we recognize a head, an arm, a face, but the image rapidly fades in and out of presence. The *Eurydice* paintings, which come at the limit of feminine disappearance as Eurydice dies her second death, can perhaps be extended to the ultrasound image, which also stage the disappearance or elision of the maternal body for its own emergence. Is it possible that Ettinger's paintings can offer a model for understanding the visual regime of the reproductive rights discourse in a new and more productive way? Ettinger can be read as shifting the binarism of the fetal/mother divide into a discussion of opening up an ethical space based on co-emergence. The Oedipal myth of severance and separation is replaced with that of Eurydice. Retaining the mythic structure signals to the cyclic, transhistorical element of matrixial time, but Eurydice gestures to the remembrance, rather than occlusion, of the female body and the feminine.

Ettinger's visual art engages in the negotiation of transmissibility as "imaging becom[ing] a temporal process of dis/appearing that produces the image as the unstable in terms of signification space."[81] The surface of the artwork functions as a membrane between artist and viewer, turning into an affective threshold that mimics the intrauterine encounter. Ettinger sees her artworking as enacting a matrixal space that renegotiates the subjectivities of artist and viewer. Painting can stage a matrixial affect that is transmitted through the traces inscribed in the surface of the work. Ettinger writes, "Metramorphosis is a *co-naissance*—knowledge of being-born-together—which is not cognitive and does not enter direct representation. We can nevertheless reflect on it, taking into account the errors introduced by Symbolic language. We can also grasp it in painting, if the painting accedes to the appearance of the memory of oblivion, to the blind memory of *I* and *non-I* lodging in me without my self-control."[82] The co-constituting process of meaning-making within the shared

experience of painting is not only a model for matrixial co-subjectivization, but also recuperates the creative/productive/generative/active role within the feminine. Birth and artistic creation are opened up as spaces for feminine sexual difference, but are not reserved for only females.

Ettinger does not attempt to separate her theory and artistic practice into yet another binary opposition, but rather they too are mutually co-constituted. Pollock elaborates, "She argues that the collision/collusion between theory and art may transform their borderlines allowing theory to take on aesthetic resonance and art to be 'momentarily touched by theory.'"[83] However, looking to Lévinas' concept of ethics and justice, I contend that we must also look at the political as co-equal with theory and practice. The next section will discuss the ways in which Ettinger's concept of the matrixial can be applied to the current state of reproductive rights legislation and serve as a corrective for the binaristic woman/fetus divide in more strictly political terms.

IV. Re-Imag(in)ing the Political

How can Ettinger can be read as a corrective to the binaristic impasse of the current state of reproductive rights discourse? I would like to offer a matrixial re-reading of the terms at play in the abortion debate. Feminist strategies have historically pushed against the personification of the fetus, feeling that any slippage into the rhetorics of fetal personhood already make a fundamental concession to "pro-life" arguments. However, counter discourse that refuses to engage with the fetal subject seems to be not only an incomplete account, but also misses out on an opportunity to explore an alternate reading of the maternal encounter that contests viewing abortion from the perspective of liberal individualism.

As Ettinger's language is couched within Lacan's articulation of psychic structures, it is worth clarifying the ways in which her analysis of the matrixial maps metaphorically, symbolically, and literally onto the physical maternal body. Just as Freud and Lacan's conception of the phallus is related to, yet distinct from the organ of the penis, Ettinger is precise in locating the womb, fetus, pregnancy, and gestation as "supports for a matrixial field of theorization" and therefore "the idea of the matrix should not be identified with the womb, nor Woman with Mother."[84] The conflation of the feminine and the maternal, or the reduction of woman to her reproductive potential, is precisely the omission of feminine sexual specificity that Ettinger is resisting.

However, as Chrysanthi Nigianni notes, "The originary feminine as the corpo-Real, as it is conceptualized by Ettinger, is an ethics of the Real."[85] The implications of matrixial subjectivity cannot remain purely in the Symbolic, but rather Ettinger attempts "to rethink ethics by recognizing and acknowledging the dimension of the Real; an acknowledgment that challenges and radicalizes the self-other binary distinction and the notion of relating as being necessarily oppositional, negative and transcendent."[86] Extrapolating an ethics from Ettinger's matrixial framework requires the

consideration of the experience of being a subject, and she finds the reconceptualization of the female body in the corpo-real a critical component of such a project. Ettinger recognizes that making statements about embodied experience, especially specifically female embodied experience, runs the risk of being interpreted as essentializing or constructing a normative framework for evaluating female corpo-real existence. However, refusing to engage with discourse that directly addresses the omission of a non-phallic entrance into ego formation has more egregious consequences:

> I believe that to avoid dealing with any aspect that touches on the female body and bodily experience, to avoid the conceptual potentiality that can be abstracted from the female body or has consequences with regard to it and its history—the agglomeration of its traumatic or pleasurable experiences, its potentiality, the phantasies that link to its inscriptions—I believe that this amounts to an unconditional surrender to the dominant, seemingly neutral, symbolic filter that censures both women and men and molds them in its phallic frame.[87]

Ettinger's analysis is meant to call into question the understanding of the female body and its maternal potential: "I wish to infuse [matrix] with new meaning by restoring to it its ancient feminine/maternal etymology—from the Latin for uterus, womb—in a way that also echoes Freud's phantasy of intrauterine existence in the maternal womb. But I also want to focus attention on the bodily specificity of the female in the Real."[88] The uterus is typically understood to be passive receptacle, a container or interior. Ettinger wishes instead to "create a hiatus in the 'original register,'" so that the uterus/womb is understood as "a dynamic borderspace of active/passive co-emergence *with*-in and *with*-out the uncognized other."[89] The female body and its sexual specificity exist in the corpo-real and the Real, and thus a matrixal framework has implications outside of the Symbolic.

