

**‘Our stories will recreate us...’
Reading, ‘Woman’, and the Crisis of Reproduction in the Works
of Doris Lessing and Marge Piercy.**

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Declaration:

‘I, ALICE LOUISE PODKOLINSKI, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.’

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May 2019

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Abstract

The thesis maps the critical application of reading literary terrains. Drawing on the work of Rosi Braidotti and Gilles Deleuze, I demonstrate a methodology of thinking through reading literature that counters limiting binary arguments concerning the feminist female subject and assisted reproductive technologies (ARTs). Using additional thinkers in each chapter, Donna Haraway (Chapter Two), Judith Butler (Chapter Three), and Michel Foucault (Chapter Four), I develop a rhizomatic thesis through a comparative literary analysis of texts from both Doris Lessing and Marge Piercy. Each chapter focuses on particular literary figurations to map key aspects of reading, ‘woman’, and ARTs: mothers, monsters, and machines to map difference (Chapter Two); the womb to map embodied subjectivity and creative spaces (Chapter Three); genealogies, the familial figure and the critical method, to map narrative construction and power (Chapter Four). As well as enriching critical discussions regarding the female subject, this methodology provides original contributions to literary analysis of Piercy and Lessing’s respective works. My reading of Piercy’s works considers the spectrum of applications and implications of ARTs residing between the utopian and dystopian conceptions of them, consequently critiquing a complex matrix of difference and power. It also presents the significance of imagination and storytelling in mobilising resistance to these matrices. I further pursue this affirmative consideration of storytelling and narrative building through my reading of Lessing’s works. It locates the dynamic and multi-stranded thinking accessed within her texts. Noting her works’ facility to disturb and affect the reader, I demonstrate a methodology of reading and thinking that locates the reader, their positionality and embodied responses, as central to my consideration of the efficacy of literature in contemporary discussions on the female subject and the crisis of reproduction.

Impact Statement

This thesis contributes to the reading of literature as a feminist critical resource, as a cultural entity, and as a pedagogical tool.

This work joins a multi-disciplinary discussion that forwards thinking on the application and implications of ARTs on women. Within academia this serves to present a literary methodology for considering the complicated relationship between women, ARTs, and power. The impact of this work locates itself as part of an ongoing academic discussion regarding biotechnologies and contemporary subjectivity; through its broad subject interests and engagement with other disciplines, I have attended a diverse range of conferences, from philosophy, to motherhood, to comparative literature, and extended my work's reach beyond feminist critical thinking to other academic fields. The impact of this work has social and political urgency as well as academic significance; it could be applied to these social and political interests through the increasing social media and media interests across digital, newspaper and television mediums which I raise in my thesis.

A significant impact of this thesis is to literature, as an academic field and a cultural entity. This thesis contributes original readings of both Marge Piercy and Doris Lessing's works. The impact of these readings has been accessed most notably through presenting papers at both philosophy and literary conferences in which my multi-disciplinary approach and my critical mapping of their works have provided original perspectives to both literary and feminist discussions. Further dissemination of this impact would be made possible through the publication of parts or whole of this thesis. To continue the application of this impact both within and outside academic fields, this thinking has particular potential, however, in teaching.

The impact of my work has already been applied through teaching, as a pedagogical tool, a methodological framework, and a discursive literary landscape. Within the academic forum, I have applied my research in teaching literature and feminist critical theory. For the teaching of literature, my cross-disciplinary methodology and engagement in critical thinking through creative terrains has provided stimulating material for students and a productive methodology for thinking through reading. This methodology facilitates both an original contribution to the literature and a compelling exploration of contemporary philosophical thought. Within feminist critical theory, the utilisation of literature facilitates discussion with

the students that allows them not only to extend their engagement with critical thinking within a literary forum, but to use this forum to challenge the application of this thought. This utilisation of this thesis could be extended to teaching critical thinking within other disciplines. Outside the academic forum, this methodology of thinking through literature has further application for teaching English language and literature. Reading literature can contribute a mobilising complexity to various discussions regarding contemporary experience and subjectivity. As a consequence of these discussions, students can in turn contribute to an original engagement with valuable literary spaces.

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But the storyteller will be there, for it is our imaginations which shape us, keep us, create us – for good and for ill. It is our stories that will recreate us, when we are torn, hurt, even destroyed. It is the storyteller, the dream-maker, the myth-maker, that is our phoenix, that represents us at our best, and at our most creative.

(Doris Lessing, Nobel Lecture, 2007)¹

Women are also born of women. But we know little about the effect on culture of that fact, because women have not been makers and sayers of patriarchal culture. Woman's status as child bearer has been made into a major fact of her life.

(Adrienne Rich, Of Woman Born, 1989)²

Writing has nothing to do with signifying. It has to do with surveying, mapping, even realms that are yet to come.

(Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 1988)³

¹ Doris Lessing, 'Nobel Lecture: On not winning the Nobel Prize', December 7th 2007, http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/2007/lessing-lecture_en.html, [accessed November 2018].

² Adrienne Rich, Of Woman Born – Motherhood as Experience and Institution, (London: Norton and Company, 1995 (1986)), p.11.

³ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, (London: Continuum International Publishing, 2004 (1988)), p.5.

‘It is our stories that will recreate us...’: Reading, ‘Woman’, and the Crisis of Reproduction in the Works of Doris Lessing and Marge Piercy.



George Nicholson, *The Illustrated Dictionary of Gardening, Div. VI*, (London, England: L. Upcott Gill, 1884)

On Sunday 9th October 2011, the five-month pregnant pop star Beyoncé sat down on a couch on the Molly Meldrum Sunday Night Show. She had gone on the show to talk about her upcoming song releases and to reveal the due date of her keenly awaited child. As she went to sit on the couch, however, her tight-fitting shift dress scrunched awkwardly over her already famous ‘bump’.⁴ Overnight, photo stills and video clips had been scrutinized and reprinted; the bright studio lights had cast shadows over Beyoncé’s pregnant form making her ‘bump’ appear hollow and causing the international media to go wild. Convinced that Beyoncé would not risk damaging her carefully sculpted, multi-million-pound body to the ravages of pregnancy, there were a multitude of articles and blogs worldwide demanding that not only was her ‘bump’ a fake, but that her pregnancy was also. Many concluded that she must be using a surrogate, the increasing reality of the rich and famous today.⁵ Projected onto her changing form were the expectations, imaginations and demands of popular interest and the global media. The dystopian world that Margaret Atwood had so terrifyingly painted in her 1985 acclaimed novel

⁴ ‘8,900 tweets per second! Beyoncé’s baby bump reveal smashes Twitter record’, *The Daily Mail*, (2011), <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-2031948/Beyonce-pregnant-Singers-baby-bump-reveal-smashes-Twitter-record.html#ixzz2Hx21gok7> [accessed Jan 2019].

⁵ A growing phenomenon discussed by journalist Victoria Hannaford in ‘Very little mention has been made that it was a surrogate, not Kardashian, who carried her child’, *The Advertiser*, Jan 2018, <https://search-proquest-com.libproxy.ucl.ac.uk/docview/1988525483/citation/553CAFCD728B4097PQ/1?accountid=14511> [accessed September 2018].

The Handmaid's Tale,⁶ in which reproductive politics, biotechnologies and capitalist powers terrifyingly collide, seemed to no longer be confined to fiction. In the imaginations of the tabloid media it was a reality.

The reality of biotechnologies and pregnancy may not have reached the 'implosive peak'⁷ portrayed in Atwood's literature, which through invasive totalitarian and religious practices reduces women to 'two-legged wombs' (p.134), but the fears Atwood depicts are ever more poignant. The tabloids' instantaneous responses to a shadow across Beyoncé's pregnant body reveal how the combination of now more established reproductive sciences, capitalist interests, and conceptions of gender difference is challenging how we have previously conceived woman's reproductive capacities, her body, and her position within a gendered society. The tabloid's obsession with Beyoncé's 'bump' is likely symptomatic of our current, frenetic celebrity culture, but it is also representative of changing experiences of motherhood and our struggling discursive and cognitive facilities, yet desperate desire, to comprehend and conceive the potential of alternate methods of reproducing. This is a crisis of our age: negotiating our increasingly entangled relationship with biotechnologies and the powers infusing them. My thesis proposes that a solution to this discursive and indeed cognitive shortfall lies, as the quote from Lessing in my title suggests, in the stories we tell.

Stories, found here in women's writing, present the terrain and provide the tools for my critical engagement in contemporary concerns. Literary authors as well as critical thinkers have been grappling for some time with the possible implications for women and society of reproductive technologies, most prolifically since the advent of In Vitro Fertilisation (IVF) in 1978. Marcia C. Inhorn and Daphna Birenbaum-Carmeli describe this in their anthropological article 'Assisted Reproductive Technologies and Culture Change', (2008). Their statement 'in short, technological innovation has led to anthropological proliferation' presents the profound impact of reproductive technologies on women and society as a whole.⁸ It is this ongoing development in medical practice which both implicitly and explicitly pervades much of the literature I discuss. This thesis investigates beyond the stylised glamour of celebrity; I use

⁶ Margaret Atwood, The Handmaid's Tale, (London: Random House, 1996 (1985)). All further references to this text are from this edition and given parenthetically.

⁷A reference to Rosi Braidotti's comment on the current relations between reproductive biotechnologies, subjectivity and gender difference. Nomadic Subjects, 2nd Edition, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), p.244.

⁸ Marcia C. Inhorn and Daphna Birenbaum-Carmeli, 'Assisted Reproductive Technologies and Culture Change', Annual Review Anthropology, 37, (2008), 177-96, (p.178).

critical theory and literature to consider the implications of these changes from a contemporary perspective and through this discussion, the contribution that thinking through literary terrains can make to critical thought. In doing this, I work to not only bridge the, arguably artificial, division between the two fields, but to demonstrate a methodology of reading that enriches them both. Lessing notes in her Nobel speech the value of creativity, found in the imaginative space of stories, to shape how we think and live. This thesis works to access this facility through reading literature in order to nourish contemporary critical discussions surrounding female subjectivity and Assisted Reproductive Technologies (ARTs).

‘Woman’ and her capacity to create life, to write, to read, to think is at the center of my thesis. The ‘woman’ in my title is placed in inverted commas to invite consideration of the constructedness of her subjectivity; she is the feminist female subject around which I will be reading. I use the description of ‘feminist female subject’ throughout to locate my work within the context of feminist theory. It is my engagement with feminist theory that directs how I map both the experiences this subject is undergoing and how we can ethically, so with examination of the powers acting on this subject, engage with them. Although I use the binary determiner of ‘female’ here, this is to locate this subject within a dualistically sexed system rather than to reinforce the dualism in any way. Inevitably, however, working with such binary identifiers does risk endorsing their hegemony within discourse and life. I propose understanding this acquiescence to sexed dualism through a Braidottian lens, utilising its ‘strategic aim’ rather than diagnostic function.⁹ As such I am recognising this dualism, though not endorsing its limitations, in order to facilitate more complex and constructive discussion arising from the experiences of the female sex, repeatedly subordinated because of its reproductive capacity. I map throughout in what ways I relate woman’s reproductive potential to the embodied female subject and in what ways the removal of this potential from the subject is altering how we consider and experience embodied gendered subjectivity.

My use of the term ‘map’ here is deliberate and extends throughout my chapters. My understanding of this mode of reading derives from the epistemologies of the two central thinkers who inform much of my work, Rosi Braidotti and Gilles Deleuze. Braidotti has utilised this term ‘mapping’ since her first book Patterns of Dissonance (1991) as a way of conceptualising her endeavour to survey a feminist genealogy in a non-linear, non-hierarchical

⁹ Rosi Braidotti, with Judith Butler, ‘Feminism by Any Other Name’, Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies, Vol. 6, No. 2 & 3, (1994), pp. 27 – 61, p.39.

form. I understand her use of the term ‘map’ to be proposing a genealogical form of reading. I return to this genealogical methodology in detail in my fourth chapter, but I want to note here that the term identifies a methodology of reading that provides a located, complex, dynamic, and temporary, in that it is not definitive, response to a terrain, whether literary, critical, or other.

My use of the term ‘map’ then demonstrates my conceptualisation of the texts I will be exploring as multi-dimensional spaces, with my reading of them identifying a topography of differing landmarks, undulations, and intensities, that constitute and catalyse movement of thought. More importantly, these are movements of thought which are responding and returning to embodied experiences. Deleuze’s description of the difference between mapping and tracing thought epitomises this position: ‘What distinguishes the map from the tracing is that it is entirely oriented toward an experimentation in contact with the real.’¹⁰ It is this ‘contact with the real’, in my thesis encountered in the contact between literary text and embodied reader, between imagined worlds and experienced realities, between creative and critical that makes this mode of thinking so complex and so necessary. It is notably the ‘experimentation’ that Deleuze identifies in this contact that renders my method of reading more dynamic, more creative, more original, and so necessary for the crisis I have identified. I demonstrate and develop further in the next chapter my Deleuzian informed methodology of reading literature as an affecting, deterritorializing space. I locate this cartographic method of reading as central to my engagement in contemporary questions regarding ‘woman’ and ARTs. The questions specific to this thesis are: How can we discuss these changes without falling into and reinforcing a binary discourse of limiting or liberating? In what ways can we identify and ethically include the various forms of power dictating the application of these ARTs? How can we incorporate the complexity and dynamism of the changes in bio practices in our thinking and writing?

The work of Braidotti is instrumental in negotiating this balancing act between the critical concerns, the creative literary terrains and the contemporary positionality of my work. The balance is in addressing the different discursive registers of these positions, and mapping their intersections, while preserving their differences. The challenge then is in communicating complexity while wobbling perilously between comprehensibility and superficiality. In order

¹⁰ A Thousand Plateaus, p. 1.

to achieve this aim, I develop an analytical toolbox for thinking through reading literary terrains; drawing again on the work of Braidotti and Deleuze, my toolbox comprises various figurations. Because figurations are not representational, static images, but rather figures that enact processes of thought, they facilitate access to the differing academic registers of the intersecting thesis' plateaus. Figurations form a significant aspect of my methodology and I map theoretically my understanding of them in the next chapter. Within each further chapter, I critically locate and then creatively map different figurations through the works of Doris Lessing and Marge Piercy. I develop this methodology throughout the chapters and demonstrate how it provides a lens that creates vital and vitalistic space for critical considerations, not only of the changes in current reproductive practices, but, further following Deleuze's thinking, the potential practices in 'realms yet to come'.

By way of outlining two key drives to this thesis, I want to provide here a concise consideration of what I understand with the terms 'vital' and 'vitality'. My use of the adjective 'vital' is identifying the critical, political, personal necessity of engaging in such considerations. Through my feminist mapping of power throughout, I make evident why a discussion of women and changing reproductive technologies is so necessary. In doing this, I demonstrate how fundamental a tool reading literature is to this conversation. 'Vitalistic' is a somewhat more complicated term to outline. My position on 'vitalism' is informed by the work of Braidotti whose postmodern materialist position on vitalism is evident through my reading of life and reproduction. In her publication The Posthuman (2013), Braidotti uses her vitalistic materialist viewpoint to map the forces of life, 'Zoe'. She describes how vitality is a monistic 'energy' or 'intensity' not contained within embodied 'flesh' awaiting imprint, but rather in a sense passing through us, ever transforming and becoming.¹¹ It is a force that resists individualistic humanism and rather locates the Anthropocene in a universe of life force. Positioned as part of Braidotti's post-human, post-Anthropocene view, her understanding of *Zoe* is distinct from *bios*, the discursive, political organising of life. Drawing significantly from Spinoza, she emphasises the interconnectedness of all things through this monistic energy. My work seeks to locate the moments in literature that contain and mobilise such vitalism and that, driven by my reading of Nikolas Rose's study of twentieth century biopolitics in The Politics of Life Itself,¹² make visible the forms of power that shape our experience of it and us.

¹¹ Rosi Braidotti, The Posthuman, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013), p.131.

¹² Nikolas Rose, The Politics of Life Itself: Biomedicine, Power, and Subjectivity in the Twenty-First Century, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

In order to address these various plateaus to my work, ‘Woman’, critical reading, and literature, in a non-hierarchical, mutually enriching, and necessarily complex way, I have to structure my writing conscientiously and accordingly. The image of a German Iris rhizome in the epigraph illustrates the form of this thesis and to a certain extent a reading directive. This figure allows me to engage with a philosophical methodology; it provides a figuration for the shape and direction of the non-linear thinking I cultivate in this thesis. This figure draws considerably on the work of thinker Deleuze. Deleuze and Felix Guattari open their seminal work A Thousand Plateaus with an image of a rhizome of sorts. The image they select is not horticultural; it presents the scrambling, intersecting, diverting musical lines from a Sylvano Bussotti score. The score appears at first illegible and, I imagine, to a musician somewhat daunting. Its instructions aren’t singular; they are broadly open to interpretation and revision, and as Ronald Bogue insightfully identifies ‘chance’.¹³ Its notes aren’t distinct; they blur with consecutive notes, cross staves, and devolve into lines of momentum rather than separate marks of distinction. The tempo and key are entirely open to interpretation. Bogue argues for the significance of placing this image as the opening epigraph to the rhizome that Deleuze is creating with Guattari in A Thousand Plateaus. I agree. As well as presenting a ‘deterritorialized framework’ to Deleuze’s philosophy, I support Bogue’s position that the image serves as an instruction to the reader, an instruction that tells us how to ‘play the book’.¹⁴ It is an instruction of liberation, creativity, and trepidation. These are instructions that guide my own methodology, the thesis I am creating, and the reader encountering it.

The figure I have placed in the epigraph of my own thesis is arguably less radical than Deleuze’s, but equally instructive to understanding the framework of my project. The illustration of the rhizome presents a static image of a non-static, growing, non-hierarchical, intricate organism. The nodes of the rhizome evolve from one another, though differing in shape and direction they evolve from shared vitalism and are united in their momentum to grow. From the central nodes spring multiple, entangled shoots; growing in various directions they increase the complexity of the rhizome but also the vitality, its ability to live and thrive. The chapters of this thesis function like these nodes; related in momentum, connected to but not limited by one another, similar in form but not identical. I refer to and develop my

¹³ Ronald Bogue, ‘Scoring the Rhizome: Bussotti’s Musical Diagram’, Deleuze Studies, Vo. 8 Iss. 4, pp.470-490, (p.475).

¹⁴ Bogue, p.474.

engagement with the figure of the rhizome at multiple points throughout this thesis, both to outline the cultivation of my own work, in non-linear, non-hierarchical, complex nodes and to enrich my own methodology of writing my thinking through an engagement with Deleuze's work. Life, stories, and critical thinking are not singular, separate from one another, or simple; this thesis demonstrates that through the deliberate intertwining of all three strands all can be nourished and enriched.

Chapter One: Research Questions and Methods.

Behold the creative critic! We spurn the grain of tradition, vault taxonomies!
We defy the ‘output’ imposed upon us!
‘I am for an art (writing)’, Susannah Thompson¹⁵

I

Research Questions

This chapter serves as the theoretical underpinning of the thinking that I presented in the introduction and that is developed throughout this thesis. Establishing the motivations and parameters of this thesis explicitly here is particularly necessary because of the interdisciplinary nature of my project. This disciplinary homelessness, or more constructively perceived nomadism, provides my theoretical wanderings with a productive freedom, but also with this freedom the responsibility to define the direction of these wanderings so they do not appear aimless to the reader. Consequently, I follow Susannah Thompson’s manifesto for creative critical writing from ‘I am for an art (writing)’ (2018) presented in the epigraph; this resistance to categorisation informs the content as well as the methodology of my work. I open this chapter by expanding on the crisis concerning reproductive practices and female subjectivity introduced in the previous chapter. By locating the origins of my enquiry, I outline the questions that motivate this work. In doing this, I establish the three plateaus, the reading, ‘Woman’, and crisis of reproduction identified in my thesis title, upon which this work functions. The remaining chapter is divided into three sections to map these plateaus theoretically and explain how they interact to form the motivation, method and terrains of my research.

The subject around which I am reading in this thesis, both on the literary and critical terrains, is ‘woman’, most notably her relation to reproduction and ARTs. Pregnancy and reproduction have persistently presented a complex set of contradictions for feminist thinkers. And, as the Adrienne Rich epigraph to this thesis elucidates, woman’s relation to this capacity, which is determined by a patriarchal, capitalist culture, serves as a ‘major factor of her life’

¹⁵ Susannah Thompson, ‘I am for an art (writing)...’, *The Creative Critic Writing As/About Practice*, eds. Katja Hilevaara and Emily Orley, (London: Routledge, 2018), p.29.

whether she chooses to have children or not. Consequently, whether the opportunity to bear the foetus till birth and ‘mother’ the child after is a privilege or a burden of the female sex is no simple perspective. Although published thirty years ago, Kathy Rudy’s succinct description of the mechanization of pregnancy remains true today and informative to a discussion of the proliferation of potentials facilitated by developing ARTs:

New interventions such as in vitro fertilization, artificial insemination by husband or donor, surrogacy, and gametic intrafallopian transfer allow previously infertile couples to have children, while new tests such as amniocentesis, chorionic villus sampling, fetal ultrasonography, percutaneous umbilical blood sampling, and fetal biopsy measure every possible aspect of the fetus’s development.¹⁶

When considering these changes, Rudy highlights how the effects of these developments caused a deep divide and considerable discussion within feminist thinking. This divide is caused by feminists’ varying positions on women’s bodies, the initial marker of gender difference and the location for its practicing and enforcement.¹⁷

In her comprehensive and seminal study of the changing views of bodies in Volatile Bodies (1994)¹⁸, Elizabeth Grosz organizes these perspectives into two distinct groups. On the ‘negative side’, Grosz considers theorists such as de Beauvoir and Firestone who identify woman’s ability to mother, both biologically and socially, as an obstacle which ‘must be overcome’¹⁹ in order to achieve equality between the sexes. For these thinkers, Grosz describes how women’s bodies are ‘regarded as an inherent limitation’ to social and political equality. On the ‘positive side’, Grosz places thinkers such as Kristeva and Chodorow who identify the social construction of subjectivity. Consequently, they conceive women’s bodies and experiences as providing ‘women with a special insight, something that men lack.’²⁰ Grosz’s identification that ‘what needs to be changed are attitudes, beliefs, and values rather than the body itself’²¹ is a valid one. It is nevertheless ironic when considering how her reading of the

¹⁶ Kathy Rudy, ‘Ethics, Reproduction, Utopia: Gender and Childbearing in Woman on the Edge of Time and The Left Hand of Darkness’, NWSA Journal, Vol. 9, No.1 (spring 1997), pp. 22 -38, (p.22).

¹⁷ In Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex (London: Routledge, 1993), Butler describes how the categories of sex are ‘forcibly materialized through time’. She describes the ‘process whereby regulatory norms materialize “sex” and achieve this materialization through a forcible reiteration of those norms’ (p.xii).

¹⁸ Elizabeth Grosz, Volatile Bodies – Toward a Corporeal Feminism, (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.15.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p.17.

views of bodies reduces the perspectives to binary terms, precisely the mode of thinking her research is proposing to escape.

More recently Victoria Pitts-Taylor, in her opening chapter to Mattering: Feminism, Science, and Materialism (2016),²² nods to Grosz's significant contribution to feminist theory's move towards a materialist ontology. Pitts-Taylor, however, follows Pheng Cheah's query of 'the stability' of the oppositions set up through Grosz's thinking and pervading earlier feminist discussion. She uses her discussion of Cheah to move her own focus to the concerns of materialism surrounding female embodiment today. Noting that '...matter is meaningful, and meaning is materialised in matter'²³, she leaves us in no doubt that a sexed body is significant, is always entangled in multiple forms of power, and is never statically binary. She surveys contemporary feminist discussion to confirm the need to move on from the 'focus on representation' of gender that previously preoccupied feminist discussion. Instead she proposes that in order to locate this feminist subject within a discourse of materialism, science, and power, we need to seek 'new orientations between nature, biology, evolution (Grosz 2008), and physical processes'.²⁴ My research regarding women's bodies and their reproductive capacity supports this need to resist resting solely on the positive or negative sides; similarly, it also seeks to explore the female subjects' evolving relationship with ARTs. I consequently follow Pitts-Taylor's advice and work in this thesis to utilise more complex, mobile forms of expression and criticism to map how the material maternal female subject exists in a complex and changing landscape of power, both enacted on and by her.

Anneke Smelik and Nina Lykke's Bits of Life: Feminism at The Intersections of Media, Bioscience, and Technology (2008) is significant in working towards these 'new orientations', presenting an instructive collection of essays on the feminist material subject and the rapidly changing and notably intersecting fields of biosciences and technology. Their publication maps the materiality of the female subject within a blurring context of differing technological and biological discourses; noting the 'entanglement of material, biocultural and symbolic forces in the making and unmaking of the subject', they present the urgency and ongoing need to map across disciplines the forms of power propagated through these discourses and practices.²⁵ In

²² Victoria Pitts-Taylor, Mattering: Feminism, Science, and Materialism, (New York: NYU Press, 2016).

