Bio-power and Death by Culture: The Em-Bodiment of Disposability.

The Femicides and Disappearances of Aboriginal Women in Canada and las Muertas de Juárez

by

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Abstract

Since 1993, 379 working class women have been brutally murdered in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. At least 500 others are missing. In Canada, no less than 500 Aboriginal women are thought to have been murdered or gone missing over the past two decades. Meanwhile, Mexican and Canadian authorities have shown little concern for these women's lives and deaths, and the media have appropriated these cases as a source of entertainment.

Drawing on these marginalized women's experiences of violence, in this project I emphasize that not all women are equally vulnerable to experiencing such violence. Thus, I aim to provide an 'alternative' theoretical framework to better understand why these women have been rendered worthless and disposable. This framework incorporates a feminist poststructural and postcolonial approach, coupled with Foucault's (1995 [1977]) concept of bio-power, to challenge the foundations of feminist modernist/structuralist theories of violence against women: their ontological commitment to the sex/gender binary and their understanding of power as purely repressive. Moreover, I critique the radical feminist definition of femicide as "the killing of women by men *because* they are female" (Russell, 2003a: 3). Instead, I re-define femicide as those murders that em-body the institutionalized inferior status of particular women in their society, as well as cultural beliefs in these women's worthlessness, in the disposability of their bodies.

Ultimately, I argue that these women's murders represent the discursive and material effects of (neo-)colonial technologies of bio-power (specific to each country) that have constructed them as cultural waste and as disposable bodies. Indeed, the analysis of the representation of these women's murders and disappearances in the Mexican and Canadian news media reveals the cultural expectation that such violence

is inevitable. This is "death by culture" (Wright, 1999). In depicting them as waste and making a spectacle out of their horrific deaths, the media de-humanize these women and sanitize the violence that they experienced. Representation is a technology of violence.

The salient point is, therefore, to draw attention to the inextricability of the relation between discursivity and materiality and, accordingly, to the fact that these women em-body discursive and material violences.

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to the women of Ciudad Juárez and the Aboriginal women of Canada who have been victims of femicide and 'death by culture.'

Table of Contents

Abstract........ i

Acknowledgements........ iii

Dedication........ iv

List of Figures and Illustrations........ vii

Chapter One
Introduction........ 1
Murders and Disappearances in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico........ 3
Murders and Disappearances of Aboriginal Women in Canada........ 7
An Alternative Framework........ 12

Chapter Two
Femicide: Em-bodied Violence?........ 19
Early Feminist Modernist/Structuralist Theories of Violence against Women and Radical Feminism........ 21
Recent Feminist Modernist/Structuralist Theories of Violence against Women........ 29
Current Radical Feminist Theories of Femicide........ 33
On the Ontology of Sexual Difference: A Critique of Radical Feminist and Feminist Social Constructionist Thought on Violence against Women........ 38
Femicide as Em-bodied Violence?........ 43

Chapter Three
Death by Culture: On Bio-power and Colonized Bodies........ 47
Bio-Power and Feminist Postcolonial Theory........ 49
Las Muertas de Juárez and the Em-bodiment of Social Inequality: Histories of Colonialisms........ 57
The Murders and Disappearances of Aboriginal Women in Canada: Racialized Bodies and the Legacy of Colonialism........ 68
Bio-power, Violence and (Tensions in) Resistance........ 83

Chapter Four
A Spectacle of Death (by Culture): Representation as a Technology of Violence........ 86
Of Horror and Pleasure: the Violence of Representation and the Representation of Violence........ 87

Chapter Five
Discussion........ 130

Bibliography........ 151

Canadian News Media and Newspaper Articles Cited........ 165

Mexican Newspaper Articles Cited 169

Photo Credits 171

List of Figures and Illustrations

1. "Forensic Scientists".. 97
2. "CSI: Crime Scene Investigation"... 98
3. "The Remains of a Murdered Woman"...................................... 99
4. "CSI Crime Scene Investigation 2"... 99
5. "The Remains Are Neyra's"... 100
6. "The Remains Coincide, It Is Neyra Azucena"............................ 100
7. "Murders of Women"... 102
8. "He Killed His Ex-Girlfriend and then He Killed Himself".............. 104
9. "Body"... 104
10. "Aún se Desconoce a los Responsables".................................. 110
11. "Truculence of an Episode of Blood: The Rebels, The Bus Drivers and The Egyptian".. 110
12. "More Psychopaths are Captured in Juárez"............................... 112
13. "Robert Pickton"... 115
14. "Sketch of Robert Pickton"... 116
15. "The Disappeared [Women] Appear"....................................... 127

Chapter One
Introduction

In this project, I aim to provide an 'alternative' theoretical framework of violence against women to better understand why so many marginalized women in Mexico and in Canada have disappeared or been murdered over the past two decades, as well as why such spectacular indifference has accompanied their disappearances and deaths. Utilizing feminist poststructural and postcolonial perspectives, I challenge common conceptualizations of violence against women, including those that stem from radical feminism. Drawing on feminist film theories, I further look at how the representation, including the lack of it, of these murders and disappearances in the press contributes to the re-production and reinforcement of extreme violence towards women.

Because these murders represent an absolute contempt and disrespect for these women's humanness, lives and identities, I consider them femicides. Yet contrary to the traditional radical feminist definition of femicide as "the killing of females by males *because* they are female (Russell, 2003a: 3; emphasis in original), I define femicide as those murders that em-body the institutionalized inferior status of particular women in their society, as well as cultural beliefs in these women's worthlessness, in the disposability of their bodies and, ultimately, in their otherness. This re-definition is expressly different from the radical feminist definition in that it does not take all women to be equally vulnerable to experiencing such violence. On the contrary, this feminist postcolonial and poststructural approach focuses on unveiling the construction of particularly marginalized women's bodies as worthless and disposable, thereby justifying indifference towards these brutal murders on the part of authorities and powerful sectors of society.

This re-definition of femicide allows me to question radical feminism's notion of a pre-social sexed body, the belief in innate sex differences between women and men (e.g. Brownmiller, 1975; Russell, 1992a, 1992b, 1992c, 2002a, 2002b). Consistent with feminist poststructural conceptualizations of bodily materiality[1] and Foucault's (1995 [1977]) concept of bio-power, a feminist postcolonial/poststructural approach to violence "posits a historical and changeable body, on which all possible configurations of power and signification are inscribed" (Hird, 2002: 3). My focus in this project is therefore to theorize violence in relation to the notion of the material disposable (female) 'body'; that is, violence in relation to a specific embodied (female) subject, a corporeal body that has been constructed as disposable through social, historical, political and cultural mechanisms as "technologies of power" (Foucault 1995, [1977]). Indeed, this is why Foucault's concept of bio-power is central to my project: through bio-power I analyze the discursive and material effects of Mexico's and Canada's histories of colonialism and its institutions as constitutive and productive of these women and their bodies as worthless and expendable. In this sense, I am concerned with the material organization of social life and the different discourses that have shaped and created these bodies as disposable. I argue, ultimately, that these women's murders are a materialization of "death by culture" (Wright, 1999: 458): the cultural expectation that these women will inevitably be killed because they em-body social and cultural waste and hence cultural value in decline, which needs to be restored.

I thus appropriate the murders and disappearances of Mexican women in Ciudad Juárez and of Aboriginal women in Canada, all of whom were young and from a low socio-economic background, to illustrate how this alternative framework can

[1] By feminist conceptualizations of materiality I am referring to the work of Butler (1993), Bordo (1993), Barad (1998) and others.

enhance our understanding of how and why a specific segment of each country's population is rendered disposable and invisible.

Murders and Disappearances in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico

Ciudad Juárez, located in northern Chihuahua, is a Mexican bordertown in front of El Paso, Texas, known for its *maquila* (sweatshop) industry and the powerful Juárez drug cartel. Between 1993 and 2005, however, the disappearance of over 400 women (Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa,[2] 2006) and the exceptionally vicious murders of at least 379 other women (PGR,[3] 2006) have brought it in both national and international spotlights.

The murders are surrounded by numerous controversies and contradictions, especially concerning the actual number of missing and disappeared women, the police's (in)ability to solve the crimes or follow up on missing persons reports, and the (un)certain identification of the victims' bodies[4] (Amnesty International, 2003; González Rodríguez, 2002; Ronquillo, 2004). Though the Mexican government and the PGR finally carried out an extensive investigation that culminated in the arrest of at least 177 people (PGR, 2006), a sense of impunity is still prevalent; and certainly not without reason. For example, the apathy and indifference on the part of Mexican authorities toward the murders and disappearances confirmed what the victims' relatives and feminist activists saw as their utter disregard for these women's lives; especially given that most of them were young, poor and involved in the sex trade or the *maquila* industry (Benítez et.al., 1999; González Rodríguez, 2002; Monárrez

[2] Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa ([We Want] Our Daughters Back Home) is Mexican organization demanding the investigation of the 379 murders of women in Ciudad Juárez and the disappearance of over 400 other women.
[3] The acronym PGR stands for the Procuraduría General de la República, the Mexican Office of the Attorney General of the Republic.
[4] In at least 8 cases, DNA tests did not confirm the identities determined by anthropometric tests (Amnesty International, 2003).

Fragoso and Fuentes, 2004). One of the most salient examples of police indifference towards violence against working class women is the case of Lilia Alejandra García Andrade. In February 2000, her body was found on a waste ground; she had been tied, raped, mutilated and strangled. Although someone witnessed Lilia being raped and beaten in a car and had called emergency at 10:15 pm, the police did not respond. Another call was made shortly before 11 pm, yet the police did not respond until 11:25. However, when a police car came, it was too late: the car in which Lilia had been raped and killed was gone (González Rodríguez, 2002: 244; Ronquillo, 2004: 62).

Violence against poor women is viewed by Mexican authorities as inevitable, yet not regrettable or alarming, further constructing these women as worthless and disposable (Benítez et.al., 1999). Indeed, the sarcastic and thoroughly insensitive comment made by Arturo González Rascón, Attorney General of the state of Chihuahua in 1999, is representative of the fact that the authorities see violence against poor women as unavoidable and continue to be indifferent to it:

> There are unfortunately women who, due to their life conditions, the places where they carry out their activities, are at risk, because it would be very difficult that somebody who went out to the street when it is raining, well it would be very difficult that that person would not get wet (*El Diario*, Ciudad Juárez, Wednesday February 24th, 1999, p. 9C; quoted in Monárrez Fragoso, 2002: 285; my translation).

Moreover, the UN Special Rapporteur on the murders of Ciudad Juárez made the following remarkable statement in her report:

> ...the arrogant behaviour and obvious indifference shown by some state officials in regard to these cases leave the impression that many of the crimes were deliberately never investigated for the sole reason that *the victims were "only" young girls with no particular social status and who therefore were regarded as expendable* (in Amnesty International, 2003; emphasis added).

What is worse, this indifference from officials coupled with stereotypes of women from a low socio-economic background as cheap, tacky, loose, lazy and dumb

(Benítez et. al., 1999) renders the violence that has been perpetrated against them unimportant. This has been unbearable for the murdered women's family members. As a mother of one of the women murdered in 1995 put it, Mexican authorities think that

> ...because they [the murdered women] are people of low resources, they [the authorities/Mexican society] think that they are stupid, that they don't think, that they have no ambitions, that they have no desire to challenge themselves. I mean, they think that because one lives in a remote neighbourhood one is an idiot, that one doesn't think anything. I am very upset when they say 'they are from the periphery, poor women, of low resources;' yes, they are poor, not dumb (mother of Adriana Torres Márquez in Benítez et.al., 1999: 128; my translation).

It is not only stereotypical assumptions about poor women that put them at a higher risk of experiencing violence. As Monárrez Fragoso and Fuentes (2004) argue, Ciudad Juárez features conditions of socio-spatial segregation that render a determined sector of women more vulnerable to violence: those who are poor, young, living in slums or shanty towns, and who work either as prostitutes or in the *maquila* industry. Urban marginality, that is, inadequate, unsafe, overcrowded and far removed housing, represent a real and material threat in these women's lives: "the mere fact of having to go across the city to get to work has meant, for some women, facing death" (Monárrez Fragoso and Fuentes, 2004: 58; my translation). Violence is inevitably "part of and accompanies social inequality, exclusion and marginalization from society" (ibid: 50; my translation).

Though the case of *las muertas de Juárez*[5] has become emblematic of violence against women in Mexico, I argue that the extreme violence and torture to which these women were subjected goes beyond mainstream theories of violence towards women. The murdered women were raped, tortured, mutilated and usually stabbed or strangled; their bodies discarded and dumped on waste grounds, dumpsters or in the

[5] The dead women of Ciudad Juárez.

middle of the desert. The forensic report of the body of Olga Alicia Carrillo Pérez, murdered in 1995, illustrates the degree of violence perpetrated against these women and their bodies. Olga Alicia's body was found with a

> [w]ound with irregular edges on the left earlobe probably due to an attempt to bite it off. The area described in the autopsy certificate as devoid of fabric (...) corresponds... to amputation of the left breast, partial amputation of the nipple probably as a result of being bitten, possibly by a human being (Autopsy Certificate, revised version, September 1995, case of Olga Alicia Carrillo, Amnesty International, 2003).

Unfortunately, Olga Alicia was not the only one who suffered this horrible death. Shortly after her body was found, the bodies of Elizabeth Castro García, Silvia Elena Rivera Morales and Adriana Torres Márquez were found in the same condition: all of them had their hands tied behind their backs, sometimes with their own shoelaces, they all had been raped, some sodomized, their right breasts severed and their left nipples bitten off (Ronquillo, 2004: 72, 73).

Furthermore, in 1996, 13-year old Susana Mejía Flores and 15-year old Brenda Lizeth Nájera were held captive and tortured for two weeks by eighteen-year old Edgar Omar Sánchez before he murdered them. Brenda suffered lacerations made by a sharp object on her left hand, her neck and her back while she was being tortured; she had four heart attacks before Edgar shot her twice in the head. Although there were no visible signs of torture on Susana's body, she was also shot twice in the head (Ronquillo, 2004: 171-173). In November 1997, Eréndira Buendía Muñoz, was found naked in a dumpster, her clothes lying next to her. She presented clear signs of torture: her murderer(s) had inserted a large, solid and thick object – similar to a stake – into her vagina, causing internal haemorrhaging and severe lesions. She was strangled with a thick strap (ibid: 69). In 1998, the remains of 15-year old Paulina Lizalde Gómez indicated that her 7 months pregnant had been drenched in gasoline and then burnt. Eréndira Ponce was strangled, her hands were tied behind her back and she was half-

naked. María Eugenia Mendoza Arias, whose body was found in the municipal dumpster, was raped anally and vaginally, and then strangled. Her face was completely disfigured; her skull had been literally smashed with a rock and a vehicle driven over her head and body numerous times (Ronquillo, 2004: 173). Laboratory analyses revealed that she had been beaten and her body penetrated with a metal tube, which was found next to her. In 1999, thirteen-year old Irma Angélica Rosales Lozano, a *maquila* worker, was raped, tortured and asphyxiated with a plastic bag over her head (ibid).

It is evident that in these and similar cases "the objective [was] *the victim's control and extermination*, which without a doubt reflects a strong form of sexism, even though [the authorities] argue that sexual violence was absent [in 80% of the cases]" (Monárrez Fragoso and Fuentes, 2004: 53; my translation, emphasis added). These murders can only be regarded as femicides.

Murders and Disappearances of Aboriginal women in Canada

Approximately 500 Aboriginal women have either gone missing or are thought to have been murdered in communities across Canada over the past two decades (Amnesty International, 2004; Jacobs, 2002; O'Hara, 2007). As far back as 1996, the Indian and Northern Affairs Canada reported that "Aboriginal women with status under the Indian Act and who are between the ages of 25 and 44 are five times more likely to experience a violent death than other Canadian women in the same age category" (Jacobs, 2002: 8). The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) believes "that the incidents that have come to light are part of a larger pattern of violent assaults, murders and disappearances of Indigenous women across Canada" (Amnesty International, 2004: 14). Furthermore, in pointing out the indifference of the police's response to this situation, the NWAC argues that "significant gaps in how

police record and share information about missing persons and violent crimes means that there is no comprehensive picture of the actual scale of violence against Indigenous women, of who the perpetrators are, or in what circumstances the violence takes place" (ibid: 15). In the words of journalist Warren Goulding (2001), "it [is] clear that something like an epidemic [is] raging virtually unchecked in Canada" (p. 33).

There are salient similarities between the murders of Helen Betty Osborne, Mary Jane Serloin, Shelly Napope, Eva Taysup, Calinda Waterhen, Pamela George, the murdered and the missing women of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside and the victims of the "Highway of Tears," which are only a few examples of the violence perpetrated against Aboriginal women in Canada. All of them were young, poor Aboriginal women and, as in Ciudad Juárez, their disappearances and murders were treated with indifference by authorities and the media. As vicious as their murders were, none have received the type or degree of attention as did the murders committed by Paul Bernardo and Karla Homolka (Goulding, 2001), the case of the Montréal Massacre (Kelley, 1995) or even the recent Dawson College shooting, where the victims were white women from a middle-class background. As Caffyn Kelley (1995), writing on a Vancouver-based monument project in honour of the women shot in Montréal Massacre,[6] points out:

> ...the names inscribed on the monument will not be the First Nations women of the neighbourhood who have been murdered in back alleys and beer parlour, left to die in garbage dumpsters or thrown out of hotel windows. In this neighbourhood where women are six times more likely to be murdered than in the city overall – 10 to 20 times more likely if they are between the ages of 20 and 45 – the monument will be inscribed with the names of fourteen, white, middle-class women from four thousand miles away (Kelley, 1995: 8).

[6] By pointing out that the murders of white women have received more attention than the murders and disappearances of Aboriginal women in Canada, I in no way mean to devalue their experiences of violence.

What is more, the convicted killers of Aboriginal women in these cases, all of whom were white males, have been treated with leniency. Most of them have been convicted of manslaughter, as opposed to murder, and their sentences have been very short (Goulding, 2001; Razack, 2000). In addition, the idea that Aboriginal women are 'easy' and promiscuous – a legacy of colonialism (Acoose, 1995) – as well as the poverty in which Aboriginal women live, make them more vulnerable to violence (Amesty International, 2003; Culhane, 2003; Jacobs, 2002; Razack, 2000).

The power of negative stereotypes of Aboriginal women is evident, for example, in Helen Betty Osborne's murder in 1971 in The Pas, a clearly racially segregated city in Manitoba (Hamilton and Sinclair, 1991). Osborne was approached by four white drunken men in a car, Dwayne Johnston, James Houghton, Scott Colgan and Norman Manger, who were looking to find "an Indian girl with whom to drink and have sex" (ibid). When she refused to go 'party' with them, she was beaten, sexually assaulted and stabbed over 50 times with a screwdriver. Her face was smashed beyond recognition. The Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba examining the circumstances surrounding Betty Osborne's murder concluded in its report that "*her murder was a racist and sexist act. Betty Osborne would be alive today had she not been an Aboriginal woman*" (ibid; emphasis added):

> Her attackers seemed to be operating on the assumption that Aboriginal women were promiscuous and open to enticement through alcohol or violence. It is evident that the men who abducted Osborne believed that *young Aboriginal women were objects with no human value beyond sexual gratification* (Hamilton and Sinclair, 1991; emphasis added).

It was only in 1986 that Johnston was convicted of murder and sentenced to life imprisonment on the basis of the evidence given by Colgan in exchange for immunity, although he was fully paroled in 1997. Houghton was charged but then acquitted, while Manger was never charged.

The leniency with which these murderers were treated given their class and race status is by no means an exception. In 1997, the murderers of Pamela George, Steven Kummerfield and Alex Ternowetsky, two varsity athletes of the University of Regina, were charged with manslaughter, as opposed to murder, even though they brutally beat her and left her to die with her face in the mud (Razack, 2000). George was a 28-year old woman of the Salteaux (Ojibway) Nation, who occasionally engaged in sex work to support her two children. During the trial, however, the judge asked the jury to bear in mind that George "was indeed a prostitute," while Kummerfield and Ternowetsky remained "boys who did pretty darn stupid things" (ibid: 117), like soliciting sex from George and beating her up, but who had, nevertheless, not committed murder. Both men were fully paroled in 2000, after serving only half of their six and a half year sentence.

That John Crawford, the man who murdered Mary Jane Serloin, Shelly Napope, Eva Taysup and Calinda Waterhen, never truly considered these women full human beings is illustrated in the affidavit he wrote in an attempt to appeal his sentence. On Eva Taysup's murder around September 20, 1992, Crawford states he refused to pay the $150 she demanded for the sexual acts she had performed on him, since he had provided her with alcohol. When she threatened to yell rape, Crawford recalls "grabbing her by the throat and holding on… because [he] didn't want to go to jail… [He] remember[s] thinking *'She's only worth $50, I'm not going to jail. She has no right to live…*" (in Goulding, 2001: 205, 206; emphasis added). Crawford's description of Calinda Waterhen's murder on the following night is remarkably similar, since he also refused to pay her the amount she had asked for: "I became angry and said 'fuck that' […]. I choked her to scare her [but] after she was dead, I

remember thinking *'fuck, here goes another one... '"* (ibid: 206; emphasis added). Mr. Justice Wright correctly remarked during Crawford's trial that he

> ...was attracted to his victims for four reasons: one they were young; two they were women; third, they were native; and fourth, they were prostitutes. [He] treated them with contempt, brutality; he terrorized them, and ultimately he killed them. *He seemed determined to destroy every vestige of their humanity* (in Goulding, 2001: 188; emphasis added).

Indifference and apathy toward these women's murders and disappearances characterized these cases from the beginning. The case of the murdered and disappeared Aboriginal women of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside is notorious in this respect. Vancouver authorities refused to take the disappearances of sex workers in that neighbourhood seriously, until Robert Pickton's pig farm was excavated in Port Coquitlam and the remains and DNA of at least 15 women were found. Robert Pickton was tried this year on the murder of 27 women[7] and the RCMP is still investigating 60 more cases (Amnesty International, 2004). The salient point here is that Aboriginal women are overrepresented in Vancouver's sex trade as well as in the number of murdered and disappeared women (ibid).

Meanwhile, the murders along the "Highway of Tears" demonstrates that race is clearly a factor in how authorities respond to the murders and disappearances of Aboriginal women. The name "Highway of Tears" is in reference to the number of mostly Aboriginal women who have gone missing or have been found murdered along the stretch of Highway 16 between Prince Rupert and Prince George, British Columbia (Leheidli T'enneh First Nation et.al., 2006). Five women have been found murdered, Ramona Wilson, Rozanna Thiara, Aleisha Germaine, Deena Braem, Aielah Saric-Auger and three women remain missing, Tara Chipman, Lana Derrik, Nicole

[7] Pickton has been charged with the murders of Heather Chinnock, Inga Hall, Tanya Holyk, Sherry Irving, Jennifer Furminger, Helen Hallmark, Patricia Johnson, Georgina Papin, Brenda Wolfe, Andrea Joesbury, Heather Bottomley, Jacqueline McDonell, Diane Rock, Sereena Abotsway, Mona Wilson, Tiffany Drew, Marnie Frey, Cinthya Feliks, Angela Jardine, Diane Melnick, Sara deVries, Jane Doe, Cara Ellis, Debra Jones, Wendy Crawford, Kerry Koski and Andrea Borhaven.

Hoar and Cicilia Anne Nikal. Prior to Hoar's disappearance in 2002, the case of the "Highway of Tears" only drew local media interest (ibid). The attention that Hoar's case received finally raised awareness of the fact her disappearance was not an isolated event. It is not a coincidence that Hoar was the only white woman among the missing and murdered women.

Given the intricate intersection of race, class, age and gender that is at play in these murders and disappearances, coupled with the indifference that has characterized them, these cases should also be classified as femicides.

An Alternative Framework

In focusing on the murders and disappearances of Aboriginal women in Canada and in Ciudad Juárez, I want to analyze why certain women in each country are more vulnerable to violence and how, as a result, their experiences of violence can be so similar in what are seemingly disparate social and cultural contexts. The focus here is not, therefore, to equate a developed country of the North with a developing country of the South, but to explain why these women's bodies are constructed as disposable through social, historical, political and cultural mechanisms and how, as a result, the violence that has been perpetrated against them has been rendered unimportant. I am aware that in different countries, different bodies are constructed as disposable and that, ultimately, "social power regulates what losses can be grieved" (Butler, 1997: 183). My purpose is to draw attention to the need to develop a theoretical framework that can cut through North/South and other binaries. It is thus important to emphasize that only particular women have been constructed as worthless, expendable and disposable throughout Mexico's and Canada's histories of (neo-)colonialism; not every or any woman is murdered or is prone to experiencing this kind of violence. I find, consequently, that modernist/structuralist theories of

violence against women do not adequately address this crucial point and fall short in their attempts to explain these murders.

As I argue that the cases of *las muertas de Juárez* and the murders of Aboriginal women in Canada be considered femicides, I am aware of my own theoretical positioning in the midst of the ongoing debate between modernist/structuralist and postmodernist/poststructuralist approaches to gender and the 'body' within feminism and its impact on theories of violence against women. Postmodern and poststructural feminist theories regard the 'body' as a "political field;" a text onto which discourses and power are inscribed (Braidotti, 1991: 77). Holding the notion of a post-socially sexed body[8] (Hird, 2002, 2004) as one of their main theoretical underpinnings, these approaches to gender have destabilized the sex/gender binary: they have radically called into question the taken for granted assumption of 'sex' as simply the 'natural' biological basis of gender (see Braidotti, 1994; Butler, 1990, 1993, 1998; de Lauretis, 1987; Hird, 2000, 2004; Riley, 1988; Webster, 2000). Instead, they have pointed to the discursive construction of sex through gender:

> If the immutable character of sex is contested, perhaps this construct called 'sex' is as culturally constructed as gender; indeed it was always already gender, with the consequence that the distinction between sex and gender turns out to be no distinction at all… Gender ought not to be conceived merely as the cultural inscription of meaning on a pre-given sex (a juridical conception); gender must also designate the very apparatus of production whereby the sexes themselves are established. As a result, gender is not culture as sex is to nature; gender is also the discursive/cultural means by which 'sexed nature' or 'a natural sex' is produced and established as 'prediscursive', prior to culture, a politically neutral surface on which culture acts (Butler, 1998: 279, 280).

Undoubtedly these theories have challenged "the very legitimacy of the political representation of 'women' and 'women's concerns'" (Webster, 2000: 1) and thus the universal conception of 'Woman' as the subject of feminism (Riley, 1988).

[8] This refers to the conceptualization of the body as sexed through gendered discursive and social practices, as opposed to an understanding of the body as naturally sexed.

From a different perspective, postcolonial and black feminists have further contested the legitimacy of the category of Woman and the notion of women's sisterhood in pointing out how dominant white Western feminist theories othered women in the "Third World," black women and women of colour (hooks, 1991; Mohanty, 2003). Indeed, the problem of modernist/structuralist white Western feminists' use of "women as a category of analysis" (e.g. Hartsock, 1990) is that they presuppose that "all women, across classes and cultures, are somehow socially constituted as a homogeneous group identified prior to the process of analysis" (Mohanty, 2003: 22, 23). They also assume that women as an already constituted group are powerless, exploited, sexually harassed and, in so doing, they mistake "the discursively consensual homogeneity of women as a group... for the historically specific material reality of groups of women" (ibid: 22). Thus, in presuming that all women are bound together by a "sociological notion of the 'sameness' of their oppression" (ibid: 22), modernist/structuralist white Western feminism blurs the differences in oppression and agency that different women of different countries, cultures, races/ethnicities, classes, sexual orientations, ages and abilities experience.

The impact of poststructural and postcolonial feminist thought for theories of violence against women is paramount. Their theoretical foundations have clearly established that no one theory of violence against women can (or should even attempt to) adequately explain all women's experiences of violence. In this manner they have drawn attention to the complexities involved in any attempt to theorize any instance of 'violence against women': Which women experience violence? How do these women experience violence? How is violence defined and/or manifested in their specific social, cultural, historical and political context? In light of these premises, my "alternative" framework of violence against women is both an outcome of the insights

resulting from the debate between feminist structural/modern theories and postmodern/poststructural perspectives, but also a response to their shortcomings. The purpose of this thesis is thus three-fold: 1) to theorize and re-define femicide; 2) to analyze the representation, and the lack thereof, of these women's deaths and disappearances in the media; and 3) to demonstrate how power affects and effects bodies and renders materiality and discursivity inseparable in the analysis of why certain women's bodies are rendered worthless and disposable.

In Chapter 1, I engage in a critique of modernist/structuralist theories of violence against women, with particular emphasis on radical feminist theories of femicide, to indicate why they are inadequate to explain the lethal experiences of violence of marginalized women. I thus point to the essentialist assumptions about 'maleness' and 'femaleness' that permeate these theories, given their ontological commitment to the sex/gender binary, that is to the idea that gender is socially constructed and that biological sex is its 'natural' basis. Their adherence to the sex/gender binary not only presupposes that there is a pre-socially sexed body, but that all women are equally vulnerable to experiencing violence in that they are women, (i.e. biological females).

In order to challenge this conceptualization of 'violence against women,' I use the term "sexed violence" (Howe, 1998) to highlight the powerful effect that discourses of gender have in shaping our understanding of what counts as 'violence against women' as well as the body. Ultimately, it is my purpose in this chapter to re-define and theorize femicide as those murders that em-body the institutionalized inferior status of particular women in their society, as well as cultural beliefs in these women's worthlessness and the disposability of their bodies.

In Chapter 2, I elaborate on my theoretical framework to provide a better understanding of why marginalized Aboriginal and Mexican women have been rendered worthless and disposable. I contextualize their murders as the historical and cultural outcome of (neo-)colonial gendered, racialized and classed violence, which, notwithstanding Mexico's and Canada's different histories, has resulted in their increased vulnerability to violence, and thus in their tragic deaths. Central to this chapter are Foucault's (1995 [1977]) concept of bio-power and feminist postcolonial theory. Through them, I analyze the discursive and material effects of colonialism and its institutions in the production of these marginalized women's bodies as expendable through Mexico's and Canada's histories, while emphasizing the salient role of the interplay of discourses of gender, race and class in this process. In so doing, not only do I re-interpret the case of *las muertas de Juárez* and the murders of Aboriginal women in Canada as femicides, but as a form of "death by culture"[9] (Wright, 1999).

In Chapter 3, I focus on the representation, and lack thereof, of these marginalized women's murders and disappearances as a technology of violence and thus as a technology of bio-power.[10] This representation is inseparable from the violence to which they were subjected, since it re-produces and strengthens the construction of their bodies as disposable. As such, I am concerned not only with the representation of violence but the violence of representation. In so doing, I emphasize the relationship between the discursive and material production and re-production of these women and their bodies as waste: I argue that the violent visualization of their bodies in representation is also a materialization of the violence that they experienced. Within the framework of feminist film theory, I engage in discourse analysis of how

[9] The concept of death by culture is Uma Narayan's characterization of the global discourses for explaining women's death in the Third World as somehow embedded in tradition, internally driven, and resulting in the distortion of 'traditional' cultural values (Wright, 1999: 458).
[10] In Discipline and Punish, Foucault (1995 [1977]) explains technology as...

the Canadian media and the Mexican newspaper *El Heraldo de Chihuahua* cover and re-create these cases as a spectacle. As a spectacle, the media representation of these cases undermines the seriousness of these crimes and perpetuates the sense of inevitability of the violence to which these women were subjected: it is a spectacle of these women's death by culture.