In her intervention into the phallocentric psychoanalytic model, Ettinger conceptualizes an ethics of alterity. The encounter with the Other is a point where the Other becomes traumatizing to me. However, "in the matrixial sphere, what this vulnerability implies is not a sacrifice of myself in a

disappearing for the sake of the Other, but rather a partial disappearing to allow jointness."[90] A matrixial ethics replaces the atomized self and Other with a shared relation; the Freudian conception of subjectivity becomes fragmented and dispersed. This emerges in her artworking, which creates a texture of transgenerational trauma and intersubjective connectivity. But how can Ettinger's ideas be brought forward even further, to truly negotiate the political implications of the corpo-real?

The "pro-choice" argument proceeds from the logic that the maintenance of reproductive freedom is justified because of a right to bodily agency. The government ought to "keep its laws off our bodies." While reproductive rights concern decisions that are intimately personal, embodied, and medically invasive, this line of individualistic argumentation can only be taken so far. In a society governed by laws, we are constantly being told what we can and cannot do with our bodies: we cannot drink alcohol before a certain age, or in certain places; we cannot ride a bike on the sidewalk; we must wear a seatbelt in the car. This is not at all to make the argument that women ought not have the right to safe, accessible abortions regardless of their race, class, or nationality. However, it does contest the grounds from which these rights are claimed.

Drucilla Cornell, in her book *The Imaginary Domain*, locates "bodily integrity," rather than a right to privacy or a right for the state to not intervene, as the basis of an ethical claim to the preservation of reproductive rights. "Understood under the rubric of bodily integrity," Cornell explains, "the wrong in denying a right to abortion is not a wrong to the 'self,' but a wrong that prevents the achievement of the minimum conditions of individuation necessary for any meaningful concept of selfhood."[91] In other words, the framework of bodily integrity shifts the conversation away from viewing rights infringement as an individual violation, bur rather problematic because it closes off a space of social and symbolic recognition. Whereas a framework of negative freedom, defined by Cornell as freedom from state intervention for already-free persons, relies on the assumption of the individual being always already rights-bearing and free, Ettinger's ethics instead

operates on the idea that we are always already bound to the Other. Reproductive rights should be grounded on a form of ethics that preserves equality, rather than rights rhetoric regarding bodily ownership.

Lisa Guenther provides a reading of both Cornell and Lévinas in her text *The Gift of the Other*. In the final chapter, she poses the query, "What if we grounded women's reproductive freedom not on the assumption of an autonomous subject who owns her body and therefore has the right to choose, but rather on the ethical sensibility of an always-already embodied self whose very exposure to the Other calls for justice and equality, and *therefore* for women's right to choose?"[92] Just as Ettinger wishes to eschew the possessive Oedipal gaze in favor of recognition of mutual co-subjectivity, we can imagine an understanding of reproductive rights that moves away from rhetorics of "ownership" and instead turns to a communal demand for social and political equality.

On face, it might appear that there is some tension between Ettinger's reading of the intrauterine encounter and a political demand for the maintenance of abortion rights. If we concede that the relationship between fetus and woman *is* one of co-constitution, it may appear that a woman's claim to exert control of her body falls away. However, in her 1999 essay "Weaving a Woman Artist," Ettinger clarifies that although her appeal calls for the reconsideration of the status of the womb, it "should not be in any way be understood as calling for a limitation on women's rights over their bodies—quite the contrary."[93] The very basis for the denial of reproductive rights proceeds from the exclusion of the recognition of feminine sexual specificity. Ettinger explains:

> Though any discussion of the prenatal may seem at first glance to support the assumed claim of the infant on the mother's body, or the phallic seizure and esssentializing of women's bodies, in fact my approach is an act of resistance to this seizure because the matrixial apparatus dissolves the ground it stands on from within: it dissolves the unitary subject and transgresses it.[94]

It is only within a phallic framework that we attribute an individual and discrete desire to the fetus, which would require protection from that of the woman. Under a matrixial framework, the

recognition that a woman's corpo-Reality is not unitary or singular does not disclose her responsibility for "any event occurring with-in her own not-One corpo-Reality and transsubjectivity."[95] The impulse to regulate the body comes out of a possessing, controlling psychic apparatus, rather than one based on co-emergence and response.

These regulations on reproductive rights stem from a phallic framework that essentializes women's bodies. Taking away a woman's ability to make a choice in regard to terminating her pregnancy or carrying it to term reduces the category of woman to its reproductive function. It places an unequal and nonreciprocal burden on women, which creates the conditions of the asymmetricality of injustice.

As Guenther explains, Lévinas sees a distinction between ethics and justice. "While ethics displaces the self from its apparent "place in the sun" even to the point of persecution, the demand for justice recalls the importance of defending the self against violence and protecting it from a reduction to this or that objective identity."[96] Whereas the ethical encounter of the face-to-face structures my infinite obligation to the Other, conditions of justice demand my defense from objectification as well.

