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Fetal Representations in the Internet: Scientific Results, Political Subjects and Fetish Objects

This paper analyzes pictures of human fetuses that have been published in the internet. The topic stems from the perception made by feminist cultural studies of technoscience scholars that Anglo-American antiabortion activism has produced a worldwide 'global fetus' through circulation of fetal representations in different media. The purpose of my paper is to compare www-pictures from Anglo-American servers to Finnish servers in order to discuss the relationship of this 'global' imaginary with specific local adaption of it. The data analyzed are 400 internet pictures, and the methods include frame analysis intertwined to methods of analyzing pictures. The analysis of the data shows that there are 3 interlinked frames of attributing meaning to fetuses: scientisation, politicisation and fetishisation. The fetal representations travel from mere bodies in a biological process to nurtured babies, commodities and political participants, in a slightly less political and commodified manner in Finland compared to Anglo-America.