²³ *Ibid.*, p.7.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.10.

²⁵ Nina Lykke and Anneke Smelik eds., Bits of Life: Feminism at The Intersections of Media, Bioscience, and Technology, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008), p.xiv.

an effort to contribute to the necessary new forms of orientation required to explore this shifting and entangled landscape of biotechnologies, materiality and power, they present the figuration of 'bits of life'. Drawing significantly from Haraway's cyborg figure, their figure actively works to blur boundaries and intersect disciplines. Inspired further by Haraway, they describe how it 'is an imploded knot from which an infinite number of threads can be untangled.'²⁶ The selection of essays in this publication work from and across differing discourses, sociological, philosophical, cultural, to untangle this knot, pulling out the various threads of material subjectivity, technology and biosciences from which it is constituted. In order to introduce the positionality of this endeavour, Lykke provides a detailed explanation and visual depiction of a Venn diagram. Describing the intersections of Feminist Studies, Cultural Studies and Science and Technology Studies, Lykke presents a case and indeed the need for working within 'feminist cultural studies of technoscience.'²⁷ Significantly, they locate reproductive sciences at the forefront of this discussion. I align my own project with this broad cultural engagement, biomedical enquiry, and feminist critical epistemology. Rejecting a binary critique of biomedical practices, I too propose working within the deconstructive tradition of these overlapping disciplines; from this position my project similarly seeks to expose and unravel the forms of power working on and through the material subject's entanglement with reproductive biosciences.²⁸

In an attempt to categorize the growing impact of ARTs on women's experiences of their reproductive capacity, which has been particularly apparent since the birth of the first IVF baby in 1978 in England, Michelle Stanworth divided the developments into four categories. Although she organised these categories in 1987, they remain relevant today: fertility control; childbirth labour management; pregnancy screening and monitoring devices; conceptive and gestational technologies. I touch on all aspects at various points in this thesis, but my focus will primarily be on the last of these categories, conceptive technologies and most significantly surrogacy and IVF. This decision is confirmed by a more recent publication on ARTs, Christopher J. De Jonge and Christopher L. R. Barratt's Assisted Reproductive Technologies: Accomplishments and New Horizons (2002). While noting the significant and rapid developments that continue to take place in this field, Howard W. Jones' foreword to this work presents the petri-dish, the 'in vitro' of IVF, as the primary location for these radical changes

²⁶ Lykke and Smelik, p. xv.

²⁷ Ibid., p.7.

²⁸ Ibid., p.12.

in reproduction.²⁹ I propose this petri-dish figure as equally significant to considering the personal and social impacts of ARTs on ‘woman’. It is in this space that both physically and potentially genetically the ‘woman’ is distanced from her progeny, forcing a reconsideration of what it means to conceive and gestate life.

This physical distance has implications: it destabilises the certainty of the categories of mother and child, but also of woman and gender difference which are intricately intertwined with these. In what ways it destabilises these categories and the further effects of this destabilisation are ongoing and require investigation. This is no simple task. Not only because IVF technologies are developing at a rapid rate, but because as Amade M. Charde and Grietje Keller demonstrate in their comparative reading of human and animal utilisations of IVF, ‘IVF doesn’t stay put.’³⁰ Describing how the technology is adapted to fit differing medical and agricultural uses, they map its impact on social kinship discourses and practices, and vice versa. Their discussion exposes the applications and development of reproductive technologies to replicate supposed ‘naturalised’ social constructs, specifically addressed through the struggle to legally and discursively fit three parent fertilisation into the normative two parent model. Simultaneously their work exposes the practice of IVF to ethical questions regarding the marketing, availability and utility to women. These questions are particularly pertinent because as they argue ‘IVF doesn’t stay put’; it is a constantly developing science and the application of it, to whom, under what circumstances, at what cost, varies according to geographical, political and commercial interests.

In the UK, these interests can be identified in the question of access to ARTs. Within the NHS, access is determined by age, sexuality and geography. Those who do not fulfil the widely varying interpretations of the NHS guidelines are then subject to a global market of reproduction in which wombs are cheaper to rent and embryos cheaper to buy depending on geography and currency. This thesis’ exploration of these various factors affecting ART access and ‘woman’ is driven by my arguably utopian belief that only through further consideration of the implications of reproductive practices can women benefit from the choices these ARTs provide without being further implicated by the detrimentally normative and capitalist

²⁹ Christopher J. De Jonge and Christopher L. R. Barratt eds., Assisted Reproductive Technologies: Accomplishments and New Horizons, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. xiv.

³⁰ Amade M. Charde, Grietje Keller, ‘Parenthood and Kinship in IVF for Humans and Animals.’, Anneke Smelik and Nina Lykke (eds.), Bits of Life: Feminism at The Intersections of Media, Bioscience, and Technology, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008), p.61.

differences they potentially enforce. This idea is further supported by Braidotti's position on reproductive technologies. Referencing the current discourses on reproductive rights in light of developing technologies, Braidotti not only identifies how crucial they are 'to the construction of gender relations and the socio-symbolic status of sexual difference',³¹ but also to the potential undermining of the rights of women and their bodies.

Despite and arguably because of the rapidly growing utilisation of these technologies, the social impacts of ARTs are still being discovered. Recent statistical studies reveal the challenge of scientific research to record, let alone fully understand, these changes. Kim L. Armour's 2012 study outlines, from a nursing perspective, the current positions on surrogacy throughout the world. Whether commercialised, as in America, India and Russia, or legalised, for altruistic purposes only, as in Britain, Mexico, Norway and many other countries, her collection of often inconsistent data reveal an accelerating increase in the use of surrogacy and most significantly an inability of legislators and governing bodies to fully standardize let alone govern the practice.³² A 2015 survey of UK surrogacy statistics confirms similar uncertainty surrounding surrogacy. As well as identifying a significant increase in recent surrogacy enquiries between 2010-2013, this survey exposes UK fertility clinics' notably inconsistent awareness of the NHS funded provision and UK legislation on surrogacy availability and application.³³ Admittedly surrogacy is not a practice which the majority subscribe to. Nevertheless, there are social implications from the growing availability, use and conception of such ARTs; as the studies above suggest, these are implications that we are grappling to keep up with. Surrogacy is just one form of reproducing that is made possible through the use of IVF. Others, such as post-menopausal pregnancies, homosexual parenting, egg and sperm donor pregnancies, are also shaping what it means to reproduce and parent.³⁴ The material female subject is located then in a shifting landscape of unknowns and uncertainty. It is a landscape of reproductive biotechnologies which is implicated by gender, political and commercial powers and which also implicates them. We need to map this landscape in a way

³¹ Nomadic Subjects, (2011), p.214.

³² Kim L. Armour, 'An Overview of Surrogacy Around the World - Trends, Questions and Ethical Issues', Nursing for Women's Health, Vol. 16, No. 3, (June 2012).

³³ Wendy Norton, and Marilyn Crawshaw, Nicky Hudson, Lorraine Culley, Caroline Law, 'A Survey of UK Fertility Clinics' Approach to Surrogacy Arrangements', Reproductive BioMedicine Online, September 2015, Vol.31(3), pp.327-338.

³⁴ Ian Sample, 'First UK license to create three-person baby granted by fertility regulator', The Guardian, (16th March 2017), <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2017/mar/16/first-licence-to-create-three-person-baby-granted-by-uk-fertility-regulator> [accessed March 2017].

that includes these various implications, recognises its shifting nature, and locates the female subject without limiting her.

Lykke and Smelik's publication engages in this project; distinctly absent from their collection of diverse and informative essays, however, is literary studies.³⁵ I propose that literature can make a unique contribution to their feminist cultural studies of technoscience through both its location in language, and, unlike films which do feature in their work, its pronounced activation and utilisation of the reader's imagination. Through these means, literature has the ability to both make visible the forms of power impacting gendered embodiment and perhaps more significantly, when read critically, it can have the ability to mobilise a more dynamic, complex mode of thinking through these intricacies. Both to demonstrate these potentials and utilise them critically, my exploration of literature resides at the heart of this thesis. A much-discussed literary writer in this field whose work directs the content and method of this discussion is Ursula Le Guin. In her acclaimed science fiction novel The Left Hand of Darkness (1969), Le Guin considers a society in which sex and gender are no longer fixed facts but fluid experiences. Her portrayal reveals the absence of binary reproductive roles to be liberating to all subjects, not only women:

The fact that everyone between seventeen and thirty-five or so is liable to be...“tied down to childbearing”, implies that no one is quite so thoroughly “tied down” here ... psychologically or physically. Burden and privilege are shared out pretty equally...³⁶

As well as exploring the implications of childbearing on gender difference, Le Guin's work provides instruction for thinking through creative terrains. Like Genly Ai in her work says, ‘the truth is a matter of the imagination’; we, the readers, are directed to reflect on the constructedness of the ‘truths’ that shape and direct how we live. In doing so, we are forced to think through the multiple possible truths available, as in Le Guin's writing, not one at the expense of the others, but all simultaneously. This thesis maps this ability of literature to affect the reader, to catalyse a response in them, to move them cognitively to occupy multiplicities and so to mobilise a dynamic mode of thinking. Like Le Guin, many female, and male, writers have adopted speculative and imaginative responses to the potential unknowns of reproductive sciences and the possible impacts these could have on society.

³⁵ Lykke and Smelik, pp. ix – xix.

³⁶ Ursula Le Guin, The Left Hand of Darkness, (London: Orbit, 2012 (1969)), p.75.

Whether reproductive technologies would liberate women from the physical capacity to give birth or further implicate the gestational process in a capitalist value system of product exchange, these writers did and still do not know. Nevertheless, by utilising the imaginative facility of writing literature they have considered the possibilities. Writers such as Marge Piercy, Doris Lessing, Gwyneth Jones, Ursula Le Guin, and Margaret Atwood have utilised, to varying degrees, fantastical genres in order to explore real issues facing women and the changing dynamics of gender difference.³⁷ Their work still provides fertile ground for discussing contemporary questions regarding biotechnologies and female subjectivity. This is because not only have their initial questions and concerns not fully been answered, but the questions remain ever relevant today: How do these technologies impact the conception and gestation of life? What are the consequent effects on woman and gendered society? How do various forms of power shape these effects?

Although the medical and sociological facts of developing reproductive technologies underline my enquiries, they do not direct my methodology or means. I propose drawing on this literary tradition of feminist critical fiction and utilising it as a creative forum in which to address questions concerning the feminist female subject and ARTs. I propose, and develop further in section III of this chapter, that a Deleuzian methodology of reading literature can enable a mapping of these landscapes that contributes the necessary ‘new orientations’ to feminist critical thinking. It is this interaction between creative and critical terrains derived from this introductory discussion and outlined in the following questions which drive this thesis: How does the removal of the child from the mother within these literatures help us consider the impact of the growing usage of ARTs, which distance the maternal function from the mother’s body, on female subjectivity and gender difference? In what ways does a methodology of thinking through creative literary terrains contribute to feminist critical thinking? Simultaneously, how does such a feminist critical lens enrich my reading of the selected literatures?

³⁷ These publications have been informative on this topic: Alice Ridout and Susan Watkins (eds.), Doris Lessing: Border Crossings, (London: Continuum International publishing, 2009); Margaret Atwood, In Other Worlds: SF and the Human Imagination, (London: Virago Press, 2011); Jennifer A. Wagner-Lawlor, Postmodern Utopias and Feminist Fictions, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

Through this discussion and from these questions, I have established the three plateaus which form the central focus of this thesis and so the centre, or in horticultural terms the flesh, of my rhizome:

- The ‘Woman’ in Feminist Theory: Gender Difference and Female Subjectivity
- Towards a Deleuzian Approach: The Critical Potential of Writing, Reading, and the Space in between
- A Critical Mapping of Marge Piercy and Doris Lessing’s Creative Terrains

I develop my thinking on these three aspects in this chapter in turn. In the first section, ‘The ‘Woman’ in Feminist Theory’, I discuss the subject at the centre of my questions, ‘woman’. Recognising the crisis in feminism which surrounds identifying this subject without limiting her, I turn to the work of Rosi Braidotti to explore the need for more liberating and constructive methods for considering ‘woman’. Using her work as the foundations for my own feminist positionality, I identify the urgency to foster more complex ways of thinking about difference and subjectivity. I present how developing ARTs are further complicating the challenges surrounding the feminist female subject. Within the next section, ‘Towards a Deleuzian Approach’, I assess Deleuze’s contributions to philosophical thought through his literary analysis to justify my selected analytical terrain, literature, as well as the methodology of mapping deterritorialized spaces and reading ‘affect’ on these terrains. I continue my demonstration of this critical potential of reading through my discussion of translator Clive Scott. Through my reading of his methodology, I identify the intersecting stages of reading, thinking, and writing that constitute a creative and responsive engagement with a text. In the final section, ‘A Critical Mapping of Marge Piercy and Doris Lessing’s Creative Terrains’, I outline and justify the literary terrains on which I demonstrate this methodology of reading. By explaining my decision to read the works of Marge Piercy and Doris Lessing in this thesis, I make evident the narrative features and form that direct my decision to locate my mappings in their works. These three plateaus intertwine with one another, develop numerous lines of flight, and inform how I structure and achieve the central aims in this thesis: to engage in a critical consideration of ARTs and the feminist female subject; to develop and demonstrate a methodology of reading literature; to make an original contribution to literary criticism.

II

The 'Woman' in Feminist Theory: Gender Difference and Female Subjectivity.

Can we learn to think differently about difference?³⁸

The questions raised in the previous section surrounding reproduction and gender difference remain as urgent and as topical as ever for my generation of women. On the eve of arguably a fourth wave of feminism, both literally and critically my generation is struggling to negotiate the legacy of choice bequeathed to us by feminists before us. The challenge is to reconcile the freedoms these choices provide with developing medical practices and economic developments which impose detrimentally limiting experiences of gender difference on us. Thomas Sobirk Petersen maps the ethics conflicting this notion of 'choice' in reproduction in his article 'A Woman's Choice? On Women, Assisted Reproduction and Social Coercion' (2004).³⁹ In working to critique and counter the argument that women are socially coerced into desiring children and so utilising ARTs, he proposes that a solution lies not in controlling access to ARTs but in increasing information regarding them. This argument is pertinent; my focus, however, is not solely in relation to actual mothers or women desiring to become mothers, but also in relation to women who are branded, as Rich notes, by society, law, and culture as 'potential mothers.'

Braidotti supports this position and goes as far as to suggest that 'each woman, whether she likes it or not, only exists in her culture as a potential mother'.⁴⁰ This statement, although somewhat extreme, posits this capacity to mother, whether biologically or socially, as the source of social, and legislative prejudice against women. This reproductive facility, rather to be the location for the gestation of the pregnancy remains, to borrow from Firestone, is the 'keystone'⁴¹ of gender difference. In the introduction to Part Three of The Gendered Cyborg: A Reader (2000), Kathryn Woodward identifies how Luce Irigaray similarly considers the maternal feminine as representative of the feminine within phallogocentric discourse and

³⁸ Nomadic Subjects, (2011), p. 216.

³⁹ Thomas Sobirk Petersen, 'A Woman's Choice? On Women, Assisted Reproduction and Social Coercion', Ethical Theory and Moral Practice, 2004, Vol.7(1), pp.81-90.

⁴⁰ Rosi Braidotti, Patterns of Dissonance, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), p. 260.

⁴¹ This is a reference to Firestone's consideration of woman's maternal function as a 'keystone' of gender difference and which I will be discussing further in section I of this chapter, Patterns of Dissonance, p.155.

representation. There is, however, a critical potential in this process of ‘other-ing’ that Woodward recognises. She suggests that:

In focussing on how the maternal-feminine has been historically reproduced, it is possible for women to find new ways of marking difference and of challenging the patriarchal sublimation of “woman” into mother.⁴²

Woodward argues that by exploring issues surrounding conceptions of motherhood and by turning towards, not away, from subordinated figures, Irigaray is able to address questions concerning women’s subjectivity and gender difference. I agree that by mapping discussions of these figures, the woman and mother, we can encounter ‘new orientations’ of mapping this difference. Throughout her work, Braidotti similarly turns her gaze to the maternal feminine. She does not limit the term ‘mother’ to the solely literal, but productively uses it to consider the role of women and reproduction ‘both as “biocultural entities” as well as political subjects who are represented in feminist theory.’⁴³ My thesis is by no means endorsing an absorption of the female into the maternal subjectivity; rather I am admitting that these two subjectivities are most certainly not independent from one another, whether socially or critically, and that developments for one inevitably affect the other. To allow consideration of female subjectivity inclusive of the many differences such a term implies, one of which is mother or non-mother, a distinction which itself is altered by ARTs, I will be referring to this perceived ability throughout this thesis as ‘reproductive capacity.’

I do at times use the term ‘mother’, but note that it is a complex and conflicting term. My understanding of the figure of the ‘mother’ is significantly informed by Julia Kristeva’s essay ‘Stabat Mater’ (1977, tr. 1985). In this essay her consideration of the narcissism and fantasy of the mother figure rooted in Christian discourse returns continuously to the fabrication of this figure and the effect of this on women. She describes the ‘mother’ as an ‘adult (male and female) fantasy of a lost continent’⁴⁴. Her use of the term ‘fantasy’, which removes this mother figure from any form of reality, is compounded by considering her a ‘lost continent’, further distancing this figure in space and time. Nevertheless, this fantastical figure evidently has a significant impact on real experience. According to Kristeva, the failure to reconcile traditional representations of the mother figure with what women ‘say’ about it is ‘a

⁴² Kathryn Woodward in *The Gendered Cyborg: A Reader*, eds. Gill Kirkup, Linda Janes, Kathryn Woodward, Fiona Hovenden, (London: Routledge, 2000).

⁴³ *Nomadic Subjects*, (2011), p.215.

⁴⁴ Julia Kristeva, ‘Stabat Mater’ (1977), *Poetics Today*, Vol. 6, No. 1/2, ‘The Female Body in Western Culture: Semiotic Perspectives’, (1985), pp. 133-152, (p.133).

major force of discontent.⁴⁵ The reason for this is revealed most acutely in Kristeva's accompanying personal narrative to her essay. Squeezed in next to her critique of religious discourse and the virgin mother Mary, Kristeva reminds us of the real, embodied, 'Incommensurable, unlocalizable maternal body.'⁴⁶ There are multiple arguments as to why the maternal body is both incommensurable and unlocalizable, some of which will be considered in my discussion of literature in this thesis. Notable here is how this statement reveals the contrast pervading Kristeva's publication and the discourse I will be exploring on female and maternal subjectivities: the jarring disparity between women's experiences of their 'maternal body', so their reproductive capacity, and the representations of and discourse regarding this body.

The 'woman' in my title then is not a singular, unitary subject. Although I have placed her in speech marks again to invite consideration of the constructedness of her subjectivity, this does not begin to account for the complexity and multiplicity this subjectivity contains. Since my thesis questions largely concern this subject, I must start by considering who this subject is. When attempting to discuss who this 'woman' is without rejecting or confining all the varieties possible, feminists since the 1990s have engaged in diverse discussions regarding the subject and subjectivity. Throughout these discussions, it is evident that whether sexual, racial, national, or class, difference forms a fundamental part of subjectivity. I utilise the work of Braidotti to inform my position on this feminist female subject and difference and to locate my thinking in an ongoing feminist discussion because to cover it in its entirety would fill this thesis.⁴⁷ I specifically use Braidotti's work in which she establishes 'the material/maternal roots of subjectivity'⁴⁸ to demonstrate why embodied difference is such a vital aspect of considering 'woman'. Within my exploration of this thinking, I confront arguably the most pressing issue concerning woman's reproductive capacity: formulating ways of considering her subjectivity which embrace the varying and changing varieties of gender difference rather than limiting it within an oppressively rigid dualistic model of gender difference. When reflecting on her own feminist agenda in an interview with Judith Butler, Braidotti identifies the failings of a stable, universalistic representation of 'woman' and her subjectivity, and proposes her objective to engage in a discussion which moves feminist theory beyond this stable notion of the subject to

⁴⁵ Ibid., p.135.

⁴⁶ Kristeva, 'Stabat Mater', p. 145.

⁴⁷ Braidotti provides a survey of a number of these positions in *Patterns of Dissonance* (1991).

⁴⁸ Rosi Braidotti, *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming*. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002), p.23.

one more fitting with the lived experience of it.⁴⁹ I understand this feminist political effort to seek modes of thinking and writing that allow such complexity and diversity as a primary drive in my own exploration of ‘woman’ in this thesis. In this thesis, however, I am specifically locating this subject in a changing field of reproductive technologies to consider female subjectivity amidst this ongoing contemporary change.

1. The Maternal Reproductive Function and Gender Difference

In order to engage in considerations of contemporary subjectivity and gender difference, this thesis maps a fundamental embodied difference between the sexes: reproduction. My use of the terms sex and gender subscribes to the strategic application of sex for biological difference and gender for cultural. Though I note these distinctions to be artificial and far more complex, for the clarity of this discussion my use of the terms facilitate a broader discussion beyond such debates.⁵⁰ In relation to reproduction and difference, I partly agree with Braidotti’s rejection of Firestone’s assertion that ‘it will first be necessary to get rid of the keystone of the difference between the sexes: the maternal function.’⁵¹ Braidotti considers such a position to be symptomatic of feminists who sought a false equality through a homologation of the sexes which was motivated by the urge to reject a system which perceives and utilises difference as a ‘synonym of oppression.’⁵² Nevertheless, reproductive technologies are continually and significantly altering the dynamic between the sexes and embodied reproduction. How these technologies are affecting the sexes and who or what is affecting these technologies is an ongoing crisis.

I am not describing it as a crisis because these effects on women are solely negative, rather because the word marks a period of tension in which the effects are in flux, to a large extent still unknown or unconsidered, and ongoing. Rachel Bowlby’s discussion of reproduction and reproductive technologies and her mapping of it in literary terrains in *A Child of One’s Own* (2013) describes the many varieties of family and mothering made possible by developing reproductive technologies.⁵³ This ‘crisis’ of reproduction is not solely negative for women; there are also various positive effects. Braidotti’s understanding of Firestone’s

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, (London: Routledge, 1990).

⁵¹ *Patterns of Dissonance*, p. 155.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Rachel Bowlby, *A Child of One’s Own: Parental Stories*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

arguably extreme plea fails to address the liberatory potential of what she was proposing. Reproductive technologies such as IVF arguably free the woman's body from the conception, gestation, and birth of her biological kin, not to mention the crushing diagnosis of infertility. With the growing availability of reproductive technologies, more and more women are able to delay, control, and outsource how they choose to reproduce, though of course the 'freedom' of these choices is a complex area for consideration.⁵⁴ Furthermore, there are questions of access and funding, and indeed questions of power, that determine precisely which women have access to these choices at all. Woodward considers this 'oppressive or liberatory potential of reproductive technologies' to be a primary point of discussion for feminists still.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, where previously the mother has been defined by her difference, the potential of biotechnology's intrusion into reproduction is to eradicate this difference entirely. Women can lose jobs, face increased physical violence, and suffer significant medical traumas as a consequence of this capacity to mother, but simultaneously the embodied experience of gestating and birthing a child, the unique personal and social values surrounding this experience render it one not simply to be outsourced or removed from. Maternal difference is both a source of subjugation and celebration, sometimes both simultaneously. Furthermore, because of the power structures ARTs impose, practising these reproductive technologies cannot be fully embraced either. The question then of whether these ARTs have a limiting or liberating affect is not complex or effective enough. Not only does this positioning risk reinforcing binary dialectic through which the feminist female subject is subjugated, but it fails to take into consideration the powers directing these practices and the complexity of them in an advanced capitalist and global era.

In order to facilitate the inclusion of power in this thesis, I turn now and will do at multiple points, though primarily in chapter four, to the work of Michel Foucault. The insidious power of medical and technological devices can be understood through a Foucauldian consideration of 'bio-power'. Foucault considered 'bio-power', so the control and subjugation of populations through technological and legislative practices on the body, as:

without question an indispensable element in the development of capitalism; the latter would not have been possible without the controlled insertion of bodies into the

⁵⁴ Thomas Sobirk Petersen, *ibid.*.

⁵⁵ Woodward, p.164.

machinery of production and the adjustment of the phenomena of population to economic processes.⁵⁶

According to Foucault ‘machineries of production’ are utilised as methods of population control and development, so I include with them reproductive technologies. Foucault describes here the commodification of bodies, as potential producers and consumers, as well as the commodification of reproduction, so the productions of these bodies. From this we can argue then that ARTs extend this lens in that not only do they facilitate the production of ‘bodies’, but the processes of production themselves become commodified and the location for economic processes and capitalist interests. ARTs incorporate the intersections of capitalist, scientific, and, with legislative controls varying geographically, also political powers. Biotechnologies should not then be understood purely as instruments of medical or capitalist power imposed on the body, but also as extensions of the practices through which various forms of power are imposed.