I would offer that Guenther's reading of Lévinas, which attempts to find feminist terrain for the defense of reproductive rights within his views of ethics and justice, can be used in conjunction with Ettinger's matrixial to open a space for a feminist program of legal reform. Just as Ettinger defends "a woman's full response-ability for any event occurring with-in her own not-One corpo-Reality and transsubjectivity,"[97] Lévinas' conception of justice requires the affirmation of a relatively stable idea of self, "if not quite for its own sake, then for the sake of holding open the possibility of a just community and a responsible self."[98] However, this unicity of the subject is not at odds with Ettinger's notion of co-subjectivity, nor does it demand that we understand the self as complete, unified, and insular. *Some* form of selfhood is implicit in the articulation of multiple subjectivity,

because "if the self were fully permeable—if the interior were fully accessible from the outside—then I would not be able to receive an Other in welcome, or respond to the Other as someone truly different and distinct."[99] This conception of ipseity does not derive from an Oedipal desire for a completed self, but rather as what Cornell refers to as deferred "personhood."

The title of Cornell's book *The Imaginary Domain* refers to the space of symbolic recognition of our selves, especially who we want to be as sexuate beings. It already implies a specific kind of projection of self into the future, asserting that our understanding of our ipseity is not bound up in a stable conception of who we already are, but rather that we are always already in a process of *becoming* a person. As Guenther elaborates, we are always "moving toward an imagined autonomy that is never accomplished in the present but rather projected into the time of the future anterior, a time in which I "will have been" a whole and integrated self. This open-ended identity of the self does not exclude otherness but rather emerges in response to an Other who is meaningfully different from myself."[100] This conception of selfhood bound up in a non-linear temporality, where our present conceptions of ourselves come from infinitely projecting ourselves into an unrealized future, can be compared to Ettinger's matrixial time, that where "the future traumatically meets the past."[101] While Ettinger looks back, turning to an ethics of remembrance and the inter-generational translation of trauma, Guenther and Cornell underscore that this fragmented and incomplete understanding of the self is always already future-oriented.

The intersections of these two conceptions of temporality are manifold, but one compelling similarity is their movement away from a static understanding of self that is objectified through representation. In Ettinger's art practice, the infinite deferral of the index through the interruption of the photocopying process, and her layering techniques that serialize, blur, and blend, all work together to displace a static representation that could be taken as a complete whole. Similarly,

Guenther explains the need for an always already unstable and split identity that resists representation:

> Ironically, in order to exist as a "whole" person rather than a collection of fragments (as a womb or a viable egg), I need the *instability* and *lack* of a wholeness that is endlessly deferred into the future, the ambiguity of a split identity that does not neatly coincide with any given representation. The gap between static representation and fluid imagination is held open by the difference or diachrony between past and future possibilities for personal identity. The insistence on a full and completed identity in the present would destroy the very promise of becoming a person, reducing the imaginary domain to the space of presence or representation.[102]

The political project of the maintenance of abortion access, on the basis of resisting the reduction of women to their reproductive potential, is both on a metaphorical and literal level linked to the representation of women and the maternal body. We must resist the idea of the subject as complete and insular, and instead understand the self as always interconnected, fragmented, and bound to its past inheritance and future projections.

Rather than reducing the specificity and flattening the nuances of Ettinger and Cornell's two alternate modes of envisioning subjectivity, my comparison attempts to demonstrate potential ethics and politics that can emerge from a renegotiation of our understanding of the self. Both Ettinger and Cornell see selfhood as a process, infinitely deferred. Subjectivity is never static and is always relational. Ettinger uses the image of the matrix to give shape to a search for difference that recognizes connectedness; Cornell's imaginary domain spatializes the requirements for the minimum conditions of individuation within a system of social and symbolic recognition.

Just as a subject is always in the process of *becoming*, justice is never a completed state, but always in abeyance. As Guenther elaborates, "Justice refers to an open-ended future in which the demand for equality does not compromise the singularity of the 'I' and the alterity of the 'you.' In this sense, justice is oriented towards a future that never quite arrives in the present moment, a time that resists adequate representation; it refers to a future anterior, a time that *will have been* just…"[103] Justice implies a continual *working towards*, a project which entails recognizing and correct unequal

structures or conditions so that justice is even possible. The relationship between laws and justice therefore is not one of equivalence, laws are not *a priori* just in being laws, but rather laws enable the pursuit of justice. Guenther summarizes Cornell's view of this connection:

> For Cornell, the function of law is to hold open the space in which each of us can encounter both the instability of our present identity, and the endlessly deferred project of becoming a whole and completed person. On this view, justice requires a framework of laws, institutions, and objective principles, but it is not *exhausted* by this framework, as if justice could be immediately produced by the right set of universal rules.[104]

Legislative change will not result in a *state* of justice, but codifies equal conditions. In this case, reproductive justice is oriented towards the recognition of the maternal body as something beyond a biological container. The pro-right argument that automatically links pregnancy with a moral obligation to carry the fetus to term is a problematic account of justice, as "an ethical response to the Other cannot be legislated or rhetorically coerced from women—it may *only* emerge given a demand for social and political equality, one of the conditions for which is publically funded access to abortion, such that women need not become mothers by default."[105] If Cornell's imaginary domain speaks to a psychic space of self-understanding and symbolization, the law preserves that space within the political realm.