Discourse analysis and feminist film theory are useful tools in my project, since they allow me to study representation as a social and discursive practice, while addressing readers' (possible) experience of feelings of pleasure and/or disgust in their fascination with the horrendous renditions of these women's deaths in the media's narratives. I further explore the visualization of the body in representation as a manifestation of the materialization of violence against the feminine and against women. In addition, I pay special attention to the gendered, racialized and class significance with which the representation of these women, their murders and their bodies is imbued.

In the final discussion, I raise questions concerning the relevance of re-defining femicide to better understand why and how these women and their bodies have been rendered disposable. I conclude by arguing that the bodies of the murdered and missing women of Ciudad Juárez and of Aboriginal women in Canada are "material-discursive bodies" (Barad, 1998). This concept illustrates the central argument of my thesis: that bodies are simultaneously and inextricably material and discursive and that these cases of violence cannot be properly analyzed without taking this into consideration. Through it, I highlight the importance of viewing these women's femicides as the effect of death by culture and of the material and discursive effects of (neo-) colonial technologies of bio-power.

At the same time, I explore the existing tensions between Foucault and feminism, especially in the matter of resistance. With regard to the case of Aboriginal women in Canada and *las muertas de Juárez*, it has been thanks to activist efforts that there has been a slow yet significant discursive change in how these marginalized women are represented in the media. Nevertheless, the strategies of resistance that these groups have used do not necessarily fit a Foucauldian framework. Yet what are the implications of using his conceptualization of resistance? Ultimately, I argue that it is necessary to take Foucault's notion of power as diffuse and productive, but with the insights of feminist elaborations on his work that point out that (bio-)power has both productive *and* repressive aspects.

In the end, this is what I aim to do in this project: I want to provide a way of analyzing the murders and disappearances of these women that does not rely on essentialism or on an exclusively oppressor/oppressed model of power. However, it is necessary to take into account the negative aspects that power does have on marginalized women in particular to understand why they have been rendered as disposable and to think about the possibility of effecting social change.

Chapter Two
Femicide: Em-bodied Violence?

In this chapter, I engage in a critique of radical feminist and feminist social constructionist theories of violence against women.[1,2] With particular emphasis on radical feminist theories of femicide, I put forth a definition of femicide that conceptualizes violence as em-bodied. The concept of femicide is embedded in the history of the development of radical feminist theories of violence against women, which started with the western Women's Movement of the 1960s. In the radical feminist literature, femicide is commonly defined as "the killing of women by men *because* they are female" (Russell, 2002a: 3; emphasis in original) or as "the misogynist killing of women by men" (Radford, 1992: 3). I argue that these feminist modernist/structuralist theories and definitions are inadequate to explain the complexity of women's experiences of violence or why femicide occurs, primarily because they are grounded on the sex/gender binary, that is, on the notion that gender is socially constructed and that biological sex is its 'natural' basis. This ontological commitment to the sex/gender binary has greatly influenced our understanding of 'violence against women' and it has obscured the fact that not all women are equally vulnerable to experiencing violence, let alone to being victims of femicide. I thus re-define femicide as those murders that em-body the institutionalized inferior status of particular women in their society, as well as cultural beliefs in these women's worthlessness and the disposability of their bodies.

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[1] Throughout the chapter I also refer to radical feminist and feminist social constructionist theories as modernist/structuralist theories of violence against women.

[2] In critiquing these theories, it is not my intention to disqualify or dismiss them. On the contrary, throughout this chapter I stress their crucial contributions to feminist theorizing on violence and contesting popular understandings of and mainstream psychological and socio-biological explanations of violence against women. These mainstream accounts continue to re-produce and perpetuate very powerful myths about violence and the relationship between women and men. Though I do not provide a detailed description of each of these perspectives, they are relevant to this project because they constitute what I consider dominant or hegemonic discourses of violence against women

It is my purpose in this chapter, therefore, to give an overview of feminist modernist/structuralist theories of violence against women, and to critically analyze the theoretical assumptions that follow from their pre-social ontology of sexual difference. First, these theories presuppose that there are fundamental biological (sex) differences between women and men, which in turn determine the social (gender) differences between them. As a result, they hold 'violence against women' to be a stable category of analysis, regardless of the specific social, cultural, political and historical contexts in which it takes place (Ramazanoglu, 1989). Hence, feminist modernist/structuralist theories in general, and radical feminist theories in particular, regard *all* women to be equally vulnerable to violence in that they *are* women, even though feminist social constructionist theories have been preoccupied with the question of women's race and class difference in their experiences of violence. Their conceptualization of 'difference' remains, however, undertheorized (Ashenden, 1997). The unitary subject 'Woman' (Riley, 1988) is always at the center of their analyses.

Moreover, in holding 'sex' as gender's 'natural' basis, feminist modernist/structuralist theories of violence against women mirror nature/culture and mind/body dualisms that ultimately take the body as an immutable, ahistorical object. Nevertheless, a different understanding of the body as pliable to power (Grosz, 1994) and as open to the discursive and material effects of institutions (Braidotti, 1991: 77), present the possibility of conceiving violence as em-bodied. In other words, if bodies are viewed within their particular historical and cultural contexts as "not only inscribed, marked, engraved by social pressures external to them but [as] the products, the direct effects, of the very social constitution of nature itself..." (Grosz, 1994: x), it can be argued that not all women similarly em-body institutional, material and discursive practices that marginalize them. As such, only some women's bodies are

rendered worthless and disposable in their specific social contexts, and are thus more vulnerable to experiencing violence.

Early Feminist Modernist/Structuralist Theories of Violence against Women and Radical Feminism

The powerful impact that the western Women's Movement of the 1960s had on feminist academic conceptualizations of and even on popular understandings of violence against women cannot be denied. Much of this is owed to radical feminist theories and activism, which strove to highlight the systemic prevalence and pervasiveness of violence against women in the 'public' and 'private' spheres. The theories that radical feminists developed posed a powerful challenge both to popular explanations of violence against women and to 'malestream' conceptualizations of violence in academic disciplines. This challenge was clearly consistent with radical feminism's general goal to fundamentally contest and change the existing gender blind frameworks to think about and make sense of women's lives.

Radical feminism can be understood as a "woman-centered interdependent theory and practice, which takes its starting-point from women's lived experience, making the personal political" (Rowland and Klein, 1990: 305). Radical feminists coined the terms 'sexism' and 'sexual politics' to conceptualize how the relations between men and women were structured according to a patriarchal order (Echols, 1989), "a system of structures, institutions, and ideology created by men in order to sustain and recreate male power and female subordination" (Rowland and Klein, 1990: 305). As such, radical feminist theorists focused on male power over women's bodies, sexuality and reproductive capacities as they questioned the imposition of compulsory heterosexuality and the family as institutions (e.g. Dworkin, 1974; Firestone, 1970).

Ultimately, the principal precept of radical feminist theory was that women's subordination is universal. It claimed that women are primarily oppressed *as women,* even though it acknowledged differences between them. Indeed, through concepts such as 'sisterhood' or 'sex class,' radical feminism effectively gave gender primacy over race or class. For example, Shulamith Firestone (1970) argued that women as a sex class have been oppressed by men throughout history, regardless of the mode of social organization, given their biological ability to reproduce. In other words, sex class is the outcome of the biological distinction between females and males which is, nevertheless, exacerbated by the patriarchal character of the organization of culture in general. On her part, Andrea Dworkin (1974) justified her use of gender as the central category of analysis in arguing that

> ...[t]he nature of women's oppression is unique: *women are oppressed as women, regardless of class or race, some women have access to significant wealth, but that wealth does not signify* power; women are to be found everywhere, but own or control no appreciable territory; women live with those who oppress them, sleep with them, have their children – we are tangled hopelessly it seems, in the gut of the machinery and war of a life which is ruinous to us. And perhaps most importantly, most women have little sense of dignity or self-respect or strength, since those qualities are directly related to a sense of manhood (p. 23; emphasis added).

Accordingly, Firestone and Dworkin, among other radical feminist theorists (e.g. Daly, 1978), called for a complete reorganization of culture and of society in which sex and gender would not be attributed the cultural and structural significance they had been granted throughout patriarchal history.

Though these and other early theories were more concerned with male institutional and ideological dominance over women than with violence as such (Edwards, 1987), it can be argued that they clearly set the stage for the development of theories that dealt specifically with violence. For example, in her classic book

Sexual Politics, Kate Millett[3] (1970) focused on women's (psychological) internalization of patriarchal ideologies and values through socialization, which turned them into men's 'willing' slaves. However, she remarked that the threat of force was always present as a means of social control over women:

> We are not accustomed to associate patriarchy with force. So perfect is its system of socialization, so complete the general assent to its values, so long and so universally has it prevailed in human society, that it scarcely seems to require violent implementation. Customarily, we view its brutalities in the past as exotic of 'primitive' custom. Those of the present are regarded as the product of individual deviance, confined to pathological or exceptional behaviour, and without general import. And yet, just as under other total ideologies... control in patriarchal society would be imperfect, even inoperable, unless it had the rule of force to rely upon, both in emergencies and as an ever-present instrument of intimidation (Millett, 1970: 43).

It was in this context then that radical feminism made violence in women's lives a political issue.

Radical feminist theories of violence arose out of early feminist activists' legitimate anger, distress, concern and frustration, not only with the prevalence and seriousness of women's experiences with violence, but also with its disturbing political invisibility. Prior to the development of radical feminist writings on violence against women, rape (Brownmiller, 1975; Griffin, 1971; Medea and Thompson, 1979; Russell, 1975, 1983, 1984), wife battery (Dobash and Dobash, 1979), wife sexual assault (Russell, 1982), sexual harassment (MacKinnon, 1979), prostitution and pornography (Dworkin, 1974, 1989 [1981]; Kittay, 1984; Russell, 1980) were not perceived as political issues. What counted as violence against women was very narrowly understood as the physical and sexual aggression of male strangers against

[3] Though I refer to Millett (1970) under the section devoted to radical feminism, it must be mentioned that she expressly rejected all forms of biological reductionist arguments.

women, whereby women were often accused of provoking the attack (Medea and Thompson, 1979).[4]

This sexist conceptualization of violence against women was present even in early sociological analyses of such violence, despite the fact that (male) sociologists had given prominence to social factors as opposed to individual psychopathology (Edwards, 1987). As Menachem Amir's (1971) explanation of rape illustrates: "...the victim is the one who is acting out, initiating the interaction between her and the offender, and by her behaviour she generates the potentiality for criminal behaviour of the offender or triggers this potentiality, if it existed before him" (p. 259).

Rape was thus clearly *the* feminist issue of the 1970s, as it

> [...] symbolized women's unique vulnerability to attack from men at any time and an attack involving a fundamental violation of their physical and sexual being. Unlike other issues at the time, such as prostitution or abortion, *rape had the advantage of uniting all women, whatever their status, values or beliefs* (Edwards, 1987: 18; emphasis added).

In her article *Rape: the All-American Crime*, Susan Griffin (1971) was the first to analyze rape as part of the patriarchal system of male domination over women. Yet it is Susan Brownmiller's (1975) *Against Our Will* that is considered representative of radical feminist theories of rape (Ramazanoglu, 1989). Brownmiller (1975) also theorized rape in relation to patriarchy. She argued that both the physical act of rape and the threat or fear of rape to which all women are subjected are one of patriarchy's main means of socially controlling women: "rape is nothing more or less than a conscious process of intimidation by which *all men* keep *all women* in a state of fear" (ibid: 5; emphasis in original). As such, Brownmiller identified rape as a physical

[4] This is hardly surprising, given that up until the beginning of the 20th century any instance of violence against a woman was not considered an attack on the woman herself, but on her father or husband. A woman was legally regarded as her father's or husband's property and not as an autonomous human being. In the case of rape, it was thus the father or husband who had to seek damages (Dubinsky, 1993). Even then, women were well aware that they would be judged by a moral double standard that would most likely construct them as 'designing' or 'fallen' women, instead of victims of sexual assault (ibid). The fact that a woman could be physically and sexually abused by her father or husband was not even deemed possible, since a man was not considered capable of damaging his own property (ibid).

manifestation of men's power over women, which is possible given biological anatomical differences: "man's structural capacity to rape and woman's corresponding structural vulnerability [to be raped]" (ibid: 4). But she further considered it a socially condoned expression of manhood, legitimized in and through the sexist biases that have existed in rape laws throughout history and in cultural practices, such as prostitution and pornography, that guarantee male privileged access to women's bodies. Rape could thus be viewed "as an indication of the property concept of women" (ibid: 319).

The theories that followed developed in more detail the issues raised by Griffin and Brownmiller, namely

> ...the close interconnection between sexuality, aggression and violence as the primary component of masculinity in many societies; a difference in degree only, not quality, between rape and 'normal' heterosexual intercourse; the contradiction between men as predators on and guardians or protectors of women; the paradox that femininity, socially constructed as the complement of masculinity, not only undermines women's capacity for sexual (and social) self-determination but actually increases their physical and psychological vulnerability to male attack; the perception of rape as more a political than sexual act, one which represents the collective domination of men over women and thus is an act akin to terrorism; and the failure of the legal and judicial systems to extend to women the support, protection and redress their injuries deserve (Edwards, 1987: 19).

For example, in her pioneer study on rape, Diana E.H. Russell (1975: 260) concluded that contrary to the general perception of rape as a deviant act, it could actually be regarded as an act that exemplifies men's desire to over-conform to and act out those characteristics considered masculine in western and other societies: aggression, force, power, strength, toughness, dominance, and competitiveness. These features constituted the 'masculinity mystique,' since they "demonstrate masculinity to those who subscribe to common cultural notions of masculinity" (Russell, 1984: 118). Russell (1975) used this concept to unveil the close relation between sex and aggression and how men's rationale of rape is caught up in a simple yet dangerous

tautology: "being aggressive is masculine; being sexually aggressive is masculine; rape is sexually aggressive behaviour; therefore, rape is masculine behaviour" (p. 261).

Russell (1980, 1984) further explored the relationship between rape and pornography. In her analysis of the Commission on Obscenity and Pornography, Russell (1980) put forth two arguments. First, that based on women's experiences of violence after their partners viewed pornographic material, a positive correlation between pornography and violence could be established. Second, that male researchers' analyses of the relationship between pornography and violence have ignored or undermined this correlation because they have held an implicitly sexist perspective. Russell consequently highlighted how male researchers continuously minimize the harmful effects of pornography depicting violent sexual activity, such as rape, in insisting that women (either as viewers or as the victims in these rape stories) can achieve orgasm. Russell critiqued Malamuth, Feshbach and Jaffe (1977) in particular for interpreting such instances as "benign rape" (in Russell, 1980: 234). For Russell, the negative aspects of this and similar interpretations cannot be ignored. Ultimately, the interpretation of "the effect of the orgasm at the end of the story is likely to free the rapist (or the person identifying with him) from guilt, to show how powerful he is and how animal-like women are underneath their 'pure facades'" (ibid: 235).

In her later work, Russell (1984) related the depiction of rape as pleasurable in magazines such as *Playboy*, *Penthouse* and *Hustler* to the 'virility mystique': male children's socialization into learning to "separate sexual desire from caring, respecting, liking or loving. One of the consequences of this training is that many men regard women as sexual objects, rather than as full human beings" (p. 119). Thus, the

increase of pornographic material that encourages rape in the mass media constituted not only the perpetuation of the 'virility mystique,' but a backlash against women's liberation.

Also writing on pornography, Dworkin (1974) argued that women's sexual objectification and dehumanization through pornography was the ultimate outcome of the violence inherent in heterosexuality and heterosexual sex. In her classic book *Pornography: Men Possessing Women* (1989 [1981]), she further claimed that pornography, as a system of male sexual domination, signifies male imperial power over women's colonized bodies (p. 223). In this destructive and misogynist system, the depiction of women as whores results in women being "used as whores are used, valued as whores are valued" in their real lives (ibid: 224). For Dworkin, pornography represents

> [...] the orchestrated destruction of women's bodies and souls; rape, battery, incest, and prostitution animate it; dehumanization and sadism characterize it; it is war on women, serial assaults on dignity, identity, and human worth; it is tyranny. Each woman who has survived knows from experience of her own life that pornography is captivity –the woman trapped in the picture and the other woman trapped wherever he's got her (ibid: xxvii).

Likewise, Eva Kittay (1984) saw pornography as hate literature, in that its representations of sexualized and eroticized violence serve the purpose of contributing to and reflecting patriarchal power relations between women and men. She claimed that "the eroticization of the relation of power" (ibid: 172), or rather, "the eroticism of domination" (ibid), successfully masks the pervasiveness of violence in women's lives as well as the degree to which the patriarchal (sexist) imaginary has colonized both women's and men's psyches. Ultimately, for Kittay, men's desire to consume such sexualized violence as something pleasurable obscures the relation between pornography and misogyny.

In *Gyn/Ecology*, Mary Daly (1978) conceptualized male violence in the form of the "sado-ritual syndrome" (p. 131-33) as one of the key factors of male power. Consistent with Brownmiller's ontological presuppositions, Daly's arguments hold that women and men are fundamentally different, and that male sexual aggressiveness and its predisposition to violence structure the relationship between the sexes. Moreover, Anne Edwards (1987) points out that Daly uses similar language to both Brownmiller and Griffin to describe male power: "[a]ll three of them use terms like 'terrorism' to characterise the social and psychological effects of male violence on women and liken the battle of the sexes to war generally" (p. 21).

Andra Medea and Kathleen Thompson (1979) defined rape as "a crime against women, the deprivation of sexual self-determination, all the hatred, contempt, and oppression of women in this society concentrated in one act" (p. 11). Following Brownmiller, they too focused on women's fear of rape as a mechanism of social control. Yet particularly innovative was their argument that women experience 'little rapes' on a daily basis in the form of "verbal suggestions that always carry the threat of the action" (ibid: 3). They thus linked sexual harassment to these 'little rapes' and posited that they were representative of the institutionalization of violence against women, as well as an informal means of controlling them.

R. Emerson Dobash and Russell Dobash (1979) demonstrated that wife beating is a widespread form of violence against women and that, given its 'private' character, it often goes unchallenged. Indeed, the structure of the patriarchal nuclear family effectively facilitates the institutionalization of men's power over women and children. As a result, it legitimates the state's lack of concern for this type of violence and the belief that only what happens outside the home is of political relevance.

Catharine MacKinnon (1979) dealt extensively with sexual harassment and power inequalities between women and men in the workplace. Sexual harassment reinforces and perpetuates women's subordination "by using her employment position to coerce her sexually, while using her sexual position to coerce her economically" (ibid: 7). She therefore stressed the need to legally recognize sexual harassment as sex discrimination in employment in order to "support and legitimize women's economic equality and sexual self-determination" (ibid).

Ultimately, radical feminist theorists worked relentlessly to dispel the myths surrounding violence against women. They showed that rape was not an isolated or deviant act, that women did not enjoy being raped or sexually harassed and certainly did not ask for it. Furthermore, they claimed that women should not be accused of provoking rape, and they pointed out that women were usually raped by somebody they knew, as opposed to a stranger in a dark alley. Moreover, in highlighting that women are abused within 'the family' by husbands and male relatives, radical feminists displaced the notion that violence only took place in the so-called 'public' sphere. Overall, these theories represented a revolutionary framework to make sense of women's experiences of violence.

Recent Feminist Modernist/Structuralist Theories of Violence against Women

The vast body of theories of violence against women of early radical feminism clearly influenced more recent and even current modernist/structuralist feminist writings on violence. Prominent writers of the 1970s, like MacKinnon, Dworkin, Dobash and Dobash, Radford and Russell, continue to be important in contemporary feminist theorizing on violence. Some have moved away from their original radical feminist framework (e.g. Dobash and Dobash, 1998), while for others, these theoretical assumptions persist in their arguments (e.g. Caputi and Russell, 1992;

Dworkin and MacKinnon, 1997; Radford, 1992; Russell 1992a, 1992b, 1992c, 2002a, 2002b). But modernist/structural theories also developed out of early feminist Marxist and socialist analyses of women's oppression and of the ideological legitimation and reproduction of gender and patriarchy as part of the capitalist superstructure (Barrett, 1980; Hartmann, 1981; Mitchell, 1971; Rowbotham, 1973).

A central characteristics of recent modernist/structuralist theorists is that they take a social constructionist approach to violence, gender and sexuality. Social constructionism is a result of feminist Marxist and socialist analyses, but also an attempt in part to address the limitations of early radical feminist theories (Edwards, 1987: 26). Violence is thus "seen as a socially-produced and often socially-legitimated cultural phenomenon, rather than the 'natural' expression of biological drives or an innate male characteristic" (ibid). Gender and sexuality, as social constructs, are considered the outcome of capitalist and patriarchal ideologies of compulsory heterosexuality (Rich, 1980), [heterosexual] romantic love (Dworkin, 1974, 1976, 1987), motherhood (Rich, 1986), marriage and the family (Campbell, 1980; Smart, 1984; Stanko, 1985) and the division between 'public' and 'private' spheres legitimized by the law and the state (MacKinnon, 1979 , 1989). More important, however, is that these theories go beyond considering physical and sexual experiences of violence as the ultimate elements of what constitutes violence against women. In other words, the concept of 'violence against women' itself becomes subject to further elaboration. The question that these modernist/structuralist theorists begin to raise is what counts as 'violence against women'?

Recent theories typically define 'violence against women' in terms of physical, sexual and psychological violence. Even the *United Nations Declaration on Violence Against Women* adopts this categorization in defining such violence "as any act of

gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life" (in Kirk and Okazawa-Rey, 2004: 216). Physical violence consists of any harmful physical act like pushing, shoving grabbing, wrestling or pinning down, throwing an object at someone, scratching, biting, slapping, punching, hitting with an object, kicking, strangling and using a weapon such as a knife or gun (Jukes, 1993). Sexual violence includes non-consenting sexual relations, unwanted sexual touching, or forcing an individual to engage in degrading sexual activity (ibid). Lastly, psychological violence takes into account intimidating, terrorizing, humiliating, insulting, isolating the person from family and/or friends, yelling and/or screaming at an individual in order to induce fear, destroying the person's property or controlling the person's movements (ibid).

This categorization arose precisely out of feminists' concern with the fact that mainstream definitions of violence against women still reduce it to or attempt to measure it in terms of exclusively physical and sexual assaults. The definition of violence against women in terms of sexual and physical assaults in the criminal Code of Canada exemplifies this:

> Physical assaults range from the threat of imminent attack to attack with a weapon and attack with serious injury. Sexual assault refers to nonconsensual sexual activity ranging from unwanted sexual touching, kissing, and sexual intercourse to sexual violence resulting in wounding and endangering the life of the victim (Boricht, 1997: 222).

As feminists point out, such narrow conceptualizations not only ignore the psychological dimension of violence, but effectively overlook the relationship between violence and the institutionalization of women's inequality. Not surprisingly,

this and similar definitions are unable to capture the full scope of the different experiences of violence that women face in their everyday lives.

Indeed, according to Gwyn Kirk and Margo Okazawa-Rey (2004), mainstream definitions of violence obscure the relationship between power and violence, since they commonly understand it as a physical act that can be quantified. The problematic result is that they do not take into account the categories of gender, class, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, or physical and mental 'disabilities' and how they are related to violence. In contrast to these narrow conceptualizations, Kirk and Okazawa-Rey borrow Bulhan's (1985) definition of violence as

> …any relation, process, or condition by which an individual or a group violates the physical, social and/or psychological integrity of another person or group. From this perspective, violence inhibits human growth, negates inherent potential, limits productive living, and causes death (Bulhan, 1985, quoted in Kirk and Okazawa-Rey, 2004: 226)

For Kirk and Okazawa-Rey (2004), this definition allows them to reconsider what constitutes 'violence against women.' Under this more sophisticated framework, they point out how women's greater poverty relative to men's, their lesser or limited access to basic social services, their systematic objectification and commodification, and the restriction of their reproductive rights can and should also count as violence against women (ibid: 226).

Other recent modernist/structuralist feminist writings focus on the importance of the historical, social, cultural and political context in the understanding of violence against women (Madriz, 1997; Pickup, 2001). As such, they incorporate race/ethnicity and class as axes of differentiation in women's experiences of violence. For example, Esther Madriz (1997) argues that women experience violence differently according to the ways in which their race/ethnicity and class shape their experience of fear of violence. The significance of Madriz's work lays not only in her addressing the

critiques put forth by women of colour or of lower socio-economic backgrounds regarding their distinct experiences of violence, but that this type of analysis sheds light on the social construction of the victim. According to Madriz, common conceptualizations of violence against women often undermine or ignore the experiences of non-white or sexually assertive women as victims (ibid: 32).

As an analysis of these theories show, current modernist/structuralist feminists have incorporated the intersection of gender, race/ethnicity and class into their analysis and have emphasized the importance of specifying the context in which violence takes place. Their questioning of what constitutes 'violence against women' brings them closer to postmodern/poststructuralist theories. Nevertheless, they continue to rely on some of radical feminism's main principles, namely that violence against women is categorically different than any other type of violence, that women in general are vulnerable to violence in that they are women (i.e. biological females), and that class and race/ethnicity only shape (as opposed to produce) the different experiences of violence of some women.

Current Radical Feminist Theories of Femicide

Russell (1992a, 1992b, 1992c, 2002a, 2002b) is the leading theorist on femicide, and she presently defines it as "the killing of females by males *because* they are female" and, therefore, as an "expression of male dominance and sexism" (2002a: 3; emphasis on original). True to her early radical feminist background, Russell further considers femicide as a "lethal hate crime, [since it] is on the extreme end of a continuum of the sexist terrorization of women and girls" (ibid: 4). Her main argument is that the use of the concept of femicide locates the murders of women or girls by men in the arena of sexual politics, and thus serves the purpose of demystifying the extreme patriarchal, sexist and misogynistic character of these

crimes. According to Russell (2002a), specifying that femicide is "the killing of females by males *because* they are female" is a necessary step to address the pathologization of the murderers' actions, as well as the "gender-erasing" language that is used in both the legal descriptions and media representations of such murders (p. 6). Otherwise, what is at stake is the depolitization and trivialization of these murders (ibid).

In their co-edited anthology, Diana Russell and Jill Radford (1992) are the first to challenge the idea that the misogynous killings of women are simple murders or be referred to as homicides.[5] Radford (1992) argues that the term femicide better captures misogynous killings, since they are ultimately a form of sexual violence:

> ...the term *sexual violence* focuses on the man's desire for power, dominance, and control [and] enables sexual aggression by men to be seen in the context of the overall oppression of women in a patriarchal society. It also allows feminist analysis to distance itself from legal discourse that is based on discrete and narrow definitions of the sexual and the violent, definitions that distort and deny women's experience (p. 3).

Moreover, in placing femicide along a continuum of sexual violence, Radford relates it to the pervasiveness and institutionalization of violence against women in the forms of rape, sexual harassment, pornography, and women's physical abuse.

Russell, writing with Jane Caputi (1992), further argues that femicide is not an inexplicable phenomenon, rather it is

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[5] Prior to these writings, Daly's term gynocide (1973) was used. Daly defines gynocide as "the fundamental intent of global patriarchy: planned, institutionalized spiritual and bodily destruction of women; the use of deliberate systematic measures (such as bodily or mental injury, unlivable conditions, prevention of births), which are calculated to bring about the destruction of women as a political and cultural force, the eradication of Female/Biological religion and language, and ultimately the extermination of the Race of Women and all Elemental being" (1973: 77). Dworkin (1976: 16, 19) further defined it as "the systematic crippling, raping, and/or killing of women by men... the relentless violence perpetrated by the gender class men on the gender class women" and as "the ongoing reality of life lived by women under patriarchy." The conceptual parallels between gynocide and femicide are clearly visible. However, Russell (2002b) not only differentiates between them but argues that femicide and gynocide are complementary rather than competitive. While gynocide and genocide in general include femicidal acts, "femicide is not limited to intentional efforts to exterminate females as a gender" (ibid: 23)

> ...the most extreme form of sexist terrorism, motivated by hatred, contempt, pleasure, or a sense of ownership of women. Femicide includes mutilation, rape murder, battery that escalates into murder, the immolation of witches in Western Europe and of brides and widows in India, and "crimes of honor" [sic.] in some Latin and Middle Eastern countries, where women believed to have lost their virginity are killed by their male relatives. Calling misogynist killings femicide removes the obscuring veil of nongendered terms such as homicide and murder (p. 15).

For Russell and Caputi, North American culture's glorification of violence against women in popular culture and in the media – what they alternatively name "the sex-and-violence culture" of the late 20th century (ibid: 18) – legitimates and normalizes such violence. As Deborah Cameron (1992) illustrates, the media's celebration of Jack the Ripper to the degree of regarding him as cultural hero is a testament to this:

> ...the sadistic sexual murder of women by men did not disappear with the cobble stones and gas lamps. On the contrary, the attitudes and structures of power which give rise to sexual murder are with us to this day, while the Ripper himself provides a powerful inspiration for appalling acts of violence by men here and now (p. 187).

Sandra McNeill's (1992) analysis of the newspaper reports on the murders of women by their husbands in the British media supports Cameron's arguments. The media has consistently played down the seriousness of the murders. Instead, it has opted to depict them as accidental tragedies. Likewise, Beverly Labelle's (1992) work on snuff films demonstrates that violence against women as a source of 'entertainment' is still commonplace, in spite of feminist organizing against it.

Ultimately, *all* women can be potential victims of femicide, for woman-killing is not only legitimized, but its seriousness and magnitude have been historically undermined. Marianne Hester (1992), for example, posits that femicide is not a new development in violence against women. On the contrary, the mass killings of women accused of witchcraft during the 16th and 17th centuries can be interpreted not only as a mechanism to socially control women, but as femicidal violence: "the witch-craze was violence against women within a context of male-dominant social relations, rather

than violence by individual men against women" (ibid: 35). For Beatrix Campbell (1992), Rikki Gregory (1992) and Margo Wilson and Martin Daly (1992), the killing of women by their husbands in North America is nothing else but the perpetuation of this historical violence against women, the state's lack of concern for the systemic nature of this violence, and men's sense of ownership of women and their lives.

In a different context, Dorothy Stein (1992) calls for the recognition of suttee, "the practice of burning or burying women alive with their deceased husband" in India as femicide (p. 65). Stein claims that this practice represented patriarchal politics that only placed value on women in their role as wives, that is, as long as they could reproduce; once their husband died, widows could only be valued if they were sacrificed. Marielouise Janssen-Jurreit (1992) further argues that female infanticide throughout history around the world be interpreted as female genocide and, thus, as "an expression of male power, arbitrariness, chance disposition, and jealousy" as opposed to "only a measure of population policy" (p. 68). For Rajendra Bajpai (1992), Govind Kelkar (1992) and S.H. Venkatramani (1992), however, these are not things of the past. They report on how suttee and female infanticide in India continue to take place, given that

> ...in most parts of the country, a woman is still considered a burdensome appendage. She is an economic drain. She must be exploited or dispensed with as a non-person. Because she crushes her family with marriage and dowry expenses she must be raised – from childhood – in financial and physical neglect. Her birth... is greeted with silence, even sorrow. A boy arrives to the sound of joyous conch shells. Discrimination begins at birth (Vekatramani, 1992: 125).

What is significant about this co-edited anthology by Russell and Radford's (1992) and much of the subsequent literature on femicide is that, though it still takes women as a sex class (Radford, 1992: 6), it tries to incorporate categories of racism, class and homophobia into its analysis in an effort to acknowledge that not all

women's experiences of femicide are the same. Russell (1992a, 1992b, 1992c), for example, writes on African-American and Asian women's experiences of racism and sexual violence. Moreover, Radford (1992) recognizes that:

> ...white feminists had to be told how racism compounds and shapes black women's experiences of sexual violence – how, for example, racism and misogyny are often inseparable dimensions of the violence. [...] Analyses that fail to acknowledge differences in women's experiences, cultures, and histories replicate the white- and male-dominated society's failure to acknowledge broader categories of difference – what it means, for instance, to be black, lesbian, or poor. Any strategy for change that does not recognize these power relations is likely to benefit only certain women at the expense of others (p. 8).