Butler’s discussion of Foucault’s work on power is significant in my exploration of power and embodiment (see Chapter Three). When considering the mechanisms of power in Foucault’s discussion of the hermaphrodite Herculine Barbin, Butler insists on considering the ‘productive capacity of power’.⁵⁷ Reminiscent of her discussion on performativity and subject formation, Butler describes how these ‘regulative strategies produce the subjects they come to subjugate’.⁵⁸ Although in the case of Herculine, Butler is primarily referring to regulatory discourse and legislation in the construction of sexual difference, she does implicate medical discourse in subject formation also.⁵⁹ We can perhaps apply then her observation regarding the relation between gendered performances and the construction of sexed subjects to the relation between reproductive practices and sexed subjects: ‘there need not be a “doer behind the deed,” but that the “doer” is variably constructed in and through the deed.’⁶⁰ In light of this, we can then read Braidotti’s observation that through developing biotechnologies ‘power over the body has reached an implosive peak’⁶¹ as not just a warning about how women ‘practice’ their reproductive capabilities. The interiorising ‘implosiveness’ of this power suggests that these

⁵⁶ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: The Will to Knowledge*, tr. Robert Hurley, (London: Penguin, 1998 (1976)), pp.140-141.

⁵⁷ *Gender Trouble*, p. 125.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ This is evident throughout Butler’s discussion on Herculine in *Gender Trouble* p.132.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.181.

⁶¹ *Nomadic Subjects* (2011), p.244.

practices although not always obviously visible are formalising parts of subjectivity and gender difference.

Discussing the feminist subject and embodiment provides one particular predicament for Braidotti that also has to be considered in this thesis. Braidotti identifies the paradox of focussing philosophical thought on the body towards the beginning of Nomadic Subjects; she states how the ‘body emerges at the centre of the theoretical and political debate at exactly the time in history when there is no more single-minded certainty about what the body actually is.’⁶² For Braidotti this is largely for theoretical reasons; she cites the ‘loss of the naturalist paradigm and of Cartesian certainty’ as the reason the body is now opened up to a multitude of discourses.⁶³ This ‘absence of consensus’⁶⁴, however, is by no means purely theoretical. The maternal body alone unsettles and distorts a unitary reading of embodiment; it transgresses the very borders of the body, both spatially and temporally. Even beyond the experience of pregnancy, woman’s reproductive capacity, which is experienced through cyclical periods and pregnancy, demands women to experience temporality personally, physically and beyond the hegemonic narrative of linear time (see Chapter Three).

To explore this female embodied resistance to singularity, Braidotti reads Walter Benjamin’s idea of ‘transitional space’⁶⁵ as derived from Donald Winnicott’s earlier work. She suggests that by ‘redefining the bodily space this way [in terms of transition and ‘receptivity to otherness’], Benjamin lays the foundations for an alternative representation of female subjectivity.’⁶⁶ To extend this thinking, our growing and blurring relationship with reproductive biotechnologies makes the maternal body an even more complex, transitioning area for discussion. By delaying, outsourcing, extending, violating these processes, ARTs render this reading of ‘transition’ ever more apparent and truer. I discuss this position on embodiment further in Chapter Three, but what is of significance here is how Braidotti develops her thinking from Benjamin and combines it with Deleuze’s philosophy, in which he understands the body as a complex and changing location for intersecting differences and relations, to incorporate this capacity for change and multiplicity in subjectivity. In her later publication Metamorphoses (2002) Braidotti describes this as ‘thinking about processes, rather

⁶² Nomadic Subjects (2011), p.192.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid., pp.192 – 193.

⁶⁵ Patterns of Dissonance, p. 269.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

than concepts.’⁶⁷ My methodology of reading literature developed and demonstrated throughout this thesis seeks to facilitate such a process ontology capable of incorporating the complexity, multiplicity and vitality necessary for ethically, so read through a feminist lens which includes difference and exposes power, mapping embodied subjectivity and ARTs.

2. Thinking Differently About Difference

This endeavour to map difference and subjectivity is evident in much of Braidotti’s work. Since her earliest publication, Patterns of Dissonance (1991), Braidotti has been exploring a ‘crisis’ or indeed dissonance at the core of her positionality and thinking when mapping ‘woman and/or philosophy’.⁶⁸ Citing her place of enunciation as ‘the woman, the philosopher and the feminist’, she notes the intersections of these ‘discursive registers’ but simultaneously their resistance to synthesis and conclusive singularity. It is from this “‘difference within the self’” that she paints a project of ‘discontinuous lines’ rather than linear progression. Difference serves not only as the foundations of her positionality but also of her nomadic project to map the feminist subject within philosophical thought.⁶⁹ Indeed, Braidotti recognises ‘difference’, and significantly not only sexual but racial, age, religious, ethnic, and national as well, as the ‘issue in our time’.⁷⁰ She draws on both linguistic construction, social organisation and most deliberately on Europe’s recent past to demonstrate how pervasive and persistent difference is in our society. Consequently, previous feminists’ attempts to promote equality and dismiss difference are understood by Braidotti to be a dangerous homologation of difference and rejection of lived experience. In her opinion, such homologation risks assimilating the woman into ‘the master’s voice, in established conceptual frameworks’,⁷¹ or rather into the dominant masculine ‘modes of thought and practice’ identified by countless feminist theorists.⁷² This thinking, through difference rather than proposing a beyond, is ever more necessary when discussing reproduction; this is because the gender differences are so profoundly embodied and so significantly impacted by the forms of power implicating biotechnologies and practices that questions of power and difference remain ever pertinent and urgent.⁷³ Braidotti’s work positioned so self-consciously amongst these intersecting differences demonstrates her own

⁶⁷ Metamorphoses, p.1.

⁶⁸ Patterns of Dissonance, p.14.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p.13.

⁷⁰ Rosi Braidotti, Nomadic Subjects, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p.5.

⁷¹ Patterns of Dissonance, p. 14.

⁷² Nomadic Subjects, (2011), p. 153.

⁷³ Nomadic Subjects, (1994), p. 147.

methodology for thinking differently about difference. Her plea, identified in the sub-title of this section, although perpetual throughout her work comes in this instance from the chapter ‘Mothers, Monsters and Machines’ from the second edition of Nomadic Subjects (2011). Although many of the ideas expressed in this most recent edition permeate her earlier work, this particular chapter does present one of her most recent and comprehensive discussions of difference, and, of particular interest to my work, why the mother figure is central to this discussion.

In Braidotti’s justification for building a ‘case-study’ around the figures of Mothers, Monsters and Machines she exposes the issues of embodiment and difference to be fundamental to all three, and most significantly dominant discourses’ treatment of them. The connection between the role of the mother and the intrusion of biotechnology is quickly made evident with Braidotti’s observation that developments in artificial reproduction ‘have entangled the power of science over the (maternal) body of women.’⁷⁴ Braidotti notes the significance of this entanglement in the realms of ‘artificial reproduction’. She describes how the potential outsourcing of the ‘maternal function’ and the ‘manipulation of life through genetic engineering’ have allowed for a new generation of ‘artificial monsters’ to come into existence.⁷⁵ Noting the significant ‘legal, economic, and political’ repercussions of these changes, Braidotti identifies how the consequent debates surrounding them are altering the discursive and juridical perceptions of female embodiment and gender difference. At the risk of subsuming maternal rights into fetal or embryo rights or dismissing them in favour of these, Braidotti notes the significance of developing ARTs, the implementation and discussion of them, over female embodiment and sexual difference.

To further this application of the mother/monster figures and ARTs, I turn again to Woodward. She reads the normative pressures surrounding experiences of mothering and notes how non-normative behaviours are read through a negative and often monstrous lens; she considers how ARTs extend and facilitate what is considered ‘normal’ or not. Through this discussion she identifies how reproductive technologies ‘can be seen as making possible monstrosity and new “monster mothers”’⁷⁶ by opening up the experience to a further dimension

⁷⁴ Nomadic Subjects, (2011), p. 214.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Kathryn Woodward in The Gendered Cyborg: A Reader, eds. Gill Kirkup, Linda Janes, Kathryn Woodward, Fiona Hovenden, (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 163.

of positive and negative differences. She describes the 60-year-old mother and the commercial surrogate to demonstrate that reproductive practices are often also understood through divisive dualistic oppositions, right/wrong, normal/not-normal. ARTs make possible infertile mothers, homosexual mothers, surrogate mothers; with these possibilities comes the discursive and social reactions. How women reproduce, at what age, with whom, whether they choose to at all, what technologies they choose to use to facilitate and monitor the consequent pregnancy, are all manifestations of the various forms of normalising discursive and social powers practiced on and through the woman's body and behaviours. When these behaviours do not conform to current normative standards, then women are considered through a lens of negative difference. Braidotti's work extends this thinking. In her discussion of motherhood and difference, she notes how the figure of the monster is not applied to simply identify negative difference, rather she argues the figure of the monster *is* 'the bodily incarnation of difference'.⁷⁷ This position locates then the maternal subject, when encountered through the monstrous lens, as the embodiment of monstrous discourse. In her discussion of monsters and mothers, Braidotti succinctly draws on the logic of binary oppositions which has permeated Western thought and is discussed most fervently by French theorists. It is within her discussion of this binary dialectic that Braidotti encounters the restrictions, but also the potential liberation of working through difference.

Significant here is how Braidotti primarily develops this understanding of difference from Lacan and his work on binary logic and logocentrism. She reflects on his discussion of language which operates through binary oppositions and supposes that the 'other' is 'that which is other-than the accepted norm.'⁷⁸ In Lacanian thought this 'other' is a linguistic incidence; through Braidotti's thinking, however, she applies this logic to embodied practices and experience. This thinking derives from the work of the French Feminists', particularly Irigaray's, thinking on difference and the significance of occupying the position of 'other'. Like Lacan, Irigaray recognises the significance of the signifying economy of language; she, however, takes his argument further identifying 'woman' in this economy not as 'other' but, as Butler describes it, the 'point of linguistic absence'.⁷⁹ In 'The "Mechanics" of Fluids' (1985) Irigaray argues that both the subject/man and the other/woman are patriarchal constructions, as

⁷⁷ Nomadic Subjects, (2011), p. 216.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Butler, Gender Trouble, p.15.

the symbolic is constructed through the phallus.⁸⁰ From my own reading of Irigaray, I applaud and follow the potential she identifies of this subordinated position; it is nevertheless the case that within the dominant phallogocentric discourse, and with it society, woman remains absent and repressed through her negatively perceived difference from the subject/man. Furthermore, since society and humanity are constructed through and by the dominant, ‘man’, where does that leave ‘woman’, not to mention ‘mother’? With the monsters and machines as inhuman? These are questions I return to in the following chapters with a more detailed exploration of the critical and personal resource female maternal embodiment can provide. Suffice to say here, this logocentric thought epitomises theoretically how difference is shrouded in negative connotations and how woman’s body and maternal function are further implicated and complicated in negative difference through the growing use of ARTs. In this position, however, free from being the dominant norm, the marginal figure of the mother has the potential to change, respond, move. This figure is a creative resource to Irigaray’s work precisely because of this subordinated position.

Difference has persistently remained a divisive tool throughout Western history, language and thought. Braidotti holds the ‘phallogocentric perversion’ of difference responsible for the fact that ‘femininity and monstrosity can be seen as isomorphic’⁸¹ in their subjugated position outside the norm. Motherhood and in particular alternate forms of mothering are very much entangled in this discourse of monstrosity and difference. It is by focusing on the science of teratology, and the ubiquitous figure of ‘monsters’ which serves as a persistent obsession of fantasy, art, fiction and science that Braidotti reaffirms her constant plea: ‘can we free difference from these normative connotations? Can we learn to think differently about difference (Jardine 1985)?’⁸² And it is this enquiry, particularly through the mapping of marginal, embodied figures that will inform my discussion of the feminist female subject and reproductive technologies within this thesis.

⁸⁰ Luce Irigaray, ‘The “Mechanics” of Fluids’, *The Sex Which Is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter, (London: Cornell University Press, 1985), pp. 106 – 119, (p.112).

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p.228.

⁸² *Nomadic Subjects* (2011), p.216.

3. The Nomadic Figure

Difference is so entrenched in language, thinking and culture it is acutely challenging to discuss difference and so the feminist female subject without falling into the traps of essentialism or dismissal. In order to work through binary logic and subjectivity from a feminist position, we must struggle to utilise dualistic identifiers such as 'female' and 'woman' while recognising the discursive, social, and political powers of such terms without endorsing them. ARTs pose a similar challenge; discussions of the complexities of the field risk falling into limiting traps of binaries, suggesting the biotechnologies application is either simply liberating or limiting for women. Renate Klein's survey of feminist thinking on ARTs over the last 25 years demonstrates the risks of such approach.⁸³ In, helpfully, presenting the origins and developments in feminist thinking countering ARTs, Klein merely works to reinforce a binary logic that entraps woman as passive objects of a medicalised system that functions, she argues, irrespective of their health and wellbeing. Unable to recognise women's agency or even the complications affecting this agency in negotiating developing technologies, her woman focussed arguments disenfranchise the 'woman' she is ardently seeking to protect. As Braidotti describes it, the feminist theoretician must balance like an acrobat on a tightrope without a safety net in her dazzling feat addressing issues of power promulgated by the binary logic permeating discourses of philosophy and science, amongst others, without falling into the void left by the 'master's discourse'.⁸⁴ It appears when working within the 'master's discourse' that the feminist theoretician risks either reaffirming the hegemony of this discourse or being silenced entirely.

This particular void is made acutely evident in the published discussion between Braidotti and Butler. Both theorists recognise the 'constraints of representational discourse'⁸⁵ and with it the signifier 'woman'. Butler, however, considers an acceptance of these binary structures an endorsement of patriarchal power itself.⁸⁶ She consequently prefers to deconstruct and abandon existing dichotomies leaving the reader surrounded by epistemological tatters, whereas Braidotti, arguably more optimistically and in my opinion constructively, wishes to

⁸³ Renate Klein, 'From Test-Tube Women to Bodies Without Women', *Women's Studies International Forum* 31 (2008) 157–175.

⁸⁴ *Patterns of Dissonance*, p. 14.

⁸⁵ 'Feminism by Any Other Name', p. 7.

⁸⁶ There are numerous examples throughout Butler's *Gender Trouble* in which she equates an acceptance of binary gender structures as consolidating and naturalizing 'convergent power regimes of masculine and heterosexist oppression' (p.46).

work through the ‘inherent dualism’. Adopting a conscious form of strategic essentialism, she locates her thinking directly within the structures of difference in order to find ‘points of exit’ from within.⁸⁷ This effort to tackle difference head on through our modes of thinking is an effort I am intending to transfer to my endeavour. In doing this, I am by no means rejecting Butler’s contribution to feminist thought; rather my reading of her work in Chapter Three confirms her relevance but does not follow her particular deconstructive method. Our language, society and embodied experience of subjectivity are so entrenched in binary difference, however, that it is not only impossible to abandon it, but for an ethical consideration of subordinated subjects, dangerous. Consequently, like Braidotti, I agree that we need to develop our modes of thinking to coincide with the complexity of embodied experience.

My own engagement with creative criticism is driven by Braidotti’s answer to the question of how we can think differently about difference: to propose a new way of thinking. When countering criticisms of essentialism by working through difference, Braidotti draws from her reading of Irigaray and Deleuze. She declares that we need to shed a ‘centuries old habit’ of considering difference and identity in the Hegelian terms of ‘thesis and antitheses’, persistently returning to difference in terms of dichotomies. Instead she asks the reader to think differently altogether, and follows Deleuze’s and Irigaray’s lead to declare that we need to think in a mode that she calls ‘the future perfect, the conditional present’.⁸⁸ This grammatical instruction has multiple possible interpretations; I understand from it, however, that the deliberate reference to grammatical tenses which suggest either a completed task in the future or an impossibility in the present are hinting more directly at Braidotti’s feminist agenda. Braidotti’s answer to her question of thinking differently about difference is not merely to propose a possible way of thinking, rather it is to ask her readers for a little imagination and creativity to re-think the present; only then can it be opened up to a potentially different present or eventual future. I propose that thinking through literature can facilitate such encounters with the ‘conditional present’. It is more specifically the conscious utilisation of imagination in the literatures I will be reading that I argue contribute to mobilise ‘thinking differently’ about our present. I map how ‘imagination’ as a reading resource can function to both destabilise accepted ‘truths’ in the present I, the reader, am discussing and catalyse a mode of thinking about this present. Through this means, I use my engagement in literature to reconsider a feminist critical engagement in life. This endeavour is inspired by Braidotti’s proposal not just to suggest a new

⁸⁷ ‘Feminism by Any Other Name’, pp.153-154.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

idea about philosophy and life, but to go as far as to suggest a ‘reformulation of the relation of thought to life as well as to philosophy’⁸⁹ itself. I propose that this reformulation can be mobilised through the methodology of reading literature this thesis develops and demonstrates.

This methodology of reading and engagement in literature is in part directed by Braidotti’s presentation of the critical potential of figurations. Her most significant one is the nomadic subject. Returning her project to the feminist question of mapping the subject feminist politics is attempting to represent, Braidotti tackles the issue of how we can think differently about difference in relation to this female feminist subject. This directs her focus, significantly, to the body; but as Braidotti declares it is by ‘rethinking the bodily roots of subjectivity’ that we can engage in her ‘epistemological project of nomadism.’⁹⁰ Drawing on Braidotti’s work, I understand that this particular body should be viewed as neither an exclusively biological nor an exclusively sociological entity, but rather as the location, both spatial and temporal, for the multiple, complex and evolving differences that intersect and constitute the subject. More significantly these differences and intersections are not static and unchanging, but rather constantly in a state of movement and transformation. Braidotti understands the subject ‘woman’ to be ‘a site of multiple, complex, and potentially contradictory set of experiences, defined by overlapping variables.’⁹¹ She develops a visual cartography of these various levels of difference in her chapter ‘Sexual Difference as Nomadic Political Project’ in Nomadic Subjects to demonstrate how these asymmetrical differences function between men and women, between women, and within women.⁹² These tables function clearly to elucidate the differences between these particular figures in society, but fail to draw into view the further differences experienced by various subjects: between men, between old and young, between mothers and non-mothers, not to mention between mothers using reproductive technologies and mothers not. The possibilities are numerous. Nevertheless, Braidotti’s formulation of subjectivity does present a compelling method, namely thinking through a figuration. Braidotti’s project is to develop ways of thinking about this site that takes this difference, affirmatively, into consideration. Braidotti’s solution is to formulate a new figuration, a mobile and mobilising lens, for thinking about the female feminist subject: ‘the nomadic subject’.

⁸⁹ Nomadic Subjects, (2011), p.127.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.24 – 25.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

⁹² In ‘Sexual Difference as a Nomadic Political Project’, Nomadic Subjects, (1994), Braidotti uses tables to clearly demonstrate these three points of difference, pp. 159, 162, 165.

From her work, I can both inform my understanding of the embodied subject and more significantly a methodology which maps complex thought through a figuration.

Following Braidotti's example, my engagement with figurations and imagination within literature is motivated by the drive to develop a mode of thinking that coincides with the contemporary challenges of utilising these technologies while exposing and unravelling the potential power implications these utilisations perpetuate. The figurational, unlike the figurative which supposes a statically separate sign and object, incorporates a mode of thinking about processes and multiple differences. Drawing from Braidotti's consideration of figurations, Federica Timeto describes how 'figurations do not stand outside the world they describe, but are living maps and transformative accounts never detached from their geopolitical and historical locations'.⁹³ These are ways of thinking which include the complexity, changes, movement and nomadism of our embodied experience in our current 'post-human hybridized technoculture'.⁹⁴ In order to coincide with rather than confine the complexities, changes and multiplicities of women's reproductive capacity and its relation to gender difference, I fully endorse Braidotti's further observation that we require 'a theoretical style that allows one to think processes, transitions, in-between zones and flows.'⁹⁵ Since language and consequently thought, as my discussion of Lacan and Irigaray has demonstrated, are entrenched in binary modes of logic, a mode of thinking needs to be mapped in a space where language and meaning are flexible, transformative tools; I will demonstrate how this mode of thinking needs to be explored in the space of literature.

In these efforts to map deterritorialized spaces of 'zones and flows', we must remain critical of the forms of 'movement' we are mapping. In her second and most recent edition of Nomadic Subjects, Braidotti presents an entirely new introduction which addresses critics' responses to the nomadic aspects of her theory in her original publication.⁹⁶ Inspired by her personal nomadic experience as well as philosophical training, amongst other things, the term nomadism draws on a deterritorialized understanding of 'social identity' and differences.⁹⁷ Relating this to our globalized economy, however, we must be aware of the multiple forms of

⁹³ Federica Timeto, 'Diffracting the Rays of Technoscience: A situated Critique of Representation', Poiesis & Praxis (November 2011), pp. 151–167, (p. 160).

⁹⁴ Rosi Braidotti, Transpositions, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006), p.170.

⁹⁵ Metamorphoses, p.230.

⁹⁶ It is of note that this is not instead of her original introduction, but rather as well as; her original introduction takes the place of Chapter 1 in the 2011 edition.

⁹⁷ Nomadic Subjects (2011), p.7.

mobility and in particular to the forms to which she subscribes. Braidotti reflects on the ‘schizoid character’ of advanced capitalism, which through global commercial networks proposes free mobility beyond the confines of national borders. She warns against the assumption that this network somehow automatically facilitates nomadic thought. On the contrary, she identifies the ‘concrete conditions’ of global commerce which through commodity and material commerce merely reinforce and perpetuate the negativity of binary logic, rather than expose or escape it.⁹⁸ My project seeks to identify moments in literary texts that mobilise dynamic nomadic thinking, and can be applied to my engagement with the feminist female subject, as well as expose and critique the ‘capitalist brand of pseudo nomadism’ that implicates this subject.⁹⁹ In order to facilitate such exposure through my own project, I self-consciously utilise such a critical, ethical, feminist lens when mapping nomadic deterritorialized thinking in literature. I consider further how this can be done through marginal figures in the next chapter, through embodied, reproductive figures in the third chapter, and with a mapping of power, advanced capitalist, patriarchal, political, in family figures in the fourth.

This thesis follows throughout Braidotti’s recognition of the need to remain discerning of the types of nomadism we endorse and to develop a form of nomadic subjectivity which identifies ‘lines of flight, that is to say, a creative alternative space of becoming that would fall not between the mobile/immobile, the resident/the foreigner distinction, but within all these categories.’¹⁰⁰ The nomadic subject is such a mobilising and effective figuration because it can be perceived as a location of intersections without hierarchy, where the multiple, complex and developing aspects of a subject meet. Braidotti’s nomadic project is not seeking to define, or confine, the feminist female subject within a definitive reading or conclusion, rather to propose a figuration and way of thinking about the subject which not only allows, but potentially encourages the multiple, complex differences and intersections that constitute lived experience. It is by exploring and mapping the material existence of the feminist female subject through this nomadic lens that we can answer the opening question I cited from Braidotti regarding how we can think differently about difference. Namely, we can think differently about difference by thinking through difference.

⁹⁸ *Nomadic Subjects* (2011), p.7.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.6.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

Braidotti's work informs the philosophical foundations of this thesis' methodology, the feminist politics of its motivation, and serves as the critical guide to my tools: figurations and mapping. Braidotti's answer to her question 'Can we think differently about difference?' is explored through examples and case studies from embodied experience to demonstrate both why we must think differently about difference and through her own examples, how. In her revised introduction to Nomadic Subjects (2011) she warns against understanding the nomadic figuration as simply a way of thinking; we must understand it as method of mapping the material, embodied subject. Braidotti's case study of the 'Mothers, Monsters and Machines' demonstrates how the process must be done carefully and with plenty of self-criticism. We must be cautious not only of what we are thinking and how we are articulating it, but also of the implications of how we think about difference; this caution must be made in an effort to allow but not endorse, to identify and not obscure the various, intersecting aspects of gender difference. She offers the figure of the 'Nomadic subject' to do this. Throughout her work Braidotti repeatedly provides demonstrations of how to think differently about difference; her nomadic journey allows her to traverse disciplines to provide cartographies of contemporary society. As she states, the nomadic subject allows for 'blurring boundaries without burning bridges'¹⁰¹. This analogy can be applied to both her disciplinary movements as well as the movement of her thought. Her case studies may indeed vary widely, but as the 2nd revised edition of Nomadic Subjects demonstrates her thinking keeps moving as well. She does not offer a product or solution, but instead she suggests and engages in a process through her nomadic figure. It is this exercise of engaging in a critical process that I use to direct my own methodology. This methodology intends to be an engagement that, similar to Braidotti's work, traverses disciplines and so occupies critical and literary boundaries. It is an engagement in the process of reading and thinking about the feminist female subject and ARTs.