We can return to the ways in which the terms of woman, mother, and fetus have been solidified through representations of pregnancy (Section I), wherein the fetus is currently posited as already a rights-bearing autonomous individual. Within the schematic of either "pro-life" or "pro-choice" discourse, there appears to be only enough room for one complete subject—we ought to prioritize either the woman or the fetus. The pulling forward of the fetal image pushes the woman to the background, or as Guenther aptly describes, she often "*becomes* the background"[106] The photography of fetal development and its place within public discourse dissolves the presence of the pregnant woman, demonstrating the tenuous and problematic condition of the subject. Within the current language and image system surrounding reproductive rights, woman-as-subject and fetus-as-

subject cannot be simultaneously held within the same texture. As Guenther continues, "The represented fetus appears as a completed whole; but this appearance of fetal wholeness entails the fragmentation of the maternal body, which appears on the ultrasound screen only as the blank spaces where the fetus is not—as the parts of the picture that need not be illuminated, or could only be illuminated at the expense of obscuring the fetal image."[107] It is through this system of thought emerging from fetal imagery that woman is presented as a mere receptacle or environment for the fetus, reducing her to her biological potential. Limiting women's access to abortion reasserts this essentialized view of women and their bodies, extrapolating a moral obligation to carry a fetus to term from her biological condition. This constructs a double bind for the pregnant woman—she is desubjectivized, rendered into a vessel-object, and simultaneously viewed as a "uniquely responsible moral agent who is obliged and can be justly forced to support the life of the fetus."[108] It is both the non-reciprocity of this burden, as well as its derivation from a purely biological condition, that renders the withholding of reproductive rights unequal and unjust.

The understanding of sexual difference that undergirds the "pro-life" argument comes out of a phallocentric model that devalues both pregnancy and the female body—it presumes male sexual difference to be the only possible sexual difference. Ettinger attempts to provide an alternate account of sexual difference that moves beyond the binary between the sexes, yet still recognizes feminine specificity. Such a project is only contradictory when it is already entrenched in the terms of a phallic, dichotomous understanding of difference. Cornell's language appears to extend this sentiment to the realm of legal and political recognition:

> The goal of this recognition is not the affirmation of a system of gender binarism, which tries to encompass the feminine within a pre-given hierarchy. Instead, we call for equal evaluation of the feminine within sexual difference, knowing that this equality cannot exist within a system of hierarchy in which the feminine is devalued or simply erased in its specificity; a specificity which in the most profound sense cannot now be known but only re-imaged and resymbolized.[109]

This demand for equality as a basis of justice is not at odds with Lévinas' articulation of one's infinite responsibility for the Other. Without equality, there is no space for an ethical response to arise. Despite the asymmetricality of my ethical relation to the Other, Lévinas refers to "the original locus of justice, a terrain common to me and the others where I am counted among them."[110] I myself am an other to the Others. Additionally, Lévinas introduces the concept of the "third party," or the Other's neighbor to whom I am also responsible. The "third party" extends my ethical relationship to an Other-as-individual to an understanding of social justice as it exists within a community of thirds. Since I am included within this, I may also make a claim for equality and fairness. This is not a claim to justice as an atomized rights-bearing individual, but rather on the basis of the third party—to prevent a kind of violence against a group.

It is through this framework that we can better understand the conditions necessary to "re-image" the feminine. We can see the self as infinitely bounded and ethically responsible to the Other, including a prenatal Other, but this does not "preclude the vital necessity of women's *political* right to safe and accessible abortions."[111] I find the thrust of my argument to align very much with Guenther's: "The aim is to provide an account of embodied selves whose ethical responsibility is excessive and anarchic, but also mediated by the political demand for justice and equality."[112] Ettinger, in dialogue with Lévinas, Cornell, and Guenther, opens up the theoretical grounding for a shift in our understanding of the self and a corrective to the current terms of reproductive rights discourse.

Epilogue: The Future and A.R.T.

The issues associated with reproductive rights discourse have continued to build into the present, and now tug at us with an increasing sense of urgency. In the United States, we are faced once again with the impending loss of reproductive freedom. The instances of such violations in the past few years are innumerable. A recently passed Texas law requires women to receive a sonogram twenty-four hours before having an abortion, during which they much listen to the fetal heartbeat and observe the image on the monitor.[113] Arizona pushed back the legal timeframe during which a woman can receive an abortion to twenty weeks.[114] Michigan attempted to pass a huge omnibus bill that could shut down all of the state's abortion clinics, criminalizing all abortions except for in the case of rape.[115] Reproductive resources, already stretched thin, are being cut on the local, state, and federal level, which functionally prevents women from fair and equal access, even while the legal right to abortion remains protected. In light of this, it is all the more pressing that the terms of the abortion debate are revisited.

Moreover, advances in assisted reproductive technology (A.R.T.) complicate the current definitions of maternity. Increased options for women facing infertility, including in vitro fertilization, can be viewed as enabling an essentialist view of women as incomplete or broken if they are not able to conceive, thus requiring medico-technological intervention. On the other hand, such opportunities could expand a woman's freedom in deciding her own condition of fertility and maternity. While the potential is clear for ART to been viewed as exemplifying "men's desire to control women's bodies" allied with "the medicalization of childbirth and…the scientific management of conception,"[116] we ought not concede to a logical of technological determinism; now more than ever such technologies indicate the need for a reconceptualization of the definitions of pregnancy and maternity. Reproductive rights constitute a field of laws, protections, insurability, and decisions that extend beyond one's right to safe and accessible abortions. Our current model for

understanding the relationship between fetus and woman is insufficient to account for the multiplicity of subject positions now opened up by reproductive technologies.