Radford thus distinguishes between different forms of femicide, such as "racist femicide (when black women are killed by white men); homophobic femicide, or lesbicide (when lesbians are killed by heterosexual men); marital femicide (when women are killed by their husbands); femicide committed outside the home by a stranger; serial femicide; and mass femicide" (ibid: 7).

In her recent work, Russell (2002b: 18) makes reference to these types of femicide and even adds "prostituted woman femicide," "drug-related femicide," and "sexual femicide" to the list. Moreover, she makes her conceptualization of femicide increasingly specific and complex, as she makes a distinction between four categories of what she terms "genderized murders": male-on-male killing, male-on-female killing, female-on-female killing, and female-on-male killing (ibid: 13). Femicide is only characteristic of the second category, even though she agrees that the murder of a female by a male can be nonfemicidal.[6] Russell then makes the controversial argument that even though females *can* kill other females, acting either as agents of patriarchy or of male perpetrators, or simply on their own behalf, their actions should be classified as female-on-female murder and *not* as femicide (ibid: 14). Nevertheless, she insists that:

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[6] For example, Russell considers the shooting of a female bypasser as nonfemicidal.

> ...[her] definition extends the term femicide beyond misogynistic killings to apply to *all forms of sexist killing*. Misogynistic murders are limited to those motivated by the hatred of females, whereas sexist murders include killings by males motivated by a sense of entitlement to and/or superiority over females, by pleasure or sadistic desires toward them, and/or by an assumption of ownership of women (Russell, 2002: 14; emphasis mine).

It should be mentioned that Russell's definition and general theoretical framework of femicide have been widely adopted, not just within North American feminism, but worldwide (e.g. Mouzos, 2002; Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa, 2006; Ortiz-Ortega *et.al.*, 2004; Skilbeck, 2002). It is clear, therefore, that feminists have recognized the political power and usefulness of the concept. Nevertheless, it is of great importance that the problematic assumptions of this conceptualization of femicide be discussed and acknowledged.

On the Ontology of Sexual Difference: A Critique of Radical Feminist and Feminist Social Constructionist Thought on Violence against Women

As shown throughout this chapter, the value of radical feminist and feminist social constructionist theories of violence against women to feminist thought on violence is paramount. The examples presented in this overview are but a few of many of the committed efforts to understand and end violence against women, as well as to challenge hegemonic discourses of such violence.

I identify hegemonic discourses of violence as those discourses that perpetuate and reproduce the notion that violence against women is 'biologically natural' (socio-biological accounts) or that focus on the psychopathology of the murderers (psychological explanations). Unfortunately, there is a "cultural readiness to locate causes for human events [such as violence] in biology and a cultural receptivity for the idea that gender roles are the product of orderly laws" (Travis, 2003: 9). As part of this cultural phenomenon, "socio-biology provides one of the most pervasive, popular and enduring discourses on the relationship between gender and all forms of violence"

(Hird, 2002: 13). Randy Thornhill and Craig Palmer's (2000) book *A Natural History of Rape* is a good example of the powerful appeal to explain sexual aggression in terms of genes, hormones, evolution and men's allegedly 'naturally' uncontrollable drive for sex.

Psychological explanations of violence against women often reinforce the belief that such violence should be viewed not as a social problem, but as the outcome of psychopathology or 'naturally' masculine or feminine psychological attributes. Indeed, according to Myra J. Hird (2002), psychological explanations often draw on "a notion of pathology to theorize violent men as mentally ill" (p. 17). Long ago, Russell (1975) illustrated that mental illness is used by both men and professionals as the most common explanation as to why men rape women. Moreover, psychological theories tend to assume that aggression is an intrinsically male characteristic whilst passivity is 'naturally feminine.' In fact, these theories often rely on biological essentialism or "on *a priori* factors (such as gender, social class, internal defense systems, the presence of mental illness and personality) considered to correlate with, or predict, heterosexual interpersonal violence" (Hird, 2002: 16) and violence against women in general (Tavris, 1992). Consequently, these discourses negate both societal responsibility for violence against women and ignore that such violence is an incredibly complex social problem.

Despite the revolutionary contributions of both radical feminist and feminist social constructionist theories of violence against women in challenging these discourses, it is necessary to critically analyze the problematic ontological assumptions that they make. I argue that feminist modernist/structuralist theories subscribe to a pre-social ontology of sexual difference and thus hold a stable notion of 'violence against women' as a category of analysis. As a result, they implicitly

presuppose *a priori* differences between women and men. At their worst, early radical feminism (e.g. Brownmiller, 1975; Daly, 1978) and radical feminist theories of femicide (Russell, 2002a, 2002b), explicitly argue that women and men are socially and biologically fundamentally different.

A perfect example is the problematic conceptualization of violence against women as an essential component of a universal patriarchal order. The notion of patriarchy as universal and as the most important source of male power over women (Brownmiller, 1975; Caputi and Russell, 1992; Daly, 1978; Griffin, 1971; Radford, 1992; Russell, 1975, 1984, 1992a, 1992b, 1992c, 2002a, 2002b) is not only controversial because it is ahistorical and ethnocentric, but because it explicitly or implicitly relies on biological reductionism. As Caroline Ramazanoglu (1989) points out, even when patriarchy is treated

> ...as socially constructed but still as universal, it is difficult to avoid falling into the trap of biological determinism. If, for example, feminists are dealing with immediate practical issues, such as that of male violence towards women, they may assert that patriarchy is a cause but without being able to explain variation in male violence. Patriarchy does not just label men's power over women, it also creates a need for explanations of why men have this power and how they maintain it. *Where patriarchy is taken to be a universal characteristic of the relations between men and women, then, since all that women have in common is their biological sex, it is hard to avoid the assumption that patriarchy must be rooted in an essential masculine nature* (p. 35; emphasis added).

Furthermore, early radical feminism in general, and its theories of violence against women in particular, are based on a stable and universal category of Woman (Riley, 1988). In choosing to give gender primacy over race or class as a category of analysis, radical feminists assumed that all women share common interests vis-à-vis men, in addition to their experiences of oppression (Mohanty, 2003). Consequently, they ignored that some women have power over other women (and men) according to the social and historical context in which they live. Only few feminists recognized that

social classes existed alongside sex classes (e.g. Delphy, 1977), yet radical feminists did not take this insight as far as to argue that women do not constitute a sex-class in itself (Ramazanoglu, 1989). In addition, these theories can be considered ethnocentric because they were largely based on middle-class, white western women's experiences, or on ethnocentric interpretations of violence against women in other cultures (ibid).

It could be argued, however, that feminist social constructionist theories do break away from extreme forms of biological reductionism and that they have begun to leave behind the assumption that all women experience violence in the same way (e.g. Madriz, 1997; Pickup, 2001). Their assertion that violence is context specific and their questioning of what constitutes 'violence against women' brings them, in fact, closer to postmodern/poststructural theories. Yet, I consider them modernist/structuralist theories because they do not go as far as to question why certain women's experiences and not others count as violence. For example, none of these theories mention women's violence towards other women, let alone violence in lesbian relationships (Ristock, 2002). 'Violence against women' in this context continues to be solely conceptualized as violence perpetrated by men against women.

Another criticism is that, in spite of their more sophisticated analysis of the intersection of gender, race and class in the shaping of women's experiences of violence, recent feminist modernist/structuralist theories also rely on a stable notion of a biological sexed female body. In other words, these recent theories still assume that what can relate these different women's experiences of violence is that they are women, that is, biological females.

On their part, current radical feminist theories of femicide seem to encapsulate in an exaggerated manner the problems and contradictions just mentioned. Russell's (2002a) definition of femicide as "the killing of women by men *because* they are

female" (p. 3), as well as her complicated typologies of "genderized murders" (2002b: 17) and femicides, not only hold a stable notion of the 'sexed body' but put forth essentialist precepts of what it means to be female or male. Indeed, for Russell (2002a, 2002b), being female seems to involve a 'natural' inability to be sexist or to kill another woman out of sexist beliefs, as evidenced by her claim that female-on-female killing cannot ever be considered femicide. This claim is highly controversial in at least four ways: First, sexism is an ideology that legitimates male supremacy and male dominance over women in a specific social, cultural, historical and political context. As such, no human being can be said to have a 'natural ability' or 'inability' to be sexist. Second, denying women's ability to be sexist in a social and cultural context marked by sexism disregards much feminist work on women's internalization of male supremacist values and how this makes them in part complicit in their own oppression (Millett, 1970; Rowbotham, 1973). If women were naturally incapable of being sexist we would not see mothers-in-law setting their daughters-in-law on fire in India, we would not have to worry about female infanticide in China, and we would not have to be concerned about mothers saying that 'boys will be boys.' Third, women's allegedly 'natural inability' to be sexist necessarily implies that men are 'naturally' sexist. Ultimately, this creates a dichotomy that constructs women as natural victims and men as natural aggressors. In turn, these dichotomies invariably reinforce hegemonic discourses of violence against women that see such violence not only as 'natural' but as unavoidable. Women are and will forever be victims/victimized. Last, it follows from the previous point that this dichotomous configuration of sex and gender and the *a priori* association of men with violence disregard women's ability to behave violently and, as such, undermine women's agency (Hird, 2002).

Moreover, Russell's (2002a) definition of femicide implies that all women are equally vulnerable to experiencing femicide, and thus that 'violence against women' is a stable category of analysis. This assumption reveals, in addition, that she still holds the notion of the unitary subject 'Woman' at the center of her framework. In other words, she posits "an authentic identity of and for women ...based on an idea of what women really are" (Ashenden, 1997: 49). The question of difference between women in her work is lacking analytical and theoretical depth. As the complicated typologies and categorization of femicide illustrate, Russell (2002a, 2002b) is unable to conceptualize race/ethnicity, class, sexual orientation and other differences as anything other than layers in a woman's (unitary) identity. She seems to be content in resolving the question of difference in women's experience of femicide by creating such vastly different types of femicide as racist femicide, sexual femicide, prostituted woman femicide, or drug-related femicide. But it is necessary to be critical of these terms: what *do* prostituted woman femicide or drug-related femicide mean? Whether this classification of femicide succeeds in effectively representing women's different experiences of femicide or conveying the need for understanding them as femicide is questionable. In the end, the only thing that these different types of femicide seem to have in common is the notion that women (i.e. biological females) were killed, and this certainly does not allow for a better understanding of why femicide occurs, why some of them could indeed be understood as racist or why women's experiences of femicide are different in the first place.

Femicide as Em-bodied Violence?

'Violence against women' is not a stable category of analysis; neither are 'women' or 'men' for that matter. Women, men, and their bodies are the products of their historical and cultural contexts. Bodies are, as Elizabeth Grosz (1994) put it, "the

mobile and changeable terms of cultural production" (p. x). As such, bodies are political fields, affected by material and discursive practices of institutions (Braidotti, 1991: 77) and bio-power, that is, power as a technology productive of the body as the subject (Foucault, 1995 [1977]). A more complex conceptualization of 'violence against women' calls, therefore, for the questioning not only of what is violence, but of how bodies are understood in relation to it. How are some women's bodies produced as violable and, hence, as disposable? What are the benefits of conceptualizing femicide as em-bodied violence?

The ontological commitment to the sex/gender binary of feminist modernist/structuralist theories of violence against women, as detailed above, obscures the fact that not all women are equally vulnerable to violence. These theories presume that all women are potential victims in that they are women and, consequently, that all men are potential aggressors. They never question what makes violence gendered or sexual in what they conceive as 'violence against women.' It is necessary, however, to look at the discursive construction of 'sex' as sexual difference (Hird, 2004) through the sex/gender binary to analyze how it shapes our understanding of gender and sexuality (i.e. of what is sexual) and of what constitutes 'violence against women.' Such violence "can only be fully understood within the context of relationships which are profoundly sexed but which are not often recognised as such" (Howe, 1998: 6). Conversely, if we take 'violence against women' as "sexed violence" (ibid), we can question "the implicit messages about masculinity, femininity and sexuality which are contained in the act itself, in its reporting and in the way in which the judicial system deals with it" (ibid). In other words, sexed violence raises awareness of the effects that discourses of gender have

on discourses of sex and sexuality and, as a result, in our conceptualization of the body and 'violence against women.'

I argue that femicide is a form of sexed violence precisely because it rests on the *social difference* that is drawn between women and men. Indeed, it is given the question of violence as sexed that I still find the concept of femicide, re-defined as those murders that em-body the institutionalized inferior status of particular women in their society, as well as cultural beliefs in these women's worthlessness and the disposability of their bodies, useful to analyze the murders and disappearances of marginalized women in Mexico and Canada. Yet re-defined as em-bodied violence, femicide further highlights the materiality of the body as the incarnation of marginality. Femicide encapsulates the specificity of the violence that these marginalized women, as sexed, gendered, classed and racialized subjects have experienced through technologies of power in their societies. Femicide unveils the power dynamics of discursive and material institutional practices that have been inscribed upon their bodies, and which rendered them disposable. Ultimately, their marginality materialized in their bodies through rape, torture, mutilation, and indifference.

In re-defining femicide as em-bodied violence, I thus aim to challenge its radical feminist definition as "the killing of women by men *because* they are female" (Russell, 2002a: 3; emphasis in original). Understood as em-bodied and as sexed violence, femicide cannot be seen as the outcome of men's 'natural' ability to be sexist. On the contrary, I find the re-defined concept useful because it makes reference to the distinctive discursive and material effects in the production of women's bodies. My purpose in offering this alternative definition of femicide is hence to provide a

framework that does not rely on essentialism or biological reductionism to explain this manifestation of violence against women.

In the next chapter, I make use of Foucault's (1995 [1977]) concept of bio-power in relation to feminist postcolonial theory to illustrate that the murders of Aboriginal women in Canada and women of low socio-economic resources in Ciudad Juárez are femicides. As such, the central question I explore is what are technologies of bio-power that produce these specific women's bodies as worthless, disposable and thus as violable? How can these women's experiences of violence be theorized as embodied?

Chapter Three
Death by Culture: On Bio-power and Colonized Bodies

In this chapter, I link Foucault's (1995 [1977]) concept of bio-power[1] to feminist postcolonial theory in order to provide a framework to understand why the bodies of women of low socio-economic resources in Mexico and Aboriginal women in Canada have been rendered worthless and disposable, and thus why their murders should be considered femicides. In the previous chapter, I re-defined femicide as those murders that em-body the institutionalized inferior status of particular women in their society,[2] as well as cultural beliefs in these women's worthlessness and the actual disposability of their bodies and their lives. As such, I argue that these femicides need to be understood as a form of "death by culture"[3] (Wright, 1999: 548), that is, as the materialization of the cultural expectation that these women will inevitably be killed because they represent socio-cultural waste and hence cultural value in decline, which needs to be restored. Therefore, I aim to examine the relationship between bio-power as the discursive and material effects of colonialism and its institutions and the production of these marginalized women's bodies as worthless, expendable and violable in and through Mexico's and Canada's histories. In so doing, I want to put forth an analogy between blood and power and discourses: I consider that power and discourses, like blood, are fluid and that, like blood, they congeal in the material

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[1] In choosing to utilize Foucault's concept of biopower to address how power affects the body, it is not my intention to ignore or deny the fact that it was feminists who first drew attention to the relationship between power and "the politics of the body" (Bordo, 1993: 185). However, I consider Foucault's reconceptualization of modern power useful in explaining how these particular women were produced as disposable. I address the problems that this conceptualization of power pose for feminist use and vice-versa, the problems that feminism poses for his conceptualization of power, especially in terms of 'resistance' (Diamond and Quinby, 1988; Bordo, 1993; Burfoot, 2003) at the end of this chapter and in this project's final chapter.

[2] As I argue throughout this chapter, the institutionalized inferior status of Aboriginal women in Canada and economically marginalized women in Ciudad Juárez in their respective societies is specific to Mexican and Canadian cultures, in that it is inextricably linked to the histories of the development of these cultures and societies.

[3] The concept of death by culture is Uma Narayan's characterization of the global discourses for explaining women's death in the Third World as somehow embedded in tradition, internally driven, and resulting in the distortion of 'traditional' cultural values (Wright, 1999: 458).

effects they produce; in the mutilated and tortured bodies of these colonized women, who were rendered disposable.

The concept of bio-power is central to my project, since it emphasizes the discursive and material effects of institutions as constitutive and productive of bodies and subjects (Foucault, 1995 [1977]). Power affects the body (ibid, 1989: 209). Through bio-power, I analyze what power relations are inscribed upon and channelled through these marginalized women's bodies. Yet this concept on its own would not suffice to explain how these women have been produced as disposable. Feminist postcolonial theory, however, does allow me to explore how the complex interplay of discourses of gender, race and class have produced colonized bodies as valueless and hence as more vulnerable to violence in and through Mexico's and Canada's respective histories. Ultimately, these histories of colonialism cannot be understood without looking at the ways in which gender, race and class dynamics were essential to establishing colonial social orders and imaginaries, which continue to influence discourses and the material organization of social life in both countries. I argue, therefore, that in order to better understand the numerous disappearances and the ruthless murders of marginalized women in Mexico and Canada, as well as how they are mediated in their societies, it is necessary to carefully analyze the effects of (neo-) colonial technologies of power on these women's bodies. I want to emphasize, nevertheless, that this chapter is not about an analysis of the details of these murders *per se*, or about a comparison between Mexico and Canada, but about power and how certain bodies are rendered disposable.

Bio-Power and Feminist Postcolonial Theory

For Foucault, power in general is diffuse and productive; what is relevant in his work "is not only who has power over whom, but how power has produced the specific and characteristic moments of discursive reality" (Cahill, 2000: 47).

> Power would be a fragile thing if its only function were to repress, if it worked only through the mode of censorship, exclusion, blockage and repression.... If, on the contrary, power is strong this is because, as we are beginning to realise, it produces effects at the level of desire – and also at the level of knowledge. Far from preventing knowledge, power produces it (Foucault, 1980: 59).

His concept of bio-power follows directly from this understanding of power and knowledge as positive and productive, and thus as constitutive. The concept of bio-power also makes visible how "power relations can get through the very depths of bodies, materially, without having been relayed by the representation of subjects. If power affects the body, it is not because it was first internalized in people's consciousness" (Foucault, 1989: 209). Hence, Foucault (1995 [1977]) argues that this is power exercised "from below," that is, it normalizes bodies through noncentralized, nonauthoritarian apparatuses and institutions that constitute "a microphysics of power" (p. 26). Power is thus channelled through our daily mediations of the body, as opposed to force exercised upon it "from above," like in the case of torture and corporeal punishment of pre 18th-century Europe (ibid).

This microphysics of power, or what Foucault alternatively calls technologies of power, works as networks that create truth effects in the production of discourse specific to a historical and cultural context. The body and the subject are such truth effects and, consequently, are inherently connected to knowledge and power. A salient point here is that these products, "our bodies, our selves – may be experienced positively even as they serve prevailing relations of dominance and subordination" (Boddy, 1998: 98; Bordo, 1993a). The body needs to be understood, therefore, as a

political field (Braidotti, 1991: 77), as "the inscribed surface of events" (Foucault, 1995 [1977]: 148), bearing the traces of culture, history and relations of power.

This understanding of the body is particularly relevant in thinking about women's bodies, violence and the material and discursive mechanisms of colonial institutions that have rendered some women more vulnerable to violence in Mexico and Canada. The mechanisms of power that have produced their bodies as violable and as expendable are not directly exercised upon them from above. A complex interplay of discourses that have legitimated and reproduced the institutionalization of these women's inferior status in their particular societies, as well as the conditions of urban marginality in which they live, constitute the diffuse microphysics of power of Mexican and Canadian (neo-)colonial social orders and imaginaries. As such, they are embedded in social relations, in histories and cultures, even though laws such as the *Indian Act* in Canada or economic treaties such as NAFTA in Mexico, which have clearly contributed to the institutionalization of these women's inferior status in their societies, are exercised "from above."

But as important as Foucault's concept of bio-power is to analyze how certain women's bodies have been rendered worthless and disposable, it must be first pointed out that he fails to recognize the *repressive* aspects of bio-power in focusing on its positive and productive dimensions. This is evident, for example, in his attempt to de-sexualize discursive practices and the notion of subjectivity (Braidotti, 1991: 90, 93). His lack of attention to the repressive effects of bio-power for women, especially in relation to sexuality, has had serious implications. One particularly controversial example is Foucault's claim that rape should not be punished as a sexually specific crime in France (Braidotti, 1991; Cahill, 2000; Plaza, 1981). Foucault argued that rape should, instead, be regarded as "a crime against 'humanity', that is to say, a power-

crime, and not as a specifically sexual one" (Braidotti, 1991: 87), since he believed that sexuality should not be repressed:

> One can always adhere to the theoretical discourse which consists of saying: in any case, sexuality cannot under any circumstances be the object of punishment... and when rape is punished, it is exclusively the physical violence that should be punished (Foucault quoted in Plaza, 1981: 27).

Monique Plaza argues (1981: 28), however, that in this claim the sexual specificity of the violence of rape is denied. As Foucault insists that rape is not sexual, he forgets that this type of violence *is* sexed.[4]

> Precisely, what is rape? Is it or is it not a 'sexual' practice? [...] It is very sexual in the sense that it is frequently a sexual activity, but above all in the sense that it opposes men and women: it is *social sexing* which underlies rape. If men rape women, it is precisely because they are socially women, or even more, because they are 'the sex,' that is to say, bodies which they have appropriated, by the exercise of a 'local tactic' of a nameless violence. Rape is sexual essentially because it rests on the very *social* difference between the sexes (Plaza, 1981: 28, 29; emphasis in original).

As a result, it is clear for Plaza that Foucault does not only fail to recognize the effect of power, knowledge and discourse specifically on women's bodies, but to analyze his own 'enunciative modality,' that is, his own position as an author of discourse (Plaza, 1981: 35). Rosi Braidotti concurs (1991) in claiming that Foucault's

> ...reflections on the 'human being' are far from being sexually neutral or unbiased... [T]hey establish an essentially masculine model: when Foucault speaks of the body, he is (almost always) speaking about the man's body. The masculine is thus kept to the level of the general, following centuries of patriarchal mental habits. This is how Foucault forgets, following tradition, the factor of sexual difference (p. 95).

As I argued in Chapter One, it is useful to analyze the femicides of marginalized women in Mexico and Canada as sexed violence to both highlight the

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[4] As I argued in the previous chapter, rape, as type of violence against women, needs to be understood in the context of sexed relationships between women and men within which it occurs. Taking rape as sexed violence, and not only as sexual or gendered violence, raises awareness of the assumptions made with regard to biological sex as the 'natural' basis of gender and thus about the sexed body (Howe, 1998: 6). The body is socially sexed through discourses of gender that define sex as sexual difference (Hird, 2004; Howe, 1998). In this context, it does not mean that rape is experienced as just sex (i.e. the sexual act) by men and as violence for women. Drawing on Holloway (1984), Hird (2002) has argued that in instances of heterosexual interpersonal violence, men have invested in hegemonic heterosexual masculinity as a subject position that has allowed them to rationalize and perform violence.

sexual specificity of the crime and to challenge the essentialist assumptions that accompany conceptualizations of 'violence against women' that are ontologically committed to the sex/gender binary. Yet it is within a feminist postcolonial framework that I am able to highlight that the violence that these women em-body is not only discursively sexed and gendered, but discursively classed and racialized as a result of (neo-)colonial technologies of power in their societies.

Feminist postcolonial theory "has engaged in a two-fold project: to racialise mainstream feminist theory and to insert feminist concerns into conceptualisations of colonialism and postcolonialism" (Lewis and Mills, 2003: 3). As such, it is built upon a feminist anti-racist politics that "was born out of recognition of the differences between women and out of the anti-imperialist campaigns of 'first-' and 'third-world' women" (ibid: 4). Thus, the question of 'difference' is at the center of its project and its politics. Feminist postcolonial theory is not only concerned with the recognition of differences between women, but with women's different experience of colonialism and imperialism vis-à-vis men and, more importantly, with the question of difference itself.

Anne McClintock (1995) argues, for example, that "a good deal of evidence has emerged that women and men did not experience imperialism in the same way" (p. 6). Colonized women's experiences were shaped by their own positions within their societies before colonial rule, which "gave the colonial reordering of their sexual and economic labor very different outcomes from those of colonized men" (ibid: 6). At the same time, colonial women were subject to oppressive gender ideologies that prevented them from having access to power in the same way as colonial men. Nevertheless, race afforded them privileges that neither colonized women nor men had: "white women were not the helpless onlookers of empire but were ambiguously

complicit both as colonizers and colonized, privileged and restricted, acted upon and acting" (ibid: 6).

McClintock (1995) hence advocates a theory of gender power to better understand the controversial processes of imperialism and colonialism. "Gender power was not the superficial patina of empire, an ephemeral gloss over the more decisive mechanics of class or race. Rather, gender dynamics were, from the outset, fundamental to the securing and maintenance of the imperial enterprise" (ibid: 6, 7). McClintock is careful to argue, however, that gender is not synonymous with women and that race and ethnicity do not refer only to the colonized. On the contrary, she critiques those who are complicit in making whiteness or men invisible in the analysis of imperialism. Moreover, for her, as for other feminist postcolonial theorists, "race, gender and class are not distinct realms of experience, existing in splendid isolation from each other... Rather, they come into existence in and through relation to each other – if in contradictory, conflictual ways" (ibid: 5).

On her part, Chandra Mohanty (2003: 22) has presented a forceful critique of (modernist/structuralist) western feminist theories that have produced a 'Third World Woman' as a singular, monolithic subject, who is oppressed by virtue of being both female and 'third world.' In so doing, Mohanty argues that western feminists have engaged in a discursive exercise of colonization that suppresses the heterogeneity of the subjects in the 'third world': "it is in the production of this 'third-world difference' [– that stable, ahistorical something that oppresses most if not all the women in these countries –] that western feminism appropriate and colonize the constitutive complexities of women in these countries" (ibid: 24). Gayatri Spivak (1988) goes beyond Mohanty in critiquing the homogenization of the subject positions of the colonized. "Spivak argues for a more complex analysis of the many, often conflicting,

subject positions that women are required to negotiate under intersecting power structures of patriarchy and imperialism" (Childs and Williams, 1997: 168).

Trinh T. Minh-ha (1989) questions the concept of 'difference' in itself. Difference "as uniqueness or special identity is both limiting and deceiving" (ibid: 95), especially when it comes to the identities of 'Third-World' women. Minh-ha first challenges the idea that identity refers to patterns of sameness, for difference is

> ...*that which undermines the very idea of identity*, deferring to infinity the layers whose totality forms 'I.' [...] The difference (within) and between *difference* itself and *identity* has so often been ignored and the use of the two terms so readily confused, that claiming a female/ethnic identity is commonly tantamount to reviving a kind of "male-tinted" romanticism (ibid: 96; emphasis in original).

Consequently, for Minh-ha, tolerating difference is not enough. Tolerating difference essentializes it and renders it natural. But the naturalness of difference is yet another means of discriminating against 'Third-World' women. The search for essential, natural authenticity will always legitimate subordination. Ultimately, difference is only tolerated as long as it does not overstep or disturb the boundaries of white Western liberalism and its hegemonic universal subjects, Man (and Woman). What is at stake in destabilizing and reclaiming 'difference' is the devaluation and erasure of 'Third-World women' (ibid: 79). 'Third-World women' need, therefore, to find their own voice to speak about their lives and experiences, so that they themselves are not told (ibid). They need to reassert that there cannot be two separate identities, such as woman and ethnic, i.e. woman and 'Third World;' they exist together, one with the other, in diversity.

For Minh-ha (1989), therefore, white Western feminists need to accept the challenge of difference and put an end to the discursive practice of othering 'Third World women.' Like McClintock, Mohanty and Spivak, Minh-ha demands that white Western feminists acknowledge their role in reproducing hegemony and racism, even

if it is an involuntary one. Yet, Minh-ha is also critical of 'Third-World' women's complicity in their oppression. Minh-ha is concerned here with the construction of Third World specialness that singles these women out. In their attempt to be considered special, these women reproduce and perpetuate their own stereotypes and submission, in that they allow others to judge them and define what makes them special (ibid: 87). In being defined as 'special,' women are kept from challenging the boundaries that marginalize them: "Specialness as a soporific soothes, anaesthetizes my sense of justice; it is, to the wo/man of ambition, as effective a drug of psychological self-intoxication as alcohol is to the exiles of society" (ibid: 88). This specialness is then a mask, an artificial virgin authenticity that is incapable of challenging itself and other voyeuristic conceptions of 'Third-World' authenticity (ibid).

In addition, feminist postcolonial theorists have been concerned with the question of land and space and the reproduction of gendered, classed and racialized colonial social relations. As McClintock (1995), Sara Mills (2003), Ricardo Padrón (2002), among others, have pointed out, colonizers feminized and sexualized the land they had 'discovered.' At the same time, these eroticized interpretations of the new 'virgin' lands were transposed upon colonized women in these lands, with very serious implications as to how the womanhood of colonized women was constructed. But the sexualization and racialization of space and (neo-)colonial relations is not a thing of the past, discourses, images and metaphors that emerged as part of colonial imaginaries are still very relevant to understand how women in the 'Third World' and Aboriginal women are viewed (Acoose, 1995; Anderson, 2000; Carter, 1997; Nathan, 1999; Paz, 2000 [1953]). As McClintock (1995) argues, the symbolic association of colonized women with the land has meant that

> ...women are the earth that is to be discovered, entered, named, inseminated and, above all, owned. Symbolically reduced, in male eyes, to the space on which male contests are waged, women experience particular difficulties laying claim to alternative genealogies and alternative narratives of origin and naming. Linked symbolically to the land, women are relegated to a realm beyond history and thus bear a particularly vexed relation to narratives of historical change and political effect. Even more importantly, women are figured as property belonging to men and hence as lying, by definition, outside the male contests over land, money, and political power (p. 31).

Nevertheless, feminist postcolonial theorists have been aware that the gendering of imperialism and the sexualization of space took different forms in different parts of the world. Ultimately, "this notion of space as being imbricated with social relations is important in considering women in space, because it moves discussion away from simple notions of women as a group having a consistent relation to spatial framework" (Mills, 2003: 699, 700).

Thus, feminist postcolonial theory, as an analytic tool, allows me to delve into the complexities of gender, race and class in women's experiences of (neo-) colonialism. I should emphasize again that I am not comparing Aboriginal women's experiences with those of Mexican women. These women experienced (neo-) colonialism in different ways, and this is precisely why feminist postcolonial theory is helpful. Even though these women are colonized, it does not mean that their identities and experiences are homogenous by virtue of being both women and colonized. There is a vast diversity between and among these women, as well as within the categories of 'Aboriginal women' and 'working class Mexican women.' What is important for the purpose of my work is that within their own countries' cultures and histories, these women have been produced as expendable and violable through different technologies of bio-power, and these technologies can only be understood if we take our conceptualization of power beyond pure repression. Thus, in linking bio-power to feminist postcolonial theory, I want to further an understanding of bio-power both as

positive, productive *and* repressive, as I unveil the production of certain women's bodies as colonized bodies, which are not only expendable and valueless, but rapable, mutilable, destroyable and unimportant in and through technologies of power specific to Mexico's and Canada's histories. What are the mechanisms or technologies of bio-power that produce these specific women's bodies as worthless, disposable and thus violable? How do discourses of gender, race and class, as well as (neo-)colonial spatial relations figure in these processes? How can these women's experiences of violence be theorized as embodied?