¹⁰¹ Nomadic Subjects, (2011), p.4.

III

Towards a Deleuzian Approach: The Critical Potential of Writing, Reading, and the Space in between.

To those who ask what literature is, Virginia Woolf responds: To whom are you speaking of writing? The writer does not speak about it, but is concerned with something else.¹⁰²

How we read a body of text is as significant as how we read embodied subjectivity. In the context of the latter, my discussion in section II has demonstrated how these readings have had and continue to have considerable impact on our understanding and experiences of subjectivity. I have argued that as readers of embodied subjectivity, we must then take considerable care to develop how we think about it and ensure that these understandings facilitate and do not restrict the lived experience of subjectivity. Similar care ought to be taken when reading a body of literature. Like the corporeal body, certain bodies of literature have been written on so persistently that it is impossible to avoid the many palimpsests of different readings staining them. To avoid replicating these readings, the effort then must be, as in the previous section, to read differently. Further to this, as Jeannette Winterson so aptly demonstrates through her own body of work, whether through cultural norms or critical theory we cannot avoid ‘writing on the body’¹⁰³, so instead we must become mindful readers, conscious of our own positionality and how we are writing on the body. I suggest then that the ‘something else’ that Woolf identifies in the epigraph is not merely driving the process of writing a text, but also driving the process of reading it; it is this ‘something else’ that makes the process of reading so valuable to critical thinking and feminist philosophy.

1. A Deleuzian Approach

There are multiple ways to read a body of literature; Gilles Deleuze’s work provides a method that is both applicable to my feminist enquiry and mobilising for my critical needs. Yet in Daniel W. Smith’s introduction to Deleuze’s Essays Critical and Clinical (1998), Smith points

¹⁰² Gilles Deleuze, Essays Critical and Clinical, trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco, (London: Verso, 1998), p. 6.

¹⁰³ Jeannette Winterson, Written on the Body, (London: Vintage, 2010 (1992)).

out that ‘nowhere does Deleuze directly offer a systematic “theory” of literature, nor is one easily extrapolated from his various literary studies.’¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless, Essays Critical and Clinical does offer instructive demonstrations or examples of how to approach a body of text and, in the words of Deleuze, to provoke its ‘becoming’, or rather the text’s engagement in processes of transformation. Although a reading of Deleuze’s consideration of literary books as functioning ‘machines’ would perhaps suggest that the texts he selects to read are already texts which instigate ‘becomings’¹⁰⁵, I argue that in his publication Essays Critical and Clinical it is more specifically his method of reading these texts which opens them up to such possibilities. This method provides the ideal tools with which, in conjunction with my critical positioning from my reading of Braidotti, I propose to read contemporary literature. Indeed, I demonstrate here how his method provokes a movement of thought which counters the ‘symbolic constipation’¹⁰⁶ Braidotti identifies in contemporary thinking.

Smith describes Deleuze’s approach to literature as driven by his perception of it, and with it all forms of artistic expression, as ‘an equally creative enterprise of thought’ as philosophy.¹⁰⁷ He recognises how Deleuze identifies the similarities between the processes of artistic creation and creation of thought; it is this very enterprise that establishes the creative space for ‘becoming’. In the opening chapter to his work Essays Critical and Clinical Deleuze posits this capacity to ‘become’ to literature’s complex relationship with life. For Deleuze ‘writing is a question of becoming, always incomplete, always in the midst of being formed, and goes beyond the matter of any liveable or lived experience.’¹⁰⁸ His description of writing as very much an unfinished process supports Smith’s observation of it as an ‘enterprise of thought’. I understand from this that the ‘enterprise’ in writing is not in presenting a conclusive opinion or observation, rather it is to engage in processes of thought that intersect with but are not confined to the ‘liveable or lived’. From this position Deleuze, as Smith observes, then ‘writes on the arts not as a critic but as a philosopher.’¹⁰⁹ The consequent reading renders obsolete the separation of literature and theory, of the creative and critical, and in so doing creates an original approach to literature. The primary methods I observe here and adapt

¹⁰⁴ Ronald Bogue, Deleuze on Literature, (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 1 – 2.

¹⁰⁵ Deleuze demonstrates within multiple publications, Kafka: Toward a Minor literature and Essays Critical and Clinical, but explicitly discusses this function in the introduction to A Thousand Plateaus, p.4, pp. 3- 28.

¹⁰⁶ Rosi Braidotti, ‘Difference, Diversity and Nomadic Subjectivity’, 2002, <http://www.translatum.gr/forum/index.php?topic=14317.0>, [accessed 1.01.12].

¹⁰⁷ Deleuze, Essays Critical and Clinical, p. xii.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 1.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

throughout this thesis as my own tools for reading are his treatment of historical and biographical context, his reading of narrative form and effect, and the critical thinking he provokes from reading a literary text.

Deleuze masterfully negotiates the challenging balance between socio-historical context and narrative content. He does this not by reading the text as separate from the author or indeed as a product of the author, rather he reads the text and author interchangeably. This is evident in Deleuze's analysis of the surfaces and depths of meaning and thought in his concise chapter on Lewis Carroll in Essays Critical and Clinical. Deleuze justifies his optical reading of the texts through references to Carroll's own biography: 'Carroll the mathematician or Carroll the photographer.'¹¹⁰ He integrates Carroll's own knowledge and passion in mathematics and photography into his reading of the 'new surfaces that come into existence' through Carroll's writing.¹¹¹ His explanation for his reading of the text is drawn directly from the biographical context. Rather than reading this context as separate from his analysis or even as a justification for it, it becomes part of his philosophising. The context becomes not an explanation for content or indeed something exterior to the text informing or directing it in some way, rather the context is the content.

This philosophising is also particularly evident in Deleuze's development of his theory of 'Minor Literature' in Kafka: Toward A Minor Literature written with Felix Guattari. Their reading of Kafka's deterritorializing experience as a Jewish German speaker in Prague plays as vital a role as their description of the actions of Gregor Samsa in Metamorphosis. When describing the process of the deterritorialization of language in Kafka's work, Deleuze vividly describes the moment language stops functioning as a collection of mere signifiers and when used in minor literature starts taking on different functions and evolving towards, as Kafka describes it, 'its extremities or its limits'.¹¹² The pain of this process of linguistic metamorphosis is evoked with references to both the fictional Gregor's 'painful warbling' and the author Franz's 'cry'.¹¹³ Deleuze moves so fluidly between the fictional and the biographical that it is clear that both have become, like the very literature he is discussing, figures to be read. Once he accords himself this freedom, Deleuze is able to then roam freely through the

¹¹⁰ Deleuze, Essays Critical and Clinical, p. 21.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008 (1975)), p. 23.

¹¹³ Ibid.

rhizomatic literary and historical terrain to thoroughly enter into, in this case, not only Kafka's work, but also his own philosophy.¹¹⁴ I use this method to direct my step away from more traditional historical or contextual readings of the texts I have selected.

Deleuze's readings contain multiple plateaus; beyond contextual detail and narrative content, he also reads the fiction's style, form, and most significantly effect. Claire Colebrook describes how Deleuze 'inhabits a text'¹¹⁵ from within to gradually break down the borders of its narrative, its context and its form to allow a blurring with philosophical and critical theory. In his short essay on Lewis Carroll in Essays Critical and Clinical his opening line epitomises this approach:

In Lewis Carroll, everything begins with a horrible combat, the combat of depths: things explode or make us explode, boxes are too small for their contents, foods are toxic and poisonous, entrails are stretched, monsters grab at us.¹¹⁶

This powerful all-encompassing statement confidently summarises Carroll's energy, not thematically, or purely contextually, but straight to the core of the actions. Deleuze's evocative language paints a disturbing and emotive collage of surfaces and interiors graphically and violently colliding and being transformed. He describes a textual space in action; with combat, explosions, stretching and grabbing, this action and the energy of it has the ability to touch, and effect 'us', the reading subjects. His use of the pronoun 'us' implicates the reader, both him and us, in the visceral experience of not one text, but the body of Carroll's work. This simple utilisation of a personal pronoun locates the reader in contact with the text and evokes the effects reading a text can provoke, feelings and processes of thought. It is this affecting potential that I map in this thesis and which I propose is significant to the critical potential of thinking through creative terrains.

John Hughes considers this focus on predominant imagery and style to be indicative of Deleuze's approach to literature. He argues that Deleuze's identification of style was because he considered it a point of access to 'a writer's original vision.'¹¹⁷ It is apparent, however, on reading Deleuze's analysis of Carroll's literature, that whatever his intention in writing on literature, it is not necessarily the writer's vision he is accessing by reading the texts so

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p.3.

¹¹⁵ Ian Buchanan and Claire Colebrook (eds.), Deleuze and Feminist Theory, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), p. 5.

¹¹⁶ Essays Critical and Clinical, p. 21.

¹¹⁷ John Hughes, 'Deleuze, Style and Literature', Literature Interpretation Theory, 21:4, pp. 269 - 284, (p. 269).

profoundly. Rather, I propose that particularly with the inclusion of the reading subjects ‘us’, Deleuze’s writing is accessing his own ‘vision’ and philosophy on creative thought, and the subjects that both motivate and are the products of such thought. In his case, it is not a question of applying theory to text, but of mutual nourishing between the two facilitated by Deleuze’s ‘reading’ of the texts. I demonstrate throughout this thesis that this space outside the written text is encountered through reading; the process of reading literature, whether critical or personal, is complexly intertwined through the subject with the process of living, and so literature’s intimate relationship with philosophy.

2. Literature and Life

Literature has a vital and vitalistic contribution to make to the consideration and discussion of life. ‘Life’ is a broad term; I understand it here and within the context of literature as the exploration of our experiences, with this the efforts to map how we engage with ‘*Zoe*’, so the energy of life. Despite and arguably because this term life can be experienced and understood so differently by others, it has remained a persistent interest in literature. Glancing back at previous literary theory, we can see both how other literary theorists have maintained this relation between literature and life, and also how dynamic Deleuze’s application of this potential is. In Benjamin’s seminal work ‘The Storyteller’, Benjamin places the ‘meaning of life’, or search for it, as the centre ‘about which the novel moves’.¹¹⁸ He posits the experience of life as central to the ‘something else’ about which writers are writing. Paul Ricoeur views the relationship between life and writing from an alternative perspective. He equates ‘life to the story or stories we tell about it.’¹¹⁹ This understanding confirms the effect of literature and narrative on our experience of life; it recognises the psychological impact of stories on how we perceive and act on the events in our own lives. Deleuze takes this idea further and not only uses his reading of literature to demonstrate how literature both searches fundamental questions regarding life and affects the very lens through which we read life, but also has the power to instigate change, becomings and processes of life. From his work, I understand that literature does not serve a discursive or representational function, but is, through the processes of reading and thinking subjects, enacting a force of life. Deleuze praises Kafka’s writing for turning the literature of the Jews of Prague ‘into something impossible – the impossibility of not writing,

¹¹⁸ Walter Benjamin, ‘The Storyteller’, A Critical Anthology – Theory of the Novel – A Historical Approach, ed. Michael McKeon, (Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 2000), p. 87.

¹¹⁹ Paul Ricoeur, ‘Narrative Identity’, *Philosophy Today*, 35:1 (1991: Spring), p. 77.

the impossibility of writing in German, the impossibility of writing otherwise.’¹²⁰ This reading presents the value of literature to representing the current situation in life as well as instigating possible change in life. By identifying a silenced subject, a voice previously unheard, Deleuze notes the personal and political urgency in Kafka’s writing and life. As Smith says in the introduction to Essays Critical and Clinical, through Deleuze’s work writing itself can be understood as ‘a passage of life that traverses both the liveable and the lived.’¹²¹ The ‘liveable’ here is the imaginary potential that reading provokes and the ‘lived’ is the experienced life inspiring the writing. I would relate this to Bogue’s Deleuzian inspired statement that ‘Literature invents new possibilities for life’,¹²² which describes how a text provides a space for the intertwining of the lived and the liveable to catalyse possibilities beyond. It is precisely these possibilities beyond that I argue are so necessary and dynamic to contemporary critical considerations of woman and ARTs evident in the literatures of Doris Lessing and Marge Piercy.

These ‘new possibilities’ that literature proposes and instigates are what determine for Deleuze a text which ‘becomes’. It is precisely this epistemology that informs the methodology of this thesis. Drawing from Deleuze’s description of texts as ‘machines’, Colebrook identifies that literary texts are read in terms of ‘how they work, rather than what they mean.’¹²³ Colebrook understands Deleuze’s instruction that when he speaks of machines he is not using the term metaphorically, but rather figuratively; he is providing a limitless figure through which to understand both the processes of literature and those it catalyses. I propose mapping this figurational function in my readings of Lessing’s and Piercy’s works. Furthermore, Colebrook extends her reading of Deleuze to suggest that Deleuze’s literary criticism as not merely identifying literature as functioning bodies, rather they are ‘machines that make something happen.’¹²⁴ I argue and demonstrate in this thesis that this ‘something’ that is made to happen is the movement of thought catalysed by Deleuze’s reading of literature.

Like the nomadic reading of embodied subjectivity discussed in the previous section, a mobilising reading of a text then is one that posits it as a process, rather than a static object. By reading both through this lens the reader takes account for the multiple possible readings the

¹²⁰ Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature, p.16.

¹²¹ Daniel W. Smith in Essays Critical and Clinical, p. xiii.

¹²² Bogue, p.6.

¹²³ Buchanan and Colebrook, p. 3.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

body of text, or subject, can provoke; such a reading is revelling in a text's potential to both contain and provoke multiple, rhizomatic strands of thought, simultaneously and without hierarchy. On the first page of Essays Critical and Clinical Deleuze confidently asserts that writing 'is a process'¹²⁵; reading and thinking through this lens contains similar potential, as my discussion of the deterritorializing effects of minor literature or the conflict of depth and surfaces in language and meaning demonstrates. This is not, in my opinion, solely because writing is a process, but, because reading is also. Engaging in a critical reading, and the analysis that accompanies it, has the potential to catalyse a similarly creative process of 'becoming' as writing. Just as good writing functions like a machine that is always in the process of formation, so good critical reading, particularly as demonstrated by Deleuze, engages in and instigates a process of creative thinking and potential 'becoming'. Consequently, Bogue's statement that 'Literary works do not mean so much as they function'¹²⁶ seems ever more compelling; the 'function' of literary works extends beyond only the writing of them, or even the reading of them, it is the space for thinking they create that makes them a productive tool to the endeavours of critical thinking and philosophy.

3. A Becoming Reading

When I talk of 'reading' then, I don't just mean reading; I mean the responsive, reactive, embodied processes of thinking and writing about and through a textual terrain. It appears here that I risk collapsing these terms reading, thinking, writing into one another. I am, however, presenting them as intersecting processes engaging with a text. When I talk of thinking in relation to reading literature, I am noting the embodied, affected response this contact has in the reader. When I speak of writing, I am considering the processes of creating and editing that direct the expression of these responses, negotiating the communication of complexity and dynamism and avoiding reduction. The term 'translate', though complex in itself, inarguably more comprehensively includes these various intersecting processes of responding to a text. Indeed locating the reading subject in the process of translation, Timothy Mathews presents these intersections in 'Reading the Invisible with Cees Nooteboom, Walter Benjamin and Alberto Giacometti'. He describes how the positionality, the past, the experiences of this subject are manifested in the reading they produce: 'We read what we read, in our own

¹²⁵ Essays Critical and Clinical, p.1.

¹²⁶ Bogue, p.187.

imaginings, translating and synthesizing in the present of our reading and living.’¹²⁷ Drawing further from this field of study, I am bringing the work of translator Clive Scott in to my discussion of reading here. His position on ‘reading’ and the creative potential and critical value reading can have to thinking significantly resonates with and informs the position on reading that I have been proposing thus far and will be developing and demonstrating throughout this thesis. There are three key arguments that I want to draw from Scott’s work here to outline my own understanding of the mobilising act and process of reading: reading as an anti-interpretive process; as a bodily process; as a creative process in an intermediary space.

An ‘anti-interpretative’ reading resists locating meaning in a text; rather it responds to and thinks through a text. In his publication Literary Translation and the Rediscovery of Reading (2012) and his article ‘The Translation of Reading’, Scott spends a considerable amount of time outlining how his method of reading is ‘anti-interpretive’.¹²⁸ He offers various points of contrast with what he describes as a ‘digested’ read, noting that, in his opinion, reading is ‘about reading itself, as a complex dynamic of perception and consciousness of language.’¹²⁹ Using this as the starting position for his method of reading and translating, Scott is rejecting a methodology that presumes a static, singular or linear meaning awaiting discovery in a text. It is the constructivist methodology which he outlines in contrast to this hermeneutic mode of reading that resonates so profoundly with my own work. It is not only then the anti-interpretive stance he takes, it is the suggestion that the constructivist reading he proposes is primarily concerned with the act of reading itself, a factor that returns multiple times throughout my own work. He states:

Constructivist reading begins with a passionate interest in how one negotiates the act of reading itself – something that the hermeneuticist tends to take for granted – an interest in what kind of performance readerly perception requires.¹³⁰

This recognition of the reader, their positionality, the various factors that constitute their reading position, and the significant implication these factors have on the reading they are performing is similarly vital to my own endeavour. In order to access this thinking, I do at

¹²⁷ Timothy Mathews, ‘Reading the Invisible with Cees Nooteboom, Walter Benjamin and Alberto Giacometti’, in Translation, Tradition, Trauma, eds. Jan Parker and Timothy Mathews (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p.319.

¹²⁸ Clive Scott, ‘The Translation of Reading: A Phenomenological Approach’, Translation Studies, Vol. 4, 2011 – Issue 2: Poetry and Translation.

¹²⁹ Clive Scott, Literary Translation and the Rediscovery of Reading, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p.17.

¹³⁰ Literary Translation and the Rediscovery of Reading, p.14.

times in this thesis engage in a text through the figure of ‘the reader’. This figure of ‘the reader’ functions as a point of access for such a responsive and located mapping of a literary text. More specifically, this figure facilitates a mode of reading that conveys rather than confines the becomings and processes catalysed by an embodied subject engaging in a literary text. It is a figure for combining the processes of reading, writing and thinking. It is the recognition that one reading will always be different from another reader’s reading that seems so simple and yet so significant to inviting and allowing a multiplicity of responses to a text. This recognition of a multiplicity of narratives and a significant absence of certainty in these narratives is central to my methodology that proposes that such a methodology should be applied to the narratives that construct our society and subjectivity. It is the recognition of reading as an ‘act’, a cognitively and physically responsive process to a text, that I apply to my own feminist methodology for reading.

The figure of the ‘reader’ throughout my work is then an embodied subject. Advancing his own methodology for reading and so translating, Scott, in relation to the act of reading poetry, explores what he means by the ‘act’ of reading. For him, as in my own work, the embodiment of the reading subject cannot be ignored. He describes this aspect of the reader as the ‘kinaesthetics of reading’ and places it as central to his method for reading and translating. He notes how embodied these kinaesthetics are:

By “kinaesthetics of reading” I mean the dynamic of our organism as it is set in motion by the act of reading, and the sensations associated with that dynamic.¹³¹

As in my own project, the inclusion of an embodied ‘organism’ demands that the multifaceted, sensory experience of reading be taken into consideration. He does this through the idea that this ‘organism...is set in motion.’ Returning to the ‘us’ I noted in Deleuze’s responsive reading of literature, we once again have a mapping of not only the content of a text, but its effects. Taking this thinking into my own project, the figure of ‘the reader’ then functions as a critical device to consider the becomings and processes catalysed by an embodied subject engaging in a literary text. It is a figure for considering further the embodied subject through which a text is activated and active.

Following my discussion of Deleuze, my reading methodology in this thesis seeks to access deterritorialized thinking in the ‘in-between’ spaces, between genres, subjectivities,

¹³¹ Literary Translation and the Rediscovery of Reading, p.12.

temporalities, effects, of the text. By this I mean a reading that catalyses a movement of thought, an intrusion of doubt, and an exploration of ideas to provoke ‘sensations’ and responses within the reader. This liminal, in-between space that I identify through my own work is also vital to Scott’s method of translating. In the epilogue to his book, by way of presenting a creative, critical methodology of ‘reading’ and by way of honouring literary scholar Malcolm Bowie posthumously, Scott offers a moving ‘portrait of a reader-Malcolm Bowie’. As the title to and contents of this epilogue suggest, it is the ‘critical interworld’ of reading that Scott identifies and admires as fundamental to Bowie’s methodology:

Finally, Bowie finds his natural critical space in the *intermundium* whether we think of it as Rilke's *Zwischenraum* or Merleau-Ponty’s *intermonde* or Winnicott’s “transitional space” (1998b, 26). Here creative forces, ideological postures, lines of thought, desires, come into collision, negotiate, interweave. And as we have already intimated, this is the space where meaning is made possible but cannot be made: meaning in movement, “never able to reach its point of closure and finality” (1998b, 28).¹³²

In this outlining of Bowie’s work, Scott pinpoints precisely what it is that I intend to map in this thesis: ‘meaning in movement’. Such mobilised meaning is vital to the feminist endeavour; it has the ability to liberate thinking on subjectivity from the defining and confining narratives that construct it. My project maps how vitalistic such a mode of reading, and indeed thinking, can be in catalysing movements of thought and becomings beyond the static considerations of the subject. Applied thus, I propose and will demonstrate in this thesis that this methodology of reading has the ability to contribute to the ‘new frames of orientation’¹³³ so needed in feminist critical discussions of ARTs and subjectivity. Drawing from Scott’s work and Deleuze’s thinking, I will explore experiences of ‘incompleteness’ of meaning within the texts I am reading; through the reader’s experiences of these moments and interspaces, I will map how the text mobilises reading, and so thinking, to become.¹³⁴

Following this method of reading, the consequent translations offered by Scott are creative, critical, and vitalistic in every sense. With their multi-layered and complex use of language, textual space, and reader’s experience, his translations draw from and demonstrate directly his methodology for reading. This reading of reading offered by Scott, although in relation to translation, presents a proposal for a phenomenological method of reading. I am not

¹³² Literary Translation and the Rediscovery of Reading, p.197.

¹³³ Pitts-Taylor, p.10.

¹³⁴ Deleuze, Essays Critical and Clinical, p.xii.

suggesting that the Deleuzian methodology I have considered thus far is constructivist and phenomenological. Rather I am demonstrating here that by reading critically, creatively and actively, as demonstrated through Deleuze's work also, and as explained in Scott's and as will be developed within my own, the reader can present, whether in the form of a translation or an academic thesis, a dynamic, complex, and creative mapping of thought. My discussion of Deleuze and Scott have allowed me here to outline and propose a method of reading. This is a method that maps narrative content and form alongside narrative effect. This mapping locates the 'in-between' spaces of a text, between genre, narratives, effects. In doing this, it seeks the deterritorializing effects of reading and thinking through literature. This is a method of reading and thinking that is not simply applicable to literary scholarship or feminist critical theory, but is a cross-disciplinary methodology that draws from and enriches the two. This methodology endeavours to cross disciplinary registers and therein finds its resources, originality, and contribution to this work. I describe it as a becoming-reading.

IV

A Critical Mapping of Marge Piercy and Doris Lessing's Creative Terrains

Utopia is the infinite work of imagination's power of figuration.¹³⁵

Into that space, which is like a form of listening, of attention, will come the words, the words your characters will speak, ideas - inspiration.¹³⁶

The questions arise then, why do I propose that literature presents the necessary terrains for this methodology of thinking through reading? And why feminist speculative literature? And why Lessing and Piercy's literatures specifically? By outlining my justification for these terrains, I present the thinking that frames the structure and contents of my research. This section is constituted of two parts: firstly, with my consideration of the authors' bodies of work, the contextual and textual explanation for my selection and secondly, through my discussion of speculation, the methodological. My initial attraction to the works of Piercy and Lessing was to the deliberate and temporary ways they adopted speculation to present narratives about

¹³⁵ Louis Marin, 'Frontiers of Utopia: Past and Present', *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Spring, 1993), pp. 397-420.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

motherhood and female subjectivity. P. L. Thomas expends considerable energy determining to outline a definition of speculative writing and how it intersects with but does not identify as science fiction writing. In the complexity of this effort, he notes that both perform a critical social function.¹³⁷ Consequently, speculative thinking has a long tradition in feminist epistemologies. I align myself with Jennifer A. Wagner-Lawlor's assessment of speculative fiction, utopian narratologies and feminist epistemologies in Postmodern Utopias and Feminist Fictions (2013).¹³⁸ In this publication she works to undo the postmodern scepticism of the imagination as a feminist critical resource. Presenting the cognitively destabilising and socially critiquing function of imagination, she calls for the utility and vitality of speculative writing.