Radical American poet and literary arts organizer Michelle Tea has a column published on xojane.com since November 2011[117] that chronicles her attempt to get pregnant as a (then) almost forty year old queer person. Over the past eighteen months, she has described in detail the structural, legal, and medical barriers in artificial insemination and infertility treatments and how those are exacerbated by her desire for a "non-traditional" family. One of her most recent columns explores the complexity of deciding to have a close friend donate sperm or to use an anonymous donor through a sperm bank.[118] Both options involve a complicated analysis of who, however obliquely, has become part of their family, and how those people would potentially be involved in their lives and the life of their future child. Tea ponders the psychological baggage that would potentially accompany not knowing where half of your biological material comes from, even while recognizing that "family" is a social, rather than biological construction.

After several months of trying to artificially inseminate at home with no success, Tea and her partner sought medical assistance, despite treatments being exceptionally expensive and the system uncomfortably heteronormative. After determining that Tea's ova were not viable, they decided to use her partner Dashiell's eggs that will then be implanted into Tea's womb. On paper, Tea is merely the surrogate, and will have to legally adopt her own child when the time comes.[119]

Tea's story demonstrates the insufficiency of our current understanding of maternity in light of increasingly diverse interpretations of what pregnancy or motherhood entails. In the United States, the binary opposition through which we view fetus and woman, legally and socially, has allowed for unjust contestations to the ruling of Roe v. Wade on the state and national level. Moreover, these terms increasingly appear inadequate to produce constructive discourse, or as meaningful legal categories. As Rosemary Betterton writes in her book *An Intimate Distance*, "the

representation of reproductive technologies can be seen as a 'site of struggle', one space in which women's identities as maternal and non-maternal subjects are being redefined."[120] There is much at stake in the need to understand reproductive rights through a new lens, and advancing technological conditions require a conception of the maternal subject that is flexible, multiple, and dynamic.

Ettinger can be read as opening up new spaces for negotiating the meaning of the maternal body that can allow for an ethics and politics of inclusion rather than regulation. My reading of her work is not meant to be exhaustive or comprehensive, but rather demonstrate the ways in which her theory and work can participate in a feminist project of legal reform, as well as shifting social and ideological expectations.

What will the new image culture of pregnancy and fetality look like? Can Ettinger's artworking provide a means for expanding the cultural depictions of utero? By using different intellectual streams of thought to pose the political problem, I hope to underscore the significance of the image in public discourse and provide possible new ways of representation. Ettinger does not provide a solution per se, but rather an intervention that subjects these terms to re-mediation. By putting her in dialogue with other writers and thinkers, her work unfolds out into its own matrixial web, setting it in its time and place while simultaneously projecting it back into the past and forward into the future.

Figures.

fig. 1: Lennart Nilsson. "Drama of Life Before Birth." *Life* 30 Apr. 1965. Cover.