Las Muertas de Juárez and the Em-bodiment of Social Inequality: Histories of Colonialisms

> "*When we found her, my daughter's body told of everything that had been done to her*" (Norma Andrade, mother of Lilia Alejandra, murdered in 2001, quoted in Amnesty International, 2003: 2).

It is impossible to understand any aspect of Mexican society, including the brutal murders of at least 379 women (PGR, 2006) and the disappearance of at least 500 other women in Ciudad Juárez (Delgado Ballesteros, 2004), without taking into account its histories of colonialisms. Though Mexico became independent from Spain in 1810 after three hundred years of violent and exploitative mercantile colonial rule, the current powerful influence and pervasive presence of the United States in this country, especially through mechanisms of economic control such as NAFTA as well as media domination, can be considered an instance of neo-colonialism. I argue that the femicides of Ciudad Juárez em-body the social inequality that has accompanied these histories of colonialisms. The traces of violence engraved in these women's mutilated and disfigured bodies, in the decomposing limbs and scattered bones that have been found in dumpsters, industrial parks and in the desert – the clandestine graveyards of the border – represent the congealment of historical and cultural beliefs

in their worthlessness and disposability. In addition, societal and political apathy towards the murders and disappearances further reinforces the notion that these women, their lives and their bodies do not matter. Such are the effects of colonial and neo-colonial bio-power; their femicides are a matter of "death by culture" (Wright, 1999).

Mexican women's bodies were produced as violable through the literal and metaphorical rape of Indigenous women and Indigenous culture by Spanish conquerors. This explicitly sexist legacy of Spanish colonialism in Mexican culture, what could in fact be conceptualized as a technology of colonial bio-power, can be best illustrated through Mexican Nobel Prize winner Octavio Paz's (2000 [1953]) analysis of one verb: *chingar* (to fuck). Paz's work on this verb is a sophisticated attempt to encapsulate the symbolic and physical violences that were perpetrated against Indigenous cultures and peoples through colonization. More importantly, Paz focuses on Indigenous women and their bodies as the field in which Mexican sexual politics and the Mexican culture of *machismo* developed through rape.

In his genealogy of the verb *chingar*, Paz (2000: 83) describes it as an intrinsically masculine verb, which is tainted with sexuality. It is a verb that denotes violence (over some-body), that wants and enjoys to hurt, that violates and rips some [female] body and, more importantly, that characterizes the *Gran Chingón*, that is the *Great Macho* or the *Great Fucker*. The fucked or *lo chingado*[5] is the 'feminine,' the 'open,' the 'abject.' The ultimate symbol of *lo chingado* is the Mexican nation itself,[6] incarnated in Mexican women's bodies. Paz's defining argument is that Mexicans

[5] The translation of *lo chingado* is what is/can be fucked. *Lo chingado* is the neutral of the three grammatical forms that this expression can take in Spanish: *el chingado, la chingada* and *lo chingado*. Thus, even though *el chingado* is exclusively masculine and *la chingada* exclusively feminine in grammatical terms, *lo chingado* in Paz's work is necessarily 'feminine' in that he considers the verb *chingar* (to fuck) inherently 'masculine.' Whatever is or can be fucked is hence inevitably 'feminine.'
[6] It is worth mentioning that in Spanish, nation is a feminine word; and the nation is symbolically considered a mother.

consider themselves the offspring of rape in a literal and metaphorical sense, in that both the Indigenous women and the Mexican nation were raped (ibid). Hence, Mexicans call themselves *los hijos de la Chingada* (the children of the Fucked One)[7]:

> Who is *la Chingada*? Above all, it is the Mother. Not a Mother made of flesh and blood, but a mythical figure. 'La Chingada' is one of the Mexican representations of Maternity... *La Chingada* is the mother who has suffered, metaphorically or in reality, the corrosive and infamous action implicit in the verb [*chingar*] that gives her this name (Paz, 2000 [1953]: 83; my translation)

But Paz does not focus exclusively on the rape of Indigenous women, who physically reproduced the new *mestizo* (mixed) race that now constitutes Mexico. While he certainly links the devaluation of Mexican women to this historical raping, for Paz, the rapes resulted in the general sense of inferiority and self-hatred that characterize 'Mexicanity,' as well as in a perpetually wounded Mexican masculinity (Mirandé, 1997). Mexican *machismo* and the ensuing belief that women are worthless, expendable and violable is the ultimate outcome of this colonial heritage, which continuously pressures Mexican men to be the *Gran Chingón*, to seize the opportunity to *chingar* (fuck) and avoid being *chingado* (fucked).

Paz furthers his argument by analyzing the figure of *La Malinche* or Doña Marina, the Indigenous woman who helped Hernán Cortés conquer Mexico, as *La Chingada*. *La Malinche* is Mexico's own version of Eve, who is seen to have betrayed Indigenous peoples in helping Cortés. *La Malinche* or Doña Marina – her Spanish given name – was an Indigenous woman given as a slave to Cortés; she served him as a concubine, as well as his translator and advisor. Even though it is undeniable that Cortés would not have managed to conquer Mexico without Doña Marina, he abandoned her soon after. He left her pregnant and alone. She has been called *La*

[7] The expression "*hijo de la Chingada*" (child/son of the Fucked One) is often used as an insult. According to Paz (2000: 88), there is a very important distinction between this Mexican expression and the Spanish version, "*hijo de puta*" (son of a whore). The insult for Mexicans consists in being the offspring of rape, for the Spanish to be the offspring of a prostitute.

Chingada or "The Fucked One" ever since (ibid: 94). *La Chingada* is thus for Paz the ultimate passivity; she does not and cannot offer any resistance to violence: "This open passivity leads her to lose her identity: she is the Fucked One. If she loses her name, she is nobody, she becomes confused with nothing, she becomes Nothing. Yet, in spite of all, she is the atrocious incarnation of the female/feminine condition" (ibid).

I disagree with Paz's notion that *lo chingado*, the 'feminine,' or what he in the end equated to women and their bodies, did/does not resist violence. Thinking of the verb *chingar* within the framework of Foucault's concept of bio-power, however, entails recognizing that there is always resistance and acknowledging that while power clearly produces bodies, there is always excess (Cahill, 2000).

In spite of this criticism, Paz's work is relevant to understanding the murders of Ciudad Juárez as em-bodying beliefs in women's worthlessness, disposability and violability because his analysis eloquently elucidates that Mexican women and their bodies have been historically and discursively produced as such. This effect of colonial bio-power continues to permeate the present-day use of language in Mexico, especially with regard to issues or incidents of violence against women, as well as the treatment that Mexican institutions give to such violence. Patricia Duarte Sánchez's (1996) analysis of the role of language in rape in contemporary Mexican society illustrates this point. Duarte Sánchez argues that Mexican society, through language and codes of conduct, imposes values that sanction the exercise of violence against women. Language is gendered and as such it reproduces and reinforces power inequalities that exist between women and men, as well as a double standard that controls gender relations. Her analysis of language and rape effectively reveals that the language used before, during and after the rape is imbued in the sexist assumption that women are there to be *chingadas* (fucked). "Before the rape: '*they like it*,' '*you do*

them a favour,' '*they want it*', and '*they even need it*'; during the rape: '*you are a whore,*' '*you deserve it,*' '*you are worthless*'; after the rape: '*she wanted it,*' '*she provoked it,*' '*she was looking for it.*'" (ibid: 25, my translation). In Carol Smart's (1999) succinct words, "women's sexual subjectivity has already been framed by the language of rape" (p. 206).

Likewise, Gerardo González Ascencio (1996) makes visible the mechanisms through which this discursive construction is legitimized and reinforced in Mexican law and in legal institutions. He describes how the inefficacy of the Mexican legal system discourages rape survivors from pressing charges, and how, were a woman to press charges, her moral integrity would be questioned. Interestingly enough, he points out how sexual harassment, once acknowledged as a social matter at the institutional level, is seen as a woman's issue. As such, it is dealt with by an office mainly led by women and which often runs on a tight budget that prevents it from having any power to influence real political change (ibid: 66). Marta Torres Falcón (2004) is supportive of this argument in indicating that the main problem lies in how unrecognized differences in power between women and men have been built into Mexican laws. Consequently, even when the notion of women's rights as human rights has been incorporated into the Mexican legal system, these unnoticed power inequalities curtail women's possibilities of pressing charges and of being successful in trials. What is relevant here is not only that women's sexual subjectivity has been framed by the language of rape, but that women's sexed bodies as such have been constructed as violable in and through Mexican history. What is more, as Gonzaléz Asencio's (1996) and Torres Falcón's (2004) work illustrate, this history of colonialism has had lasting and pervasive effects, since discourses and institutions

have legitimized this historical construction, as well as made it invisible and insignificant.

Yet not all Mexican women have been rendered equally vulnerable to experiencing violence, even though their bodies have been produced as violable, throughout Mexico's histories of colonialisms. In Ciudad Juárez, the women most vulnerable to experiencing violence are poor, young, and they live in conditions of urban marginality. Indeed, the women who have disappeared or been viciously killed have all come from a low socio-economic background and most of them were either students or involved in the *maquila* industry or in sex work. Conditions of urban marginality, as well as neo-colonial discourses have exacerbated their vulnerability to violence. But to understand this increased vulnerability to violence, it is first paramount to analyze "what Ciudad Juárez is; as a city, as a border, what it is as a pole of development and contrasts; as a center that draws [intranational] migration and, above all, as havens of organized crime" (Zermeño, 2004: 65; my translation).

After the Mexican financial crisis of the 1980s and, more importantly, through the consolidation of NAFTA in 1994, Ciudad Juárez became the model of industrialization that neo-classical economic theories and neo-liberal discourses of modernization and development/globalization predicted would eventually result in successful economic growth (Cardona, 2004; Gutiérrez, 2004; Gwynne, 2006). Drawn to Mexico given the opportunity of employing (or rather, exploiting) cheap labour, close to 3,700 sweatshops, 80 per cent of them of American-owned, had been set up along the border by the end of the year 2000 (Cardona, 2004: 21). That same year, these factories reported an income exceeding 16,000 million dollars. In spite of this, over 60 per cent of the streets of Ciudad Juárez are not paved, and the number of bars and discotheques exceeds that of schools or day care facilities (ibid). Overall, the

infrastructure of Ciudad Juárez is abysmal (Cardona, 2004; Monárrez Fragoso and Fuentes, 2004), not to mention that living there is made even more difficult given the general climate of violence, insecurity and impunity that numerous gangs and the Juárez drug cartel perpetuate (Gutiérrez, 2004: 71, 72).

Furthermore, what has been described as the anomic character of Ciudad Juárez cannot be ignored. Sergio Zermeño (2004: 48) argues that Ciudad Juárez is anomic due to the unprecedented population growth resulting from intranational migration, which has accompanied the rapid expansion of the *maquila* industry along the border; especially after NAFTA. The people who migrate to Ciudad Juárez from smaller Mexican cities, towns or villages find themselves struggling to adapt to a place fraught with the crude effects of its deficient infrastructure, in addition to feelings of living in a nonexistent community (ibid: 49). Moreover, the constant threat that American-owned companies will leave in order to access an even cheaper labour force or be exempt of taxes in other parts of the world, has exacerbated the anomie that pervades the living and working conditions of the people of Ciudad Juárez (ibid: 53).

Ultimately, for Zermeño (2004), among other Mexican scholars such as Delgado Ballesteros (2004), the anomic living and working conditions, which have rendered particular women more vulnerable to violence, are the result of U.S. hegemony and globalization. As César Delgado Ballesteros (2004: 78) argues, Ciudad Juárez and its murdered women, is the perfectly tragic example of the contradictions and inconsistencies of globalization. Neo-liberal discourses, such as that of the World Bank, the IMF, and U.S. foreign policy, have put forth the promise of capitalist globalization as a process that will spread equality, a better standard of living, as well as the decline of borders all over the world (Simon, 2006). However, in downtrodden

parts of the world such as Ciudad Juárez, capitalist globalization is a process that feeds off the underdog to deliver its promises to the North (Delgado Ballesteros, 2004: 77). It should come as no surprise then, that Ciudad Juárez is conceived not as a city, but as a slum of (Western) underdevelopment and El Paso, its twin city, as an "aseptic retainer through which the U.S. desperately seeks to contain at all costs the pollution coming from the South" (ibid: 78).

> Juárez concentrates in a vicious circle all those distorted energies of the development of underdevelopment... Juárez is not a city proper, it is an urban conglomerate [where] the crudest marginality grows at an unrestricted and unmanageable rate... Even by day, in those marginal neighbourhoods, daughters of the purest urban frustration, one can breathe danger in the dust of the unpaved streets saturated with old tires and abandoned old cars... More than a city, Juárez boards people who work long and arduous days, there or on the other side [El Paso]... Certainly Juárez is a place of enormous opportunities but also of great risks in all senses. *There, life is not worth as much; we could even say it is practically worth nothing, for it is barely respected* (Delgado Ballesteros, 2004: 78; my translation, emphasis mine).

Indeed, for Delgado Ballesteros (2004), in this anomic climate of marginality, "there is not much that could be expected of women's rights. They have, it would seem, no future" (p. 79). How is it to be expected, then, that the lives and bodies of women living in these conditions be respected? Unfortunately, the anomic working and living conditions, which women from low socio-economic resources must face, reinforce the belief in their worthlessness and, consequently, societal apathy toward their vicious murders and the numerous disappearances. Young women are the poorest inhabitants of Ciudad Juárez (Monárrez Fragoso and Fuentes, 2004), and their bodies are commodified and dehumanized in the *maquila* industry and sex work. As empowering as these two forms of work may be for some women, since they afford them some degree of financial independence from fathers, husbands, lovers or other male relatives (Athreya, 2006; Nathan, 1999), these two activities need to be framed in the context just described.

The exploitation of *maquila* workers, especially women of low socio-economic resources, has been established by numerous scholars (e.g.: Elson and Pearson, 1997; Fernández-Kelly, 1983; Salzinger, 1997; Zermeño, 2004). Women between the ages of 15 and 25 bear the burden of the social inequalities that are the result of NAFTA and neo-liberal discourses of comparative advantage, as well as the unequal global/international division of labour and the gendered division of labour within the *maquila* industry itself. The constant surveillance processes to which they are subjected by both the (male and often foreign and, therefore, white) managerial staff as well as other co-workers generate appropriately gendered subjectivities and, more importantly, appropriately productive bodies on the shop floor (Salzinger, 1997: 554). Managers are easily able to keep track of the flow of production, for "the factory floor is organized for visibility –a panopticon in which everything is marked" (ibid); including bodies.

> Yellow tape lines the walkways; red arrows point at test sites, yellow, and red lights glow above the machines. On the walls hang large, shiny white graphs documenting quality levels in red, yellow, green and black. Just above each worker's head is a chart full of dots – green for one defect, red for three defects, gold stars for perfect days. Workers' bodies too are marked; yellow tunics for the new workers; light blue tunics for women workers; dark blue smocks for male workers and mechanics; orange tunics for (female) "special" workers, red tunics for (female) group chiefs; lipstick; mascara; rouge; high heels; miniskirts; identity badges.... Everything is signalled (Salzinger, 1997: 554).

For Leslie Salzinger, therefore, the production of gendered subjectivities and dexterous, docile bodies is caught up in a complex web of discourses of gender, class and race. It can be argued that the production of these women as disposable bodies is equally embedded in these discourses. As Melissa Wright (1999) points out, the murders of so many women of low socio-economic resources in Ciudad Juárez can be interpreted as a backlash against the 'cultural decline' embodied in women's participation in the labour force; be it as *maquila* workers, sex workers or exotic

dancers. In fact, Zermeño (2004) claims that women's newly found economic power contributes to the anomic character of Ciudad Juárez, namely the altering of gender roles results in a "wounded machismo" (p. 58). D. Nathan (1999) further argues that this emasculated machismo is visible in Mexican authorities' justification of the murders by implying that women who work away from home are leading 'a double life': "the implication [is] that sex murder [is] the fault of moral 'looseness.' Or, as many Juárez residents put it, of girls leading the 'double life' of chaste factory work by day and sinful bar-hopping by night" (p. 26).

On her part, Wright (1999) identifies the expectation that these women will inevitably be killed because they are outside the home as "death by culture":

> ...[the victims] represent cultural value in decline and in consequence are possibly not valuable enough in death to warrant much concern. When we find girls and women out on the streets at night, seeking adventure, dancing in clubs, and free from parental vigilance we find evidence of diminished value in their wasted innocence, their wasted loyalty, and their wasted virginity. The logical conclusion is, therefore, not to seek the perpetrators of the crime as much as to restore the cultural values whose erosion these women and girls represent (Wright, 1999: 458).

In this sense, the concept of death by culture illustrates how these women in particular have been constructed as invariably worthless and disposable. These women's worth resides only in the expectation that they will abide to traditional, *macho* perceptions of femininity, that is, that they will be chaste and docile women/bodies that are subordinate to men. Ultimately, this expectation of inevitable death does materialize: these women and their bodies are not only discursively produced as social waste, but discarded as such.

In fact, in her sophisticated analysis on the similarities between the corporate death of poor Mexican women in the *maquila* industry and the concept of death by culture, Wright (2001) theorizes "the connection linking the production of value within the maquilas to the wasting of women inside and outside of them" (p. 557). As

such, Wright (1999) argues that the *maquila* industry produces a female Mexican subject "around a continuum of declining value" (p. 460). *Maquila* managers employ contradictory discourses that characterize this female Mexican subject both as a desirable and docile worker (e.g. Salzinger, 1997), but at the same time regard her as untrainable and unskilled, thus pushing her towards turning over[8] once the factory has extracted all the value she has (Wright, 1999: 468). Wright (1999) thus describes turnover itself "not necessarily as waste but [as] the by-product of a process during which human beings turn into industrial [and social?] waste" (p. 468). Once the similarities between the concept of death by culture and the corporate death to which many *maquila* workers are subjected are recognized, "*the vision of the [poor] Mexican woman as inevitably disposable*" becomes apparent (ibid: 469; emphasis added). Ultimately, this vision leads her society, her murderers and her managers at the *maquiladoras* to discard her as soon as they "get what they want from her" (ibid).

Discourses and the material organization of social life in Ciudad Juárez have all left their mark on *las muertas de Juárez*; as technologies of colonial and neo-colonial bio-powers they have inscribed worth, or rather the lack thereof, upon these women's bodies. These women are not just *las muertas de Juárez* but, sadly, *las Chingadas de Juárez*. In these marginalized women's raped, mutilated, disfigured and discarded bodies, Mexico's histories of colonialisms have intertwined and reinforced its discourses to produce bodies that are more vulnerable, even materially 'open' to symbolic and physical violences. Like *La Chingada* before them, who was 'open' to the symbolic and physical violences of Spanish conquerors, the women of Ciudad

[8] In Wright's (1999) work, turnover "refers to the coming and going of workers, training refers to the cultivation of worker longevity and firm loyalty. Both processes unfold through the materialization of their corresponding subjects: a temporary, unskilled labor force and trained, loyal employees, respectively. Trained workers are those whose intrinsic value has matured and developed into a more valuable substance, whereas temporary workers do not develop or transform over time. They simply leave when their value is spent" (p. 460).

Juárez, constructed as morally loose (Nathan, 1999), are seen to be equally 'open' to sex and violence. In Pablo Vila's succinct words, "[s]ymbolically, these women's bodies signify the openness of the borders to the needs of the "other." The openness is characterized not just by the continuing pouring of American males in Juárez's cantinas, but also by the border maquiladora program and its overwhelming use of young Mexican females in its labor force" (Vila, quoted in Nathan, 1999: 29). The murders of the women of Ciudad Juárez are femicides because they em-body the congealed effects of Mexican colonial and neo-colonial sexual politics. Understood as femicides, it is possible to unveil the ensuing construction of these women's bodies as disposable as a truth effect of Mexico's histories of colonialisms. These women have been sentenced to death by culture.

The Murders and Disappearances of Aboriginal Women in Canada: Racialized Bodies and the Legacy of Colonialism

> "*I can't help but wonder what kind of reaction there would be if these young women were white. What kind of value do we place on human life?*" (Acoose, 1995: 87)

Canada has its own history of colonialism, its own modes of discursivity and technologies of bio-power through which the bodies of Aboriginal women have been rendered worthless and disposable. Violence against Aboriginal women in Canada is embedded in this history; a history of unequal colonial/imperial power relations that institutionalized racism as well as the sexism inherent in European patriarchal values (Dua 1999; Maracle, 1993). The femicides of Aboriginal women in Canada are a testament to this history of colonialism; one that, according to several Aboriginal scholars and activists, has not ended (Jacobs, 2002; Maracle, 1993; O'Hara, 2006; Stevenson, 1999). Aboriginal peoples continue to be systematically discriminated against and their right to land, sovereignty and self-determination denied (Maracle,

1993). The mutilated and tortured bodies of murdered Aboriginal women, which have been dumped in ditches along highways or found half-buried in swamps, not to mention in Robert Pickton's pig farm, are not merely symbolic of this violence, they em-body it. In the eloquent words of Monture-Angus (1995): "violence is not just a mere incident in the lives of Aboriginal women. Violence does not just span a given number of years. It *is* our lives. And it is in our histories. For most Aboriginal women, violence has not been escapable" (p. 170; emphasis in original). I argue, therefore, that the outcome of the relationship between the discursive and material effects of colonialism and its institutions has been the death by culture of Aboriginal women in Canada.

Colonization, through the establishment of the white settler society nearly 500 years ago, destroyed or radically altered the woman-centered organization of many Aboriginal communities, which had granted Aboriginal women a high status and an important role in the decision-making processes (Jacobs, 2002; Maracle, 1993; Stevenson, 1999). In contrast to European women, Aboriginal women were considerably independent and autonomous from men, they had control over their own sexuality, the right to divorce, and owned the products of their labour (ibid: 56). As Winona Stevenson (1999) points out, "Aboriginal women's ability to distribute foods and goods produced by their families among the community is evidence of their autonomy and authority in household matters" (p. 59). Yet the imposition of Victorian ideals of womanhood, coupled with changing imperial interests, effectively altered the role and status of Aboriginal women within their communities.

In the early mercantile phase of this history of colonialism, French and British colonists had an arguably cooperative relation with Aboriginal peoples. They depended, after all, on them for survival and for their fur gathering skills, yet the

relation soon became deeply exploitative (Stevenson, 1999: 49). In the early phase, French and British men had even been encouraged to enter into alliances with Aboriginal peoples through marriage to Aboriginal women, since it benefited the trade. For example, the marriage between Frenchmen and Aboriginal women following Aboriginal traditions, that is *mariages à la façon du pays* or 'marriage according to the custom of the country' (ibid: 51) was in fact part of a so-called 'Frenchification' process endorsed by French policy (Dickason, 1985). And, though the directors of the Hudson's Bay Company were never fully supportive of unions between British men and Aboriginal women, they "could neither control the social needs of its servants nor avoid [Aboriginal] trade relations protocols which required kinship ties" (Stevenson, 1999: 54).

However, the discourse that structured the (power) relations between colonists and Aboriginal peoples changed when imperial interest expanded from fur trading to enlarging settlements or establishing new ones (Stevenson, 1999). Aboriginal women in particular were negatively affected, since the skills that colonists had come to rely on were increasingly regarded as a sign of Aboriginal people's 'natural' savagism. In fact, missionaries and French and British colonists alike, took Aboriginal women's independence from men in their communities and their subsequent resistance to Christianization and its restrictions on female sexuality and power, as proof of such savagism and thus as a moral call to 'civilize' Aboriginals (ibid: 58). As Sherry Smith (1987) points out, colonizers legitimated their actions by claiming that whereas Europeans "pampered their women; savage people mistreated them" (p. 66). Missionaries thus blamed Aboriginal women's alleged position of oppression to the 'paganism' inherent in the Aboriginal lifestyle. According to Sarah Carter (1997), missionaries firmly believed that Aboriginal women

> ...were drudges who performed all the labour; chattels that were purchased and sold, at the absolute mercy of their owners or husbands, who felt free to cast them aside when old or unwanted in order to make room for a new wife. [...] The central message that the missionaries conveyed was that the lives of women were dramatically transformed for the better with the advent of "civilization" and Christianity. Women were being offered liberation from centuries of oppression (p. 162, 163).

Here, the bio-power of colonial discourses as productive of both colonial relations and Aboriginal women's bodies as valueless compared to white women cannot be disregarded.

Upon their arrival, fur traders "were shocked by the physical strength of Aboriginal women, by their clothing and beautifying styles, marriage and child-rearing practices, and by what they perceived as the drudgery of Aboriginal women's lives" (Stevenson, 1999: 56). Ultimately, Aboriginal women represented the exact opposite of their (bourgeois) European counterparts, for whom being a woman entailed being frail, weak, and dependent on men (Anderson, 2000; Dua, 1999; McClintock, 1995; Stevenson, 1999). But as long as Aboriginal women served the purposes of the fur trade, not to mention the sexual needs of colonists, their sexual autonomy, their knowledge, skills and lifestyles were not considered threatening or monstrous. On the contrary, the discourse of the 'Indian Princess' surfaced. As McClintock (1995) argues, this representation of Aboriginal womanhood symbolized the virginal new territory that colonists had encountered. Indeed, this virginal Indian Princess and her virginal land were for the male white settlers to "covet" (Anderson, 2000: 101). As a reward for her help and thus as an opportunity to transcend her culture, the Indian Princess was allowed to marry the white man (ibid: 102). In the words of Acoose (1995), the Indian Princess, represented in Walt Disney's *Pocahontas*, depicted an Aboriginal woman who is "overtly sexual, writhing over rocks, scantly clad, beautiful and Native, but not too Native" (p. 43).

Nevertheless, the eroticism and the overall appeal of the image of the Indian Princess was undermined as colonists were less dependent on "the traditional hunting, gathering, and manufacturing skills of Aboriginal women for their personal survival, and on their abilities as interpreters, cultural mediators, and guides to further the trade" (Stevenson, 1999: 56). Subsequently, the discourse of the Aboriginal woman as a 'dirty squaw' took over colonial representations of Aboriginal women. However, the rise of this discourse can be more strongly attributed to the missionaries' failure to convert Aboriginal women and make them more amenable to the new needs of the imperial project and thus to 'civilization.'

Missionaries were not tolerant of Aboriginal women's blatant transgression of European ideals of womanhood (Stevenson, 1999: 58). As mentioned earlier, they thus wrote prolifically about the alleged abuse and mistreatment that Aboriginal women must endure in their barbaric and primitive societies to justify their moral duty to 'civilize' them. As 'squaw drudges,' Aboriginal women were described as "squat, haggard, papoose-lugging drugde[s] who toiled endlessly" (Smith, 1987: 65). In marked contrast to the Indian Princess, the squaw drudge was depicted as "sexually licentious, ugly, beast of burden, and slave to men" (Stevenson, 1999: 57). Yet what truly disturbed missionaries was not the alleged oppression of Aboriginal women in their societies, but rather,

> ...their personal autonomy and independence. More specifically, *they assailed the lack of patriarchal family structures, complementarity in gender relations, female authority in the household, polygamy, the rights of both sexes to divorce, sexual freedom outside of marriage, and female ownership of and control over lands, resources, and produce* (Stevenson, 1999: 59; emphasis added).

What is clear is that Aboriginal women's "nobility as 'princesses' or their savagery as 'squaw drudges' were defined in terms of their relationship to or with European men" (Stevenson, 1999: 57). Nonetheless, the imposition of the image of

the 'dirty squaw' upon Aboriginal women has had lasting and devastating effects. As discussed in the Introduction, the murder of Helen Betty Osborne in The Pas in 1971 was a direct result of the construction of Aboriginal women as squaws who are lazy, dirty and sexually loose. In addition, it should be taken into account that the majority of Aboriginal women have admitted to having been called a 'squaw' at some point in their life (Anderson, 2000: 105).

Yet the effects are not reducible to racial slurs. It should also be emphasized, that "sexual violence towards Aboriginal women was an integral part of 19th century settler technologies of domination" (Razack, 2000: 98). As Carter (1997: 186) documents, it was the negative images of Aboriginal women as licentious and corrupt squaws that shaped how Canadian authorities defined and treated them. Aboriginal women had little protection from the law when they suffered abuse (ibid: 181). For example, when Aboriginal women did try to lay charges against policemen or agents for assault or rape, the claims were seen as attempts to discredit or blackmail the naturally civilized and moral British men (ibid). The logic behind the blatant disregard for the real abuse that Aboriginal women experienced was that white men were only responding to the 'natural' immorality of 'Indian' women. The Northwest Mounted Police (NWMP) often ignored the accusations made against farm instructors or agents, who would often withhold rations unless Aboriginal women were made available to them (Carter, 1997: 182). Carter (1997: 180) in fact suggests that the sexual coercion of Aboriginal women by NWMP officials was particularly easy when their families were starving. Moreover, the image of the "squalid and immoral 'squaw'" served the purpose of confining Aboriginal women to reserves, since "classified as prostitutes, [they] were regarded as particularly threatening to morality and health" (Carter, 1997: 187). As Carter (1997) argues, thus classified, "Aboriginal women could be subjected

to a new disciplinary regime" (p. 187). Indeed, the separate legislation under the *Indian Act* that governed Aboriginal prostitution made it easier to convict Aboriginal women (ibid).

Of great relevance is, therefore, the legitimation and institutionalization of Aboriginal women's inferior legal status, facilitated through these discourses, within their own communities and Canadian society through the *Indian Act* (1876). Through the *Indian Act*, a paternalistic piece of legislation, the newly formed Canadian Confederation bestowed power upon itself to exclude 'Indian peoples' from participating in politics as well as the right to define who was and who was not 'Indian' (Jacobs, 2002; Proulx and Perrault, 2000; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996). The *Indian Act* secured the land and resources required for the Canadian nation-building project and, in so doing, it justified the subsequent land dispossession of Aboriginal peoples and their displacement onto reserves. Slowly but surely, it also attacked the traditional values and means of governance of Aboriginal peoples, disenfranchising them altogether (Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples, 1996).

With regard to Aboriginal women, the *Indian Act* effectively exacerbated the already negative effects of the expansion of the fur trade. It furthered the destruction or erosion of the originally egalitarian relations between Aboriginal women and men through the commodification of Aboriginal female labour and sexuality and the introduction of male private property (Bourgeault, 1991; Stevenson, 1999). The *Indian Act* should be considered part of the rationality of (colonial) bio-politics that shaped the regime of colonial bio-power: "in the rationality of biopolitics the new object is life and its regulation, to be achieved through the continuous regulation of its mechanisms" (Rabinow and Rose, 2003: xxix). As such, this rationality not only

enabled practices that surveyed and disciplined Aboriginal women's bodies and behaviours, but produced them as objects of colonial knowledge. In this sense, the *Indian Act* reflects how the colonial discourse constructed Aboriginal women's bodies as gendered and racialized through different technologies, even though it is not a manifestation of bio-power in itself (since it is implemented "from above"). Nevertheless, the production of Aboriginal women as gendered and racialized ultimately allowed the legitimation and perpetuation of racist and sexist legal discriminatory practices well into the 20th century.

The production of Aboriginal women's subjectivity in terms of gender and race – what could actually be regarded as a truth effect of this regime of colonial bio-power – has resulted in contradictory and conflictual experiences for Aboriginal women. The salient point here is that it was on the basis of gender that Aboriginal women could lose their 'Indian' status, yet on the basis of race that they could be discriminated against, whether or not they were considered 'Indian.' In the end, these practices systemically disempowered Aboriginal women, affecting their lives both within and outside of their communities. It can be argued, therefore, that Aboriginal women's institutionalized inferior status in Canadian society is one of the outcomes of the relationship between the discursive and material effects of colonialism and its institutions.