The epigraph from Louis Marin presents precisely this facility of the imagination that I map within the literary terrains in this thesis and that enriches my Deleuzian methodology of reading. His work offers an extensive consideration of the term 'utopia'; I draw from his discussion that by locating a space beyond the known, 'utopia' outlines the political drive to enact change in contemporary society. In this context then imagination and speculation are not genres but creative resources for unshackling thought from empirical observation and accessing this facility for change. Marin states that this resource can be accessed through the 'power of figuration'; this is a cognitively mobilising power that I propose is present in Piercy and Lessing's writings and will demonstrate in this thesis. Drawing on my exploration of Deleuze's discussion of literature as a functioning machine,¹³⁹ I suggest that speculative literature in particular functions through this imaginative potential to not simply access or depict these future, utopian 'realms', but it has the ability to move thinking to occupy these realms itself. In Piercy and Lessing's works I map how this speculation intersects with real experience to destabilise existing thought and catalyse it beyond established norms and supposed 'truths', creating lines of flight. It is by locating and occupying the in-between spaces in their literature, not only between speculation and fact, but between mother and child, between subjectivities, between versions of narratives, that such a dynamic form of thinking is mobilised.

¹³⁷ P. L. Thomas, Science Fiction and Speculative Fiction: Challenging Genres, (Rotterdam: Sense Publications, 2013).

¹³⁸ Jennifer A. Wagner-Lawlor, Postmodern Utopias and Feminist Fictions, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

¹³⁹ A Thousand Plateaus, p.4.

1. Women and Mothering

Biographically Lessing and Piercy have their differences. Lessing was born into a British family in 1919 in Persia before moving to Zimbabwe and eventually to England. Her publishing career has spanned six decades, for which she was awarded the Nobel Prize in 2007 and is internationally renowned. Piercy was born in 1936 in North America and has lived much of her life there. She began publishing poetry in 1968 and has gone on to publish multiple novels and collections of poetry since then. Unlike Lessing, she is a self-professed feminist writer and explicitly handles political and social questions in her work. It should be noted also, that they are writers of somewhat differing stature. Lessing is an internationally acclaimed writer across multiple genres, while Piercy is somewhat categorised within feminist fiction and less well received globally. I will primarily be exploring beyond these biographical and commercial considerations to the textual ones. I will be mapping the topography of thought their literature provides.

Issues of female subjectivity, reproduction and mothering arise frequently in both authors' works. In particular, a narrative of a distancing between a woman and her reproductive capacity is one told repeatedly and in multiple forms by both. Whether because of biotechnologies, societal pressures, political requirements, or desire, women in Lessing and Piercy's works are repeatedly distanced from their reproductive capacity and progeny, both physically and emotionally. Throughout the literature, I will be exploring how this mother/child dyad is disrupted, not only through the reproductive methods creating the child, but also through the very instability of the identity of mother. As in real life, within these texts there is no singular definition of a mother: there are biological mothers forcibly separated from their kin; there are women who mother other people's biological kin; there are mothers who choose to leave their children; there are mothers who share the 'mothering' with their family or community; there are mothers who hate their children, mothers who kill for their children, and there are mothers who would die for their children; there are mothers who are not only not biologically female, but perhaps not definitively human.

One shared feature of these alternative mothering narratives is the relation of these women to the communities around them, and also the relationship of these communities to their children. Robert Arlett considers Lessing's preoccupation with how the individual relates to

society as the key aspect which ‘makes Lessing a representative writer for her age.’¹⁴⁰ This is a characteristic in Lessing’s fiction which Clare Hanson has also identified; she discusses the relevance of genetics and scientific developments in Lessing’s works. Hanson describes how Lessing has a ‘longstanding preoccupation with questions of motherhood and inheritance.’¹⁴¹ Although she largely considers the implications of genetic inheritance in Lessing’s work, I would extend this to social and generational inheritance also. Soraya Copley’s eco-feminist reading of Piercy’s work in ‘Rereading Marge Piercy and Margaret Atwood: Eco-feminist Perspectives on Nature and Technology’ locates the feminist subject in both a social and also environmental context.¹⁴² Reading ARTs and biopolitics in a broader context of environmental change, economic interests, and social action, she places the significance of how reproductive capacity is practiced not only on mothers, or even only on women, or on their progeny, but on the experience of gender difference and society as a whole. Similarly recognising the relation between these factors in regards to Lessing’s work, Hanson endorses Lessing’s literary ‘attempts to rethink reproduction, so that it is understood in terms of the maintenance of a balance of forces within a wider cosmic harmony.’¹⁴³ Beyond proposing a more liberating model of community or critiquing the contextual one, these fictions provide rich terrains for considering the relationship between female subjects, their reproductive capacity, how it is conceived and experienced in their contextual societies, and how this impacts how they experience their own gendered subjectivity and difference. I extend Braidotti’s observation that we need to ‘provide alternative figurations of intersubjectivity.... through the complex symbolic relationship between mother and child’¹⁴⁴ to incorporate the real relationship also. To consider subjectivity comprehensively, we cannot discuss the subject alone; we must consider it in all its complexities and relations with those around it. For women, whether symbolically, socially, or literally, this means incorporating how we consider the mother/child dyad and locating this shifting dyad in its broader social, biopolitical and environmental context.

Following my discussion of a Deleuzian multifaceted mapping of literature, the narrative content is not my sole concern. My reading of these authors presents how the

¹⁴⁰ Robert Arlett, Epic Voices – Inner and Global Impulse in the Contemporary American and British Novel, (London: Associated University Press, 1996), p. 25.

¹⁴¹ Clare Hanson, ‘Reproduction, Genetics, and Eugenics in the Fiction of Doris Lessing’, Contemporary Women’s Writing 1:1/2, December 2007, (p. 171).

¹⁴² Soraya Copley, ‘Rereading Marge Piercy and Margaret Atwood: Eco-feminist Perspectives on Nature and Technology’, Critical Inquiry, Vol. 25, No. 2 (2013), pp. 40-56.

¹⁴³ Hanson, p. 179.

¹⁴⁴ Metamorphoses, p.24.

implications of narrative voice can at times be instrumental to our understanding of the narrative content as well as of the narrative effect. I will understand the use of narrative voice as intertwined with the events described within the fiction. In Piercy's work meta-narratives and storytelling serve a critical function; they both unravel the hegemony of singular narratives, a function applicable to my feminist endeavour, and they facilitate an exploration of the social, personal and critical facility of the stories we tell. Lessing's work allows a similar consideration of storytelling. Within her works it is, however, through the presentation of a self-conscious narrative voice that we, the readers, can encounter the significance of how we construct stories and who tells them. These differing methods of exposing narrative construction remove the comforting certainty of a singular narrative for the reader. I map how placing the reader in a landscape of shifting, multiple or deliberately uncertain narratives demands a mode of thinking through complexity and dynamism that is both challenging and potentially liberating. I propose that this narrative resource lies in the ability of these narratives to present the critical resource of the imagination.

2. The Potential and Necessity of Speculation

The feminist utility of 'imagination' is not new; there has been a substantial amount of speculative feminist fiction written about women and developing ARTs.¹⁴⁵ A predominant example of a speculative feminist text that has catalysed considerable discussion and multiple lines of flight is Margaret Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale (1985). Throughout The Handmaid's Tale Atwood immerses her narrative in fantastical and speculative possibilities and as countless critics who have discussed her work confirm, this method has enabled her to develop a strong critique of real social and feminist issues. Coral Ann Howell's essay 'Margaret Atwood's Dystopian Visions: The Handmaid's Tale and Oryx and Crake' makes clear not only how profoundly successful Atwood's publication was, but how Atwood's future narrative was responding to a contemporary 'cultural crisis'.¹⁴⁶ Atwood's prolifically discussed text does this by presenting the dystopian tale of a handmaid, a woman used as a surrogate to wealthy, infertile women. It documents the handmaid's painful process of conceiving a baby that will not belong to her and losing a child that does. The deliberate and at times rebellious use of personal possessive pronouns 'mine' and 'yours' (p.204, p.271) explicitly marks the women's

¹⁴⁵ Jennifer A. Wagner-Lawlor, (2013).

¹⁴⁶ Coral Ann Howell, 'Margaret Atwood's Dystopian Visions: The Handmaid's Tale and Oryx and Crake', The Cambridge Companion to Margaret Atwood, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p.161.

relation to their progeny and the overwhelming sense of kinship gestating a baby produces in these surrogates. Although presented within a fantastical narrative, these scenes and the language used paint a profound portrait of the complexity of women's relationship to reproduction and their reproductive capacity.

The tale that does not get told, and that is often overlooked in feminist literature and theory alike, is that of the woman requiring a surrogate. The figure of a mother without reproductive sex or even reproduction without a binary understanding or practicing of parenting can be an intensely disruptive one, not only personally but to society as a whole. Aunt Lydia's advice to the handmaids that they 'should always try to imagine what they [the wives] must be feeling' (p.44) simultaneously sets up the relevance of these women's perspectives and the absence of them. It is something we, like the handmaids, are simply forced to 'imagine'. Imagination is presented here as a resource for facilitating an encounter with the other; simultaneously, it is a literary resource within Atwood's publication for critiquing the familiar. This multiple functioning utility of 'imagination' as a literary and critical resource directs my decision to read Lessing and Piercy's works of imagination.

The utilisation of imagination within Lessing and Piercy's works is not only proposing an alternate narrative or future, but, like critical thinkers writing at the same time, raising issues regarding a real present as well as facilitating a way of thinking about this present.¹⁴⁷ Margaret Whitford identifies this aspect in Irigaray's, at times, utopian pleas for a feminist future. In response to the growing critique of a utopian methodology that she identifies, Whitford justifies the utopian visions in Irigaray's work by demanding that its purpose is not to create a future but to 'change the present'.¹⁴⁸ One thinker who explicitly responded to Irigaray's imaginings is Braidotti. Admiring Irigaray's 'profoundly literary and very creative style', Braidotti identifies the relevance of this facility of imagination, creation:

The question of the relation between writing as a space of subjective creation – *pathos* – and thought as a moment of elaboration and critical self-reflection – *logos* – is one of the axes of Irigaray's texts.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ 'It appears then that the utopian potential registered in an SF [science fiction] text is not an epiphenomenal escape of consciousness *outside* of history, not a mere futuristic projection, but a material force inscribed in the *here* and *now* of history, notwithstanding its perplexities and frustrations.' Nadia Khouri, 'The Dialectics of Power: Utopia in Science Fiction of Le Guin, Jeury, and Piercy', *Science Fiction Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 1, (Mar. 1980), pp.49 -60, (p. 59).

¹⁴⁸ Margaret Whitford, *Luce Irigaray – Philosophy in the Feminine*, (London: Routledge, 1991), p.15.

¹⁴⁹ *Patterns of Dissonance*, p. 248.

Braidotti makes clear the connection between creativity and critical thinking here. The use of the term 'relation' identifies the reciprocal working between the two; Irigaray's writing style conveys her thinking and her thinking instructs her writing style. I propose that this critical creative function can be found in literary terrains also. The most significant term in this quote, however, is that of 'space'. In this quote it is identifying the location for the intersecting of the creative and critical; my reading of Lessing and Piercy's works seek to identify these spaces in their own writing.

'Space' is a term used by Magali Cornier Michael when discussing Piercy's literature. She considers the creative strategy of fantastical literature and its interaction with contextual critique to be providing 'a means of creating a space for reconstruction.'¹⁵⁰ In Piercy's writing, as with Lessing's Nobel speech in the epigraph of this section, 'space' is vital to creation. For Cornier Michael, this space is particularly necessary for reconstruction. I think, however, that reading and thinking through these literary spaces is as necessary for deconstruction as reconstruction of thought. This is because of how Piercy and Lessing intersect imagination/speculation with realism; by including the speculative, the what *could be*, the real, so the what *is*, becomes disturbed. Susan Watkins' describes this effect of genre application in Lessing's late twentieth century writing in Doris Lessing (2010).¹⁵¹ She describes how Lessing's deliberate and 'disruptive' utilisation of speculative fantastical genres serves as a 'progressive challenge to realism as the majority mode.'¹⁵² This disruption works, she argues, to expose the constructedness of the categories by which we define not only our literature but ourselves.¹⁵³ By including then speculative elements alongside a realist narrative, not one instead of the other, but both intersecting undermines the hegemony of the rational, the what *is*. As a feminist epistemology, unravelling this what *is* is necessary in order to access what possibly what *could be*.

What is more, this intertwining of reality and imagination has an 'affecting' function on the reader. When located between a depiction of what *is* and what *could be*, without the allowance of resting in one, the reader is forced to move between the two, or sometimes multiple possible narratives. It is in this unsettling in-between, the locating of the *intermundium*

¹⁵⁰ Magali Cornier Michael, Feminism and the Postmodernist Impulse: Post World War II Fiction, (New York: State University of New York, 1996), p. 45.

¹⁵¹ Susan Watkins, Doris Lessing, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010).

¹⁵² Watkins, p.138.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

praised in Clive Scott's work, that the reader can occupy a mobilising cognitive space, a space necessary to create. Watkins identifies this aspect of Lessing's writing. Through her reading of Lessing's late twentieth century fiction, she considers how "'minor' genres' and narrative technique are used to critique contemporary culture. In her reading of Lessing's The Fifth Child (1988), she identifies how the utilisation of these minor genres, such as urban gothic, picaresque, and fantasy, into a realist fiction narrative leaves the reader 'disturbed', conscious of their own subconscious desires to categorise.¹⁵⁴ It is precisely this ability of the insertion of 'imagination', through speculative genre devices, to move the reader, to push them to a place in which multiple interpretations are possible and none are proven that is significant to my reading of both Lessing and Piercy's works. This imaginative utility of literature provides access to this space of intersecting possibilities and realities. It is this facility for de- and 'reconstruction' through imagination that I seek to access in the texts I have selected and through my reading apply this thinking to my feminist discussion of the female subject and ARTs.

Throughout this thesis, I examine both Piercy and Lessing's perspectives on the act of creating, life, literature and thought. I have chosen Piercy and Lessing's works because they don't 'belong' to the more traditional feminist fictions as authors such as Le Guin and Atwood, whom I have already discussed, do. Neither Piercy nor Lessing consistently publishes within the feminist speculative or science fiction genre. Watkins has located the significance for Lessing's writing of being located in this Deleuzian minor position; it lies in the ability of her work to then undo the hegemony of dominant discourses, genres, genders, identities, from within.¹⁵⁵ I propose that both Lessing and Piercy enjoy a freedom from the categorisation of feminist science fiction. Indeed, Lee Cullen Khanna identifying this position within the genre locates both Lessing and Piercy on the 'Frontiers of Imagination' in her 1984 essay.¹⁵⁶ I would extend this observation by arguing that not only do they inhabit these frontiers, but they force the reader there also. Both use distorted mother/child dyads, self-conscious narrating and story-telling, and meta-narratives to locate the reader in a liminal borderland of sorts in which 'truths' are destabilised and uncertainty reigns. This is not practiced in a postmodern way, which can leave the reader far beyond the frontiers, lost in no man's land. Rather both authors utilise

¹⁵⁴ Watkins, p.127.

¹⁵⁵ Watkins, pp.119-139.

¹⁵⁶ Lee Cullen Khanna, 'Frontiers of Imagination: Feminist Worlds', Women's Studies Int. Forum, Vol. 7, No. 2, (1984), pp. 97-102.

imaginative literary figures, of mothers, monsters, machines and families to force the reader to re-think and re-build ideas. In her Nobel Lecture, Lessing identifies how in our contemporary 'fragmenting culture' the use of imagination is ever more important:

...for it is our imaginations which shape us, keep us, create us - for good and for ill. It is our stories that will recreate us, when we are torn, hurt, even destroyed. It is the storyteller, the dream-maker, the myth-maker, that is our phoenix, that represents us at our best, and at our most creative.¹⁵⁷

This potential of utilising the imagination is evident in the construction and content of both these writers' works. Mapping how and in what ways these works 'shape', 'keep', and 'create' us, the readers, will expose the potential contained within thinking through such imaginative literary terrains.

To add a further dimension to this mapping and to seek out further 'spaces' for de- and reconstruction, I will not only be traversing the borders between critical thinking and literary prose, and between narrative functions, but between literary texts also. Within each chapter I build a comparative analysis between Piercy's and Lessing's literature. Through comparative readings a unitary position is avoided and thinking in multiple, complex ways is mobilised. Such thinking coincides with and supports the questions I am considering and the theory I am discussing. Furthermore, by examining differing approaches to literary tropes, figurations, and feminist enquiries, we are forced to encounter the space between the texts that inevitably arises. This space allows and provokes creative thought. Lessing's own description of the creative process during her 2007 Nobel Prize acceptance speech reveals locating this 'space' to be vital to creation. Although arguably talking about a different understanding of space, I propose that accessing a 'space', whether physical, cognitive and/or textual, is vital for creation. She describes how once a writer has found that space, they can use it: 'Into that space, which is like a form of listening, of attention, will come the words, the words your characters will speak, ideas - inspiration.'¹⁵⁸ In light of the thinking I have been discussing in this chapter, I argue that locating and thinking through these in-between spaces is as necessary for the creative process of reading as it is for the creative critical process of writing.

V

¹⁵⁷ Lessing, 'On not winning the Nobel prize', Nobel Lecture.

¹⁵⁸ Lessing, 'On not winning the Nobel prize', Nobel Lecture.

My Thesis

Although significantly informed by the feminist thinkers from the 80s and 90s, around the advent of IVF ARTs, this thesis looks both retrospectively as well as addresses contemporary thinking. I engage, primarily but not exclusively, with literary and theoretical texts published from the 1980s to now. My engagement is driven by a motivation to map imaginative approaches to the questions I posed at the beginning of this chapter regarding reproduction, subjectivity, and reading: How does the removal of the child from the mother within these literatures help us consider the impact of the growing usage of ARTs, which distance the maternal function from the mother's body, on female subjectivity and gender difference? In what ways does a methodology of thinking through creative literary terrains contribute to feminist critical thinking? Simultaneously, how does such a feminist critical lens enrich my reading of the selected literatures? These questions direct my drive to develop through reading the necessary 'new frames of analysis'¹⁵⁹ for our contemporary predicament as defined by Braidotti:

No area of contemporary technological development is more crucial to the construction of gender relations and the socio-symbolic status of sexual difference than the new reproductive technologies.¹⁶⁰

Braidotti similarly positions herself within the context of previous thought while using a wide range of contemporary terrains to develop new thought. She recognises how feminist theory's celebratory freedom of the 1960s, which developed into the active politics of the 1970s, had through the deconstruction of the 1980s become 'fixed and stalemated'.¹⁶¹ Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, her work has presented compelling modes of thinking, whether in regard to philosophical, social or political thought. Both the focus of her thinking and the method she adopts provide an instructive and motivating model for my own research.

This element of retrospection in such a contemporary dilemma further demands that the thinking of this thesis develops in a rhizomatic rather than linear form. This is because my thinking does not move directly 'forwards' from issues raised by previous thinkers. Instead my explorations return sporadically to them to develop the multiple, intertwining elements of my methodology. In practice this means that chapters function both independently and as part of a

¹⁵⁹ *Metamorphoses*, p.191.

¹⁶⁰ *Nomadic Subjects*, (2011), p.214.

¹⁶¹ 'Feminism by Any Other Name', p.11.

whole. Through the exploration of key literary figurations and narrative features, my chapters map the various complex and imaginative ways of conceiving what happens to gender difference and subjectivity with the continuing intervention of biotechnologies into reproduction. The mother figures within the literature I will be reading serve to direct my mapping of female subjectivity. The trope of distancing the mother from her progeny and reproductive capacity provides both projections about the potential of reproductive technologies and enables me to develop ways of conceiving the impact they may, and do already, have. And the deliberate intertwining of genres, the application of narrative voice, and the provocative use of imaginative speculation within these realist literatures provide access to exposing narrative effect and the significance of who and how we construct narratives. The methodology of reading I demonstrate through this mapping is driven by Deleuze's exposition of the significance of writing, to which I add reading. Far from seeing it as a representative act, his work presents it as a methodology for thinking dynamically through textual spaces. To include these various aspects and to develop the theoretical foundations of my reading methodology, my chapters each consist of a theoretical grounding of my thinking and then a comparative reading of a Lessing and a Piercy work. The chapters are organised around the key areas of interest that have been drawn out through my discussion in this chapter: constructing difference and thinking through difference deconstructively (Chapter Two); embodied subjectivity and creative spaces (Chapter Three); narrative construction and power (Chapter Four).

In Chapter Two "O Brave New World": Mapping the Margins of Subjectivity and Reproduction', I explore discourses on difference and the conception of life and subjectivity through these discourses. Drawing comparisons with dominant discourses on mother figures, I map Braidotti's discussion of monsters and Haraway's discussion of cyborgs to consider how imaginative engagement with difference can transform a negative understanding of difference into a liberating one. Through this exploration of theory, I note, in particular, the vitalistic utility of figurations for thinking through difference and subjectivity. This discussion forms the lens through which I read Lessing's The Fifth Child and Piercy's Woman on the Edge of Time. My reading of these texts and the monstrous, maternal and robotic figurations within simultaneously explores thinking on difference, the utilisation of figurations for conceiving changing conceptions of subjectivity, and the task of literature in mapping these issues.

Chapter Three, ‘The Becomings of Pregnancy: Mapping Transforming and Transformative Gestational Spaces’, focuses on critical discussions of and figurations regarding embodied subjectivity and the transforming and transformative potential of pregnancy. Since the embodied experience of pregnancy can be a profoundly transformative experience for women, I consider how discussions of this embodied potential, both literary and critical, reveal the positive and negative implications of the changes encountered gestating a pregnancy and birthing a child. Furthermore, I discuss how the very experience of pregnancy itself, through the increasing use of ARTs, is transforming; I explore both the aspects directing these transformations as well as the potential impacts of them. Within both these discussions I draw from Butler and Plato’s work in particular to demonstrate why including considerations of embodiment in discussions regarding subjectivity and maternity is both vital and vitalistic. My mapping of Piercy’s Body of Glass and Lessing’s Marriages Between Zones Three, Four, and Five demonstrates and extends this reading further to expand upon these critical aspects of embodied subjectivity and becoming for the maternal subject.

In Chapter Four, ‘Thinking through the Family: The Critical and Creative Potential of Reading Family Genealogies and Genealogical Methodologies’, I discuss the implications of changing forms of motherhood, this time including the forms of power manifested through the practising of the mother role. In this chapter I read the female embodied subject within a familial, genealogical, and social matrix. I map both the narrative content of Piercy’s The Third Child and Lessing’s The Cleft and the narrative form. Within the content, I examine how both authors explore women’s experience of generational relations to consider multi-dimensional aspects of female subjectivity which are complicated through changing experiences of reproduction. Within the narrative form, I discuss the implications of Piercy and Lessing’s use of narrative voice and narrative structure as both critical and productive tools for contemporary feminist thought. Drawing on Foucault’s genealogical methodology, I note the significance of how we construct narratives to incorporate embodied subjectivity and expose forms of power acting on and through it. Through this discussion I demonstrate the significance of the stories we tell on how we think and live.

My concluding chapter returns these questions surrounding narrative structure and reading to my earlier considerations of a feminist discussion of the embodied female subject and ARTs. Understanding the process of thinking through reading as both informative and mobilising, I establish the potential of thinking through creative spaces, whether in literature

or theory for engaging with critical considerations of life. The concluding part of this chapter ties these various strands together to outline a methodology for considering contemporary experiences of women's reproductive capacities on female subjectivity on literary terrains. This mapping will not be limited solely to women; it will address issues of subjectivity and difference concerning all subjects. After all, it is not the shadows cast over Beyoncé's dress that should be igniting such urgent consideration, but the tabloid responses to them. The implications of such limited thinking and speculations need to be considered and more inclusive modes of thinking regarding developing reproductive technologies and gendered subjectivity proposed before Atwood's speculative fiction truly becomes our terrifying reality. Demonstrating the potential of reading to gain access to Deleuze's description of writing as 'mapping, even realms that are yet to come', this thesis maps literature's vital and vitalistic contributions to discussions on the feminist female subject and reproductive technologies.

Chapter Two: “O’ Brave New World”: Mapping the Margins of Subjectivity and Reproduction

A freckled whelp, hag-born – not honour’d with
A human shape.

(The Tempest, 1:II:283-4)¹⁶²

“O brave new world!” Miranda was proclaiming the possibility of
loveliness, the possibility of transforming even the nightmare into something
fine and noble. “O brave new world!” It was a challenge, a command.