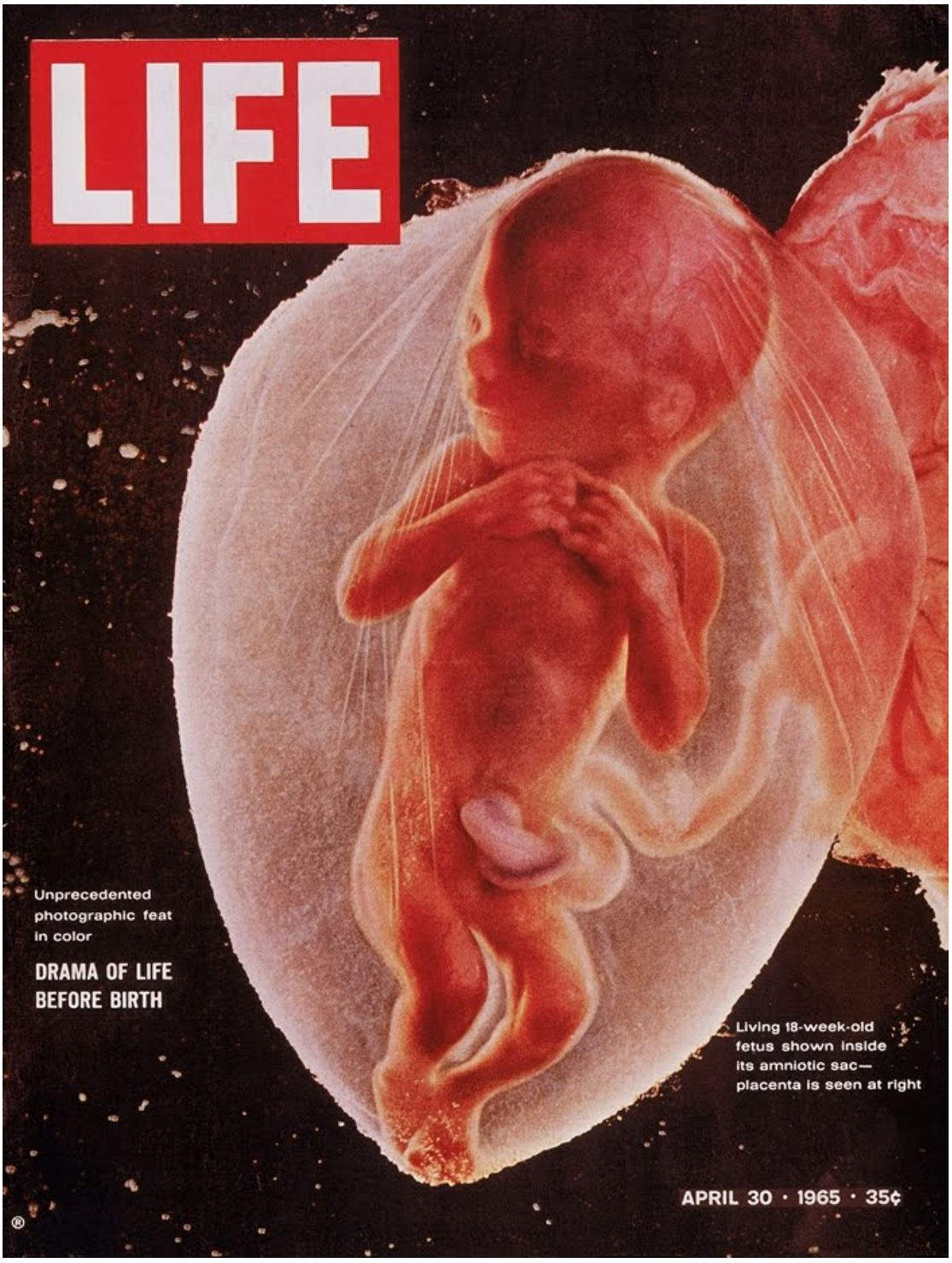


fig. 2: Lennart Nilsson. "Drama of Life Before Birth." *Life* 30 Apr. 1965. 64.

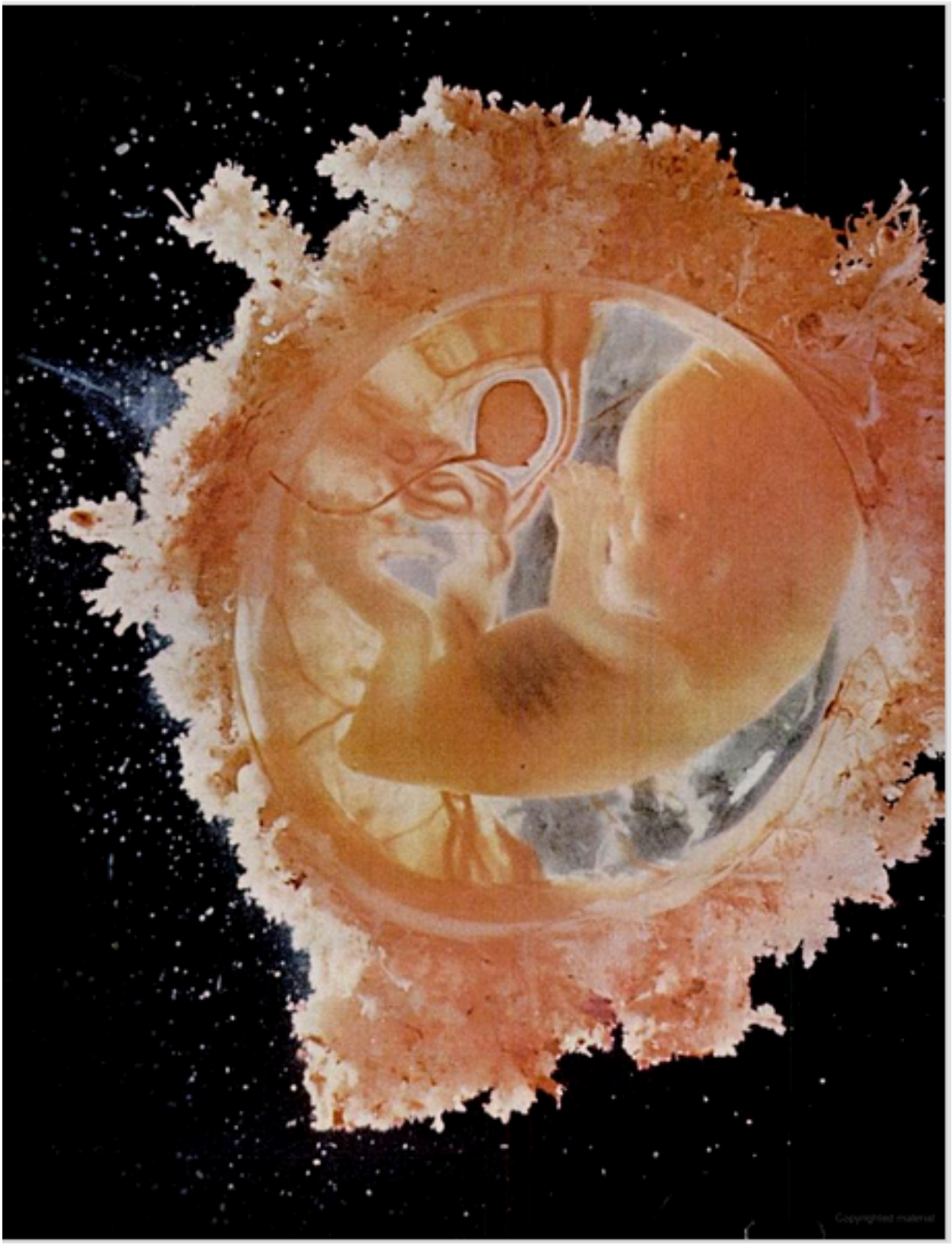


fig. 3: Lennart Nilsson. "The First Pictures Ever of How Life Begins." *Life* 8 Aug. 1990. Cover.