For example, the *Indian Act* of 1876 established that Aboriginal women could only gain their 'Indian' status if they married an 'Indian' man; yet their status did not permit them to partake in decision-making processes of band councils and they were not allowed to own land (Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples, 1996). What is worse, Aboriginal women lost their status as 'Indian,' their band membership and rights to land ownership upon their husbands' death (ibid). In 1884, the Indian Act

permitted husbands to leave land to their wives on the condition that they had been faithful to their husbands and hence had proven to be of 'good moral character' (ibid). The *Indian Act* of 1951, in symbolically enfranchising Aboriginal women involved with non-Aboriginal men, forcibly and automatically stripped them from their Indian status (Stevenson, 1999). As a result, Aboriginal women were excluded from their bands and their reserves, often preventing them from passing on their way of life to their children (O'Hara, 2006; Proulx and Perrault, 2000).

The subsequent loss of status of Aboriginal children should not be interpreted as an 'accident,' though. At the center of the 19th century racialized nationalist Canadian project were powerful discourses of motherhood that constructed white middle-class women as responsible for the physical reproduction of 'the race' and the nation, as well as for the social reproduction of desirable citizens, not to mention empire-builders (Berg, 2002; Dua, 1999; Margolis, 2001; Valverde, 1992). Preventing Aboriginal women from passing on their values and traditions to children was but one strategy that was to secure white supremacy in Canada. The tragic and cruel experiences of Aboriginal children in residential schools, as well as the long struggle to reinstate the Indian status of women and children that was achieved only in 1985 (Nahanee, 1997), can be understood in this context.

The residential school system needs to be considered within the context of the rationality of colonial bio-politics, as well. As a colonial institution, residential schools were certainly violent and coercive, since through them, the Canadian state attempted to destroy Aboriginal cultures and 'civilize,' or rather break and dominate Aboriginal bodies. Yet what is important to emphasize is that, like Foucault's analyses of prisons, asylums and clinics show, "such practices, persons and institutions gain their sense only from their location within a much wider nexus of relations of

knowledge, power, and the production of subjectivities" (Rabinow and Rose, 2003: xiv). These coercive practices of the residential school worked within the rationality of a regime of power that had already produced Aboriginal bodies not only as gendered and racialized, but as Other to the white Euro-Canadian subject. Ultimately, it was the construction of the Aboriginal subject as Other that legitimated the violence perpetrated against Aboriginal children deemed necessary to appropriately 'civilize' their bodies. In the words of George Manuel, a residential school graduate, the residential school was "the laboratory and the production line of the colonial system" (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996).

As Deborah Chansonneuve (2005: 35-39) illustrates, Aboriginal children were often kidnapped from their communities, most notably during the sixties' scoop, and forbidden to speak their languages. Moreover, she established that children were taught to be ashamed of their culture, in addition to being subjected to physical, psychological and sexual abuse. As if guided by the missionaries of the early phases of colonialism, this 'civilizing' process in the case of Aboriginal girls was aimed at producing women/bodies that conformed to the pervasive ideology of the cult of domesticity (Fiske and Johnny, 2003: 191). As such, Aboriginal girls' education consisted in fulfilling domestic chores that would prepare them for a life as dependent wives (ibid) and in the reinforcement of bodily shame and a notion of sexuality as sinful (Anderson, 2000). These coercive practices were thus clearly part of the colonial endeavour to establish a white supremacist Canadian society. Nevertheless, what must be emphasized within the framework of bio-power is that the residential school marked and re-produced a boundary between the Aboriginal and the white Euro-Canadian subject.

It is precisely in the construction of Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian subjectivities that we are able to analyze the discursive aspects of colonization and hence the diffusive nature of (colonial) bio-power. Notably, it is through the creation of the Aboriginal subject (as Other) as a truth effect of technologies of colonial bio-power and its subsequent appropriation by Aboriginal peoples that it could be argued that Aboriginals were 'convinced of accepting' colonization. I am fully aware that Aboriginal peoples have not accepted colonization and its inherent violence as such (e.g. Maracle, 1993, O'Hara, 2006), but within a Foucauldian framework, appropriating this subject position, which is an effect of colonial discourse, could be construed as 'accepting' colonization.[9] In the end, it can be argued that both the Aboriginal and the Euro-Canadian subject positions created through colonial technologies of power, like the cinematic apparatus (Shohat and Stam, 1994), represent what Foucault (2003) calls "games of truth," that is, the technologies through which human beings come to see themselves as "being human" and thus conceive themselves as subjects. As Paul Rabinow and Nikolas Rose (2003) illustrate,

> [s]uch "games of truth" have not arisen in some abstract space of thought, but always in relation to specific practices: the places and spaces, the apparatuses, relations, and routines that bind human beings into complex assemblies of vision, action, and judgment, whether these be those of domestic existence, sexual relations, labor, or comportment in public places or consumption.... The games of truth which make up the history of our relation to ourselves should not be studied in terms of ideas, but of *technologies*: the intellectual and practical instruments and devices enjoined upon human beings to shape and guide their ways of "being human" (p. xxi; emphasis in original).

The colonial gaze in the cinematic apparatus can be seen as a technology of bio-power in that it has produced and re-produced the imperial imaginary through

[9] This is precisely why there are so many tensions and controversies surrounding 'resistance' in relation to Foucault's conceptualization of power. The question that a Foucauldian framework forces us to ask is whether resistance from a subject position that is at the source of oppression is actually resistance. For Foucault (2003), resistance necessarily entails finding alternative subject positions. As I elaborate later in this chapter, feminists have thus highlighted the tensions that this understanding of power and resistance raise.

specific film narratives rooted in the Eurocolonial discourse (Shohat and Stam, 1994). In fact, for Shohat and Stam (1994) cinema quickly became a tool that empires used to shape a national and imperial identity or "sense of belonging" among European spectators across their territories by employing certain narratives to their advantage. At the same time, it othered colonized peoples while leading them to also identify with the colonizer, thus creating a deep sense of ambivalence in them. The colonial gaze developed through different colonial projects, such as tourism and expeditions to the colonized world, that recorded the Other as exotic, barbaric or monstrous in the fairs and shows so popular in the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (ibid: 106). Overall, the production of the colonial gaze served the purpose of creating and cementing ontological and epistemological difference between colonizers and colonized peoples.

In this sense, violence against Aboriginal women, in addition to the numerous problems such as poverty, unemployment, high drop-out rates, alcoholism, suicide as well as high rates of sexual abuse that Aboriginal peoples now face (Kendall, 2001), can be regarded as outcomes of the relationship between the discursive and material effects of colonialism and its institutions. In fact, for Amber O'Hara (2006), a tireless activist combating the indifference that surrounds the murders and disappearances of Aboriginal women, Aboriginal women's increased vulnerability to violence is in fact at the heart of the racist and marginalizing practices of the colonial Canadian state.

> I think it's really important to make these connections. That's why I'm writing the book linking the generational effects of the residential school system and the sixties' scoop. When are they going to learn? How many Native girls are raised in non-Native foster homes, and how many of those [murdered or disappeared] women [who were engaged in sex work, in abusive relationships or addicted to drugs] did not have exposure to Native culture? My guess is all of them (interview, Jan 2006).[10]

[10] I had the opportunity to participate in an interview with Amber O'Hara as part of the research I conducted for the purpose of this thesis. I carried out it interview with an undergraduate student in the Department of Sociology, Julie Peters. We designed the questions and interviewed O'Hara in

Moreover, the language of inclusion and exclusion, both in terms of gender and race, employed in the *Indian Act* and in residential schools need to be understood as bearing "the representational burden of the exercise of power" (Wykes, 1995: 54). It is not a coincidence that racial slurs accompanied Aboriginal children's experiences of abuse in residential schools (Chansonneuve, 2005) and that they still preclude and conclude the often lethal experiences of violence of Aboriginal women (Jacobs, 2002). The murderers of Helen Betty Osborne yelled racial slurs at her when she refused to 'go party' and have sex with them (Hamilton and Sinclair, 1991), and the murderers of Pamela George repeatedly told friends that "they had beat the shit out of an 'Indian hooker'" (Razack, 2000: 111). Racism and sexism intersect in language to (re)produce violable, racialized and 'Othered' bodies, thus condoning violence against Aboriginal women. In other words, it is on these women's colonized bodies that "gendered racial violence" (ibid) continues to re-enact and perpetuate the (material and discursive) violences that Aboriginal peoples have historically suffered.

For example, writing on the murder of Pamela George, Sherene Razack (2000) eloquently argues that the murders of Aboriginal women cannot be separated from the racialized spatial and bodily geographies of colonization. Pamela George's life of poverty and prostitution needs to be analyzed in relation to the violent history of dispossession and displacement of Aboriginal peoples by white settlers and the law's complicity in settler violence (e.g. the *Indian Act*) (ibid: 94). Due to "the intensity of this ongoing colonization, white men such as Kummerfield and Ternowetsky had only a very small chance of seeing Pamela George as a human being" (ibid: 94, 95). Equally applicable to the cases of Mary Jane Serloin, Shelly Napope, Eva Taysup,

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accordance to the ethics guidelines of the Queen's University General Reseach Ethics Board. The interview consisted of semi-structured questions and O'Hara was an active participant in the interview.

Calinda Waterhen and the murdered and the missing women of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, Razack (2000) further explains that

> ...white men who buy the services of an Aboriginal woman in prostitution, and who then beat her to death [or strangle her, for that matter], are enacting a quite specific violence perpetrated on Aboriginal bodies throughout Canada's history, a colonial violence that has not only enabled white settlers to secure land but *to come to know themselves as entitled to it* (p. 96, 97; emphasis in original).

The salient point in Razack's (2000) work is that colonial discourses and institutional practices that have historically attempted to regulate Aboriginal women, have marked (through race) their bodies and the spaces they inhabit (the reserve, 'the Stroll', the 'streets') as immoral, uncivilized, dirty and degenerate. This marking has not only "shape[d] the law by informing notions of what is just and who is entitled to justice" (ibid: 129) but it has legitimated the violence inflicted upon Aboriginal women's bodies, especially those of women working as prostitutes:

> [Pamela George's] murder was characterized as a natural by-product of the space and thus of the social context in which it occurred, an event that is routine when the bodies in question are Aboriginal. This naturalizing of violence is sustained by the legal idea of contract, an agreement between consenting and autonomous individuals. Because she consented to provide sexual services, the violence became more permissible (Razack, 2000: 117).

The result is that the hegemony of whiteness and its consequential invisibility "is protected and reproduced" (Razack, 2000: 129).

Dara Culhane's (2003) analysis of the murders and disappearances of Aboriginal women in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside supports Razack's conclusions. Following Razack's interpretation of the 'streets' and slums and the bodies of its Aboriginal inhabitants as degenerate spaces, she writes that

> ...men who seek out women working in the "low track," in Vancouver, and elsewhere, are buying a license to commit violence, to degrade, and to demean *women considered disposable by 'Johns' and by society as a whole*. [It is necessary], however, to acknowledge the specific vulnerability and overexposure of Aboriginal women to sexual exploitation, violence, and

> murder that has historically, and continues contemporarily, to be a fact of Canadian life (Culhane, 2003: 598; emphasis added).

For Culhane (2003), these murders and disappearances are the obvious outcome of "the *continuing* effects of settler colonialism, its ideological and material foundations, and its ongoing reproduction" (p. 595; emphasis in original). As such, she argues that Aboriginal women were effectively rendered invisible by a pervasive form of "race blindness" that negates the historical "burden of social suffering carried by Aboriginal people in this neighbourhood – and Canada as a whole –" (ibid). At the same time, this form of race blindness is itself tied to a "regime of disappearance," that is " a neo-liberal mode of governance that selectively marginalizes and/or erases categories of people through strategies of representation that include silences, blind spots, and displacements that have both material and symbolic effects" (ibid).

Canada's history of colonialism can be thus conceptualized as a history of symbolic and material violence against Aboriginal women; a history that has and continues to disempower Aboriginal women and construct them as inferior vis-à-vis the white settler society and the Aboriginal men in their communities (Maracle, 1993). Marked as degenerate, immoral, filthy bodies, Aboriginal women are invariably rendered worthless and disposable. What is worse, this discursive construction of Aboriginal women as waste congeals in the raped, tortured and decomposed bodies that eventually surface or are dug up from liminal spaces without much disturbance to the lives of (white) Canadians in mainstream society. The indifference towards the epidemic-like disappearances of Aboriginal women in mainstream Canadian society (Goudling, 2001: 33) is thus part of these women's death by culture. The murders of Aboriginal women in Canada need to be understood within the framework of femicide because they em-body the complexity of sexed, gendered and racialized violence of Canada's colonial history.

Bio-power, Violence and (Tensions in) Resistance

The discursivities and technologies of bio-power of Mexican and Canadian histories of (neo-)colonialisms are clearly distinct; but despite the remarkable difference in social contexts, the bodies of marginalized women have been produced as worthless and disposable. These bodies are not any bodies, they belong to racialized and economically marginalized women upon whom colonial power relations continue to be inscribed. Their colonized bodies em-body the complexity of sexual, racial and class politics, and as such they represent the congealment of discursive and material violences that have characterized the histories of their social and cultural contexts. These murders are femicides; these women were sentenced to death by culture.

I do want to emphasize, however, that in claiming that these women em-body the social inequalities that have rendered them disposable, I am not arguing that their ontological status is that of *being* disposable. As I have argued throughout this chapter, it is the relationship between the discursive and material effects of colonialism and its institutions that have rendered these women worthless and expendable. The effects of poverty and urban marginality on these women's bodies cannot be ignored. For example, Aboriginal peoples in general and Aboriginal women in particular are more vulnerable to having health problems, becoming HIV/AIDS positive, having problems related to alcoholism and being malnourished (Benoit et. al. 2003; Kendall, 2001; Spittal et. al. 2002; Zierler and Krieger, 1997). In Mexico, it has been established that poverty has a significant impact on the health of marginalized women. As Rico Alatorre et. al. (1994: 239) demonstrate, marginalized women have the highest rates of mortality and morbidity. These women are also more vulnerable to becoming HIV/AIDS positive and experiencing mental health problems (Lara and

Salgado de Snyder, 1994). In addition, the colonial gaze and discourses continue to shape how these women are (or not) represented.

In this context, it may seem difficult to talk about resistance, and this difficulty is exacerbated by the different connotations attached to this concept, not to mention the fact that feminist and Foucauldian conceptualizations or projects of resistance are not always compatible (Burfoot, 2003). In other words, while Foucault's theory of power as diffuse provides the possibility of resistance, his conceptualization of what counts as resistance can differ from feminist politics of resistance (Diamond and Quinby, 1988). For Foucault (2003), resistance entails looking for alternative subject positions that can challenge particular "techniques of power that makes individuals subjects, [in the sense of the two meanings of the word 'subject']: subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power that subjugates and makes subject to" (p. 130). Only then can meaning of discourses be changed to produce a powerful effect. Feminist projects/politics of resistance that rely on the very subject positions that are considered oppressive would, in this sense, "contribute to, rather than resist, normalizing power" (Diamond and Quinby, 1988: xii). Moreover, as Annette Burfoot (2003) argues, we must be critical of the fact that

> Foucault's theory has become feminist method without much close reading of his work nor with enough careful political consideration of the origins and implications of his ideas. The drive for political change comes from feminist sensibilities, not from Foucault, but he is left with the credit for a way out of repressive situations that his theory actually denies (p. 55).

There are, therefore, tensions in the concept of resistance that need to be addressed with regard to the murders and disappearances of the marginalized women of Ciudad Juárez and of Aboriginal women in Canada. What 'counts' as resistance? Can activist efforts that do not necessarily fit in the Foucauldian framework effect

change in discourse, in spite of embracing subject positions that are part of the 'oppressive' discourse? Activists and relatives of these murdered women are, after all, lobbying for the local governments to recognize that these murders are a social problem and not just isolated incidents of violence (Culhane, 2003; O'Hara, 2006; Wright, 2001). Furthermore, the ways in which they speak of and represent the murdered women seek to humanize them. To counter the mainstream discourses of the press, relatives, friends and activists depict the murdered women as mothers, sisters and daughters, women with lives and relationships and not just prostitutes, drug addicts or selfish, 'loose' *maquila* workers. Interestingly enough, an analysis of the representation of these murders and disappearances in Mexico and Canada reveal that these efforts have indeed started to effect some change in representation.

Thus, in the next chapter I first analyze the negative and violent representation of these cases in the Canadian news media and the Mexican newspaper *El Heraldo de Chihuahua*. I examine these representations as technology of violence. I argue that these representations are violent in themselves since they make the horrible death (by culture) that these women suffered a spectacle and, as such, they have further contributed to the perception of these women as disposable. Nevertheless, in the final discussion, I elaborate on the tensions in the conceptualization of power and resistance within feminist and Foucauldian frameworks.

Chapter Four
A Spectacle of Death (by Culture): Representation as a Technology of Violence

As I established in the previous chapter, the bodies of the murdered women of Ciudad Juárez and of Aboriginal women in Canada incarnate the violent effects of the histories of social inequalities perpetuated through (neo-)colonial technologies of bio-power. In this chapter, I analyze the representation of these marginalized women's murders and disappearances in the news media as part of the microphysics of power that contribute to their production as disposable and worthless bodies, and hence to the re-production of the violence that was perpetrated against them. I argue that the representation of these murders and disappearances is in itself inseparable from this violence; representation is thus a technology of violence.

My purpose in this chapter is, therefore, to focus on the representation, or lack thereof, of the murders and disappearances of Aboriginal women in Canada in the Canadian news media[1] and on the coverage of the case of *las muertas de Juárez* in the Mexican newspaper *El Heraldo de Chihuahua*.[2] In so doing, I emphasize that it is not my attempt to equate these two cases. Rather, I aim to analyze the media's treatment of these crimes within their specific discursivities and social contexts. I have chosen to engage with news media representations of these cases because, be it Mexico or Canada, they mediate most, if not all, of the public information concerning these crimes. Furthermore, it is the daily practice of many to read the newspaper or watch the news and take unquestioningly whatever is portrayed there as true and legitimate and, as a result, as *real*:

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[1] I have chosen to focus mainly on the newspaper *Toronto Star*, as well as online articles from *CTV News* and *CBC News* networks, since they are representative of mainstream Canadian media. The *Toronto Star* is, in fact, the newspaper with the largest readership in Canada. I also use articles from the *Edmonton Journal*, the *Calgary Herald* and the *Star Phoenix*, given that some cases of murders or disappearances of Aboriginal women were only given local coverage.

[2] *El Heraldo de Chihuahua* is the newspaper with the largest readership in the Mexican state of Chihuahua, where Ciudad Juárez is located. It is part of the 70 newspapers that the group *Organización Editorial Mexicana* (Mexican Editorial Organization) produces in the whole country. As such, it is also representative of mainstream Mexican press.

> ...the discourse of the [news media] is an important subject for analysis in the inquiry into the consideration of definitions of deviance and their representation because of its pervasive, non-specialist and everyday nature. The reading of a newspaper [or watching the news] is an accepted part of the daily ritual of millions (Young, 1990: viii).

Taking representation as a technology of violence, I am primarily concerned with the relationship between the representation of violence and the violence of representation. I explore these concepts through two interconnected aspects of the portrayal of the murders and disappearances and their relation to the visualization of the body as a materialization of violence against the feminine and against women (Burfoot, 2007): the claims to truth/objectivity that the news media make in their accounts of these crimes, and the sensationalism and indifference that simultaneously surround the news media reports on these cases. In so doing, I explore the gendered but also racialized and class significance with which the representation of these women, their murders and their bodies is imbued through discourse analysis and feminist film theory. Ultimately, I argue that these aspects of representation create a spectacle of these women's deaths. As a result, they contribute to their death by culture,[3] that is, to the discursive and material production (and re-production) of these marginalized women and their bodies as waste and to the expectation that these women will inevitably be killed.

Of Horror and Pleasure: the Violence of Representation and the Representation of Violence

In looking at the relation between representation and the violence committed against Aboriginal women in Canada and working class women in Ciudad Juárez, it

[3] In the previous chapter I utilized the concept of death by culture (Wright, 1999) as the materialization of the cultural expectation that these women will inevitably be killed because they represent social and cultural waste and hence cultural value in decline, which needs to be restored (p. 458). Since I am concerned with representation, I want to emphasize in this chapter the discursive dimension of the production of these marginalized women as waste in representation as a manifestation of death by culture.

becomes clear that the representation of their murders and disappearances as acts of violence is not the only object of analysis. Equally important is the analysis of the discursive structure of representation and its relation to the social, as well as its interpretation by an audience as factors which contribute to the re-production and perpetuation of this violence. Thus, the object of analysis is not solely the representation of violence, but the violence of representation.

Discourse analysis and feminist film theory are particularly useful in examining the relation between violence and representation in the news media portrayal of the murders and disappearances of these marginalized women. Discourse analysis, as a tool of interpretation, "emphasizes the way versions of the world, of society, events and inner psychological worlds are produced in discourse" (Potter, 1997: 146). Discourse here is understood in Foucauldian terms as "the way in which a particular set of linguistic categories relating to an object and the ways of depicting it frame the way we comprehend that object" (Bryman, 2004: 370). Within the framework of feminist film theory, I utilize discourse analysis to deconstruct the gendered, racialized and classed discourses of violence which structure the news media reports, while addressing the readers' simultaneous experience of pleasure and disgust in their fascination with the horrific images and descriptions of these women's torture and murder in the reports' narratives. Indeed, feminist film theory has always relied on the "investigative gaze" of psychoanalysis (Mulvey, 1979: xiv) to explore scopophilia (pleasure in looking) "to discover how and when [it] is reinforced by pre-existing patterns of fascination already at work within the individual subject and the social formations that have moulded him" (ibid: 14). As such, feminist film theory allows me to problematize the spectacle of the representation of violence against women and the feminine as simultaneously pleasurable and horrific. This

controversial representation begs the questions: what is the significance of the (female) body in representation and what are the problems that femininity poses for representation? How is this related to questions of subjectivity? How is representation a technology of violence?

To address my first two questions, it is useful to explore the insights that feminist film theory offers on this matter. The interpretation of the female body as the maternal site that is both life- and death-giver has long been an object of fascination and horror, of worship and terror (Braidotti, 1994: 82; Burfoot, 2006; Creed, 1993; Kristeva, 1982). As such, woman's sexual difference from man has become the locus of the association of femininity with monstrosity (Braidotti, 1994: 81). Femininity has thus often been represented as "deadly and desirous" at the same time (Burfoot, 2006).The notion of femininity as monstrous in (film) representation has been best analyzed by Barbara Creed (1993) through her concept of the "monstrous-feminine." Creed draws extensively on the work of Julia Kristeva (1982: 2) on the abject as something that is neither subject nor object, something that defies the boundaries and dichotomies imposed by the phallocentric symbolic order.

Kristeva (1982) posits that the abject, horror and the feminine are part of the formation of subjectivity through the resolution of the Oedipus complex. The resolution of the Oedipus complex signifies the dissolution of the pre-Oedipal mother-child dyad with the child's entrance into the phallocentric symbolic order, marked by the Name of the Father, through the acquisition of language (Mitchell and Rose, 1982). For Kristeva (1982), this resulting repression of the maternal (the feminine) as a precondition of the subject's narcissistic development is the beginning of the contradictory relationship of the subject to the abject. The abject, as a remembrance of the undifferentiated maternal body, continuously fascinates us. Nonetheless, abjection

as ambiguity and excess that escape signification produces fear as it disturbs the seeming stability and coherence of our subjectivity. Ultimately, we are repulsed and revolted by the abject as we are by some food, bodily fluids and decay, especially by the corpse (Kristeva, 1982). They, like the abject, pose a threat to the boundary between what we consider human and non-human and to the "clean and proper body."[4] What is of relevance here is that, for Kristeva, sexual difference is inextricably linked to abjection.

Creed (1993) therefore claims that the monstrous-feminine represents that about woman "that is shocking, terrifying, horrific, abject": the difference of female sexuality and women's reproductive ability (p. 1). She emphasizes both "the importance of gender in the construction of [woman's] monstrosity" and the fact that the monstrous-feminine, like the abject, exerts on us a compelling mixture of fascination and horror (ibid: 3). In fact, Creed insists that

> [v]irtually all horror texts represent the monstrous-feminine in relation to Kristeva's notion of the maternal authority and the mapping of the self's clean and proper body. Images of blood, vomit, pus, shit, etc., are central to our culturally/socially constructed notions of the horrific. They signify a split between two orders: the maternal authority and the law of the father. Their presence in the horror film may invoke a response of disgust from the audience situated as it is within the social symbolic but at a more archaic level the representation of bodily wastes may invoke pleasure in breaking the taboo on filth – sometimes described as a pleasure in perversity – and a pleasure in returning to that time when the mother-child relationship was marked by an untrammelled pleasure in 'playing' with the body and its wastes (ibid: 13).

Hence, for Creed (1993: 10, 11), horror films (and I argue that media representations of violence against women) engage with the abject in three ways: 1) they provide an abundance of images of abjection in the form of (whole or mutilated) corpses and polluting bodily fluids and wastes; 2) these images continuously disturb

[4] Kristeva argues that illusion of the clean and proper body, that is, the social and acculturated body 'in control' (of its functions and fluids) that conforms to the norms dictated by the Name of the Father, is sustained only as long as we repress and undermine the danger posed by those bodily fluids which are considered polluting. The feminine is psychically and culturally related to the excremental and the menstrual; the two main kinds of bodily fluids that pollute and defile.

or transgress the boundaries between the human and non-human and are, as such, monstrous; 3) they construct the feminine as abject. Ultimately, she argues that horror films serve as an opportunity for viewers to work out the contradictory experience of fascination and horror with the abject: "[a]s a modern form of defilement rite, [it] attempts to separate out the symbolic order from all that threatens its stability, particularly the mother and all that her universe signifies. In this sense, signifying horror involves a representation of, and a reconciliation [however ambiguous] with the maternal body" (ibid: 14). In terms of the representations of *las muertas de Juárez* and the murders of Aboriginal women in Canada, this 'reconciliation' with abjection and the monstrous-feminine can be interpreted as the media's attempts to sanitize the violence to which these women were subjected in representing it as a spectacle in order to restore the boundaries that these women, their bodies and their (classed and racialized) femininity transgressed.

Yet it is precisely because of the problematic depiction of something as disturbing as these women's horrific experiences of violence as a spectacle and hence as pleasurable, that I find it of paramount importance to study the representation of violence, but also how representation does violence. Representation is, after all, "a discursive and a social practice [and, as such, it] is constituted by certain institutional frames and directed to bring about certain effects" (Young, 1990: 158). Representation must be read as a "text [that is] contextual, contingent and socially constructed, [to] reveal the operation of hierarchies, the polarisation of values and the powers of an authoritative monologue which pretends to universal truths necessary to seduce and capture its reader" (ibid). I consider each report as an interdiscursive text that is

> ...situated first, within and alongside other texts, both literal and photographic, within the specific newspaper [or media network] concerned, as well as

second, embedded within and drawing upon a system of cultural values that both assist and inform the writing of the report and in addition make available a specific interpretation or reading of the report (Smart and Smart, 1978: 97).

At the center of my project, therefore, lies my third question: how is representation a technology of violence? In other words, how can we understand representation as a gendered, racialized and classed technology that produces and re-produces violence against these marginalized women and against the feminine, without it being recognized as such? Representation does not just portray acts of violence, it engages in violence. I argue that the visualization of the tortured, dismembered and mutilated bodies of Mexican and Aboriginal women in the news media's narrative is also a materialization of the violence that these women experienced. This is death by culture in the sense that the relationship between the materialization of violence on these women's bodies and the equally violent visual materialization of their bodies in representation reminds us of the inextricable and unavoidable link between the discursive and the social. There is no separation between text and reality, between the "internal (textual) and external (referent, real, Being): "representation is inescapable" (Young, 1990: 159) since "there is nothing outside of the text" (Derrida quoted in Young, 1990: 162).

Teresa de Lauretis's (1987) work on "technologies of gender"[5] offers valuable insights upon which I base this conceptualization of violence and representation. De Lauretis establishes a relation between violence and rhetoric that "presupposes that some order of language, some kind of discursive representation is at work not only in the concept 'violence' but in the social practices of violence as well. The (semiotic) relation of the social to the discursive is thus posed from the start" (ibid: 32). As such,

[5] De Lauretis (1987) developed the concept "technology of gender" to her critique of Foucault's gender-blind theory of sexuality as a technology of sex. She argues that gender, like sexuality, is a product of "the set of effects produced in bodies, behaviours and social relations [...] by the development of a complex political technology" (ibid: 3).

de Lauretis puts forth two concepts that exemplify this relation: the rhetoric of violence and the violence of rhetoric, which are inherently linked in the process through which language defines and produces violence:

> From the Foucauldian notion of a rhetoric of violence, an order of language which speaks violence – names certain behaviours and events as violent, but not others, and constructs objects and subjects of violence, and hence violence as a social fact – it is easy to slide into the reverse notion of a language which, in itself, produces violence. But if violence is in language, before if not regardless of its concrete occurrences in the world, then there is also a violence of rhetoric... (de Lauretis, 1987: 32).

Most important for de Lauretis (1987) is, nevertheless, the fact that the relation between violence and rhetoric cannot escape gender. Gender here must not be understood

> ...as 'biological' difference that lies before or beyond signification, or as a culturally constructed object of masculine desire, but as a semiotic difference – a different production of reference. [...] "The technology of gender" [refers thus to] the techniques and discursive strategies by which gender is constructed and hence [...] violence is en-gendered. Violence is not simply 'in' language or 'in' representation, but it is also thereby en-gendered (pp. 38, 44, 42).

With regard to the representation of violence, de Lauretis (1987) argues that "there seem to be two kinds of violence with respect to its object: male and female... [in that] the object on which or to which the violence is done is what establishes the meaning of the represented act; and that object is perceived or apprehended as either feminine or masculine" (p. 42). This constitutes the rhetoric of violence in representation. Mythical texts, scientists' descriptions of their encounters with the unknown in nature, or the narratives of colonization, for that matter, are all examples of the rhetoric of violence. In the end, these texts present a structure in which the subject of violence is inevitably masculine and, in turn, the object of violence is invariably female.

To explain the concept of the violence of rhetoric, de Lauretis critiques gender-neutral approaches to violence. For de Lauretis, any explanation of violence must take

into consideration the semiotic and discursive dimension of the social in the context of social power relations. For example, approaches to family violence, which utilize gender-neutral terms like "spouse abuse" or "marital violence" in their rhetoric, obscure the relations of power between women and men, since they imply that both spouses could equally partake in this type of violence (ibid: 34). As much feminist research on violence has evidenced, this is simply not the case.[6] In excluding gender from the analysis of such violence, these approaches engage in the violence of rhetoric.[7] Ultimately, for de Lauretis the violence of rhetoric is the denial of violence as en-gendered and thus of the gendered relations of power involved in the maintenance of a specific (patriarchal) social order.