(Aldous Huxley, Brave New World, 1932)¹⁶³

To consider further the critical aspects of subjectivity, reproductive technologies and creative thought, this chapter maps difference. When I talk of difference, I am referring to a crucial aspect of the material, discursive and social formation of subjectivity; it is an aspect used to both define and confine subjects. I map difference specifically in this chapter through the critically vital and creatively driven tool of figurations. Following Braidotti’s lead, I look at the critical facility of reading difference through the marginal figurations of mothers, monsters and machines. I identify both what thinking through these figurations can contribute to my feminist enquiry regarding woman and changing forms of reproduction, and how thinking through these figurations within literary terrains functions. I concluded the last chapter by outlining the methodology and direction of my mapping. I established the vitalistic role creative critical thinking can play in this challenge. I also outlined my intention to map these creative critical endeavours within the realms of literature. My reading through and of marginal figurations in this chapter does this.

I open this chapter with a mapping of a familiar ‘monster’ in the Western literary tradition, Caliban from Shakespeare’s The Tempest (1611). I read him here as a figuration of monstrosity; my reading demonstrates the methodology I am mapping in this thesis, thinking critically through reading the creative, while also introducing the key aspects of this chapter: difference, monstrosity, and mothers. Caliban is particularly relevant because of how his ‘monstrosity’ is conceived through others’ readings of him. This act of conceiving, though here

¹⁶² William Shakespeare, The Tempest (1623), (Glasgow: Harper Collins, 1994).

¹⁶³ Aldous Huxley, Brave New World, (London: Vintage, 2007 (1932)), pp.184-185.

conceptual rather than reproductive, is the thread that binds this chapter: namely, the act of conceiving and creating subjects through difference. Through my reading of Caliban, I demonstrate why I consider this to be a concern within the context of this thesis. I do this by mapping the potential of understanding the literary character as a critical figure for thought. I then develop, in this opening section, how I intend to explore and challenge this potential of figurations further, both in critical and literary terrains. Throughout this chapter, I bring my thinking back to the feminist female subject and establish how the figures of ‘mothers, monsters, and machines’¹⁶⁴ can be critical resources for thinking affirmatively through difference.

Caliban is not a ‘non-human’ monster; the status of his humanity is deliberately ambiguous. It is this ambiguity that renders him a marginal figure. Previous discussions of Shakespeare’s Caliban have interpreted the monstrous portrayal of him from multiple perspectives: he is a slave under Prospero’s colonial power; he is an earlier coloniser of the island; he is Prospero’s illegitimate son.¹⁶⁵ All these readings, however, fail to take into consideration the catalytic effect the liminal figure of Caliban has. Since he is ‘not honour’d with a human shape’ (I.ii.283), he is explicitly cast as less than ‘human’. Residing within ‘human’, and indeed the patriarch Prospero’s society, Caliban is ‘Other’. As Braidotti suggests in ‘Signs of Wonder and Traces of Doubt: On Teratology and Embodied Differences’, however, the very peculiarity of the organic monster is ‘...that s/he is both Same and Other. The monster is neither a total stranger nor completely familiar; s/he exists in an in-between zone.’¹⁶⁶ Similarly, Caliban is not excluded entirely from dominant society and discourse. Rather Prospero ‘took pains to make thee [Caliban] speak’ (I.ii.353) and, according to Caliban, Prospero used this power and new connection to exploit Caliban’s knowledge of the island and eventually rule it. Whether due to his mother’s origins in ‘Algier’ (I.ii.261), his apparently diminished intelligence, his unusual physical demeanour, or ungoverned upbringing, all of which are suggested, Caliban’s difference from the dominant society, all be it only Prospero and Miranda, render him a simultaneously subjugated and autonomous figure. This ‘in-between’ position, however, allows him the freedom to permeate the various groups on the island, and to catalyse change

¹⁶⁴ Nomadic Subjects, (2011).

¹⁶⁵ Richard Wilson cites some of these positions in ‘Making Men of Monsters: Shakespeare in the Company of Strangers’, Shakespeare, 1:1-2, 8-28 (2005).

¹⁶⁶ Rosi Braidotti, ‘Signs of Wonder and Traces of Doubt: On Teratology and Embodied Differences’, Between Monsters, Goddesses and Cyborgs: Feminist Confrontations with Science, Medicine and Cyberspace, eds. Nina Lykke and Rosi Braidotti, (London: Zed Books, 1996), p.141. All further references to this text are from this edition and given parenthetically.

throughout the play.¹⁶⁷ Caliban, as a liminal figure in the play, is not a representation, he is a functioning figuration.

One example demonstrating this is the relationship between Caliban and the dominant 'society' Prospero and Miranda. Prospero persistently references Caliban's negative difference with the repetition of the term 'slave' starting most of his retorts to Caliban: 'poisonous slave' (I.ii.319), 'lying slave' (I.ii.343), and from Miranda 'abhorred slave' (I.ii.352). The recriminations against Caliban, and his developing responses, reveal a palimpsest-like tapestry of his origins, years of subjugation and attempted rebellions. Notably, however, neither Prospero's nor the audience's relationship with Caliban is static; rather, Caliban moves, develops and changes throughout the play. Caliban's actions and words, made vivid through the medium of drama, present to the audience a figure with depth. This depth is multi-dimensional and multi-temporal; it refers to the past that shapes his present, to the anger in the present that shapes perceptions of his past, and to the future in the play that both of these combined compels. The Tempest is a play performed in real time and limited to the confines of the small space of the island. Consequently, Caliban's movements spatially and his actions temporally offer a passing glimpse as well as a complex insight into the figure of Caliban, his past and his present. Reading Caliban thus, we encounter the multiple dimensionality of a figuration.

To extend this mapping of multiplicity, we can also consider how the figure of Caliban has been submitted to many, varied, and conflicting interpretations of him by readers of the play. Kevin Pask reflects on the vast expanse of contrasting criticism surrounding the figure of Caliban since the Romantics and states that:

the source of the disturbance was not, as criticism from the Romantics onwards would suggest, Caliban's colonial or racial other-ness; Caliban's fault, rather, lay in his lack of verisimilitude.¹⁶⁸

This reading is particularly interesting since rather than engaging in the perpetual discussion surrounding the origins of Caliban's Otherness, Pask questions the validity and authenticity of this Otherness. The identification of his 'lack of verisimilitude' seems to uncover the constructedness of his monstrosity, in which the inability to determine his 'real' or 'true'

¹⁶⁷ Kenneth MacLean, 'Wild Man and Savage Believer: Caliban in Shakespeare and Browning', Victorian Poetry, Vol. 25, No. 1 (Spring, 1987), pp. 1-16.

¹⁶⁸ Kevin Pask, 'Caliban's Masque', ELH, Vol. 70, No. 3 (Fall, 2003), pp. 739-756, (p.739).

identity is the source of his 'Other-ness' itself. This mode of questioning is drawing attention to the complexity and artificiality of defining Otherness; namely, what is defined as 'Other' depends on the positionality, temporal and spatial, of the person doing the defining. In a sense, what is considered monstrous depends on the dominant discourse which alters over time and place.

The source of his life, his mother, is implicated as the source of his monstrosity. Unlike the other characters in the play, Caliban does not originate from Italy. Indeed, his origins are deliberately vague. Yet the single factor Prospero returns to and is simultaneously repulsed by is Caliban's mother Sycorax, a witch, historically a figure that manifests societal fear surrounding woman's knowledge and autonomy. According to Prospero, she is a 'blue-ey'd hag', a 'fouled witch' (I.ii). Significantly, Caliban's monstrosity, Prospero argues, is the result of her evils. Because of his disapproval of Caliban's mother, Caliban himself is treated as a figure of abjection. Both the source of creation, the mother, and the creation itself when 'Other' to the dominant society become a site of subjugation and abjection.

The subjugation and abjection of 'negative' differences, particularly gender difference, is discussed extensively by Julia Kristeva, Rosi Braidotti, and Donna Haraway. All three feature in this chapter; I focus, however, predominantly on the latter two here and in the next section because their particular figurations serve as guides to the method of reading I am demonstrating. Both Braidotti and Haraway have turned, like Shakespeare, to figures which exist in deterritorialized spaces with-in the territorialized, not beyond the 'norm', but bordering it. Both the monster and the cyborg that feature within their writings occupy, like Caliban, dominant discourse and society, and yet through their Otherness, their complexity, and their similarities with the 'norm', also reside outside of, or rather are excluded from, the dominant society. Because these figures are shifting figures, both moving across and transforming over historical periods, academic disciplines, literary genres, and geographies, reading through these figures facilitates varied and mobilising access to considering the feminist female subject, ARTs, and woman's maternal capacity. The constant re-imaginings and discussions of these figures lead me to propose that it is not only their difference that makes them of interest to this thesis, but reactions to this difference. As Pask pointed out with his reading of Caliban's 'verisimilitude', it is not the 'Other' that is so intriguing here, but our conception of and reaction to the 'Other' that makes it such a provocative area for exploration.

Consequently, in Aldous Huxley's Brave New World (1932) the savage's reference to The Tempest's Miranda's exclamation 'O brave new world, that has such people in't!' is informative to this thesis. It is not solely the 'people in't' who are a point of discussion, but the 'O', so rather the viewer's reaction to these people. Miranda makes this exclamation on seeing people *other* than her father or the monstrous Caliban. In Huxley's Brave New World, the savage says it when he sees the 'normal' dominant group, which considers him the monster. The quoting of this phrase then is not to exclaim at encountering the monstrous, rather it is in the encountering of difference. Huxley's use of such a statement proposes a didactic message in regarding difference positively as well as revealing the fragility of the constructs of 'normal' and 'monstrous'. This thesis not only maps the new encounters with people in our contemporary 'brave new world', but also explore the exclamation 'O'. I ask both what we can learn about female subjectivity and reproduction from considering organic and non-organic 'monster' figures, and why we are so compelled to keep doing so.

I

Reading the Mother through the Cyborg and the Monster

Since Medieval and early Renaissance times, figures that were considered 'non-human', so the monsters, were, as Atwood notes, quite literally drawn in the margins of maps.¹⁶⁹ The 'monsters' in the margins nowadays are those who do not conform to dominant conceptions of the human subject, whether through sexuality, gender, race, or non-normative reproductive practices, as recent public discourse on postmenopausal mothers reveals.¹⁷⁰ The monster and the cyborg figures are provocative areas for considering this negative difference and these marginal forms of subjectivity because discourse surrounding them traverses generations, disciplines, and geographies. Discussion of them also invites consideration of how we create monsters, the role our conceptual practices play in this process and how, like my discussion of Caliban suggested, mothers are implicated in this monster making process.

¹⁶⁹ Atwood, In Other Worlds: SF and the Human Imagination, p.67.

¹⁷⁰ Kate Connolly, '65-year-old woman's IVF pregnancy branded irresponsible and inadvisable', The Guardian, (15th April 2015), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/15/german-politicians-criticise-65-annegret-raunigk-pregnant-quadruplets>, [accessed Jan 2019].

Feminist thinkers have engaged in diverse discussions regarding both organic and non-organic monsters. Kristeva informs my thinking throughout this chapter, but I focus my reading in this section on two pivotal texts from Haraway and Braidotti's works: Haraway's 'Manifesto for Cyborgs' (1985) and Braidotti's "Signs of Wonder and Traces of Doubt: On Teratology and Embodied Differences" from Between Monsters, Goddesses, and Cyborgs (1996). These two works are particularly informative to my thesis because through their mapping of these marginal figures they both encounter issues of power surrounding female subjectivity, difference and ARTs that are as relevant now as then. Mapping discussions of these critical and literary 'non-human' figures who occupy the margins, I explore in this chapter why reflecting on what is considered 'non-human' can reveal so much about the 'human' and indeed 'posthuman'. In doing this, I make clear how critical figurations function to engage in and beyond this thinking. Locating the mother figure within these discourses of monsters and machine, I also consider how the female subject is implicated in this monster making process and how developing ARTs both facilitate and negate this process.

1. Human and/or Technology: The Cyborg

The machine is not on it to be animated, worshiped, and dominated. The machine is us, our processes, an aspect of our embodiment.¹⁷¹

Donna Haraway's 'Manifesto for Cyborgs' is not solely about the 'non-human'; as with Caliban, it is impossible to consider the 'non-human' without simultaneously reflecting on the 'human' and the significance this has to how we understand marginal subjectivities. Haraway's manifesto incorporates discussions concerning the 'human', subjectivity and technology. Choosing the cyborg, a figure which is part human, part machine, Haraway takes issue with the constructedness of the dominant categories by which we define ourselves. Although she describes the cyborg initially as simply an 'image', it is clear throughout the manifesto that this 'image' (p.191) has a capacity to function beyond mere representation.

The cyborg is both 'machine and organism'; it is also 'a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction.' (p. 191). It is precisely this embodiment of contradictory factors

¹⁷¹ Donna Haraway, 'A Manifesto For Cyborgs: Science, Technology and Socialist Feminist in the 1980s', Feminism/Postmodernism (Thinking Gender), ed. Linda S. Nicholson, (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 222. All further references to this text are from this addition and given parenthetically.

that make it so relevant, thirty years since publication. It is the critical potential of this liminality in particular between the real and the fictional that arises throughout this thesis. It is a critical potential endemic in feminist science fiction writing and apparent in the literary texts I have selected. 'A Manifesto for Cyborgs' was published in 1985, a time when as Haraway herself identifies 'contemporary science fiction' and 'modern medicine' were full of cyborgs; the prevalence of this figure in films and literature remains as true now as then. Indeed, due to continuing developments in biotechnologies the hybridisation of organism and technology remains not only a fictional fantasy, but also now a material and social reality. Following the thinking of Nikolas Rose, The Politics of Life Itself: Biomedicine, Power, and Subjectivity in the Twenty-First Century (2007), I understand this 'social reality' to also be a political one. Rose describes how through the process of molecularization of 'vitality', i.e. biomedical investigation, utilisation, and commodification of the embodiment of life, 'life may be mobilized, controlled, and accorded properties and combined into processes that previously did not exist.'¹⁷² From this, we can see how since the publication of Haraway's manifesto, our understanding of a cyborg has evolved; thanks to the molecularization of biotechnologies, the assumed distinction between the human and the non-human is even more indistinct and even invisible. The necessity then to imagine biotechnologies' potentials is ever more pressing.

Such political, personal and critical urgency was a driving force behind Haraway's cyborg figuration. Considering Foucault's Biopolitics a 'flaccid premonition of cyborg politics' (p.191), Haraway takes up the mantle of reopening the fictional, philosophical, medical and political questions surrounding embodied, technologized subjectivity. I partially follow Linda Hogle's suggestion that through this interrogation 'Haraway creates opportunities to analyse the various ways that subjectivity and agency are being transformed.'¹⁷³ I argue, however, that it is not solely what is 'being transformed' that is so compelling about Haraway's cyborg figure, but rather the 'transformation' of thought it provokes.

This ability to catalyse change through figurations is explored through Federica Timeto's reading of Haraway's work and the etymology of the term 'figure'. Timeto states, figurations are 'tropoi, in that they, according to Greek etymology, do not simply figure, but

¹⁷² Rose, p.15.

¹⁷³ Linda F. Hogle, 'Enhancement technologies and the Body', The Annual Review of Anthropology, No. 34, (2005), pp. 695 – 716, (p.703).

“turn” what they figure.’¹⁷⁴ Drawing on Deleuzian thought, I understand figurations’ ability to ‘turn’ what they figure to be a product of their deterritorializing effect. Through their incorporation of multiple, shifting differences and their consequent resistance to static identification, they have the potential to destabilise the certainty of categorisation by which we define ourselves. Haraway’s opening definition of the cyborg locates the figure precisely in its resistance to categorisation: ‘A cyborg is a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction’ (p.191). According to Haraway, the cyborg is not one thing or another, it is one thing *and* another *and* another *and* so on. Occupying multiple ‘categories’ simultaneously demands thinking through the multiple, resisting the urge to simplify or stabilise meaning. Haraway summarises this ability of the cyborg in her conclusion when she states: ‘Cyborg imagery can suggest a way out of the maze of dualisms in which we have explained our bodies and our tools to ourselves’ (p.223). She makes evident that although she is primarily interested in gender dualism, this thinking is resistant to other social, racial and discursive dualism also.

One dualism that Haraway’s cyborg deconstructs is the supposed separation of human and technology; as Haraway states, they are both ‘our bodies and our tools’. We cannot function without technology. Whether it is a pencil or a mobile phone, we are dependent on a vast variety of constantly evolving technologies to achieve even the simplest tasks. Haraway’s observation that technological machines ‘are everywhere and they are invisible’ (p. 195) is more apparent today than at the time of publication. Referencing the advent of the silicon chip, Haraway describes the increasing ubiquity and invisibility of computerised technology. This position is endorsed by the predominant Moore’s law, which, first published in 1965, predicted how with the continuing downsizing of the silicon chip, the size, function and availability of technology would only continue to develop further.¹⁷⁵ Our technological potential is greater and more invisible than ever before. One result of this development, noted by Rose, is that the modern day cyborg is no longer ‘less human’ through the utilisation of robotics, but rather, through ‘molecular enhancement technologies’ which as he states ‘reshape vitality from the inside...the human becomes, not less biological, but *all the more* biological.’¹⁷⁶ Through growing interventions with ARTs and gene editing, this can be extended to create ‘better’ humans too,

¹⁷⁴ Timeto, p.161.

¹⁷⁵ Jeremy Geelan, ‘Moore’s Law: “We See No End in Sight” Says Intel’ Pat Gelsinger’, *Sys.Con-Media*, (1st May 2008), <http://java.sys-con.com/node/557154>, [accessed November 2017].

¹⁷⁶ Rose, p.20.

a deeply subjective, commercially marketable, and somewhat terrifying prospect. A consequence of this re-thinking of 'cyborgism' is that the previously distinct border between our bodies and the technology we construct, use, and so constructs us is no longer always visible to our naked eye. As before, conceptualising it then becomes even more a process of engaging imaginative skills.

This relation between imagination and the visible is also drawn by Haraway when she states that 'the boundary between science fiction and social reality is an optical illusion' (p.191). If we understand 'optical illusion' to be suggesting the experience of seeing something which differs from the apparent reality of it (a simple example being an image that appears 3D despite only being 1D), then this reading provokes interesting ideas about the relation between lived reality, technology, and perception. Namely, what we see and experience can be altered by biotechnologies in ways that are not visually evident or explicitly obvious. The 'optical illusion' Haraway is describing is also suggesting that what is imagined in the fantastical realms of science fiction is not so far removed from our lived reality; indeed, when read through a particular lens, it is just a trick of the eye away. This position challenges the perceived reality of our relationship with technology: that it is simply a tool to be used. It also challenges the perceived reality of the relationship between our eye, what we see, and our brains, what we understand from this. By reading science fiction then through this optical illusion lens and understanding the literature to be a distorted mirror of contemporary society, I can establish two key points regarding our changing relationship with biotechnologies: firstly, our relationship with and dependency on biotechnologies remains a persistent issue in both society and our literary tradition; secondly, creative literary terrains such as science fiction offer access to considering the actual implications of this dependency.

Creative mediums are vital to countering the scientific and juridical thought that dominates the development and utilisation of biotechnologies. This is necessary because the relation between humans and biotechnologies is not simply a matter of people using technology; technology is changing how we experience and conceive, conceptually and biologically, ourselves. This is primarily, and most acutely, experienced through developments in biotechnologies, particularly when we consider the reproductive sciences. Haraway criticises scientific discourse. Noting its diagnostic function and binary inflexibility, she, like Braidotti, cautions against leaving the intrusive and pervasive medical practices to the static discursive structures, and arguably limited imaginative capacity, of scientists:

Technologies and scientific discourses can be partially understood as formalizations, that is, as frozen moments of the fluid social interactions constituting them, but they should also be viewed as instruments for enforcing meanings. (p.205)

This excerpt criticizes the static nature of scientific thought; utilising a description of these discourses as ‘frozen moments’ does, however, suggest a hope that they can be thawed, become more dynamic. I endorse Haraway’s position that the power structures in place and perpetuated by medical practice require constant philosophical reflection, critique and shaping. This is primarily because of the significance these practices have, not only to social and political policy makers, but also to our own experience and conception of our embodied subjectivity. The primary risk of the ‘frozen moments’ of scientific discourse is that, particularly threatening in our age of pervasive advanced capitalism, this static and pervasive discourse alters how we understand and experience our embodied subjectivity, namely in favour of capitalist interests.

Understanding biotechnologies, like Haraway does, as ‘the crucial tools recrafting our bodies’ (p. 205), there is then an urgent need to consider further the extent of the impact of these tools. The impact of their potential to ‘recraft’ is on both the value and experience of woman’s reproductive capacity in society. An example of this, and a literal enactment of the Foucauldian power of viewing, is the now seemingly transparent surface of pregnant women’s bodies. Due to the developments of medical technologies, women’s bodies are now more permeable than ever. Haraway notes this shift: ‘Among the many transformations of reproductive situations is the medical one, where women’s bodies have boundaries nearly permeable to both “visualisation” and “intervention”’ (p. 211). Jane Marce Maher similarly argues that ‘pregnancy has been transformed by the routine use of visual technologies.’¹⁷⁷ She blames the invasive use of these technologies for the separation of mother and foetal subjectivities before the birth; this pushes the pregnant body outside the ‘frame’ of consideration and places it alternatively as ‘the frame for the foetal subject.’¹⁷⁸ I agree with Haraway in arguing that it is a serious ‘feminist issue’ that the primary controller of these ‘interpretations of bodily boundaries’ is ‘medical hermeneutics’ (p. 211). The ‘frozen

¹⁷⁷ Jane Marce Maher, ‘Visibly Pregnant: Toward a Placental Body’, *Feminist Review*, No. 72, (2002), pp.95 – 107, (p.96).

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

moments' in medical care and discourse have facilitated a shift in medical, social, and juridical understandings of the foetus and mother; the former gaining in value as the latter is losing it.¹⁷⁹

Haraway reads the embodied female subject both through the cyborgs occupying the imaginative terrains of science fiction and through her own imaginative discourse surrounding cyborgs. Feminist science fiction and the various manifestations of the cyborg within loom large throughout the manifesto. Haraway offers a succinct explanation for this: 'The cyborgs populating feminist science fiction make very problematic the statuses of man or woman, human, artefact, member of a race, individual entity, or body' (p.314). It is precisely this destabilising potential that permeates her own exploration of the cyborg:

Up till now (once upon a time) female embodiment seemed to be given, organic, necessary...Cyborgs might consider more seriously the partial, fluid, sometimes aspect of sex and sexual embodiment. (Haraway, p.315)

Rich with metatextuality and imaginative exploration, her reading suggests the potential of understanding sex and gender through the liminal, borderland subjectivity of the cyborg. In contrast to the fixed 'frozen moments' of science and the categorisation against which she is working, her manifesto hopes for the fluid, the partial, the sometimes. The temporality hinted at through the 'once upon a time' reference and the 'sometimes', establish a timeless (once upon a time) and yet temporary (sometimes) understanding of sex and sexual embodiment. This paradoxical thinking typifies her resistance to duality and embracement of complexity. Haraway's work and my own thesis demonstrate how thinking creatively through the liminal cyborg figure allows for these rich moments of exploration; these are moments in which the figure of the cyborg facilitates access to multiple aspects of subjectivity, embodiment, and sexuality.

Thinking through the figure of the cyborg invites consideration of various and multiple points of discussion here: both in exploring the role of technology and the perception of the body through an economic and technological lens, and in examining the experience of a permeable hybrid subjectivity. The figure of the cyborg, within Haraway's reading of science fiction as well as her writing of the figuration, allows conceptual and imaginative access to all these areas. It also provokes ways of re-conceiving them. This is a re-conceiving through the

¹⁷⁹ Despite not being considered a full legal entity under UK law, the foetus has gained considerable legal protection over the past few decades. Sara Fovargue, José Miola, 'The Legal Status of the Fetus', *Clinical Ethics*, Volume: 5, Issue: 3, (September 2010), pp. 122-124.

possible, the sometimes, the multiple. Within her manifesto, Haraway works to counter totalising feminism and responds to the ‘brave new world’ of biotechnologies surrounding her in 1985; the volume and creativity of her response is such that it can still be heard today. In my reading of Piercy’s portrayal of marginal figurations later in this chapter, I explore further why these varying and imaginative portrayals of liminality are not just responses to the brave new world of the 1980s, but also necessary critical tools for the brave new world of today.