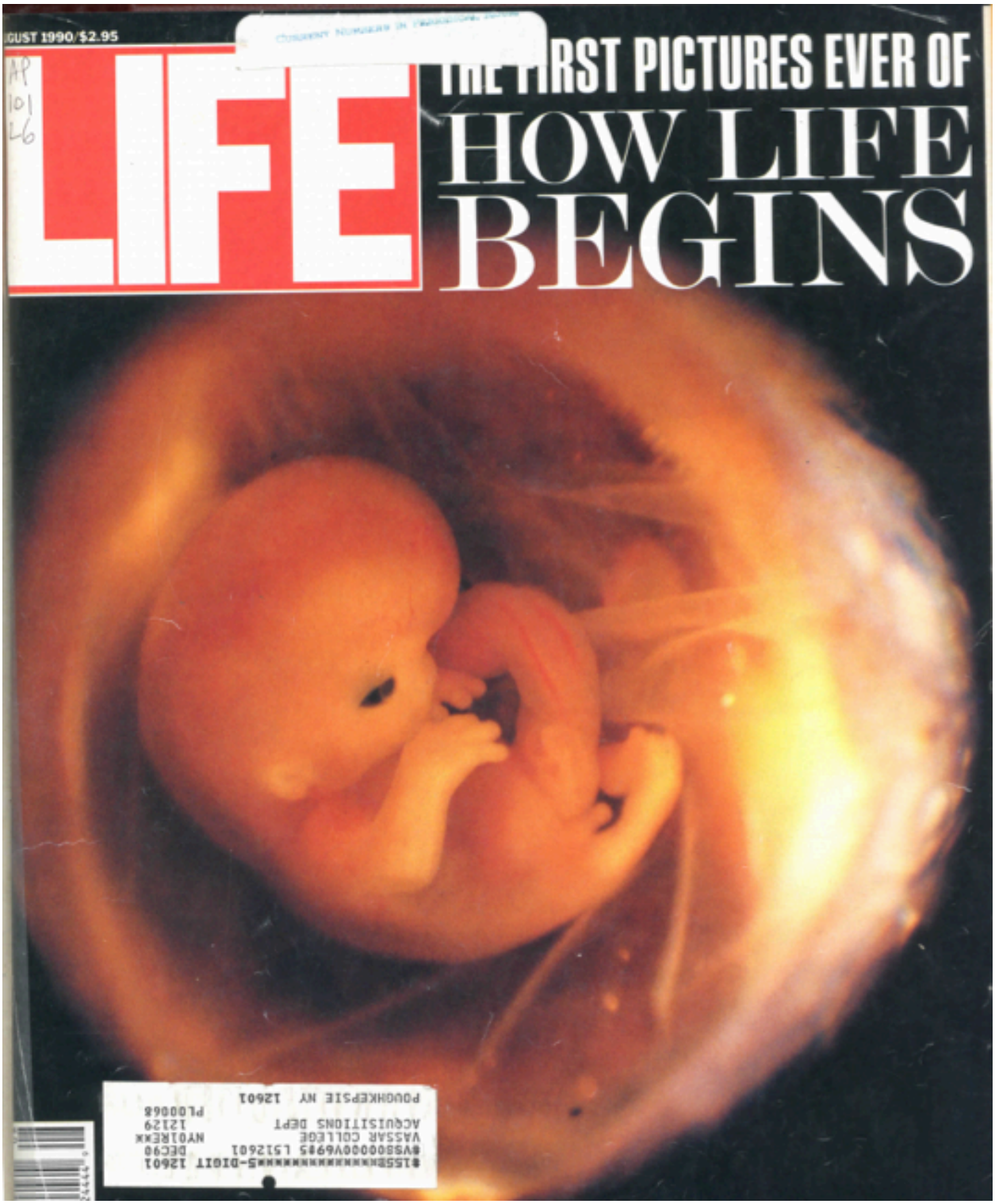


fig. 4: Lennart Nilsson. "The First Pictures Ever of How Life Begins." *Life* 8 Aug. 1990. 28

2 HOURS

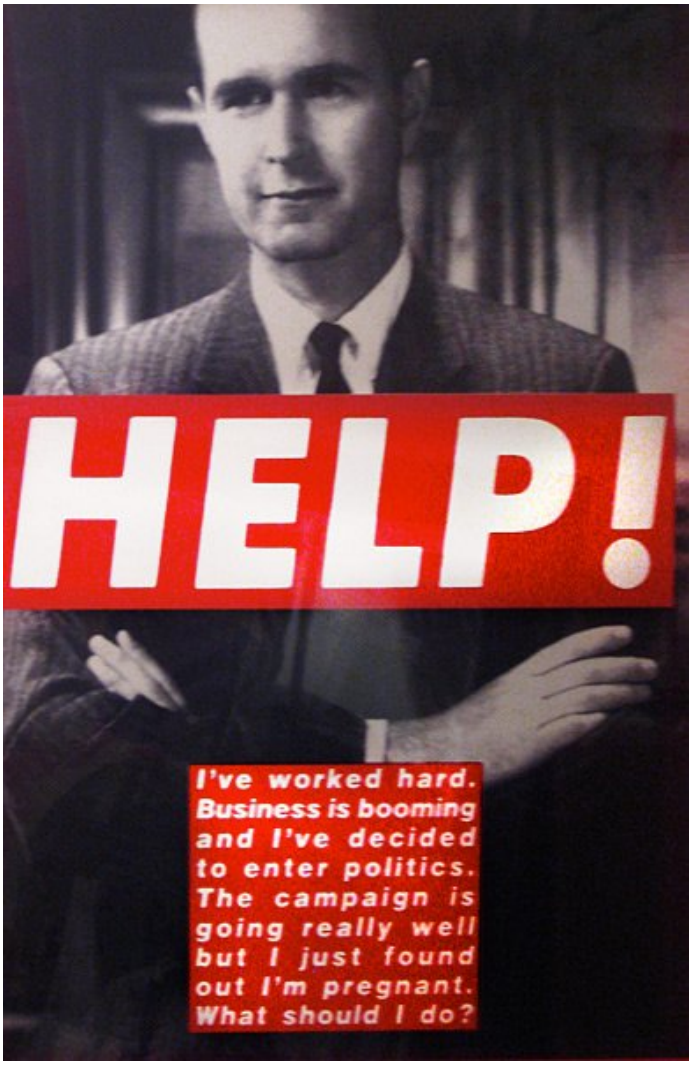
Like an eerie planet floating through space, a woman's egg, or ovum *(above left)*, has been ejected by one of her ovaries into a fallopian tube, where it will remain fertile for about 24 hours. The luminous halo around the ovum is a cluster of nutrient cells feeding the hungry egg. A closer view *(center)* shows that the 100 or so sperm cells that survived the journey up the reproductive tract are busily stripping the nutrient cells from the ovum. Over the next several hours the sperm will begin beating their tails vigorously as they rotate like drill bits into the outer wall of the egg. Although a dozen sperm may be close to penetrating at the same time, when one finally succeeds *(opposite)* a remarkable thing happens: The ovum's outer wall changes its chemical composition and shuts tight, preventing any of the other sperm from entering. Once the head of the sperm has pushed its way through the inner wall of the ovum, its tail breaks off *(above right)*.