For the purpose of my analysis of the news media portrayal of the murders and disappearances of marginalized women in Ciudad Juárez and of Aboriginal women in Canada, I take the representation of violence and the violence of representation to be similarly related. The representation of violence involves the depiction of these acts of violence as a spectacle through hegemonic discourses of what is 'violence against women.' Conversely, the violence of representation refers, on the one hand, to the gender-, race- and class-blindness that tends to permeate the portrayal of these murders and disappearances. That is, it can be understood as the lack of awareness of the fact that these women suffered their horrendous and violent fate precisely because of their gender, race and class. When race, class and gender are made to disappear, the social meaning of bodies is rendered invisible and with it, the power relations that structure our discourses and the material organization of our social life (Razack, 2000;

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[6] The gendered structures of the nuclear family in particular and of the labour market effectively render women more vulnerable to being battered by their male partners (Dobash and Dobash, 1978).

[7] In fact, de Lauretis, bases her critique of Foucault on this argument. Following Plaza (1980), de Lauretis (1987) critiques Foucault's theory of sexuality as the product of a technology of sex, which led him to argue against the penalization of rape as a sexual crime (see Chapter 1). In denying gender in his conceptualization of sex, sexuality and sexual violence, not to mention his failure to acknowledge his own enunciative modality, Foucault ignores the fact that "bodies and their pleasures" do not exist apart from the discursive order, from language or representation (ibid: 36).

Culhane, 2003). At the same time, the violence of representation is embedded in the discursive production of gender, class and race difference necessary for the maintenance of a certain kind of social order that legitimizes the institutionalized inferior status of these marginalized women and the violence that is committed against them.

The claims to truth/objectivity that the news media make in their accounts of these crimes and the sensationalism and indifference that simultaneously surround the news media reports on these cases illustrate the relationship between the representation of violence and the violence of representation. With regard to the first aspect, it is necessary to recognize the powerful influence that genres of representation such as television drama or popular film have on news media representations of reality, even though they are seldom analyzed in conjunction with one another, since "it is assumed that their fictional referent excludes them from direct comparison with news discourse" (Young, 1998: 145). In claiming objectivity, the news discourse attempts to draw a line between fiction and reality and the representation of (sexual) violence against women. Yet what is then ignored is that

> ...news stories rely upon the reader's ability to recognise scenarios, styles, and identificatory devices offered up in other representational genres [and, therefore,] how the news genre shares with television drama and film a range of themes, scenarios, paradigms and dividing lines which combine to frame the topic of sexual violence as a category constructed on the border between masculinity and femininity, and between the real and the fictional (ibid: 151).

Indeed, it is remarkable the similarity that exists between the news media images and narratives of these cases and those of TV shows like *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* and *Law and Order*, which are concerned with the forensic investigation of crimes (usually against women). The Canadian news media and the Mexican newspaper *El Heraldo de Chihuahua* are full of stories and images of forensic investigators discovering and analyzing 'evidence' of the crimes; the evidence being

the bodies, or the remains thereof, of the murdered women. As de Lauretis (1987) emphasized, in this type of representation the subject of violence is always male: be it the killer or the scientist. In turn, women and their bodies are the objects of violence: not only were they murdered, but their decomposed, tortured and mutilated bodies have become 'evidence' from which (objective and scientific) knowledge about the crime must be 'extracted.' These women are thus consistently dehumanized.

In the coverage of Robert Pickton's trial, the Canadian media consistently refer to Pickton's pig farm, its slaughterhouse and the trailer where he lived as "forensic treasures," since over 200,000 DNA and toxicology samples were 'discovered.' The *Toronto Star's* articles "Digging for Evidence at B.C.'s Notorious Pig Farm; Archaeologists Sift Through the Debris of an Alleged Serial Killer" (Girard, October 19, 2002: H 03), "Trailer Yielded Forensic Treasure" (February 9, 2007: A4) and "Lots of Blood in Trailer, Expert Says: Analyst Testifies at Pickton Trial that Height of Spatters Suggests a Body Might Have Been Dragged Through Motorhome on Property" (Joyce, February 13, 2007a: A 15) are only a few examples. These articles highlight the indispensable role of forensic scientists in solving the crime. The *CBC News* In Depth coverage of the Pickton trial even provides a link to a section that explains the role of forensic science in the missing-women investigation (http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/pickton/forensic.html). The site meticulously describes how forensic investigators "are trying to find any tiny piece of evidence – bone fragments (bone slivers, even), hair, joints, teeth – anything that might contain a few cells, enough for a usable sample of DNA."

The pictures that often accompany these articles illustrate these forensic scientists looking for evidence in a careful, scientific and objective manner; a skill that common police officers may lack (Figure 1). These pictures could be, nevertheless,

stills of any *CSI* episode (Figure 2). In fact, several times the articles make references to the popular TV series. One such article is the *Toronto Star's* "At the Scene of the Crime, Forget the Sunglasses and the Fancy Suits You See on TV, Veteran Forensic Investigators Tell It Like It Is" (Powell, February 22, 2004: A 03). Although this article critiques that the show's popularity has created unreal expectations of forensic investigators, it has not deterred the *Toronto Star* and other Canadian news media from constructing their narratives of the Pickton trial in this manner. The allure of DNA and the scientific expertise of forensic analysts in the popular imaginary have proven to be too powerful.

FIGURE 1 "Forensic Scientists" in the CBC News online in depth coverage of the Pickton Trial http://www.cbc.ca/news/ background/pickton/forensic.html.

FIGURE 2 "CSI Crime Scene Investigation" (2000), in http://www.imdb.com/gallery/ss/0247082/945447_D0251.jpg.html?path=gallery&path_key=0247082&seq=14.

In Mexico, the depiction of forensic expertise has also another function: it has been used as a tool to scientifically (and thus 'truthfully') support police findings amidst a climate of political anxieties with regard to the murders and hence to appease the general lack of trust in the police's ability to solve the crimes. After all, numerous doubts have been raised as to whether some of the bodies have been correctly identified, not to mention the many accusations that the Mexican police has faced for being 'sloppy' and unprofessional (Amnesty International, 2003). In other words, the representation of experts using state of the art forensic tools (like in *CSI*), legitimizes the police's findings, even in cases when the victims' relatives have refused to believe that the bodies in question belong to their daughters.

The following articles and the pictures that accompany them stand out in *El Heraldo de Chihuahua:* "The Remains of a Woman Murdered Three Months Ago Have Been Found"[8] (Topete, May 27, 2003a: 1B), "Chief Forensic Investigator of the

[8] "*Hallan Restos de Mujer Asesinada Desde Hace Tres Meses.*"

Attorney's Confirms that The Remains Are Neyra's"[9] (Topete, July 18, 2003b: 1 B) and "Forensic Investigator Claims There Are No Scapegoats, the Remains Coincide, It Is Neyra Azucena"[10] (Topete, July 18, 2003c: 5 B). The picture (Figure 3) in the first article shows how forensic investigators have identified the decomposed and scattered remains of the murdered woman in the crime scene. This picture can be easily compared to any scene from *CSI* (Figure 4) or any other thriller.

allan restos de mujer

"Motivaré, convenceré y rescataré"

Ráfagas

Déficit de 30% de lluvias

FIGURE 3 "The Remains of a Murdered Woman" in *El Heraldo de Chihuahua*, May 37, 2003, 1B.

FIGURE 4 "CSI Crime Scene Investigation 2" (2000), in http://www.imdb.com/gallery/ss/0247082/945447_D0251.jpg.html?path=gallery&path_key=0247082&seq=15.

[9] "*Confirma Jefe de Peritos de la Procuraduría: Restos Sí Son de Neyra.*"
[10] "*No Hay 'Chivos Expiatorios.' Perito Forense: Coinciden los Restos: Sí es Neyra Azucena.*"

The pictures in the other two articles (Figure 5 and Figure 6) show how (allegedly) Neyra Azucena's skull is being analyzed by a forensic investigator. The pictures thus depict how a scientist (represented by a hand wearing a latex glove) has meticulously and objectively identified the remains as Neyra's, in spite of Neyra's mothers refusal to identify this body as her daughter's or her nephew as her murderer. The response of the attorney general and forensic investigator to Neyra's mother is that science cannot lie, that it is "impossible to invent names and circumstances."

de Chihuahua

18

Confirma jefe de peritos de la Procuraduría

Restos sí son de Neyra

Todo coincide

Huesos, ropa y objetos, son de la víctima

SE BUSCA

FIGURE 5 "The Remains Are Neyra's" in *El Heraldo de Chihuahua*, July 18, 2003, 1B.

Coinciden los restos: sí es Neyra Azucena

Presunta implicada

Se presentó a declarar Laura Esther

FIGURE 6 "The Remains Coincide, It Is Neyra Azucena" in *El Heraldo de Chihuahua*, July 18, 2003, 5B.

Ultimately, the rationality of scientific facts and knowledge represent a glimmer of hope, a promise to solve what are otherwise portrayed as irrational murders that are "as bad as a horror movie" ("Pickton Jury Cautioned Evidence Will be Graphic," *Star Phoenix*, December 13, 2006: C 10). Science and entertainment sanitize. We can forget about the fact that women were really murdered; we can reconcile the feelings of abjection that their corpses and mutilated bodies may evoke on us and the threats to our "clean and proper" body. Instead, these women have become objectified as evidence; they are only body parts or remains to be analyzed scientifically.

It is equally important to look at the way in which the media sensationalizes and/or remains indifferent to the murders and disappearances of these marginalized women because it contributes to the invisibility and tacit acceptance of the violence committed against them. Though it would seem that the sensationalist attention with which the news media have sometimes showered the murders combats societal indifference, I argue that this sensationalism is still a facet of indifference. Ultimately, when the reporting is sensationalist, the violence that these women experienced often becomes a source of entertainment akin to TV shows (precisely like *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* and *Law and Order*), horror movies or thrillers.

El Heraldo de Chihuahua, for example, featured a series called **Asesinatos de Mujeres** (Murders of Women), with a drop of bright red blood over the word 'de' (of) (Figure 7) and ***Crímenes en la Frontera*** (Crimes on the Border) to report on these crimes in 1996 and 2001 almost as if they were part of a TV series, when the murders gathered the most public attention. In Canada, the *CBC News* (http://www.cbc.ca/ news/background/pickton/index.html) online in depth coverage of the Pickton trial allows readers access to everything and anything related to the trial.

As if they were part of the story, readers can access videos, documentaries and interviews, news stories, reporters' notes, photos and even explore the Pickton pig farm through an interactive aerial map (http://www.cbc.ca/news/ interactives/map-picktonfarm/) and an interactive map of the farm's history (http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/pickton/ map-farm-history.html). Readers are also given an opportunity to submit their own point of view on how this "hot topic" can be covered (http://www.cbc.ca/news/yourview/canada/2007/01/picton_trial_ covearge.html). This sensationalist way of covering these stories goes beyond undermining the seriousness of the crimes and negating societal responsibility for them: it is part of the ongoing process through which these women are dehumanized and Othered. The violence and torture to which they were subjected are rendered invisible; their deaths are a spectacle.

Los Asesinatos en Serie de Cd. Juárez

FIGURE 7 "Murders of Women"[11] in *El Heraldo de Chihuahua*, April 16, 1996, 2B.

Related to the sensationalism which often surrounds these cases is the violence of the reporting itself. News reports and newspaper articles are frequently accompanied with exceedingly graphic descriptions of the gruesome deaths and the

[11] "*Asesinatos de Mujeres*."

tortures to which these women were subjected, not to mention the detailed accounts of the conditions in which their corpses were found. As such, the reports in fact re-produce the violence that these women suffered.

El Heraldo de Chihuahua's coverage of the case of *las muertas de Juárez* is rich in such accounts:

> Clear signs of torture were found on the body of [Guillermina], cigarrette burnings, cuts on her head with a *chirraquera* knife, she had been raped while she was held captive and, finally, she was burnt alive ("Another Psychopath Killer is Accused in V. de Juárez,"[12] April 17, 1996; 15B; my translation)

> The 17 young women who were murdered between August 1995 and April 1996 were tortured so that they would have sexual intercourse with their attackers, and, at least three of them, present mutilations in their nipples. When the body of Elizabeth Castro, 17 years old, was found... her hands were tied with her own shoelaces, she had been sexually attacked, and she died due to strangulation. In the same way, Silvia Elena Rivera Morales, 17 years old, found on September 3... had knife wounds in both buttocks and she had been strangled... On September 10, the body... of Olga Alicia Carrillo Pérez, 20 years old, was found, which presented mutilation in one of her nipples and traces of strangulation... ("The 17 Young Women Were Viciously Tortured,"[13] April 17, 1996; 15B; my translation).

> The girl, whose corpse was already putrid, was found close to Cerro Bola, she was stabbed 15 times and it was established that rape took place, but her identity hasn't been confirmed ("She was Killed from 15 Stab wounds – The Body of the Girl of Cd. Juárez Has Not been Identified,"[14] March 15, 1997; 5B; my translation)

In more recent publications, *El Heraldo* has even provided photos of the bodies covered in blood (Figure 8) or what is left of them in the desert (Figure 9). These bodies have become a gory spectacle for the reader, yet another sensationalist element in the representation of these murders.

[12] "*Denuncian en V. de Juárez a Otro Sicópata Asesino.*"
[13] "*Las 17 Jóvenes Fueron Torturadas con Saña.*"
[14] "*La Mataron de 15 Puñaladas –Sin Identificar el Cadáver de la Niña en Cd. Juárez.*"

Ráfagas

Tragedia en Villa Juárez

Mató a su exnovia y luego se suicidó

Hay signos claros de que la situación está cambiando, por lo que la tendencia a una recuperación viene lenta, pero viene.

FIGURE 8 "He Killed His Ex-Girlfriend and then He Killed Himself"[15] in *El Heraldo de Chihuahua,* May 27, 2003, 1B.

Organización Editorial Mexicana

HERALDO de Chihuahua

FIGURE 9 "Body" in *El Heraldo de Chihuahua,* July 27, 2003, 6B.

In Canada, the coverage of the Pickton trial provides, once again, the most explicit examples. Over the years, the *Toronto Star* has featured several stories that reveal the "ugly and gory" nature of Pickton's murders:

[15] "*Mató a su Exnovia y luego se Suicidó.*"

> The details ooze and congeal – like blood.... Six murder victims, precious little of them left behind to whisper of their deaths – bone fragments, severed heads, the stumps of hands and feet, a clutch of recognizable personal possessions – all of whom came to their grisly end in the ramshackle buildings and derelict caravans scattered about a Port Coquitlam pig farm ("'I Was Gonna Do One More Make It an Even 50'; Prosecutor Reveals Ghastly Details of What Was Found at B.C. Pig Farm," January 23, 2007: A 1).

Other articles that use similar rhetoric are "Body parts Found in Pig-Farm Freezer. Police Searching for Missing Women Discover Heads, Hands, Feet" (June 4, 2002: A 23), "Relatives of Missing Women Get 'Cruel' Shock; Families Hear of Body Parts in Pig-Farm Freezer" (Bains, June 5, 2002: A 04), "Garbage Cans Contained Body Parts, Trial Hears" (February 21, 2007: A 8) and "Mystery Skull Split Like Those at Pig Farm" (Levitz, February 27, 2007b: A 4). The *CTV News* online article on January 22, 2007 "Crown Says Pickton Confessed to Killing 49" (http://www.ctv.ca/servlet/ArticleNews/story/CTVNews/20070121/pickton_trial_070122?s_name=&no_ads=) even issues a warning stating that "some readers might find the details to follow in this story disturbing." Following the warning, the article goes on to describe how "Crown counsel Derrill Prevett told jurors... that police found the skulls of Sereena Abotsway and Andrea Joesbury stuffed inside plastic pails when they searched Pickton's pig farm. The prosecutor also told the jury that police found the two five-gallon pails with human heads inside two freezers." In addition, *CTV News* informs the reader that

> ...[s]wabs taken of blood-stained clothing in the trailer also matched the DNA profile of Mona Wilson, another woman accused of being killed.... Wilson's remains were found in a bag at the bottom of a garbage can. In a laundry room of Pickton's trailer, a revolver was found in a zippered gun case. Its barrel was covered in plastic wrap, had an elastic band wrapped around it and had a sexual device fitted over it.... Forensic evidence detected DNA from both Pickton and Wilson on the revolver (ibid).

Women here are being literally represented as waste, their mutilated bodies were found *in* the garbage, they were disposed of *as* garbage. However, some reports

actually eroticize the violence to which these women were subjected in a manner that resembles "a male-directed sexual fantasy" (Walkowitz, 1992). The *Toronto Star's* report "Trailer Yielded Forensic Treasure" (February 9, 2007: A 4) portrays the discovery of the revolver mentioned in the *CTV News* article in an eroticized manner:

> The young police officer knows guns and he knows handcuffs. They are the tools of his trade. Inside Robert Pickton's industrial-size trailer, he found both items, *with a twist*. The firearm, a loaded Smith & Wesson revolver discovered atop a shelf in the laundry room, had a "dildo" – thus described in court – attached to its barrel. The cuffs, tucked on a shelf, were lined with "faux tiger fur," and lay alongside other sex toys.... *Sex and violence. Sordid, seamy, foul. Pleasure seized and pain inflicted* (emphasis added).

But what do the words "sex and violence. Sordid, seamy, foul. Pleasure seized and pain inflicted" actually mean? Given the horrific description of how these women were tortured, mutilated and murdered, these words can hardly convey the actual fear, pain and violence that they must have suffered. On the contrary, these words re-produce the violence to which these women were subjected as pleasurable, making it invisible and replacing it with sexualizing entertainment.

The article "Orgy of Blood and Terror: The Body of a Raped Woman was Found"[16] (Perea, May 12, 1993: 6B) in *El Heraldo de Chihuahua* also utilizes a rhetoric that eroticizes sexual violence against the woman who was murdered:

> *Victim of an orgy of blood and terror*, a young woman around 24 years of age was murdered last night by unidentified subjects, who threw her down a bridge while she was still alive. *They kidnapped her for at least two days without food, they kept her handcuffed and subjected her to tortures...* The lacerations of her *noble parts* indicate no other thing but the fact that *she was victim of constant and tumultuous rapes*. The agents... consider that the murderers kidnapped the victim for several days and that they subjected her to torture and rape. *That's why we talk about an orgy of blood and terror* (my translation, emphasis mine).

In so doing, *El Heraldo de Chihuahua* undermines the suffering of the woman in question and the seriousness of the crime. How is it that these terrible expressions of

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[16] "*Orgía de Sangre y Terror: Hallan Cadáver de Mujer Ultrajada.*"

violence against women can be understood as 'orgies'? There is an inherent contradiction between the word orgy and the word terror, since the former is associated with pleasure and the latter with pain and suffering; the extreme violence to which this woman was subjected is made invisible, along with her humanness and her identity.

The eroticization of these women's experiences of violence and the violent sensationalization of the mutilation and torture to which they were subjected ignore these women's institutionalized subordinate status in their society, as well as the context in which the violence takes place. The relationship between the materialization of violence on these women's bodies and the equally violent visual materialization of their bodies in representation in these examples cannot be ignored; the representation of these murders is a matter of death by culture.

In addition, these news stories seldom take the race and/or class of these women or their killers into consideration in an explicit manner as factors that may have rendered these women more vulnerable to violence. However, this is not to say that race and class are excluded from (the violence of) representation; that is, these women and their bodies are distinctively discursively classed and racialized. The "colonial gaze" (Shohat and Stam, 1994) that has shaped the Mexican and Canadian (neo-)colonial imaginaries continue to permeate the representation of Aboriginal women and Mexican women of low socio-economic resources in the news media apparatus. Moreover, the representation of these marginalized women's murders and disappearances portrays and is simultaneously structured by hegemonic discourses of violence against women. As a result, these stories usually define 'violence against women' as either the isolated act of a bloodthirsty sexual psychopath or as the victims' own fault (or as a combination of both), in that some of these women

engaged in behaviours that challenge traditional conceptualizations of femininity (e.g. sex work). In other words, these women are depicted as having transgressed the boundary of the Madonna/whore divide, which often leads to their construction as a 'deserving' (as opposed to an 'innocent') victim. As I elaborated on Chapter 2, this transgression is inextricably linked to death by culture. Women who overstep this boundary are considered worthless and hence cultural value in decline, since their sense of value is related to an ideal construction of femininity as passive and non-threatening (to masculinity). It is therefore this abject, monstrous femininity that figures as threatening in these representations, which, as Creed (1993) reminds us, serve as rites of defilement to the (maternal) feminine.

The archetype of the bloodthirsty psychopath is so powerful that it permeates both the Canadian and Mexican representations of the murders and disappearances. In the Mexican press, Abdel Latif Sharif Sharif[17] embodies the ultimate sexual psychopath. The development of the image of the psychopath in the articles of *El Heraldo de Chihuahua* has two stages: 1) the phase of the anonymous psychopath, and 2) the phase of Abdel Latif Sharif Sharif and his alleged accomplices, the gangs *Los Rebeldes* (The Rebels) and *Los Ruteros* (The Bus Drivers) as the ultimate sexual psychopaths. In *El Heraldo*, the image of the murderer as an anonymous psychopath was popularized during 1996 before any real suspects were convicted. Articles such as "The Seventh Victim of '*The Depredator*' Has Been Found"[18] (Rodríguez, September 11, 1996; 3 A), "Psychopaths Confess: They Would Meet Young Girls in Bars and

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[17] Sharif is an Egyptian chemist, who lived in the U.S., and not a Mexican man. Sharif had a long record of sexual violence against women in the U.S. and came to Mexico as part of an agreement he made with American authorities to get out of jail. After a young girl accused him of having raped her, he was blamed for some of the murders. In fact, he was accused of hiring the gangs *Los Rebeldes* and *Los Ruteros* to murder young girls while he was in jail to prove his innocence. As of today, he has been convicted of the murder of Elizabeth Castro García.

[18] "*Hallan Séptima Víctima de 'El Depredador.'*"

Then Kill Them"[19] (Ortega Lozano, April 16, 1996b: 1 B and 9 B) and "Presumed Murderers of 17 Young Women in Juárez Qualify as Psychopaths,"[20] (April 16, 1996: 9 B) reveal a remarkable sense of fascination with the archetype of the psychopath. More important is, nonetheless, "these articles' insistence on the murderers *being* psychopaths: the presumed killers are automatically pathologized, for it would be unthinkable that a 'normal' person could kill this way" (del Moral, 2007: 33). As the article titled "A Psychiatrist Affirms It: A Demented Sadomasochist, Perverted and Depraved [Individual] of CJ [Ciudad Juárez],"[21] illustrates:

> ...the acts of violence perpetrated in Ciudad Juárez [have] been committed by a *demented person,* who suffers from *perversion disorder,* as well as *sexual impulse constituted by sadomasochism, on top of schizophrenia and antisocial disorder.* This combination of disorders is rare to be found 'thank God,' said the psychiatrist Sergio Alfredo Padilla Zubiate. He commented that detecting this type of individuals is hard, given that they act normally as long as they do not have the *instinct to commit atrocities.* He even asserted that these violent acts have been committed in Ciudad Juárez are the doing of one person who had the disorders previously mentioned (April 13, 1996: 2 B; emphasis added).

The image of the bloodthirsty psychopath only became more complex as Sharif became the main suspect amidst a climate of social and political anxieties. *El Heraldo* thus carefully utilizes pictures and other devices in its layout to construct Sharif and the gangs *Los Rebeldes* and *Los Ruteros* as sexual psychopaths. For example, the image of a snake is used to represent Sharif (Figure 10). Even though the main article "Judge Denied Prison Order to Shariff"[22] (Ortega Lozano, March 27, 1996a: 6 B) says that a judge ruled against sending him to jail, the drawing of a snake in the second article suggests that Sharif is the actual killer: just like a snake, he is portrayed as evil, powerful, dangerous, poisonous, and sneaky.

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[19] "*Confiesan Psicópatas los Homicidios: Conocían a Víctimas en Centros Nocturnos y Luegos las Mataban.*"
[20] "*Califican de Sicópatas a Presuntos Homicidas de 17 Jóvenes en Juárez.*"
[21] "*Afirma Psiquiatra: Un Demente, Sadomasoquista, Perverso y Depravado de CJ.*"
[22] "*Juez Negó Formal Prisión a Shariff.*"

Policiaca

Argumentó que la PGJE no Aportó Pruebas Suficientes

Juez Negó Formal Prisión a Sharif

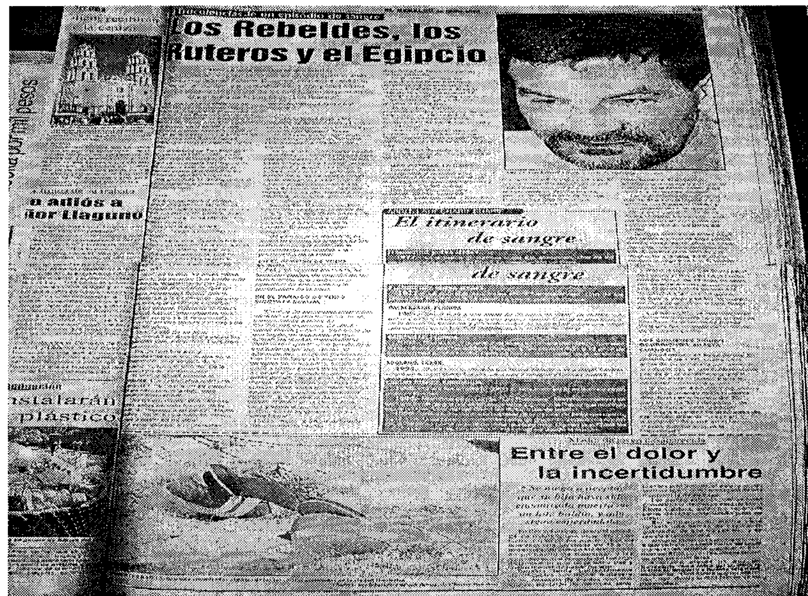
Afortunadamente no Hubo Heridos

Enfrentamiento a Balazos Entre Asaltante y Policías

Aún se Desconoce a los Responsables

FIGURE 10 "Aún se Desconoce a los Responsables"[23] in *El Heraldo de Chihuahua*, March 27, 1996, 6B.

The report "Truculence of an Episode of Blood: The Rebels, The Bus Drivers and The Egyptian (Part 2)"[24] (Meza Rivera, February 26, 2001: 3 B) (Figure 11), is literally and metaphorically framed by images of Sharif as an insatiable sexual predator.



Los Rebeldes, los Ruteros y el Egipcio

El itinerario de sangre

Entre el dolor y la incertidumbre

FIGURE 11 "Truculence of an Episode of Blood: The Rebels, The Bus Drivers and The Egyptian (Part 2)" in *El Heraldo de Chihuahua*, February 26, 2001, 3B.

[23] "The Guilty Parties are Still Unknown."

[24] "*Truculencias de un Episodio de Sangre: Los Rebeldes, Los Ruteros y el Egipcio (Segunda Parte).*"

The structure of layout depicts Sharif as if he were looking at his 'freshly murdered' victim's feet and at her dead body. Moreover, his 'itinerary of blood,' that is, his record of sexual violence against women in the U.S.,[25] is at the center of the page, which evidently renders him guilty. Finally, next to the picture of the victim's feet, is the report "Between Pain and Uncertainty"[26] (February 26, 2001: 3 B), which talks about a mother who does not believe that her daughter is dead. Hence, Sharif is represented as the ultimate sexual predator, the psychopath behind all these murders (del Moral, 2007: 34).

The article "They Accept Knowing the Egyptian Abdel Shariff Shariff: More Psychopaths are Captured in Juárez"[27] (Ortega Lozano, April 17, 1996c, 1B), is one of the few reports that renders visible the social class of the accused, but not of the victims. It displays the pictures of ten members of the gang *Los Rebeldes*, of which only one is a woman,[28] as well as a picture of Sharif (Figure 12). The nine male members look intimidating, since their hair is styled in a way that is strongly associated with drug lords. This implies that these individuals are part of what in Mexico is known as the violent and hedonistic *narcocultura* (drug lord culture). However, the reader knows from the beginning that these men are of the lower class, since they either were classified as *desempleados* (unemployed), as *obrero* (sweatshop worker), *albañil* (construction worker), or *vendedor de tacos* (sells tacos on the street).

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[25] The detailed account of the three cases of rape and physical assault for which he was convicted in the United States only serve the purpose of constructing him as the perfect murderer and the ultimate sexual psychopath. In the first case, the account reads that "the Egyptian beat up and forced [his date] to have sexual intercourse." In the second case, Sharif is said to have raped a woman who gave him a ride to his apartment after the bar. 'The Egyptian' both raped her and brutally beat her up. In the third case, Sharif rapes and "repeatedly beats up" a young student. The woman claims that "she feels afraid, since the Egyptian threatened to kill her after raping her."

[26] "*Entre el Dolor y la Incertidumbre*."

[27] "*Aceptan Conocer al* Egipicio *Abdel Shariff Shariff: Capturan Más Sicópatas en Juárez –Continúan Rastreo de Más Víctimas en Lomas de Poleo*."

[28] The representation of this female member of the gang, Erika, is also very interesting. Erika's occupation is listed as 'exotic dancer' and hence she is represented as both physically and morally corrupt in subsequent articles.

In so doing, the report makes use of a discourse based on middle-class values that evoke signs of racial and class otherness of working class men.

EL HERALDO
de Chihuahua

apturan más Sicópatas en Juárez

enuncian en V. de Juárez a Otro Sicópata Asesino

igen a Diputados se Pongan Trabajar en Favor del Pueblo

Aplican Modelo Chihuahuense en Diez Estados del País

Piden Empresarios Tregua Fiscal al IMSS y Hacienda

Detienen a Medardo Porras y lo Dejan Libre Bajo Fianza

Llamarán a Declarar a Otros Cuatro Priístas

Ráfagas

FIGURE 12 "More Psychopaths are Captured in Juárez" in *El Heraldo de Chihuahua*, April 17, 1996, 1B.

In the case of the media representation of Sharif, it is crucial to emphasize the Orientalist subtext that underpins the newspaper's articles on him. In Edward Said's (1978) work, Orientalism refers to Western representations of the Orient, "as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (p. 3). As such, Said argues that ideas about the Orient as the exotic, mysterious or violent 'Other' are, in fact, only stereotypes and cultural assumptions about what we think the Orient is supposed to be. The newspaper's constant reference to Sharif as *El Egipcio* (The Egyptian) and the use of a snake to symbolize him are techniques that effectively draw on Orientalist imagery to describe his character. Sharif is clearly portrayed as being different from Mexican men and, consequently, Mexican men are implicitly excused from being responsible for these crimes.

In Canada, even though no suspect has been apprehended in the case of the Highway of Tears, the few articles that have covered this case continuously make

reference to the likelihood that a psychopath/serial killer is behind these women's murders and disappearances. Some examples are "Could a Serial Killer Be Roaming Highway 16?: Family Calls for a Task Force After 6 Young Females Vanish Along the Route in 12 Years" (Bermingham, *The Province*, July 22, 2002: B 7) and "Serial Killer Feared in B.C.: Seven Young Women Victims on Highway 16" (Hall, *The Calgary Herald*, December 10, 2006: A 3). Finding a psychopath/serial killer seems like the only 'reasonable' explanation to these murders; it would mean finding the "evil that lurks along Highway 16" (Bermingham, *The Province*, July 22, 2002: B 7).