2. A Discourse on Difference: The Monster

The Frankenstein game. We make something of someone else, then we’re surprised when we come home one day and it’s gone out by itself for a wander around the neighbourhood. So we lock the door, angry, disappointed, how dare it. Then we get worried. Only we alone know how dangerous our creation is. So we reach for the rifle.¹⁸⁰

There are many similarities among discussions concerning organic and inorganic monster figures. As Braidotti points out in ‘Signs of Wonder and Traces of Doubt: On Teratology and Embodied Differences’, the relation between ‘the inorganic other; that is, the machine or technological body-double’ and ‘the monstrous body is strong’ (p.141). This connection primarily resides in the persistently negative, and divisive, treatment of difference from the ‘norm’, or rather in dominant discourse. Both these figures occupy not solely the position of Other, but, like Caliban, the borderlands, between human and machine, between human and animal. Both the cyborg and the monster embody a sort of domestic foreignness; existing amongst us but not belonging to the ‘norm’, these figures destabilize from within and therein lies their critical potential. Interestingly, Braidotti’s reading of monsters does not simply focus on this destabilisation, but also on the literary, scientific and social obsession with monsters throughout Western history. My focus on ‘Signs of Wonder and Traces of Doubt’ is then to interrogate not only how, but why we are so persistently attracted to the monstrous and how this thinking implicates mothers in a discourse of negative difference.

Braidotti draws her understanding of the term ‘Monster’ from the definition given in the late eighteenth century by Geoffroy de Saint Hilaire who ‘organized monsters in terms of

¹⁸⁰ Ali Smith, *Like*, (London: Virago Press, 2005 (1997)).

excess, lack or displacement of his/her organs' (p.138). Ideas of '*excess, lack or displacement*' pervade narratives on monstrosity; whether literary or scientific, this form of difference as deviating from the norm is persistently perceived negatively. The discourses surrounding mother figures, historical and contemporary, fulfil these three criteria of the 'monstrous': there are mother figures that *exceed*, so function beyond normative behaviours or appearances, such as the pregnant female body's excess of physical boundaries; mother figures that *lack*, such as childless mothers, through choice, death, or institutional intervention; and mother figures that *displace* so remove the reproductive function from the embodied subject, such as artificial wombs and surrogates. The particular forms of monstrous motherhood I include in this section are: the liminality and excess of the pregnant body and the forms of excess and displacement manifested in discourses around alternate mothers, so in this case those who have utilised ARTs.

What is considered monstrous reveals opinions on difference in dominant society, the 'norm' and its deviations. A glance at discourse on monsters demonstrates that what is understood as *excessive, lacking, or displaced* can vary from generation to generation and area to area.¹⁸¹ As Braidotti proposes, it is how the figure of the monster is defined which 'governs the production of difference here and now' (p.141). Thus, what we consider monstrous changes and these considerations can be used as a method of reading a historical period. Braidotti explains this by exploring the anthropological, racialized discourse permeating experiences of foreign culture. Starting with Homer and mapping through the colonization of North America, to European anti-Semitism, Braidotti demonstrates that although not all forms of monstrosity are racialized, all forms of racialization 'recycle' similar themes of monstrosity (pp.142-145). This is also evident in the varied interpretations of Shakespeare's Caliban I discussed earlier. In regards to maternal figures, what is posited as 'monstrous' has been considerably altered by the increasing use of biotechnologies, from the medical management of 'monstrous' births, the past critique of foetal abnormalities, to the creation of alternate 'monstrous' mothers.¹⁸² Mapping monsters throughout centuries, Braidotti does, however, identify a key similarity between the various monsters our literary and scientific imaginations have conjured up: there is always a dominant, typically negative, discourse concerning monsters and a desire to understand them.

¹⁸¹ Braidotti demonstrates how 'teratology is historically a mixed discourse' in her chapter 'Signs of Wonder and Traces of Doubt: On Teratology and Embodied Differences' (p.137).

¹⁸² Metamorphoses, 'Cyber-Teratologies', pp. 172-211.

This construction of monstrosity through negative difference can be found throughout history as well as throughout a variety of discourses. Teratology is identified by Braidotti as ‘historically a mixed discourse’ (p.137); notably, Braidotti reveals an intense interest in monstrosity permeating medical as well as fictional discourses. This position reinforces my decision to map biomedical and social interests within fictional discourses. It is on these latter terrains that I propose considering how the female subject and her reproductive capacity are implicated by this monstrous lens. Braidotti identifies that a function of thinking through the figure of monsters is that:

being figures of complexity, monsters lend themselves to a layering of discourses and also to a play of the imagination which defies rationalistic reductions. (p.135)

The potential then of mapping these literary figures functions twofold. Firstly, the ‘layering of discourses’ she describes is a resistance to a fixed singular definition. Rather it’s an invitation to include, not exclude, the various readings, historical, interpretative, disciplinary, contained within the figure of the monster. Secondly, by existing beyond the norm, beyond the known, the monster both allows and requires ‘a play of the imagination’, so a mode of thinking outside of defined rational and limiting definitions. The discourse of teratology is not only deep within our social and cultural imagination and anxiety then, but it also provides a line of flight, a creative, dynamic mode of thinking, away from reductive, dominant discourses.

The resistance to singularity in teratological discourses is primarily due to the monster’s position as the abject. My use of the term abject is derived initially from the thinking of Kristeva. I want to consider it in further detail here to demonstrate how women, and in particular mothers, and within that group alternate mothers, are implicated in a discourse of monstrosity. According to Kristeva in the opening chapter of Powers of Horror (1982), the abject, particularly the abject body, is not simply the ‘Other’ positioned opposite the subject, rather, through her discussion of psychoanalytic theory, the abject is ‘neither subject nor object.’¹⁸³ It is, like woman, that which lies outside representation. This argument is constructed through the idea of phallogocentrism, so discourse and thought being constructed through the phallus. Due to its *excess*, *lack* or *displacement*, to borrow from Braidotti’s thinking, the abject, like both the organic and inorganic monster, is identified and marginalised by its difference to the norm. Thus the abject being that which is not the ‘norm’, the dominant,

¹⁸³ Julia Kristeva, Powers of Horror, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p.1.

the phallus, is neither subject nor object in discourse and thought. Consequently, it initially seems to be the unrepresented and unrepresentable; my reading of Lessing's The Fifth Child, however, maps how textual 'effect', through the presentation of the distorted mother/child dyad, renders this 'abject' representable. In so doing, it presents the abject through the monstrous and marginal lens.

The potential of this marginalisation is identified by Kristeva in her discussion of abjection as:

[...] what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite.¹⁸⁴

Kristeva's theory of abjection has strong roots in Freudian theories of the Uncanny, and it draws its 'horror', as I demonstrate in my reading of Lessing's literature, from its ambiguity.¹⁸⁵ It is an ambiguity, so a resistance to categorisation and with it marginalisation, which calls attention to the artificiality of the normative categories by which we define ourselves. Unlike Deleuze's or Haraway's celebration of transgressing borders and embracing the 'in-between', encountered thus far in this thesis, Kristeva here draws on the repulsion and dislike of such transgression. This is crucial to my understanding of Kristeva's abject; she not only recognises the transgressive potential, but also the desire to restore to order and structure that the abject provokes. She posits this response to a Freudian sense of identity formation and to explain abjection fully she returns us to the 'original' site of abjection, the mother/child dyad. It is here, she argues, that the mother's body is identified as the first abject figure against which the individual differentiates itself. She goes on to identify the extensive socio-cultural history which has been built on this moment of rejection. This moment functions, as Freud argues, through the taboo of incest. Kristeva, however, extends this idea further to the taboo of death and our inevitable mortality. Since the conception, gestation, and birth of a child guarantees its inevitable death, the pregnant woman's body can be read as both the location and the creator of these blurred boundaries.

Relating the decay of death with the maternal body through her reading of Leviticus, Kristeva offers a reading of the 'the body and its limits' and how the maternal body exceeds

¹⁸⁴ Kristeva, Powers of Horror, p. 4.

¹⁸⁵ Daniel Sullivan and Jeff Greenberg, 'Monstrous Children as Harbingers of Mortality: A Psychological Analysis of Doris Lessing's The Fifth Child', LIT: Literature Interpretation Theory, 22:2, pp. 113-133, (p.115).

and displaces them.¹⁸⁶ She references her earlier discussion of the ‘split self’ and ‘the collapse of the border between inside and outside’¹⁸⁷ to provide an evocative description of this process through the maternal body. The stretching skin, tears of a pregnant and labouring body, and the eventual birth of the Other she describes resonate with my earlier reading of Braidotti’s work and the discourse of *excess*, *lack* and *displacement* we use to construct monstrosity. The maternal body embodies the ‘in-between’, between subject and Other, between life and death, between inside and out. As pregnancy and labour rip and distort bodily borders, they disturb the supposed singularity of self, and the contained-ness of our flesh. The processes of conceiving, gestating and birthing new life directly fulfil the potential of the marginal I referenced from Kristeva: pregnancy ‘does not respect borders’; it typifies the ‘in-between’ of inside/outside, life/death, self/Other; and it ‘disturbs identity’, so the assumption of a static, stable self. It is from this position that the abject maternal undoes the hegemony of the contained, singular self.

Within the margins of these marginalised mother figures, we find alternate mothers, women who through the use of ARTs have been able to have a child: geriatric mothers, lesbian mothers, infertile mothers, single mothers by choice, surrogate mothers. This group of alternate mothers is rapidly growing and still largely unexplored, whether academically or socially.¹⁸⁸ The consequences of occupying such a marginal space are various. Susan Golombok surveys various sociological and statistical analyses of the impact of reproductive technologies and new family forms on parents and children. Her concluding chapter reinforces the observations I have made above: these alternate mothers, and in her study fathers too, face considerable social prejudices, financial and personal challenges in forming a family; nevertheless and indeed often despite these challenges, the alternate families they construct reveal a variety of family forms to be as positive on child outcomes as the traditional heterosexual nuclear family. These alternate mothers then are outside figures, functioning beyond the dominant ‘norms’ of ‘natural’ reproduction; consequently, they challenge the dominance of normative categories. Whether through their ability to exceed and/or displace the normative definitions applied to the embodied subject, the abject monstrous bodies of mothers and alternate mothers disrupt the

¹⁸⁶ Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, p.101.

¹⁸⁷ Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, p.53.

¹⁸⁸ Both Susan Golombok’s *Modern Families: Parents and Children in New Family Forms* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015) and Yvonne Roberts and Katie Forster in their *Guardian* article ‘The Agony and Ecstasy of Becoming an Older Mother’ (published 30th August 2015) use this point as a focus and motivator for their respective works.

categories by which we form and understand ourselves, not just the familial categories, but also the social, and indeed individual.¹⁸⁹

Braidotti, like Kristeva, reads a woman's pregnant body through the lens of abject theory. The maternal body 'trespasses and transgresses the barriers', and that is why it has been repeatedly perceived as a figure of horror both in literature and history.¹⁹⁰ Braidotti notes, however, how a pregnant body not only blurs the boundaries of the flesh, as the woman's body is distorted, stretched, and ripped through the process of gestation and birth, but also restores them. As the baby is born and becomes subject and the woman heals, borders are restored but, of significance here, different: the postnatal body is marked; the stretched skin now looser and scarred; the uterus is contracted but never entirely; the stomach muscles show a palimpsestic curve of the form they once had. Reading this process of restoration as a form of reterritorialization, locates the maternal body as a fascinating figure for thought beyond fear and repulsion. As the woman's body closes, it heals, but changed. It is this change that allows us to understand this embodied maternal subject as a space for considering a more dynamic form of embodiment, a space that contains a multiplicity of effects, of palimpsestic pasts, and through the new life it has grown also possible futures.

This multiplicity of effects can be read in abject figures', here mothers and monsters, ability to provoke attraction as well as repulsion. Following Bogdan's discussion of 'nineteenth-century freak-shows', Braidotti explains how the interest in monstrous difference fed, as Bogdan describes it, a 'pornography of disability' (p.138). The craze for freak shows in the nineteenth century reveals the opposing fascination and horror produced simultaneously by the abject figure of the monster. Tracing through the history of circus acts and medical experiments, Braidotti recognises our perpetual desire to 'see' this monstrous Other, not despite but rather because of the simultaneity of effects it produces. Braidotti identifies this desire in the origins of the word itself: 'The Latin etymology of the term confirms it: *monster/monstrum* is primarily an object of display' (p.135). She understands this literally when reflecting on the historical exposure of monsters in fairs and courts for entertainment as well as philosophically when discussing the multiple and contradictory positions expressed on monstrosity. There is a similar discourse of fascination and disgust still evident in much media discussion of celebrity

¹⁸⁹ *Metamorphoses*, p.161.

¹⁹⁰ *Nomadic Subjects*, (2011), p.227.

pregnancies today.¹⁹¹ What's more, there is a discourse of fascination, repulsion, normativity and liberation surrounding the current trend to share labour images and videos online. Following a recent campaign to alter programme algorithms and allow the sharing of birthing films and images on social media sites, there has been a flurry of activity making visible the previously private moments of labour.¹⁹² Millions of people follow accounts to witness the wonder and power of such moments. These videos, however, provoke constant discussion and prolific reaction with people responding, critiquing and arguing about what they deem 'correct' or 'normal' births. This is not just a critique of medical practices but of bodily practices, one recent heated discussion being in regard to the absence of pubic hair in so many of the films. These digitally immortalised moments of spilling amniotic fluids, tearing flesh, and emerging life not only confirm the border blurring force of the maternal body, but also the fascination with it, and normative discourses defining it. It is this very 'simultaneity of opposite effects' which Braidotti considers 'the trademark of the monstrous body' (p.136). It is a 'trademark' that she argues contains critical, vitalistic potential for thinking dynamically, not definitively.

It seems that the greatest fear and/or fascination to derive from the display, investigation and imagination of monsters is surrounding their origins, 'epistemophilia' (pp.138-139). Braidotti recognises how 'the quest for the *origin* [who did this/how could such a thing happen?] of monstrous bodies has motivated some of the wildest theories about them' (p.139). In this effort to identify who is responsible for such monstrosity, the scientific gaze has kept returning to the site of origin, the mother. As Braidotti states:

Monsters are linked to the female body in scientific discourse through the question of biological reproduction. Theories of conception of monsters are at times extreme versions of the deep-seated anxiety that surrounds the issue of women's maternal power of procreation in a patriarchal society. (p.139)

This line of questioning is symptomatic of a fear of the unknown. Braidotti looks back to psychoanalytic theory and Freud to argue that this desire to know 'is marked by curiosity about one's own origins, and is consequently stamped with libidinal investments' (p.139). Similar to

¹⁹¹ Many mainstream publications have 'pregnancy pages' listing celebrities due that year. Some simultaneously positioning that next to articles documenting pregnant women's bodies, ante and post-natal. Examples are: <http://www.marieclaire.com/celebrity/news/g4393/celebrity-pregnancies-2017/>; <http://www.hellomagazine.com/tags/celebrity-pregnancies/>; <http://www.glamourmagazine.co.uk/gallery/celebrity-pregnancies> [accessed August 2017].

¹⁹² <https://www.change.org/p/nicole-jackson-colaco-allow-uncensored-birth-images-on-instagram> [accessed October 2018].

Haraway, Braidotti demonstrates the danger of the formalizing powers of this fantasmatically informed scientific discourse.

To demonstrate this, Braidotti maps, among others, the arguments of Ambroise Paré (1573) who used such ideas to impose a normalised view of sexual practice. It was a view which perpetuated and restricted female sexual practice and desire. Paré considered the birth of a monstrous child an expression of the ‘guilt or sin of the parents’ (p.139). He primarily blamed any forms of sexual practice which did not conform to those recommended by the Catholic church. Inevitably this involved limiting any excess in women’s sexual desire, and punishing any digressions, even if they were only psychological. After tracing the variety of arguments proposed in relation to the production of a monstrous baby, Braidotti suggests that this ‘imagination’ hypothesis is the most pervasive and ‘long lasting’ (p.145). Braidotti follows Glenister’s (1964) consideration that the theory of the maternal imagination is primarily about ‘vision and visual powers’ (p.147). It was the argument that women could be so influenced by what they had seen that it would impact and potentially deform their unborn child. Significantly, it is suggested that it is not only what the pregnant woman *sees* that leads to a monstrous birth, but also how she emotionally and psychologically responds to this stimulant. And so began a discourse of controlling women’s emotions and stimulants during pregnancy. Even as late as the nineteenth century, theorists proposed that reading could excessively stimulate the female imagination and result in a deformed or monstrous baby. The discourse surrounding sources of monstrosity became a tool for controlling women. Interestingly, I demonstrate through my reading of literature in the next section that the instruments of reading and imagination that so frequently were used to blame and confine women, may also be tools with which they can be liberated and indeed liberate themselves.

3. The Potential of Liminal Figures

In a thought-provoking reversal of the ‘maternal imagination’ theories, reproductive technologies have served to remove the female maternal subject from much medical assessment of the foetus. Stepping slightly away from the monster figure, I want to discuss briefly a refiguring of the maternal/foetal subjectivities demanded by the impact of medical technologies, in particular, foetal ultrasounds. This act of refiguring functions as an example for the critical potential of thinking through liminal figures that I have been mapping through my discussion of the monster and the cyborg. Prenatal scanning equipment has developed to

such sophisticated levels that the previously opaque borders of a woman's pregnant body are now transparent. Consider the now familiar image of the developing foetus, sometimes even without the surrounding womb, adorning both pro and anti-abortion documentation, not to mention group emails of family and friends' pregnancy announcements, or even celebrity social media feeds; the idea of 'seeing' a pregnancy has been transformed by the now standard use and display of visual technologies. Marce Maher offers an interesting argument, which I discussed earlier, that posits the invasive use of these technologies as partly responsible for the legal and social separation of mother and foetal subjectivities before the birth. Foetal scanning equipment has developed to such high standards that 'monstrous' births in Western medicine no longer exist, medical anomalies can not only be identified prior to birth but sometimes also surgically rectified. Through these technologies, the maternal figure is no longer the monster in the margins, rather she becomes the margins themselves, devoid of representation or subjectivity. Marce Maher's solution to this problem is to suggest 'a reconfiguration of the visual field'.¹⁹³ Criticising how contemporary visual technologies have caused the 'edges' of mother subject to be defined 'against the edges of the other subject',¹⁹⁴ she proposes reconceiving this dual subjectivity through the figure of the placenta. Imagining these two subjectivities through the placenta allows us to consider the relation of exchange and the processes inherent in the two, not considering them distinct from one another. Reimagining the gestational space and subjectivity, thinking through the liminal and in-between, allows for the mother's re-inclusion. This example demonstrates both the potential impact of developing biotechnologies on pushing the female subject further to the margins, and the potential of modes of thinking, thinking through liminal figures, such as the placenta, the monster, the mother, the machine, to remove her from these margins and conceive subjectivity in a more inclusive, complex, and adaptable form.

Thinking through the figure of the monster can have this liberating potential, not only when considering pregnant women, but when considering the subject woman. Braidotti's description of the monstrous body presents this potential: 'The monstrous body, more than an object, is a shifter, a vehicle that constructs a web of interconnected and yet potentially contradictory discourses on his or her embodied self' (p.150). Through my mapping of various disciplines and historical eras, this 'web of interconnected and yet potentially contradictory discourses' has allowed me to access two primary issues regarding monstrosity and female

¹⁹³ Marce Maher, p.96.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., p.97.

subjectivity: the discourse of monstrosity surrounding woman's reproductive capacity; the impact of biotechnologies on woman's reproductive responsibility and consequently on the subject woman. The potential of a figure which can be understood, as Braidotti says, as 'a process without a stable object' (p.150) is that this process ontology challenges the 'frozen moments' Haraway critiqued in scientific discourse and helps move thought regarding subjectivity and difference beyond them.

II

Bodies, Technology and Subjectivity in Marge Piercy's Woman on the Edge of Time.

We can only know what we can truly imagine. Finally what we see comes from ourselves.¹⁹⁵

Marge Piercy's Woman on the Edge of Time (1976) contains a productive liminal figure for creative critical thinking as well as a demonstration of the vitalistic potential of imagination: the protagonist Connie Ramos is presented as both mother and monster. Through my mapping of the thinking provoked by this liminal figure and her movements between territorialized and deterritorialized spaces in Piercy's work, I elaborate and extend both Deleuze's demonstration of the philosophical potential of literature mapped in the previous chapter and the potential of liminal figurations and imagination in this. I apply this thinking to my discussion of female subjectivity and reproductive capacity. Connie spends the vast duration of the fiction committed to and locked away in a mental asylum; she has had her daughter forcibly removed and is dismissed as a 'loser' (p.57) by the institutions that confine her. As a result of this, Piercy's publication is not the most obvious choice of text for considering the potential of deterritorialized spaces, maternal capacity, and dynamic modes of thought. Nevertheless, confined to the small and limiting spaces allowed to her, Connie regularly escapes to vivid recollections from her past and telepathic journeys to the future. It is precisely because of Connie's physical confinement that Piercy's work offers a diverse terrain for mapping the critical potential of liminal figurations and imagination when encountering the restrictions of medicine, technology, and power.

¹⁹⁵ Marge Piercy, Woman on the Edge of Time, (London: The Women's Press, 1979 (1976)), p.328. All further references to this text are from this edition and given parenthetically in this text.

1. The Potential of Becoming Liminal

Connie is an excruciatingly marginalised and restricted figure. It seems that each institution she meets further subjugates her: the institution of the family is the location for her physical and emotional abuse; the educational institution is the location for her sexual exploitation and abandonment; the judicial institution is responsible for the death of her partner; the social welfare institution is blamed for taking her child; and the health care institution posits her as both useless and to be used. It is through the neglectful treatment in the psychiatric institution that she truly becomes and feels abject: 'She felt ugly, bloated with the drugs, skin deadened and flaking, lips dry and split, hair lank and dirty and bleared with feverish sweat.' (p.63). With her bodily borders leaking, flaking, and dirty, Connie is aware of the 'disgust' (p.20) the orderlies feel towards her and mourns that she has become the monster they describe her as within the psychiatric hospital and social welfare institutions. And yet despite these oppressive monoliths, it seems that Connie discovers or rather creates a space for 'becoming'. My use of this affirmative nomadic lens to explore Piercy's work does not valorise or endorse the violent and exploitative incarceration of vulnerable subjects such as Connie, of which Piercy is highly critical. Rather my reading demonstrates how despite her marginalisation by the restrictive patriarchal institutions, moments of deterritorialization and becoming within Piercy's fiction can catalyse productive modes of thinking for both Connie within the text and my feminist endeavour outside the text.

Connie accesses this potential to become through her own cognitive, imaginative, and creative capacities. Haraway's description of the cyborg figure makes evident why creative thought is so necessary to counter dominant discourses; she offers imaginative thought as a counter to the rigid, 'frozen moments' of scientific discourse. Similarly, Connie's imagination serves to counter the formalised structures of the mental health care system in which she is trapped. Her potential as a marginalised patient in this system is particularly evident when thought through Braidotti's description of the nomadic subject; this subject functions as a transformative tool that enacts 'progressive metamorphoses of the subject away from the program set up in the phallogocentric format.'¹⁹⁶ This description of the figure of the nomad identifies the liberatory potential of conceiving subjectivity through this lens; subjects can engage in transformative processes, in Connie's case this is accessed through her imaginative

¹⁹⁶Nomadic Subjects, (2011), p.12.

wanderings, that free themselves from the rigid structures set up through phallogocentrism. For Connie, this is the institutional bodies which educate, regulate, and repeatedly subjugate populations.

Throughout her life, Connie struggles to work and survive within the dominant structures of education, social welfare and health. It is only by the end of the novel that she, through her travels to the future, realises her ability to counter these systems which had posited her as Other. She describes how she has been made Other and subjugated over the years by the ‘flacks of power who had pushed her back and turned her off and locked her up and medicated her and tranquilized her and punished her and condemned her.’ (p.336). The repeated use of the verbs inflicted on ‘her’, the object pronoun, serve to reinforce her objectification and abjection through the system. Her ability to counter these powers derives then from this position of subjugation. Because these dominant, ‘major’ institutions, like man, are the ‘norm/law/logos’, they are the rigid unchanging monoliths through which society, culture and meaning is constructed. Connie functions through her displacement and liminality, existing within society whilst simultaneously excluded from participating in it, to trouble dominant discourses and certainties.¹⁹⁷ It is from this politically and socially ‘minor’ position, to borrow from Deleuze, that she can access a minor mode of thinking and the cognitively mobilising potential it contains.¹⁹⁸

Connie’s minor position is described as deriving from her race, her sex, her class, but Connie offers her own description of her marginality, her Otherness. She understands it as a sickness: ‘I’m sick, that I’m sick to be poor and sick to be sick and sick to be hungry and sick to be lonely and sick to be robbed and used’ (p.372). This description, locating her marginality as a ‘sickness’, presents an embodied form of subjugation. Significantly, describing her subjugation through the lens of ‘sickness’, a sickness derived from her poverty and pain, reveals it to be a suffering, but, most significantly, not a suffering that solely defines her; rather, it is one that afflicts her and from which she can potentially recover and heal. This offers the hope that she can counter the Otherness that subjugates her. It seems then that Connie too can be read, like the monster and the cyborg, as a marginal, deterritorialized figure, and therein lies the critical potential of reading her story and indeed reading her. We can read Connie and in

¹⁹⁷ Donna Haraway, Modest Witness@Second Millennium.FemaleMan©Meets_OncoMouse™: Feminism and Technoscience, (London: Routledge, 1997), p.11

¹⁹⁸ Metamorphoses, p.78.

particular her telepathic journeys not only as a clear resistance to the restrictive, normative institutions which describe and limit her as ‘sick’ and against which she is battling, but also as a figure providing a method for ‘becoming’ beyond her restrictive cell.