fig. 5: Lennart Nilsson. "The First Pictures Ever of How Life Begins." *Life* 8 Aug. 1990. 34

fig. 6-7: *The Silent Scream*. Dir. Jack Duane Dabner. American Portrait Films, 1984.

fig. 8: Barbara Kruger, *Your Body is a Battleground,* 1989.

fig. 9-10: Barbara Kruger, *HELP!* –Bus Shelter Project, Public Art Fund, New York City. January-March, 1991.



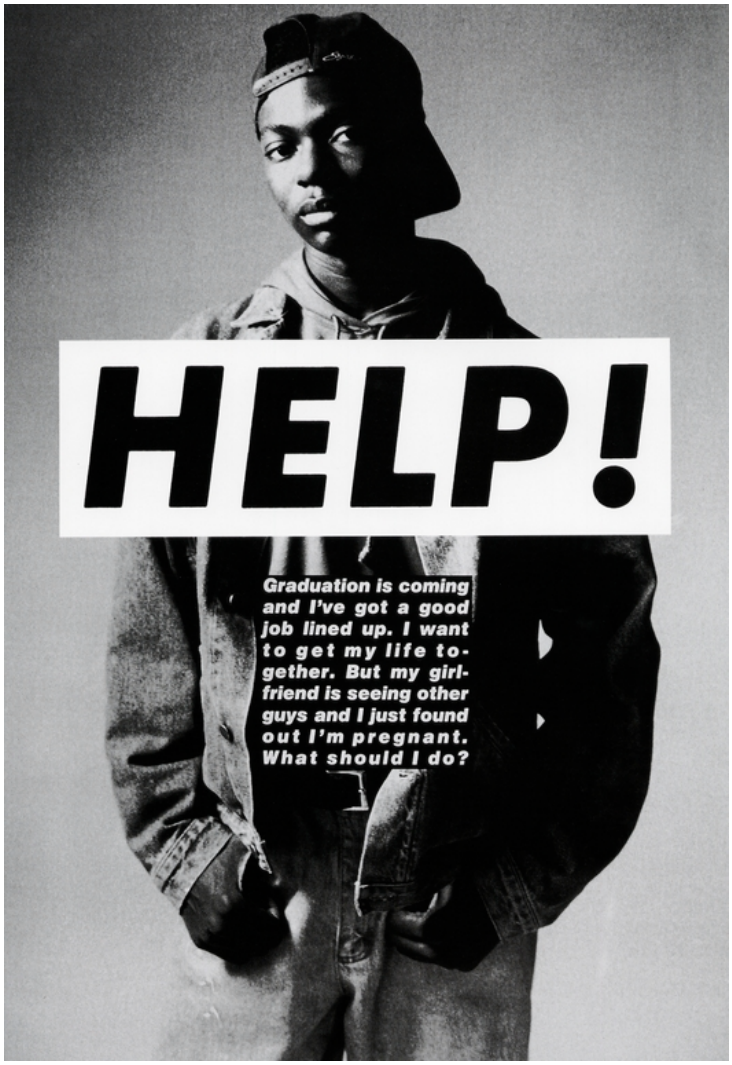


fig. 11: Bracha Ettinger, *Austistworks*, *n. 1, 4, 3, 5, 9,* 1993-94. Plate from M. Catherine de Zegher. *Inside the Visible: An Elliptical Traverse of 20th Century Art In, Of, and from the Feminine*. Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1996, 300.

BRACHA LICHTENBERG ETTINGER,
Autistworks, n. 1, 4, 3, 5, 9, 1993-94.
Oil and photocopy on paper mounted on canvas.
Approx. 35 x 27 cm.
Courtesy of the artist.

300

fig. 12: Unknown Photographer, Mizocz, Ukraine, 1942

fig. 13: Bracha Ettinger, *Eurydice*, no. 23, 1994-1998

Notes

Preface

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Section I

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[16] Lennart Nilsson. "The First Pictures Ever of How Life Begins." *Life* 8 Aug. 1990, 28.
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[24] Ibid.
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[37] Ibid., 177.

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