It is Robert "Willie" Pickton, however, who has recently come to personalize the serial killer/psychopath in the Canadian media.[29] Pickton, who has now been dubbed "The Pig Farmer," "The Pigman" or "Mr. Pigman" (http://www.ctv.ca/servlet/ArticleNews/story/CTVNews/20070122/pickton_excerpts_070122?s_name=&no_ads=), is often described as being "unmoved by DNA evidence" found on his property ("Pickton Unmoved by DNA Evidence, *Toronto Star*, January 25, 2007: A 1). According to most articles, Pickton is a cold-blooded butcher 'by nature': "his trade is a butcher, he butchers pigs, he has been doing it since he was 13 years old" (http://www.ctv.ca/servlet/ArticleNews/story/CTVNews/20070122/pickton_excerpts_070122?s_name=&no_ads=). As such, he is constantly portrayed as animalistic and thus 'abnormal': "*Robert Pickton knew swine. He was swine, in a way. 'I'm just a pig man'*" ("Jury Gets Glimpse of Pickton's Mind, *Toronto Star*, January 24, 2007: A1; emphasis added). A *CTV News* online article adds that Pickton is "into pigs" and that he described himself as "a bad dude" after saying at one point that "pork is his favourite meat" (January 28, 2007, http://www.ctv.ca/servlet/ArticleNews/story/CTVNews/20070128/pickton_strategy_0

[29] It is necessary to emphasize that the figure of John Crawford, the murderer of 4 Aboriginal women (see Introduction) has been completely ignored by the media.

70128?s_name=&no_ads=). The fact that he feels no remorse for brutally killing and dismembering 27 women is frequently highlighted:

> Accused serial killer Robert Pickton pleaded not guilty yesterday to charges he killed 27 women, mostly sex trade workers from one of Canada's poorest neighbourhoods. The 56-year old man spoke *in a strong voice* as each count of first-degree murder was read in B.C. Supreme Court, responding, "Not guilty" or "Not guilty, your honour," to the charges. (Joyce, Pickton Pleads Not Guilty to Killing 27, Toronto Star, January 31, 2006: A 07; emphasis added).

Another article recounts how, when asked to give closure to the families of the dead women, Pickton simply replied: "Shit happens" (http://www.ctv.ca/servlet/ArticleNews/story/CTVNews/20070128/pickton_strategy_070128?s_name=&no_ads=).

Yet the articles that most clearly seek to portray his cruelness and cold-bloodedness are those which make reference to the video tape that an undercover cop obtained while pretending to be Pickton's cellmate upon his arrest. The article "Performance Made for the Camera: Accused Killer Told Undercover Mountie He Hoped to Raise Gruesome Tally to 75" (*Toronto Star*, February 7, 2007: A 4) exemplifies this:

> He burps. He picks his nose and eats it. He strips down to skivvies and undershirt. Often he titters, a sinister hee-hee-hee. Sometimes he sighs, admonishes himself for stupidity, for being Mr. Sloppy. "So so so so close." To 50.... Robert Pickton, plate of beans balanced on his lap, splays the digits of one hand, five fingers showing. Then, with the same hand, brings forefinger to thumb, indicating a zero. The big 5-0. Would have been, could have been, had the tally not been halted at 49, allegedly. "I was gonna do one more, make it an even 50." [...] "Ah, I was sloppy at the end." Carelessness, Pickton observes, and now he's looking at life in prison. "I buried myself. Got me. They get me on this one. There's old carcasses. They've got DNA. Fingerprints maybe, I don't know. I made my own grave, being sloppy. But it pisses me off. They don't have nothing otherwise."

The article continues to report how Pickton's personality on the video is remarkably different from how he acts in front of the jury or the police:

> With police he's *lumpen, palpably dimwitted*, acknowledging little until the very end, when he granted that investigators will find the remains of some

> women at the farm – but denying that he killed them. On the jail-cell tape, by comparison, an animated Pickton portrays himself as *cunning, running the interrogation show, toying with his inquisitors and, critically, as the pig farmer who killed women.* "I wracked their brains, I'll tell you," Pickton boasts [...]. "Yes, I really... screwed their minds up." *Mr. Pigman, playing head games with the cops.* [...]. "Now, they're going to dig in the manure and see if the pigs s- out human remains." *He even jokes,* at one point, that he might show investigators where carcasses are located, *a scenario that causes him to burst out laughing.* "They never seen nothing like this before" (emphasis added).

Pickton is thus effectively portrayed as being dirty, unstable, sinister, evil, psychotic and devoid of feelings of guilt or shame for what he claims to have done, let alone of compassion for his victims' relatives. He is a psychopath, a cruel serial killer. The photo (Figure 13) and the sketch (Figure 14) that often accompany these articles only confirm this. In the picture, Robert Pickton appears unclean and dishevelled. And, while the sketch shows that he no longer has a beard, he seems scornful and uncaring.

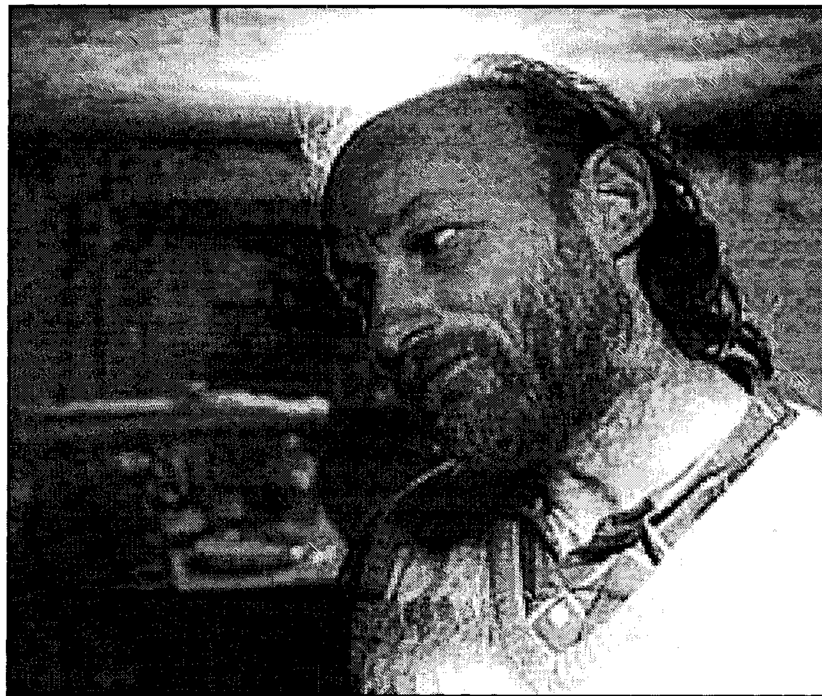

FIGURE 13 "Robert Pickton" in the CTV News in depth coverage of the Pictkon trial http://www.ctv.ca/servlet/ArticleNews/story/CTVNews/20070118/pickton_skurkacolumn_070118/20070121/.

FIGURE 14 "Sketch of Robert Pickton" in the CTV News in depth coverage of the Pictkon trial http://www.ctv.ca/servlet/ArticleNews/story/CTVNews/20070118/pickton_skurkacolumn_070118/20070121/.

What seem to me to be the two most problematic aspects of this representation are 1) the fact that his whiteness is never mentioned, even though at least 9 of his 27 victims were Aboriginal women (O'Hara, 2007) and 2) the constant references made to Pickton as "a pig man" or being "into pigs." As Sherene Razack (2000) argues, the exclusion of race in the representation of white men who kill Aboriginal women makes invisible the racial and gendered power relations that have shaped Canada's past and present. When Pickton is represented as 'just a man,' albeit the references made to him being a "pig man," and his victims as just "prostitutes," the social meaning of bodies is ignored. Thus, it becomes impossible "to interrogate what white men [are] doing in journeying to [Regina's] Stroll [or Vancouver's Downtown Eastside] to buy services of an Aboriginal prostitute. It [is] also not possible to interrogate the meaning of consent and violence in the space of prostitution between white and Aboriginal bodies" (ibid: 128). Behind this façade of racelessness or what Dara Culhane (2003) calls "race blindness" is hence the negation of the historical "burden of social suffering carried by Aboriginal people in [Vancouver's Downtown Eastside] – and Canada as a whole –" (p. 595). This is part of "the regime of disappearance" (Culhane, 2003) to which Aboriginal women and the present and historical violence has been perpetrated against them have been subjected.

Moreover, when the Canadian news media portray Pickton as being "into pigs" in describing the murders of women whom are still mainly regarded as "drug addicted prostitutes," it is clear that Pickton is not only into pigs, but also into prostitutes whom he butchered as if they were pigs. There is little difference, if any, in how the Canadian news media refer to these women and the livestock on Pickton's farm. In fact, the *Toronto Star's* article "Officer Paints a Grim Portrait of Pig Farm; 26-year Veteran of Vancouver Force in Tears Describing Sight of Neglected, Dying Livestock" (Joyce, February 20, 2007b: A 8) offers a very compassionate description of the animals dying on the farm, which noticeably contrasts the way in which these "drug addicted prostitutes" are represented.

> A veteran police officer, *wiping away tears and her voice breaking with emotion*, described a *pitiful sight of neglected and dying livestock* outside the trailer where accused murderer Robert Pickton lived. [...] In the back of the trailer, she said she saw a sow. *Hetherington stopped briefly to compose herself, using a handkerchief handed to her by the court clerk....* "She (the sow) was in such a condition that she could not stand," the officer said *as her voice halted.* [...] She saw another hog that weighed about 70 kilograms that was "in obvious distress." *As her voice broke again*, Hetherington said the hog's left front foot appeared to be "severely injured and appeared to be rotting." [...] None of the animals had water or food" (emphasis added).

There is no report describing an officer wiping his/her tears away as they recount how they discovered the bisected skulls, stuffed with the severed hands and feet of Sereena Wilson and the remains of Georgina Papin. This type of emotional response seems only to be appropriate for the victim's relatives. Instead, the Canadian media reported, in a very sensationalist manner, on the possibility that Pickton may have fed the bodies to the pigs and that meat from his farm may have been contaminated with human remains: "Human Remains Fear in B.C. Meat; 'Can't Rule Out' DNA in Pickton Pigs. Family of Missing Women Appalled" (Girard, March 11, 2004: A 01) and "'Outrage, Anger, Disgust' Over Pig Farm Meet Scare" (March 12, 2004: A 19). The idea of these women's mutilated corpses becoming meat for human

consumption is ultimately abject: it produces disgust as opposed to the sympathy that dying livestock does (although they too will be consumed), only disgust. Even in death these women seem to transgress boundaries that threaten our subjectivity.

Moreover, the media continuously refer to these women as drug addicts and prostitutes, all of whom "*had plummeted to the bottom of a human cesspool inhabited by whores, drug addicts and vagrants*" (*Toronto Star*, 'I Was Gonna Do One More Make it an Even 50,' Prosecutor Reveals Ghastly Details of What Was Found at B.C. Pig Farm, January 23, 2007: A 1; emphasis added). In other words, they were already social waste and the fact that they were murdered should come to us as no surprise. The words "each of them had people, places and things that were important to her" (ibid) in the following sentence cannot truly counter the violent rhetoric of the previous sentence. This representation re-produces violence, this is death by culture.

Ultimately, the mythic psychopath as a monstrous serial killer, the archetype of Jack the Ripper, continues to fascinate us as it terrifies us when we try to make sense of the utmost cruelty and viciousness of these 'inherently senseless' crimes (Walkowitz, 1992, Caputi, 1987). Yet, as Simpson (2000) argues,

> ...the refusal to entertain a serious discussion of motive, to posit crime as essentially unknowable and thus, at least by some definitions, metaphysically evils, serves to distance the serial killers from the comfortable everyday world and place them in some mythic realm where they are at once profane and sacred. *The popularity of the serial killer in fictional narrative, then, is a symptom of a larger cultural denial of responsibility in the production of violence* (p. xii; emphasis added).

Indeed, the construction of Pickton and Sharif as serial killers obscures the historical, social and cultural factors that have rendered their victims more vulnerable to experiencing violence.

In *El Heraldo de Chihauhua*, the socially constructed image of the victim as an innocent young girl or, conversely, as an immoral young woman, (i.e. the

Madonna/whore divide), provide a framework that leads the reader to interpret that some women were innocent and did not deserve to be murdered, while others brought it upon themselves. Two examples are the articles "A 13-Year Old Girl is Raped and Killed"[30] (Ortega Lozano, August 10, 1996d: 7 B) and "Prostitution of Young Girls, Out of Control"[31] (Salinas and Montes de Oca, March 19, 1999: 3 B) in relation to the article "Two Victims... Unsolved Cases"[32] (March 19, 1993: 3 B).

In the first article, 13-year old Sonia Ivette Ramírez, "[who] was raped and brutally stoned to death and [whose] body was dumped in a deserted terrain," is depicted as a completely innocent young girl. "The unfortunate *jovencita* had long and dark hair, and was wearing yellow shorts, a shirt with a flower pattern, school shoes and white socks." Her violent death is deemed senseless; she bares no blame for her death, since the article emphasized that "she was new to the city and she had left the safety of her house in order to accompany her older sister to the maquila Key Electronic."

The second article "Two Victims... Unsolved Cases" needs to be understood in relation to the main article on the page, "Prostitution of Young Girls, Out of Control," since this article sets the framework for the interpretation of the articles found below it. In "Prostitution of Young Girls, Out of Control," young women are described as morally and physically corrupt, I argue, in fact, that the violent rhetoric that is employed transforms these women into waste, both literally and metaphorically. The authors start by stating that "it is surprising that 16-year old *jovencitas* dance almost naked in depressing settings and that the waiters of these bars offer them [to customers] to have a good time at night." The main character in this article is Karina, an exotic dancer/prostitute "who has a tattoo on her ankle, has not

[30] "*Violan y Matan a Jovencita de 13 Años.*"
[31] "*Prostitución de Jovencitas, Sin Control.*"
[32] "*Dos Víctimas... Casos Sin Resolver.*"

yet reached legal age, but the *strains of alcohol and multiple pregnancies* have left her with an *enormous* belly that make her look as if she were 22 or 23" (emphasis mine). Karina, whose disfigured body, her tattoos and "the scars in her abdomen that indicate that she has had to be *cut open* more than once" (emphasis mine), is as disgusting and depressing as the dingy bar where she dances, including its toilets: "in the inside of that place there is not even light, the carpets are *dirty* and *completely burnt* by cigarette buds. The toilets are *truly disgusting, saturated with waste, totally scratched up*" (emphasis mine). Karina is the incarnation of social and cultural waste.

The article "Two Victims... Unsolved Cases," found directly below the first article, makes use of the same violent rhetoric. The descriptions of the bodies of Paty (found on February 16, 1998) and a young woman named Perla Patricia Sáenz (found on February 19, 1998) employ images of physical and moral waste and depravity similar to those used to portray Karina. Paty's body was found completely naked in the city's main dumpster. Her head was completely disfigured because it had been smashed with a rock and coyotes had torn off and eaten up the flesh. Perla Patricia worked at 'Club Chavas,' one of the dingy and depressing bars that were described in the previous article. It is clear that Paty and Perla Patricia, as exotic dancers/prostitutes, suffered that horrible fate because they were worthless and disposable already. Their worthlessness is evident in the authors' latent astonishment that men would actually pay money to spend the night with what they describe in the article as physically repulsive women. What also becomes clear in the analysis of this article is that these women are the monstrous-feminine, and as such simultaneously horrific and fascinating.

Nevertheless, the lesson to be learned is that these immoral young women brought their murders upon themselves, whereas the murder of young girls like Sonia

Ivette is seen as senseless or inexplicable. Sonia Ivette embodies the physical wholeness and the innocence of a school girl while Karina, Paty and Perla Patricia represent moral and physical corruption. The power of the violent rhetoric and the violence of representation cannot be underestimated here. The violent visualisation of these women's bodies as waste and hence as disposable equals the violence that materialized in these women's bodies.

The only time that a young girl is not depicted as inherently innocent is in the case of the 13-year old *maquila* worker Irma Angélica Rosales Lozano, who was raped, strangled and asphyxiated with a plastic bag over her head around February 18, 1999 ("A Young 13-Year Old Maquila Worker was Raped and Murdered,"[33] February 18, 1999: 14B). In spite of her gruesome death, Irma Angélica is construed as less innocent than Sonia Ivette because she had altered her birth certificate in order to work in the *maquila* industry. Thus, Irma Angélica is constantly written about as deceitful, and it is her deceit which eventually is used to excuse the *maquila* industry from providing safer working conditions for its workers and for employing child labour:

> The state representative [in charge of inspecting maquiladoras] indicated that he will not punish the maquiladora [where Irma Angélica worked], given that it was *deceived by the diseased,* who presented a false birth certificate, which stated that she was 18 years old ("Inspections to Maquila Staff Begin,"[34] February 20, 1999; 15B; my translation).

Here the message is that Irma Angélica and 'deceitful' girls like her *do* somehow bring their murders upon themselves. Ultimately, they are outside the home, overstepping the boundaries of traditional macho conceptions of femininity. For the media, it is these women who make of Ciudad Juárez, "*the dream of every psychopath*" (Tim Madigan quoted in Meza Rivera, "Truculence of an Episode of

[33] "*Ultrajan y Asesinan a Joven de 13 Años, Obrera de Maquiladora.*"
[34] "*Inician Revisión de Personal en la Maquila.*"

Blood: *The Rebels*, *The Drivers* and *The Egyptian*," February 26, 2001; 3B; emphasis mine).

Likewise, the Madonna/whore divide is present in the Canadian press, though perhaps in a less explicit manner. What needs to be emphasized here is that the Madonna/whore divide is played out along a racial line between (bourgeois) white and Aboriginal femininity; a boundary which, willingly or unwillingly, the Canadian media uphold despite efforts to render a more wholesome picture of Aboriginal women's "complex lives." As mentioned before, most articles refer to the victims of Pickton's murders as "drug addicted prostitutes" from Vancouver's "gritty" Downtown Eastside. Seldom is it mentioned that Aboriginal women are overrepresented among Pickton's victims and in Vancouver's sex trade (Culhane, 2003; O'Hara, 2007). There have been recent efforts to counter this simplistic representation through in-depth stories on some of the victims, nevertheless these stories are more an attempt to sanitize these women's transgressive lives than to deal with the actual complexity of their lives. For example, the *CTV News* online article "26 Women at Heart of Case Had Complex Lives" (January 19, 2007, http://www.ctv.ca/servlet/ArticleNews/story/CTVNews/20070117/missing_overview_070117/20070119?hub=Specials&pr=1) heavily critiques the label "drug-addicted prostitute" that seems to be permanently attached to these women:

> The standard description of those patches – 'drug-addicted prostitute' – is an epithet that has helped deaden the cudgel of facts and recollections about the women's lives and their deaths. Some were hard-core, some relatively recent inhabitants in the Downtown Eastside, an area a former B.C. premier described once as a 'terrible human zoo.' Some weren't even prostitutes, according to friends. Their similarities and their deaths in the minds of many who try to comprehend the horror of what Pickton is accused of have managed to wipe out their differences and their potential.

Yet the article on Sereena Abotsway on the same series of in-depth stories "Sereena Abotsway: Life Was Always About Hope" (Meissner, January 19, 2007,

http://www.ctv.ca/servlet/ArticleNews/story/CTVNews/20070117/missing_abotsway_071117/20070119/) is more concerned with redeeming Abotsway's life of drugs and prostitution with references to spirituality, baptism and Christianity, as well as metaphors of purity and innocence.

> The cold, dark ocean waters of Burrard Inlet offered Sereena Abotsway the *spiritual home she sought but never found on the hopeless streets of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside*. Abotsway wanted to be *baptized* in an ocean-front ceremony mere steps *away from the hell-hole neighbourhood where she lived*. "We baptized her right near the church at what people in the Downtown Eastside called Crab Park," says Cheryl Bear Barnetson, who recalls Abotsway attending the street church she ran with her husband.... "*It was good to see how the Lord was beginning to touch her and move in her life*." Abotsway's life was always about *hope* even when the *abyss* was all she knew. She lived and worked in one of Canada's most *desolate and dangerous* neighbourhoods but she fought loneliness and heartbreak with an infectious laugh and *selfless acts of kindness*, even though she may have guessed a *dark fate* awaited her....

These references to Christianity and spirituality serve the purpose of 'saving' her from the dark and desolate path that she did choose in life. I wonder, however, whether this act of metaphorical saving is more for the readers' benefit than for Sereena's sake. The article never mentions Canada's history of colonialism, for example, to explain why marginalized Aboriginal women live in poverty or become involved in the sex trade. In the end, it seems impossible to reconcile the fact that she may have been both a spiritual person and a sex worker. The *CTV News* online article on Brenda Wolfe, another Aboriginal woman whom Pickton murdered, utilizes a similar rhetoric: Brenda is described as a "*guardian angel* on the streets," (Merti, January 19, 2007, http://www.ctv.ca/servlet/ArticleNews/story/CTVNews/20070117/missing_wolfe_071117/20070119/).

Another example is the article on Georgina Papin, which struggles to depict her as a 'good (Aboriginal) mother' in spite of her drug addiction and work as a prostitute ("Georgina Papin Connects Others With Her Culture," Levitz, January 19,

2007a, http://www.ctv.ca/servlet/ArticleNews/story/CTVNews/20070117/missing_papin_071117/20070119/).

> One whiff of sage and Georgina Faith Papin's memory comes alive for her daughter. Burned during First Nations rituals, its scent brings Kristina Bateman back to a 1997 powwow in Mission, B.C. She was 12, her mother 33. They hadn't seen each other in about 10 years, since Papin had left Bateman in Las Vegas to be raised by her paternal grandparents. *But despite her on-again, off-again addiction to drugs, Papin never forgot her daughter.* She called on every birthday and each Christmas.... (emphasis added).

While I recognize that these series represent an attempt to counter the simplistic and damaging representation of these women as merely prostitutes and/or drug addicts, these stories implicitly restore the boundary between Madonna and whore that these women transgressed. As such, they still recreate the negative stereotypes that re-produce these women as deserving, rather than innocent victims.

The few articles that cover the case of the disappearances on Highway 16, known as the Highway of Tears, also largely ignore the fact that 8 of the 9 women who have disappeared are Aboriginal. Only two articles emphasize these women's Aboriginal ancestry and their vulnerability as such. The article "Cries of Aboriginals Must be Heard to Stop the Killings on Highway of Tears" (Meissner, *Canadian Press NewsWire*, March 31, 2006) reports on the conference that the Aboriginal community of northern B.C. organized to address the authorities' lack of concern with these disappearances. Yet it is only the article "Native Women Under Siege" (*Winnipeg Free Press*, July 2, 2006: B 2) that stresses that Aboriginal women are much more vulnerable to experiencing violence:

> What is clear is that the lives of aboriginal women and girls are so much different from other Canadians that the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics suggests in a study released in early June that they might as well be living in another country. They are likely to be less educated than other Canadians, they are poorer, less healthy, more likely to have addiction problems and more likely to be in the sex trade. And they're much, much more likely to be physically or sexually assaulted or killed.

However, the marked contrast between the representation of Nicole Hoar, the only white woman to disappear on the Highway of Tears and the scant references to the other missing women's Aboriginal ancestry is telling:

> As the then 24-year-old [Nicole Hoar] stood with her back to the west and *her broad smile facing east*, she plunged her right thumb into the afternoon air and embarked on a journey she thought would carry her to her sister. [...] It's impossible to know Hoar's thoughts as she waited to be picked up and carried to Smithers. In her excitement to surprise sister Michelle, she likely recalled the time last summer she embarked on a similar journey to the town's annual music festival and pounced onto Michelle's back.... And, *although police say Hoar likely didn't wait for long for a lift, she must have taken time to listen to the songbirds and spot the daisies peeking out among the thigh-high weeds in the ditch.* [...] Nicole Doreen Hoar was last seen wearing beige Capri pants, a cherry red long sleeved soccer shirt with the number 13 on it and Teva sandals.... She has brown, collar length hair and blue eyes. Hoar is the sixth woman to disappear along a stretch of Highway 16 that since 1990 has earned the sinister nickname "Highway of Tears" ("An Easy Place to Hitch a Ride," Tetley, *Calgary Herald* July 24, 2002b: A 10; emphasis added).

Hoar em-bodies the purity and innocence of (bourgeois/middle class) white femininity, something that is clearly out of reach for Aboriginal women, whether they were sex workers or not. No article covering either the Pickton trial or the case of the Highway of Tears describes Aboriginal women in the beautifully poetic way in which Hoar is described. And this article is not an exception, as similar renditions of Hoar can be found in "'All We Do All Day, Every Night, Is Think of Nicole': Camp Not Same Without Missing Tree Planter" (Tetley, *Calgary Herald.* Jul. 23, 2002a A 3) and "Nicole Hoar: Spirit Shines Through Exhibit: Tears, Chills as Missing Artist Recalled" (Tetley, *Calgary Herald,* March 15, 2003: B 1). Hoar is a wholesome tree planter, she is not an Aboriginal woman and she is not a drug-addicted prostitute, who may have been spiritual or a good mother. Hoar is never represented as waste. However, Aboriginal women's femininity is always abject, always monstrous; their bodies and their lives threaten the "clean and proper" body, not to mention Canadian "clean and proper" society. This contrasting representation of white versus Aboriginal

femininity is, consequently, part of the violence that marginalized Aboriginal women have historically experienced.

When the media ignore the crimes, it is clear that the lives, deaths and/or disappearances of these marginalized women did not warrant sufficient importance for them to be covered. The murders and disappearances of Aboriginal women in Canada continue to be ignored. In spite of the vast amount of (sensationalist) attention that the Pickton trial has received, no mention has been made of the cases of the Highway of Tears or of the similarities that exist between the Pickton murders and the murders of Mary Jane Serloin, Shelly Napope, Eva Taysup, Calinda Waterhen by John Crawford. There was virtually no coverage of these murders back in the early 1990s when they took place. Even today, the public remains largely ignorant of these murders (Goulding, 2001). There is even less known about the murders committed by Gordon Paul Jordan, a Vancouver barber who offered vulnerable Aboriginal women money to watch them drink one alcoholic beverage after the other until they died (O'Hara, 2007). A quick glance at the web site Missing/Murdered Native Women in Canada (O'Hara, 2007, http://www.missingnativewomen.org/ index.htm) reveals the magnitude of the problem of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and how little attention these women have been given in the media.

What I find interesting about the treatment of these women's disappearances is that they are generally given far less attention than the murders (the 'evidence' is missing; there is no body), unless women who had been previously reported as missing by friends and family are suddenly found to be alive and well, or worse, living with their lovers. I say worse because these incidents are then used to legitimate the indifference towards other cases of disappearances or to undermine the seriousness of the murder cases. These women are depicted as being completely selfish and

uncaring, since, through their wilful disappearance, they put their loved ones through severe emotional anguish and wasted the efforts that the authorities put in searching for them, instead of a 'real' victim.

In Canada, the article "One of Vancouver's 'Missing' Women Calls Home 22 Years Later" (*National Post*. Jun 8, 2006: A 12) is an example:

> Linda Grant, one of 68 women listed as missing from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, ended more than 20 years of silence this week, contacting police and her family to tell them she is still alive. Ms. Grant, who grew up in Port Moody, left her Lower Mainland home, which she describes as troubled, in 1984 to begin a new life in the United States. She said she found out she was listed as missing while she was surfing the Internet on Monday to learn more about Robert Pickton.

In Mexico, *El Heraldo de Chihuahua* has sensationalized the sudden reappearance of women thought missing, calling them "*las desaparecidas aparecidas*" (the disappeared appeared) (Figure 15).

Desaparecidas Aparecidas

Estaba "a gusto" exinterno del Ce

Cae cómplice de Machado

FIGURE 15 "The Disappeared [Women] Appear" in *El Heraldo de Chihuahua*, August 10, 2003, 4 and 5B.

The articles "Missing Woman Was with Her Boyfriend"[35] (July 13, 2003: 26 B), "They Were Reported Missing But They Ran Away From Home: 24 Women Have

[35] "*Desaparecida Andaba Con El Novio*."

Been Found"[36] (August 10, 2003: 1 B) and "The Disappeared Women Appear"[37] (Arely Ortega, August 10, 2003: 4 and 5 B). These articles feature the stories of these women who, without much concern for their parents or relatives, decided to run away, while their relatives were desperately looking for them.

What is revealed through an analysis of the news media's claims to truth/objectivity and the sensationalism/indifference that simultaneously surround the reports on these murders and disappearances is that the bodies of these marginalized women are always at the center of representation as a technology of violence. Representation is a technology of violence because the relationship between the materialization of violence on these women's bodies and the equally violent visual materialization of their bodies in representation cannot escape the link between the discursive and the social; it is, as such, a manifestation of bio-power. These representations re-produce beliefs in the inevitability of these women's deaths, given the 'high-risk' lifestyles that these women led. In their death (by culture), these women are thus materially and discursively produced as waste.

The news media representation of these murders is structured by discourses that do violence in that 1) they legitimize a particular way in which the murders and disappearances of marginalized women are portrayed and understood and 2) they engage in the violence of rhetoric (de Lauretis, 1987). This representation is violent because it produces and re-produces violence as it continues to sensationalize and remain indifferent to the murders. The portrayal of this violence as a spectacle, which allows the public to feel 'comfortable' with it (i.e. following the *CSI*/horror movie formula), ultimately sanitizes both the violence that these marginalized women experienced as well as their transgressive lifestyles and their abject monstrous

[36] "*Las Reportaron Desaparecidas Pero Huyeron de sus Casas: Ya Aparecieron 24 Mujeres.*"
[37] "*Aparecidas Desaparecidas.*"

femininity. As a result, it negates societal responsibility for these murders. The public remains, after all, fascinated with these representations; violence against women and what these women represent is a way in which it can deal not only with our psychic fears of death and the feminine (Burfoot, 2006: 120) but also with the fear of having to face pressing issues of (neo-) colonial legacies of social injustice. Thus, the fact that these murders are femicides is obliterated. The representation of the murders and disappearances of economically marginalized women in Ciudad Juárez and Aboriginal women in Canada is inseparable from the violence that these women have suffered. Representation is part of the microphysics of power that has produced these women as worthless and disposable; it is technology of violence as well as a technology of bio-power.

Chapter Five
Discussion

In analyzing the murders and disappearances of Aboriginal women in Canada and the case of *las muertas de Juárez* in Mexico, the central purpose of this thesis has not been to compare these two cases, but to study power as it affects and effects bodies, which have been rendered worthless and disposable and thus more vulnerable to violence. At the same time, I have emphasized the inextricability of materiality and discursivity in this process and, consequently, that the violence perpetrated against these women cannot be understood without taking this into consideration. As such, I have argued that common conceptualizations of violence against women, also pervasively present in feminist modernist/structuralist theories of such violence, cannot adequately explain why these marginalized women have been so viciously murdered. Moreover, they fail to account for the apathy and indifference on the part of the authorities, the media and powerful segments of society that have largely determined how these ruthless murders, as well as the numerous cases of disappearances, have been publicly mediated in each country. Therefore, in this project I have presented an alternative framework to think about these marginalized women's experiences of violence: their murders represent a congealment of the discursive and material effects of (neo-)colonial technologies of bio-power (specific to each country) that have constructed them as cultural waste and as disposable bodies. These women's deaths are "death(s) by culture" (Wright, 1999), their murders are femicides.

This alternative framework incorporates a feminist poststructural and postcolonial approach, coupled with Foucault's (1995 [1977]) concept of bio-power, to challenge the foundations of feminist modernist/structuralist theories of violence against women: their ontological commitment to the sex/gender binary and their

understanding of power as purely repressive. As I illustrate in Chapter 1, feminist social constructionist and radical feminist theories of violence against women are grounded in the ontological assumption that sex is the natural basis of gender, a social construct. These theories are problematic because they posit a pre-social sexed body, thus presupposing 'natural' differences between women and men. In so doing, they reproduce and reinscribe a dichotomy in which women are natural, powerless victims and men natural, powerful aggressors. Ultimately, these theories hold a stable notion of 'violence against women' as a category of analysis that relies on the unitary subject Woman (Riley, 1988). As a result, this understanding of violence regards *all* women to be equally vulnerable to violence in that they *are* women, (i.e. biological females), hence undermining the importance of the specificity of the context in which violence takes place and women's race and class in their experiences of violence.

I put particular emphasis in challenging Russell's (Russell 1992a, 1992b, 1992c, 2002a, 2002b) work on femicide because it is based on these problematic assumptions, yet it has been widely adopted to examine the murder of women worldwide (e.g. Bajpai, 1992, Campbell, 1992, Gregory, 1992, Kelkar, 1992, Mouzos, 2002, Skilbeck, 2002, Stout, 1992, Venkatramani, 1992), especially in the case of *las muertas de Juárez* (e.g. Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa, 2006; Ortiz-Ortega, 2006). It is important to critique the ontological assumptions that underpin Russell's (2002a) definition of femicide as "the murder of women by men *because* they are female" (p. 3; emphasis in original) because, defined as such, this concept reinforces perceptions of violence that are actually detrimental to women. Russell's work relies on the aforementioned dichotomy that constructs *all* women as natural victims and *all* men as naturally sexist and violent. Accordingly, Russell reinscribes an understanding of violence against women not only as 'natural' but as unavoidable, and a model of

power as purely repressive in which men are the natural oppressors and women are invariably oppressed. As Bordo (1993b) argues, this

> ...oppressor/oppressed model provides no way in which to theorise adequately the complexities of the situations of men, who frequently find themselves implicated in practices and institutions which they (as individuals) did not create, do not control and may feel tyrannised by. Nor does this model acknowledge the degree to which women may 'collude' in sustaining sexism – for example in our willing (and often eager) participation in cultural practices which objectify and sexualise us (p. 190).

In spite of these problems, I am aware of the promise of political and social change that this term can have (see MacKinnon in Russell, 2002b). As such, in this project I have decided to re-define femicide to take into account its political potential, yet also challenge the assumptions on which feminist modernist/structuralist theories of violence against women in general and radical feminist theories of femicide in particular are based. This re-definition is grounded on an understanding of violence as sexed (Howe, 1998), that is, on an understanding of the ways in which discourses of gender that define sex as sexual difference have shaped how we construct and treat 'violence against women.' At the same time, sexed violence points to the need to recognize the very real effects that gender (and race and class) has on women's experiences of violence.

I have thus re-defined femicide as those murders that em-body the institutionalized inferior status of particular women in their society, as well as cultural beliefs in these women's worthlessness, in the disposability of their bodies and, ultimately, their otherness. Through this re-definition, I want to highlight the fact that not all women are equally vulnerable; the interplay of gender, race and class plays a very important role determining which women are more likely to be marginalized and thus be victims of femicide. I also emphasize the need to theorize 'violence against women' with an understanding of the body as post-socially sexed, as historical and

changeable (Hird, 2002: 3), as pliable to power (Grosz, 1994) and as open to the discursive and material effects of institutions (Braidotti, 1991: 77). Femicide allows for a conceptualization of violence as em-bodied that takes into account the materiality of the body as the incarnation of marginality and the complex power dynamics that have rendered some women as disposable and hence more vulnerable to violence.

Foucault's (1995 [1977]) concept of bio-power is particularly relevant to my project because it offers a model of power as diffuse and positive; power for Foucault cannot be possessed, rather it is dynamic, productive and constitutive of bodies and subjects. Bio-power is a regime of power that is constituted in discourse as it works through non-centralised non-authoritative apparatuses and networks, directly affecting, normalizing and disposing of bodies. I utilize bio-power to analyze how these marginalized women's bodies were produced as disposable through discursive and material mechanisms of power that go beyond repression, which have not only shaped and created our understanding of the violence that was perpetrated against these women, but precisely how we view these women themselves. Nevertheless, as I point out in Chapter 2, it is necessary to critique Foucault's gender-blindness (de Lauretis, 1987; Plaza, 1981) to account for the productive *and* repressive effects that bio-power has on women's bodies. With the insights of these feminist critiques in mind, I link bio-power to feminist postcolonial theory to conceptualize the brutal murders of Aboriginal women in Canada and Mexican women in Ciudad Juárez as a materialization of "death by culture" (Wright, 1999) and hence as femicides. Death by culture refers to the cultural expectation that these women's murders are unavoidable because they represent social and cultural waste, that is, cultural value in decline that needs to be restored.

As I further elaborate in this chapter, these marginalized women have been constructed as worthless and expendable in and through Mexico's and Canada's specific histories of (neo-)colonialism, their discourses as well as the material effects of its institutions. Through various technologies of (neo-)colonial bio-power, their bodies have been marked as colonized and thus specifically as gendered, classed and racialized, but also as "filthy and immoral" given the "degenerate" spaces they (are made to) inhabit (Razack, 2000: 116). Ciudad Juárez, its sweatshops and dingy bars, Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, Regina's Stroll, slums and other areas of urban marginality in which these women live and/or work are such degenerate spaces and, as Razack (2000) argues, this has invariably led to their "evacuat[ion] from the category human, and [to the denial of] the equality so fundamental to liberal states" (p. 117).

Ultimately, the representation of these marginalized women as less than human, as waste – in life and in death – is the focus of Chapter 3. In this chapter, I argue that the representation of the violence to which these women were subjected in the Canadian news media and the Mexican mainstream newspaper *El Heraldo de Chihuahua* is both a technology of violence and of bio-power because it consistently re-produces it and perpetuates the cultural expectation that such violence is inevitable. In depicting these women as waste and making a sensationalist, pleasurable spectacle out of their horrific deaths and suffering, the Canadian and Mexican media apparatuses de-humanize these women and sanitize the brutal violence that they experienced. It is a spectacle of these women's death(s) by culture. Representation, therefore, serves the purpose of keeping the boundaries between a "clean and proper" society, readers' "clean and proper" bodies and these women's monstrosity and abjection. As a result, the visualization of these women's tortured and mutilated

bodies in representation can be conceived as a materialization of violence against the feminine and against women.

The salient point here is to draw attention to the inextricability of the relation between representation and the social, between discursivity and materiality and, accordingly, to the fact that these women em-body discursive and material violences. That is, the (neo-)colonial technologies of bio-power that have historically shaped how these women and their bodies are treated and perceived, the despotic ways in which Mexican and Canadian authorities have expressed their lack of concern with their lives and/or deaths, the 'degenerate' spaces of urban marginality that they inhabit and the sensationalist manner in which the media represent them and their murders, are all part of the same process through which these women's bodies are discursively and materially produced as waste and, as such, of the expectation that their murders are inevitable.

Take, once again, the example of the thoroughly insensitive comment that Arturo González Rascón, Attorney General of the state of Chihuahua in 1999, made with regard to the numerous murders and disappearances of women in Ciudad Juárez:

> There are unfortunately women who, due to their life conditions, the places where they carry out their activities, are at risk, because it would be very difficult that somebody who went out to the street when it is raining, well it would be very difficult that that person would not get wet (*El Diario*, Ciudad Juárez, Wednesday February 24th, 1999, p. 9C; quoted in Monárrez Fragoso, 2002: 285; my translation).

Or the fact that, during the trial of Steven Kummerfield and Alex Ternowetsky for the murder of 28-year old, mother of two and survival sex worker Pamela George in Regina, the judge asked the jury to bear in mind that George "was indeed a prostitute," while Kummerfield and Ternowetsky remained "boys who did pretty darn stupid things" (Razack, 2000: 117), but who had not committed murder. These two

examples illustrate that Mexican and Canadian authorities see violence against these marginalized women as unavoidable, yet continue to be indifferent to it.

These two comments are also remarkably similar to the ways in which the mainstream media represent and make a spectacle out of these women's deaths. As I examine in Chapter 3, news articles in the Canadian media consistently refer to Aboriginal women as drug-addicted prostitutes and thus as social and cultural waste, since they "*had plummeted to the bottom of a human cesspool inhabited by whores, drug addicts and vagrants*" (*Toronto Star*, 'I Was Gonna Do One More Make it an Even 50,' Prosecutor Reveals Ghastly Details of What Was Found at B.C. Pig Farm, January 23, 2007: A 1; emphasis added). Moreover, the numerous deaths and disappearances of Aboriginal women have not ever warranted the concern or the poetic representation that the case of Nicole Hoar, the only white woman to go missing on the Highway of Tears, was given. In the end, the message is that Aboriginal women's racialized bodies and femininity are not as worthy as white (bourgeois) women's bodies and femininity. At best, Aboriginal women's lives and their choices are sanitized to restore the boundaries that they transgressed.

Likewise, the article "Prostitution of Young Women, Out of Control"[1] (March 19, 1999: 3 B) in *El Heraldo de Chihuahua* exemplifies how young Mexican women of low socio-economic resources are depicted as disposable. Karina, the exotic dancer on whom the article focuses, is the incarnation of wasted femininity and moral and physical corruption. Women like her and like Irma Angélica Rosales Lozano, who was "deceitful" in that she worked at a sweatshop with a false birth certificate ("A Young 13-Year Old Maquila Worker was Raped and Murdered,"[2] February 18, 1999: 14 B), bring death (by culture) upon themselves; they em-body cultural value in

[1] "*Prostitución de Jovencitas, Sin Control.*"
[2] "*Ultrajan y Asesinan a Joven de 13 Años, Obrera de Maquiladora.*"

decline that needs to be re-established because they actively threaten the historically macho social order of Mexican society.

Ultimately, the deadly expectation that these disposable women will be killed, as expressed by Mexican and Canadian authorities and the media, does materialize. Their raped, tortured and mutilated bodies are discarded in the desert, in industrial parks, swamps, dumpsters, garbage cans and even in a pig farm. Their disappearances go largely unnoticed and the authorities, both in Mexico and Canada, have often refused to acknowledge that these women are really missing (Benítez et. al., 1999; Jacobs, 2002; O'Hara, 2006). In the meanwhile, their murderers know that they can get away with killing and torturing these women, for neither them nor the authorities or the media view them as truly human.

John Crawford's description of how he murdered Eva Taysup and Calinda Waterhen is the perfect example of this phenomenon. He explicitly writes in his affidavit that he did not think that Eva Taysup was worth the money she had requested for her sexual services and that "[*s*]*he ha*[*d*] *no right to live…*" (in Goulding, 2001: 205, 206; emphasis added). And, when he murdered Calinda Waterhen the next day, his only thought was *'fuck, here goes another one…* '" (ibid: 206; emphasis added). The expression "fuck, here goes another one…" seems more like he is referring to accidentally dropping another cheap piece of china that can easily be replaced, as opposed to just having taken the life of a human being.

What I want to stress is that John Crawford and murderers like him did <u>not</u> kill these women *because* they were female or as a manifestation of their hatred of/toward women. They were not 'naturally' sexist, even though they may well have been sexist (and racist). The point is, rather, that they killed these women because they were vulnerable to violence and because they had been rendered worthless and disposable

through numerous technologies of bio-power. These murders are femicides because they em-body the institutionalized inferior status of these women in Mexican and Canadian societies, as well as cultural beliefs in their worthlessness, in the disposability of their bodies and, ultimately, in their otherness. Their femicides are the congealment of death by culture.

In this sense, what I take from Foucault, and more importantly, from feminist elaborations on his work, is that bodies are simultaneously and inextricably material and discursive. I want to borrow Karen Barad's (1998) concept of "material-discursive bodies" to illustrate this point. For Barad, "bodies are material-discursive phenomena that materialize in intra-action with, and are inseparable from, particular apparatuses of bodily production, that is, particular practices through which they become intelligible" (ibid: 107). By "intra-action," Barad refers precisely to "the inseparability of 'objects' and 'agencies of observation' (in contrast to 'interaction,' which reinscribes the contested dichotomy)" (ibid: 99). In other words, Barad is interested in pointing out the inseparability of bodies or 'objects' from the apparatuses and practices that produce them. Accordingly, she highlights the importance of taking into account "the material nature of regulator practices, and of human bodies, that enables discourse to work its productive material effects of bodies" (ibid: 108). Her main concern is, ultimately, to explicate

> ...[m]aterialization not only [as] a matter of how discourse comes to matter but how matter comes to matter. Or to put it more precisely, materialization is an iteratively intra-active process whereby material-discursive bodies are sedimented out of the intra-action of multiple material-discursive apparatuses through which these phenomena (bodies) become intelligible (1998: 108).

The meaning of materiality does not exclusively refer to bodily materiality, but also to the material organization of social life as well as to the materialization of bodies in representational practices (and to representation as materialization, for that

matter). Thus, the point I want to make in this project is that the bodies of Aboriginal women in Canada and of Mexican women in Ciudad Juárez should be regarded as material-discursive bodies. These women's bodies have been rendered more vulnerable to violence through the intra-action of the discursive and material effects of (neo-)colonialism, its institutions and its technologies of bio-power, the material dimension of urban marginality, as well as representation within the specific histories, cultures and social contexts of Mexico and Canada.

It is important to think differently about the murders and disappearances of Aboriginal women in Canada and women in Ciudad Juárez not only to better understand these experiences of violence, but to develop strategies of resistance to effect social change. Having said this, I am aware that throughout this project I have painted a grim picture of the condition of Aboriginal women in Canada and women in Ciudad Juárez and that, as a result, it may seem difficult to think about the possibility of effecting social change or about resistance. It is crucial to do so, however, because otherwise the alternative framework that I have provided could be (mis)interpreted as yet another rendition of marginalized women of colour as perpetually and invariably victimized. This is most certainly not my intention and, once again, I want to stress that I am not arguing that these women's ontological status is that of *being* disposable. On the contrary, what I have attempted to do in this project is to provide a different framework to better understand why and how these women have been rendered more vulnerable to violence. In so doing, I have aimed to challenge traditional theories and conceptualizations of violence against women that subscribe to an oppressor/oppressed model, that are essentialist and that ignore the differences between and among women, as well as the context in which violence takes place.

Furthermore, while I do not want to overemphasize these women's marginalization, I stress that it is necessary to recognize race and class in their experiences of violence and marginality because disregarding this contributes to the perpetuation of race and class blindness that negates that these murders and disappearances are the outcome of the effects of (neo-)colonial bio-power in Mexico and Canada. In Dara Culhane's (2003) words, race (and class) blindness are in fact linked to a "regime of disappearance," that is "a neo-liberal mode of governance that selectively marginalizes and/or erases categories of people through strategies of representation that include silences, blind spots, and displacements that have both material and symbolic effects" (p. 595). Thus, ignoring the differences in these women's experiences of violence and the material and discursive histories and social practices that are tied to them, would be equivalent to engaging in the violence of rhetoric (de Lauretis, 1987). That is, I would fail to take into consideration the semiotic and discursive dimension of the social in the context of social power relations in this explanation of violence. In fact, de Lauretis bases her critique of Foucault on this argument. Following Plaza, de Lauretis critiques Foucault's theory of sexuality as the product of a technology of sex, which led him to argue against the penalization of rape as a sexual crime in France (see Chapter 2). In denying gender in his conceptualization of sex, sexuality and sexual violence, not to mention his failure to acknowledge his own enunciative modality, Foucault ignores the fact that bodies and their pleasures do not exist apart from the discursive order, from language or representation.

Ultimately, Foucault's lack of concern for women in general and the fact that he engaged in an attempt to decriminalize rape as a sexual crime in arguing for the de-sexualization of subjectivity are the source of the tensions that exist between Foucault

and feminism, especially when it comes to resistance. It is not my intention to resolve these tensions. This has been the subject of many books and analyses (e.g. Diamond and Quinby, 1988; Ramazanoglu, 1993), which have led to varied interpretations of Foucault's work and its usefulness for feminist theory and praxis. Some believe in the possibility of a 'friendship' between his work and feminist politics of resistance (Diamond and Quinby, 1988: ix), while others believe in the importance that feminists not be seduced by his work and, consequently, that they pay attention to the implications of his applying it (Martin, 1988). My purpose in these last pages is, therefore, to explore some of these tensions to analyze the positive discursive changes that, as I mentioned in Chapter 2, have slowly taken place in the media representation of these women's lives and deaths. This change is largely the result of activist efforts to resist the perception that these women are worthless and disposable and thus to humanize them, a strategy of resistance that may not necessarily fit within Foucault's framework.

As I have illustrated throughout this project, Foucault's conceptualization of power as being everywhere can be both useful and deeply problematic for feminist theory and praxis. On the one hand, Foucault's characterization of power as diffuse, positive and productive opens up new dimensions of analysis and, accordingly, the possibility of thinking that neither power nor resistance are vested in a single point (Cahill, 2000; Martin, 1988). On the other, this conceptualization of power and resistance can fail to acknowledge the repressive effects of power and undermine the very real and sometimes common experiences of systematic domination and coercion that women, despite (or because of) their differences, face in their everyday lives:

> But it can also lead to a tendency to revert to speaking in *abstracted terms of deconstructed 'women,'* because of the absence of, for example, class, racism or gender as categories of power relations in his thought. *The conceptual deconstruction of 'difference' is too easily abstracted from practical politics*

rooted both in women's differences and in women's common interests (Ramazanoglu, 1993: 10; emphasis added).

Hence, the dilemma: Foucault posits a very different form of political organization and struggle, "an alternative to the frontal attack on the state led y the One revolutionary subject, local struggles that undermine institutional power where it reveals itself in ideology under the mask of humanism, or... wherever the work of normalization is carried on" (Martin, 1988: 9). Ultimately, he argues that these local struggles "question the status of the individual" (Foucault, 2003: 133). In other words, these struggles allow the development and search for alternative subjectivities and thus for different types of individuality. As such, he suggests that

> [m]aybe the target nowadays is not to discover what we are but *to refuse what we are.* We have to imagine and build up what we could be to get rid of this kind of political 'double bind,' which is the simultaneous individualization and totalization of modern power structures. The conclusion would be that the political, ethical, social, philosophical problem of our days it not to try to liberate the individual from the state, and from the state's institutions, but to liberate us from the state and from the type of individualization linked to the state. *We have to promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality that has been imposed on us for several centuries* (ibid: 133, 134; emphasis added).

Resistance to power, therefore, comes through new discourses, or what Foucault calls 'counter discourses' that produce new truths (ibid).

But what are the consequences of applying these ideas? Many feminists have pointed out that the implications of this concept of resistance are problematic for feminism (Ramazanoglu, 1993: 23). I have already referred to Plaza's (1981), de Lauretis's (1987), Braidotti's (1991) analyses of the controversies surrounding the decriminalization of rape as a sexual crime in France. And lets not forget that Foucault argued that the women's liberation movement's real strength was not its demand for women's rights but

> ...that they have actually *departed from the discourse conducted within the apparatuses of sexuality.* Ultimately, it is a veritable movement of

> desexualization, a displacement effected in relation to the sexual centering of the problem, *formulating the demand for forms of culture, discourse, language and so on which are no longer part of that rigid assignation and pinning-down to their sex which they had initially in some sense been politically obliged to accept in order to make themselves heard* (Foucault, 1980: 219-220).

Yet what is to be done, if "[w]hat feminists mean by politics [or resistance] could then be distressing to Foucault, just as he recognised that his method could be distressing to others...[?]" (Ramazanoglu, 1993: 11). I certainly would not advocate the 'de-racialization' or 'de-classization' of the struggles that activists are leading to raise awareness of the violence perpetrated against Aboriginal women in Canada and working-class women in Ciudad Juárez. Such a demand would be akin to silencing them and further obliterating the murdered and missing women. So, how can we think differently about the strategies of resistance that the mothers of the murdered and missing women of Ciudad Juárez and the friends and relatives of Aboriginal women in Canada have employed? How can we account for the discursive change that has been effected thanks to their efforts?

Examples of these efforts are the ways in which these activists depict the murdered women as mothers, sisters and daughters, women with lives and relationships and not just prostitutes, drug addicts or selfish, 'loose' *maquila* workers. A flyer of the 2001 Vancouver Downtown Eastside Women's Memorial March presented the following text:

> We are Aboriginal women. Givers of Life. We are mothers, sisters, daughters, aunties and grandmothers. Not just prostitutes and drug addicts. Not welfare cheats. We stand on our Mother Earth and we demand respect. We are not there to be beaten, abused, murdered, ignored (quoted in Culhane, 2003: 539)

As Amber O'Hara, an activist fighting against the apathy and indifference surrounding the murders of disappearances of Aboriginal women in Canada put it:

> I wish the media would stop referring to these women as prostitutes, ya know. I think that the media has to take a more responsible role in the way they report, in the words they use. Words are a power weapon [...]. And I think

> they need to take a look at the whole being, the whole person behind them, you know. They need to not put it on the back burner, not put in the back section of the newspaper because it's 'only another Indian' (interview, January, 2006).

O'Hara has taken it up to her to combat these negative representations and indifference in her website www.missingnativewomen.org. Through it, O'Hara has made public a record of the deaths and disappearances of Aboriginal women in Canada and documents whether or not the cases have been solved. Moreover, O'Hara asks the murdered women's families what they want her to write about these women's lives.

> I ask the families, or they contact me, what information do you want me to say about your daughter? How do you want the world to know her? Or, how do you want the world to know your mom? So what she was a whore. Did she knit?? Did she do bead work? [...]. I ask these questions, right. And they're like you really care, she's our mother! She really was a person! Of course she was! (interview, January, 2006).

In Mexico, similar efforts have taken place. The organization Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa, A.C. ([We Want] Our Daughters Back Home) has created a web site www.mujeresdejuarez.org to raise awareness of the magnitude of the murders and disappearances of women in Ciudad Juárez. They publicly refer to these murders as femicides (as defined by Russell) and denounce the rampant impunity and the government's lack of interest in the murders. Furthermore, celebrities like Salma Hayek and Jane Fonda have become involved in the battle against violence against women in Ciudad Juárez.

Their hard struggles *have* yielded some results in challenging the negative representation of these women, as analyzed in Chapter 3. Even though the representation of these women is still largely sensationalist, there are a few articles that challenge such sensationalism. In Canada, such articles are "Missing Native Women Too Easily Ignored, Marchers Say" (Bailey, *Edmonton Journal*, July 23, 2005: A5), "'Highway of Tears' Holds Grisly Secrets of Missing Women" (Hall,

CanWest News, December 10, 2005: 1), "Unequal in Life, Unequal in Death" (*Toronto Star*, December 20, 2006: A26) and "Lurid Trial Reinforces a Stigma" (*Toronto Star*, January 27, 2007: A14). These articles all make reference to the Amnesty International (2004) *Stolen Sisters* report, which effectively illustrates the violence that Aboriginal women have suffered as the outcome of the ongoing effects of settler colonialism. The last two articles in particular provide a very detailed analysis of Aboriginal women's increased vulnerability to violence as they highlight the indifference that has surrounded their murders and disappearances. They are also highly critical of other articles that attempt to provide a sanitized version of the murders so as to not offend readers.

For example, the article "Unequal in Life, Unequal in Death" starts by stating that "[i]dealists may argue all people are created equal, but as a couple of news stories made plain last week, we die dramatically unequal deaths." It goes on to say that the murders of Aboriginal women involved in the sex trade in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside were never a big concern for the media until now that the Robert Pickton trial has started.

> Five missing college coeds would have garnered front-page headlines, but 50 missing hookers? Who cared? The police? The media? Municipal, provincial or federal governments? Compare the response to the post-mortem attention given to another woman, Princess Diana.... There was no conspiracy to kill her, no evidence of involvement by the British royals or shady government agents.... Millions spent investigating an accident in Paris; next to nothing spent investigating serial killings in Vancouver, until the body count grew too high to ignore. The reasons for the discrepancy are as obvious as they are odious. *There was a public fetish over the ultimately ordinary end of a princess; there was public apathy over the slaughter of women deemed not to much matter. The divergent reactions reveal the hypocrisy of our easy rhetoric about every life being of equal value* (*Toronto Star*, December 20, 2006: A26; emphasis added).

Likewise, the author of "Lurid Trial Reinforces a Stigma" (*Toronto Star*, January 27, 2007: A14) argues that "these women, prostitutes and drug addicts and

alcoholics were *disposable*, *invisible in plain sight even before they disappeared* from the sordid environs of the Downtown Eastside, allegedly lured to a farm-cum-abattoir where they endured *unspeakable cruelties as breathing human beings and then obliterated corpses*" (emphasis added). Indeed, the reporter points out that "[t]heir *lack of value was pivotal* to the laggard police investigation that permitted the killings to continue apace over many years, even as family friends and activists pleaded for attention from authorities" (emphasis added). Moreover, s/he states that

> …cases such as *the lurid Pickton trial reinforce the stigma of prostitutes not only as victims but dirty, debauched and almost complicit in their deaths.* The protracted mass murder of these women is not, singularly, about prostitution. There are plenty of societal ills that transacted…. Retroactively, everybody cares so demonstrably about the slain and the missing. Advocates warned reporters not to exploit the sex workers on the Eastside, as if giving them the opportunity to talk about their lives was an untoward invasion of privacy…. But this isn't a morality play. It's harsh reality…. *It does no good to turn away or smooth out the rough, ugly details. In fact, it does harm – one more way of not looking, not seeing* (emphasis added).

It is evident that these articles employ a different rhetoric; they have broken with regular trend of depicting these women as disposable. Conversely, they stress that this perception of these women as expendable and worthless has led to their increased vulnerability to violence and to the lack of professional media attention.

Similarly, the Mexican newspapers *Reforma* (equivalent to the *Globe and Mail* in Canada) and *Milenio*, which incorporates news articles from the feminist news network CIMAC, have featured serious editorials that have made an effort to counter the impression that these women put themselves at risk for being engaged in sex work or in the *maquila* industry. They further critique the lack of concern with which federal and provincial authorities have treated the numerous cases of murders and disappearances and relate this indifference to these women's poverty. Among these are the articles by Rafael Ruiz Harrell, who writes the well-known editorial *La Ciudad y el Crimen* (The City and Crime). Two of his articles include "The Murder of

Women"[3] (*Reforma*, March 7, 2005a: 12B) and "The Sorrows of Juárez"[4] (*Reforma*, April 4, 2005b: 6B). In this last article, Ruiz Harrell makes the Mexican state responsible for these women's deaths:

> There is no doubt about one thing: the problem has not been solved because of the apathy, irresponsibility and the deafness of the state. Francisco Barrios Terrazas (former governor of Chihuahua) fixed ten years ago the official attitude [towards these murders]: the guilty party are the murdered women themselves because "they liked dancing and going out with men." His successor, Patricio Martínez, who thought he owned Chihuahua, not only blocked international aid, but refused to cooperate with the federal government. José Reyes Baeza... is following in their footsteps.

Moreover, the famous journalist, activist and author of *Huesos en el Desierto* (Bones in the Desert), Sergio González Rodríguez, frequently writes for *Reforma* reporting on the murders. For him, these murders are part of a systematic violence that "is not a 'myth,' a 'fantasy,' or a 'lucrative' strategy set up civil society organizations that 'damage the image of Ciudad Juárez'" ("A Bad Day for Women,"[5] *El Ángel* (*Reforma*), March 13, 2005: 1).

In addition, the joined efforts of Salma Hayek, Eve Ensler and Jane Fonda have not gone unnoticed. On the contrary, given their celebrity status, they have been able to appeal to a wider audience. These three women have specifically related the murders to these women's poverty. Ensler, for example, narrated the story of a woman who lost her daughter because she had wanted to get a job to help her monetarily. "It was a very poor woman, whose husband beat her and then left her, thus she had to go find work cleaning houses to raise her children. Her 15-year old daughter told her: 'Let me help you clean houses' and her mother said no, but she insisted. Her little girl would've to travel by bus to the other end of the city to work... On her first day, she

[3] Asesinatos de Mujeres.
[4] Tristezas de Juárez.
[5] Un Mal Día Para las Mujeres.

disappeared… Her body was found later" (Olvera, "Ensler Endures a Painful Experience,"[6] *Reforma*, May 10, 2006: *Gente* 13).

Lately, in *Milenio*, reports that surround the articles on the murders of Ciudad Juárez are trying to raise awareness with regard to women's inequality, violence against women in other parts of the country, the lack of women's empowerment and the need for better policy. Such articles are "Equity and Rights: Only in Paper"[7] (González, June 19, 2005: 8), "Violence is Learned at Home"[8] (Montoya González, June 19, 2005: 38) and "Beyond 'Empowerment': the Cold-blooded Violence Against Women"[9] (Fernández Menédez, March 8, 2005: 2). The fact that these articles surround the reports on Juárez is very significant, given that usually they are right next to pictures of what in Canada are known as the "*Sun* girls" or the section of social events.

I think that if we viewed the marches and demonstrations organized by feminist and Aboriginal rights' activists, friends and relatives of these murdered and missing women purely as a demand to the state to 'protect' these women and their rights, Foucault may be partly right; these strategies would not necessarily be refusing the modes of subjectivation and individualization that are part of the problem. Nevertheless, as the refreshingly critical newspaper articles evidence, it is possible to interpret these strategies in a different way.

First, however, it must be pointed out that Foucault's work "does not negate the possibility of concrete political struggle and resistance. It does insist that we understand and take account of the ways in which we are implicated in power relations and the fact that we are never outside of power" (Martin, 1988: 12-13). At

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[6] Vive Ensler Experiencia Dolorosa.
[7] Equidad y Derechos: Sólo en Papel.
[8] La Violencia se Aprende en Casa.
[9] Más Allá del 'Empoderamiento': la Fría Violencia contra las Mujeres.

the same time, it is important to recognize that, even though "power is not held by anyone, [it] does not entail that it is equally held by *all*. It is 'held' by no one; but people and groups *are* positioned differently within it" (Bordo, 1993b: 191). Second, Foucault's scepticism concerning 'revolutionary' struggles must be seen in view of his rejection of strategies that presume a universal human subject (Man) and thus advocate universal strategies for human liberation:

> What Foucault is trying to undercut is not the agency of the subject, but the liberal essentialist conception of the subject which provides the centre of humanistic thought.... So here, to conceive of the deployment of subject positions and subject functions does not mean that human experience or political resistance is in any way unreal, and the fact that power is all-pervasive does not mean that resistance is always already beaten (Ransom, 1993: 135).

In this light, it could be argued that the struggles and strategies of activists and friends and relatives of the murdered and missing women, feminists, women's rights and Aboriginal rights groups are not necessarily premised on a fixed, universal subjectivity or notion of 'Woman.' They do not even posit an essential Aboriginal womanhood or an original working class femininity. If anything, their struggles unveil the plurality of women's experiences of violence and hence the unfeasibility of having the unitary subject 'Woman' at the center of their efforts. These struggles are the product of a long battle to recognize the conflictual experiences of gender, race and class in women's lives and the fact that these women are differently positioned within the field of power. As such, I argue that these struggles can and do provide new forms of knowledges and discourse, and consequently other truths, that do not repress pluralities. On the contrary, they highlight them and thus open up the possibility of thinking what makes certain discourses, regimes of power and truth feasible.

Ultimately, this is the focus of Foucault's work: the production of discourse and knowledge in culture and as shapers of culture. In claiming alternative discursive spaces to talk about, represent and shape the public perception of Aboriginal women

in Canada and working class women in Mexico, these efforts expose the truth-effects of power and knowledge of (neo-)colonial discourses, what makes their use necessary and what makes them possible. Nevertheless, it is the focus of feminism and its theoretical elaborations on Foucault to point out that the effects of power and discourse are not purely positive. In my analysis of the murders and disappearances of Aboriginal women in Canada and the case of *las muertas de Juárez* in Mexico, I thus stress the importance of taking into account both the positive *and* productive *as* repressive outcomes of bio-power through the discursive and material effects of (neo-) colonialism and its institutions to further the understanding of these femicides, but to also think about how we can challenge the perpetuation of death by culture that renders these women and their bodies as disposable.

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