2. Embrained Body and Embodied Brain

Connie’s efforts to ‘become’ are limited to the only ways available to her, to her mind and cognitive abilities. This perspective of subjectivity here, motivated by the desires, memories and mental movements of the subject, is still an embodied understanding of subjectivity. My focus on embodied subjectivity is by no means endorsing a Cartesian mind/body dualism, with a transcendental mind over matter, so to speak.¹⁹⁹ Rather, like Braidotti’s nomadic subject, I am recognising the ‘corporeal roots of the human intellect’.²⁰⁰ Furthermore, I am recognising the significance of these roots. They are not merely an aspect of the subject which impacts it; the acts, desires, and practices of this embodied subject are determining vectors of subjectivity. Connie is desperate to escape her physical entrapment: ‘She had to get out of here. She had to turn off her memory. She tried to open her mind, to invite’ (p.113). There is a distinct connection here between her physical confinement and her psychological journeying. Although her desire is to physically escape, her efforts are for the vast majority of the book entirely cognitive, accessed only through her imagination. It is by opening up her mind and her imagination to possibilities beyond her confined reality that she can not only survive her incarceration, but think beyond it. These journeys reinforce both the, as Haraway describes it, ‘optical illusion’²⁰¹ governing the distinctions of mind and body as well as the critical and personal potential of occupying these imaginative borderlands further.

Locked away in her cell, with any physical movements controlled, scrutinized and limited by force and by drugs, Connie could not be more trapped and more silenced. There seems to be no potential for escape. And yet, Deleuze does not espouse the necessity of physical movement for the potential to become. In fact to a certain extent frugality of physical experiences can enhance mental becomings; Deleuze draws on Spinozan ideas of *Puissance* (power and affect) to demonstrate how oppressive forces can in fact enhance the power to

¹⁹⁹ *Patterns of Dissonance*, p. 254.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 255.

²⁰¹ Haraway, ‘A Manifesto for Cyborgs’, p.191.

resist, the desire to survive and self-determine one's own subjectivity.²⁰² It is significant, however, that Deleuze points out: 'Above all, becoming does not occur in the imagination' (p.262). Although I am arguing for the significance of imagination in catalysing becomings, this point is poignant and evident in Connie's becomings. Catalysed by imagining beyond her circumstances, Connie's 'becoming' does not occur solely in her mind; her imagination driven travels mobilise her in her reality. There is a oneness to her engagement in her temporal movements, her imagination, and her embodied responses that resonates with a Spinozan consideration of effect, temporality, the body, and the fundamental connectedness of these factors.²⁰³ Although locked up, her travels are powerful, transformative, and deeply visceral.

The visceral experiences of these travels impact Connie both temporarily and permanently. She feels the warmth of Luciente's body, the woman from the future with whom she telepathically communicates in the present (p.43, 58). She tastes and smells the culinary delights in future (p.76, 78). These are transient, fleeting experiences. Significantly, her journeys to the future also catalyse more permanent changes. The most compelling is her eventually 'becoming war machine', as Deleuze states 'a machine against the apparatus'.²⁰⁴ At the close of the fiction, Connie violently revolts against the mental health institution which confines her. It is through her exposure to potential futures and her increasingly political conversations with Luciente from the future that Connie decides to rebel against the institutions that confine her. In her final journey to the future, Connie considers the moral implications and necessity of resisting her oppressors. Her justification for her choice for necessary violence reveals how considerably her journeys to the future Mattapoissett have changed her: 'But it was you, your people, who taught me I'm fighting a war' (p.370). By her own admission, Connie has been transformed from a beaten, bound and drugged patient to a soldier, invigorated both in the future and her present temporalities. The change in her is tangible. In a Spinozan sense, everything is readable through her present embodiment. It may be that the warmth from Luciente's body 'evaporates' as soon as she leaves Connie, and it may be that the feast she eats in the future does not directly nourish her body in the present, but her travels to the future certainly nourish her mind and catalyse her actions in her present.²⁰⁵

²⁰² Gilles Deleuze, Lecture: '*Cours Vincennes: Power (puissance), Classical Natural Right*' (09/12/1980), <http://www.webdeleuze.com/php/texte.php?cle=20&groupe=Spinoza&langue=2>, [accessed September 2013].

²⁰³ Benedict De Spinoza, *Ethics*, (London: Penguin Books, 1996 (1677)), (p. 121).

²⁰⁴ *A Thousand Plateaus*, p.388.

²⁰⁵ William J. Burling, 'Reading Time: The Ideology of Time Travel in Science Fiction', *KronoScope*, 6, 1,(2006), pp.5 – 30, (p. 15).

The language used to describe Connie's telepathic abilities presents the cognitive mobility of this creative facility: 'As if her mind had developed muscles, she could easily draw Luciente, she could leap in and out of Luciente's time.' (p.195). Rather than reading these leaps as literal or metaphorical, I am reading them as figurational aspects of Connie's becomings. There is a physical musculature to this description of her mental capacities; these capacities can 'leap', enact movement, and travel space and time. More significantly, these imaginative capacities motivate her attempts to survive in the present, while simultaneously her incarcerated physical state motivates her imaginative wanderings. Interestingly, the deliberate choice of the word 'draw' in this extract suggests further depth to Connie's telepathic skills. The verb directly references the creative capacity necessary to travel telepathically to the future; it also suggests the creative foundations of these travels and in doing so plants seeds of doubt regarding their authenticity. The blurring of physical, mental, and creative terms in this passage demonstrates how interconnected these aspects of the subject are. This quote is an elucidating demonstration of what Braidotti describes as 'the embodiment of the mind and the embrainment of the body'²⁰⁶ and the necessity of understanding the complexity and interconnectivity of subjectivity through these terms.

3. Travels to the Future

Whether physically and/or mentally, Connie embarks on these telepathic journeys. She travels away from the mental hospital in which she is trapped, beyond the city of New York to the year 2137 to the rural village of Mattapoisett. It is a utopian community that is built on feminist, environmentalist, and socialist values. This position is epitomised in their utilisation of developing biotechnologies to establish an entirely 'gender equal' community which bears and raises children at the decision and responsibility of the entire community. Their deliberate efforts to break 'the nuclear bonding' (p.105) of the hetero-familial structure to apparently free women from their 'biological enchainment' (p.105) are met with a tinge of loss by the women in the future and much disgust by Connie. Connie's recurrent and desperately visceral longing for her child throughout the text in fact reveals the relation of women to their reproductive capacities to not be a simple one from which to be freed; rather this relation is a complex aspect of embodied subjectivity. Connie regularly longs for her daughter, who has been taken away

²⁰⁶ Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Theory: A Portable Rosi Braidotti*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), p.2.

from her by the state. She describes her connection to her in terms of embodiment, in terms of labour, in terms of blood and pain: 'child of my sore bleeding body.' (p.105). Regularly referring to the fluids connecting them and spilled during labour or her breast feeding, Connie's relation with her daughter is explicitly abject; it overflows physical borders. Her rejection of and repulsion at the technologized reproduction derives precisely from the absence of this pain, the absence of this complex, border-blurring embodiment. The suggestion here is that although ARTs have finally democratized reproduction and removed women from the margins, they have also removed something else, something not entirely tangible, something embodied, something abject. Where there was excess with Connie's explicit and visceral desire for her child, there is now presented through this sanitised, technologized means of reproduction a distinct lack of desire, a lack of embodiment. Both means of reproduction provoke desire, repulsion, attraction and fear. The conflicting responses to these forms of reproductive development reveal the supposed utopian values underpinning this potential future to be subjective ones.

The future Mattapoissett, whether portrayed as a figment of Connie's imagination or a potential utopian future is certainly a deterritorialized space. It exists beyond the physical limitations of Connie's current incarceration in a deliberately and provocatively unknown, unlocatable, and multiple space. Taking Adrian Parr's comprehensive description of Deleuze's discussion of 'deterritorialization' in The Deleuze Dictionary,²⁰⁷ we find an outline of a complex term that resonates with Piercy's text. Parr describes 'de-territorialization' as 'movement producing change'.²⁰⁸ This statement supports the understanding of the multiple futures presented in Piercy's text as deterritorialized spaces, since it is not only Connie's movement to and between the possible temporalities, but both her and our lack of certainty regarding these movements which 'produces change'. The 'change' I am referring to is evident in Connie's becomings. As Parr describes 'to de-territorialize is to free up the fixed relations that contain a body all the while exposing it to new organisations'²⁰⁹; this is precisely what happens to both Connie with her movement throughout various, constantly changing, and apparently parallel temporalities and, I argue, to the reader with the variety of readings suggested by these futures. After each journey, Connie returns to her present reality invigorated, inspired; these moments of reterritorialization to the institution reveal that

²⁰⁷ Adrian Parr (ed.), The Deleuze Dictionary, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010 (2005)).

²⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 69.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

although reterritorialized, the subject is changed. Moving her memories of the past and experiences of the future with her into the past, Connie treasures these gems like ‘a candy she could suck and suck during the week and not use up.’ (p.190). Describing these memories, experiences and impressions as candy hints at how these temporal displacements deliciously nourish the subject in her reterritorialized present.

During the novel Connie visits two potential futures, but with Luciente’s hint at ‘continuums’ (p.367) more are suggested and none are certain. The fifteenth chapter is dedicated to Connie’s visit to an alternate dystopian future in which the implications of advanced capitalism have meant that the potential liberation of the sexes through reproductive biotechnologies has actually resulted in the further subjugation of women. These women rely on weekly, monthly, or annual renewal of contracts to provide for men either sex, progeny, or company, very rarely all three, in order to survive. No one is ‘free’; both men and women are owned by multinational conglomerations who manage, control and regulate every aspect of their lives: ‘multis own everybody.’ (p.300). This dystopia presents an acute form of advanced capitalism. Advanced capitalism, which will arise at multiple points throughout this thesis, describes our current historical moment in which, as Haraway describes, ‘networks of connection among people on the planet are unprecedentedly multiple, pregnant, and complex’ (p.202). These networks are constantly changing, developing and intensely pervasive in all aspects of our life; these networks are dictated by economic gain and commercial practice. Viewing reproduction through the lens of advanced capitalism, Haraway describes how ‘control strategies applied to women’s capacities to give birth to new human beings will be developed in the languages of population control and maximisation of goal achievement for individual decision makers’ (p. 205). This manifestation of power is evident in Piercy’s dystopian future. Reproduction is the consequence of legal obligation and confined to a group of women who are ‘cored’ to make babies, so biomedically designed that way; they only do it ‘If it’s in the contract’ (p.290). When advanced capitalism merges with scientific discourse and practice in Piercy’s dystopian future, we have a mix that not only subverts how women conceive their maternal capacity and sexual practice, but actually dictates, defines and determines it discursively, legally, and physically.

Connie has an intense but short encounter with one of these women, Gildina. According to her, she is ‘lucky’ to have a long-term sex contract; like my opening discussion of Beyoncé, here we have advanced capitalist powers defining female embodiment for sex

without reproduction. Gildina is a cyborg like figure who is so medically enhanced to function as a sex object she is physically incapacitated: ‘She looked as if she could hardly walk for the extravagance of her breasts and buttocks, her thighs that collided as she shuffled a few steps’ (p.288). Gildina’s adaptations are part of her contract and paid for by her owner/partner who is unambiguously named ‘Cash’, a man who too has modified himself to almost ‘cybo’ level in order to serve the multi that owns them. The description of Gildina and her gilded cage, which in stark contrast to Connie she is too afraid to escape, unambiguously depicts the manifestation of advanced capitalist medical practices on woman’s body, defining and incapacitating her. Gildina’s highly technologized lifestyle is an explicit critique of the uncritical utilisation of technologies and the various forms of power manifested in their utilisation. This is a critique also made in Haraway’s discussion of the cyborg; she raises concerns regarding women and biotechnologies in this advanced capitalist age. Her fears for their ‘integration/exploitation’ in a medicalised and capitalised system that understands bodies through values of ‘production/reproduction’ (p. 205) are present in Piercy’s chapter fifteen. This chapter is a reminder of the need to remain critical of the forms of biomedical science we practice and types of becoming we endorse. Braidotti similarly warns in Nomadic Subjects (2011) of the ‘concrete conditions’ of global commerce in advanced capitalism which through commodity and materially driven trade merely reinforce and perpetuate the negativity of binary logic, rather than escape it.²¹⁰ The difference created and reinforced through the use of biotechnologies in Piercy’s text is not only enhanced through the use of biotechnologies, it becomes a way of living and creating life. Difference is built into the living quarters, jobs and language of this world: Gildina’s apartment is “‘strictly SG’ed.” (p.288). As she goes on to explain, ‘SG’ stands for ‘Segregated and guarded’; there is no mixing between those of a different social or corporate status. Although the feminist critique is explicit in this chapter and risks reinforcing a binary polemic on reproductive technologies, its inclusion provokes further ideas regarding temporality.

As a liminal figure, occupying these multiple temporalities, the present, the past, the various futures, Connie functions to destabilise static understandings of time. The potential multiplicity of futures and their accessible presence in Connie’s present unravel universalistic, patriarchal conceptualisations of time. Defining ideas on conceptualising temporality stem back to St. Augustine’s Confessions (398 AD) and his reflections on the ‘graceful order of

²¹⁰ Nomadic Subjects, (2011), p.7.

time.²¹¹ His interpretation set the foundations for a univocal, linear reading of time; these are ideas still present in the hegemonic structuring and ordering of most languages and thought, and ones which restrict rather than fit with the subject's experience of time. The title of Piercy's work, Woman on the Edge of Time, demands that we consider temporality in this book through a multi-dimensional and spatial lens and perhaps more significantly that we consider woman's positionality within this space. We can read woman's location on the 'edge' of time as a further reinforcement of her marginality. Pushed to the edge of the dominant discourse of time in her minor position, Connie is able to access multiple temporalities simultaneously, catalysing becomings through this marginality. The location of 'edge' also hints at a teetering grasp on such a dominant entity. Particularly significant, however, is the relation of the woman, the subject to time. It is this relation that drives a convincing consideration of subjectivity and temporality in this text.

Connie's travels, with the presence of the past and future in Connie's present, are resistant to a singular, linear, or to borrow from Deleuze, molar time or *chronos*.²¹² These travels are in response to her physical and mental conditions. On arriving at the psychiatric hospital there are numerous references to time that reveal her suffering and disconnect with temporality. On her initial admission, drugged bound, beaten and ignored, her torment is palpable in the eternity of time: 'Moments were forever'. (p.20). Indeed as her torment continues, she feels she loses a grasp on time all together: 'She was caught in a moment that had fallen out of time...' (p.20). Aware of her weakening grip on time, she concludes then that 'She was mad' (p.20). Once she has been admitted and accepts her potentially interminable incarceration, the pain of her future stretches ahead of her: 'the slow cold weight of time had begun to slide forward' (p.59). Time here is no longer a measured, abstract entity: it moves at varying speeds; it has different temperatures; differing weights; it moves in various ways and different directions. For Connie, time is not a dominant discourse on which she has a grasp; it is a palpable, painful and personal measure of life. Yet her fall 'out of time' hints both at her failing grasp on reality and also at a liberatory potential that exists beyond the rigidity of 'time'.

The relationship of time with the individual is fundamental. Connie's experience of multiple temporalities is intrinsically intimate to her, the past is accessed through her memories

²¹¹ Saint Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, St Augustine's Confessions, (London: Religion and Philosophy, 1739), p.319.

²¹² A Thousand Plateaus, p.289.

and the future through her imagination. Consequently, it is not only the suggestion of multiple futures which unravels the certainty of a singular, linear temporality, but Connie's movement between temporalities and the descriptions of them. Connie moves 'Forward, into the past?' (p.70) and as Luciente describes to her, technology and society have not developed 'in a straight line' (p.125) from her contemporary society. Both the structuring of the narrative and the descriptions within it play with the hierarchical formation of chronology; they resonate with Deleuze's description of *aion*, fragmented, cyclical, simultaneous, personal time.²¹³ The recurrent descriptive resistances to linearity and singularity gently tease out the knots of time binding Connie; by the end of the fiction she is occupying multiple temporalities simultaneously. Through her mental state, which is resistant to as well as free from the normative discourses of conforming society, she is able to access parts of her mind and imagination that provide her with privileged access to this intercepting, fragmenting, *aion* temporality.

Singular, linear temporality is further problematised by our limited access to it. The multiple temporalities portrayed are only accessible through Connie's experience of them. Placing her as the threshold, at the 'edge', for these differing temporalities brings their validity and indeed the validity of her perspective, directly into question. Not only is access to the future dependant on Connie's mental efforts but it is dependent on her mental health as well. She slips out of the future and returns to the present when she doesn't concentrate or becomes emotionally overwhelmed: 'She felt a slackening through her, that beginning to slip out of her connection with Luciente, back to the asylum.' (p.125). As Connie's mental state apparently deteriorates, the clarity of distinctions between temporalities, and with it the certainty of Connie's time travel, lessens. Connie's journeys to the future start to parallel the increasingly invasive and violent medical intervention in her present and so the journeys too become increasingly violent (p.330). When she is forced to undergo brain surgery, her future quite literally becomes a battlefield in which her present, past, and future collide (p.341 and 332, 336). Figures that are dead in her present emerge in her future, as her future simultaneously bashes up against her past. The earlier certainty with which we were told that Connie does not have a history of hallucination has dissipated (p.329) to be replaced with doubt, from both her and the reader. Although, she justifies it to herself by saying 'it felt so real' (p.367) this is precisely what we are left questioning, the verisimilitude of Connie and her reality.

²¹³ A Thousand Plateaus, p.289.

4. Thinking Through Imaginative Spaces

Whether the journeys across temporalities are fabrications of a mentally ill woman in a realist text, the speculative potential of a fantastical narrative, or a philosophical narrative expressing Deleuzian ‘timeless’ time is never confirmed. Much like my reading of Caliban and the potential of the verisimilitude in the multiple readings of him, it is this abandonment of a singular, certain narrative and the layering of multiple readings, multiple tenses, simultaneously that has potential to my critical feminist enquiry. It forces us to exist within multiple narratives, temporalities, possibilities; it forces us to think through multiplicities. When applying this to considerations of the feminist female subject and reproductive technologies, we have a lens for reading a complex context, implicated by advanced capitalist values, various positionalities, and embodied subjectivity. This lens demands a multi-layered mode of thinking that resists limiting subjects whilst remaining critical of the forms of biotechnologies they utilise. In this instance, creative critical thought, through its resistance to singular, certain narratives and accessed through my reading of the monstrous mother figure Connie, can liberate rather than limit subjects. Notably in Piercy’s fiction, Connie herself is not liberated, but rather through reading her as a figuration and the movements her cognitive wanderings catalyse, defining and divisive normative thinking is destabilised.

My reading of the liminal figure of Connie and her movements between temporalities and realities cultivates multiple spaces, between narrative possibilities, between temporalities, between subjectivities, and forces me to occupy and think through these spaces. The multiplicity of these spaces functions like the cyborg figure not one *or* the other, but *and* the other; reading through these possibilities the reader must resist the urge to simplify or fix meaning. It is precisely this mode of thinking, provoked by this reading, that is so vital and vitalistic to considering the potential of reproductive technologies for the feminist female subject; it is not one argument *or* another rather it is multiple, simultaneously. Through Connie’s exposure to multiple futures we are reminded that we must consider the multiplicity of potentialities so as not to limit them or indeed the feminist female subject. Mapping Connie as a figuration, literature instigates new flows of thought and multiple forms of ‘becoming’. These becomings, or rather the capacity for transformation, movement of thought and lines of flight, are both inside and outside of the literary text. They are evident within the text with Connie’s becoming minor, becoming war machine; they are evident outside the text through

the dynamic mode of thinking it provokes. This space outside the written text is encountered through reading. The experience and process of reading literature is complexly intertwined through both the reading and read subject with the experience and process of living. It is the space between these two subjects and the possibilities that this space allows which makes the reading of literature so vital to creative philosophical and critical thought.

III

The Fifth Child: The Monster Within.

“What really fascinates me,” she said, “is this need that is so strong now that if you read a work of the imagination you instantly have to say, 'Oh, what this really is is so-and-so,' reducing it to a simple formula... This story has disturbed them in some way, so they make it safe. ... You don't have to be affected by it. ... And there's no solution to the problem of this book; there's no right way to behave. ... We like to think we can solve everything, but we can't always.”²¹⁴

My reading of Doris Lessing's The Fifth Child follows the advice above; it resists solving, simplifying or making the text safe. This reading allows and maps the effect of reading the fiction; the primary effect is, as Ruth Robbins describes, to ‘unsettle the reader’.²¹⁵ Noting the significance of this effect, I map the non-static, multiple and complex ways of thinking catalysed by the liminal figures in Lessing's The Fifth Child. It is through in particular the relationship between the mother figure and her monstrous child that these modes of thinking and effect can be identified. Although ARTs are not explicitly present in this fiction, discourses of motherhood, pregnancy, difference and monstrosity very much are. The eponymous fifth child in the Lovatt family, Ben, is not an obvious monster. Nevertheless, my reading understands this ambiguity to be the very source of his monstrosity, or rather others' perceptions of it. Like Shakespeare's Caliban, Ben does not conform to either the Lovatt family into which he is born or the contextual society of the book. It is this very difference, and the

²¹⁴ Mervyn Rothstein quoting Doris Lessing, ‘The Painful Nurturing of Doris Lessing's The Fifth Child’, New York Times, (14th June 1988), <http://www.nytimes.com/books/99/01/10/specials/lessing-child.html> [accessed May 2017].

²¹⁵ Ruth Robbins, ‘(Not Such) Great Expectations: Unmaking Maternal Ideals in The Fifth Child and We Need to Talk about Kevin’, Doris Lessing: Border Crossings, eds. Alice Ridout and Susan Watkins, (London: Continuum, 2009), p.95.

uncertainty surrounding it, that places him as a figure of monstrosity in the contextual society, of oppression to the social systems, and of conflicted maternal love and repulsion to his mother.

Returning to Braidotti's understanding of monsters as an '*excess, lack or displacement*', my reading of Ben not only demonstrates how he fulfils these criteria, but also how reading him as a figuration of monstrosity reveals the artificiality of such definitions. This aspect of his 'monstrosity' is encountered through Ben's mother Harriet. Harriet and her husband are presented as anachronistic to their 1960s context. Watkins notes how their self-conscious positioning as 'old-fashioned',²¹⁶ traditional, suburban is a 'defensive' positioning.²¹⁷ She describes how this defensiveness was towards the shifting sexual, gender and social terrains of 1960s London in which the novel opens. Read through this lens, Harriet and her husband's decision then to move out of London and have a large family serves as an initial resistance to the breaking down of barriers present in their contextual society. This reading is poignant in relation to the effect of their fifth child, Ben, whose very existence challenges boundaries and categories. My reading of Harriet and Ben through a lens of monstrosity explores in particular Harriet's ambivalent relationship with the 'modern' society around her, her experience of and relationship with Ben, and the blurring of boundaries between the two figures. I discover how a discussion of monstrosity within the figures of both Harriet and Ben can map further aspects regarding changing experiences of motherhood and difference.

1. Conceiving Monsters

Ben is different. The source of his difference is unknown, but it is repeatedly described through his physicality and unusual behaviour. Even as a new-born this difference is apparent and rejected: 'He did not look like a baby at all.' (p.60). His features, heavy and unattractive, cause his mother to consider him a 'creature' and 'beast' within moments of his arrival (p.60). Interestingly, the monstrosity of his difference is presented predominantly through others' reactions to him. Kristeva's presentation of the responses to an abject figure aptly describes the characters' responses to the presence of Ben: 'Apprehension, desire turns aside; sickened, it rejects.'²¹⁸ These are responses which only intensify as he grows older. Ben's presence not

²¹⁶ Doris Lessing, *The Fifth Child*, (London: Flamingo, 2001 (1988)), p.7. All further references to this text are from this edition and given parenthetically.

²¹⁷ Watkins, *Doris Lessing*, p.126.

²¹⁸ Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, p.1.

only causes people to ‘turn aside’ desire or affection for him, but their repulsion is so strong that the once busy house of the Lovatt’s becomes deserted: ‘his presence affected people, and they tended to go away’ (p.69). Ben need only to sit in a room for the atmosphere to change and for people to leave, and this was the case even before his birth.

Since conception, Harriet’s response to Ben is visceral and overwhelming. While pregnant with Ben, Harriet has an increasing desire to keep moving and walking. Her fantasies about escaping the life growing within are manifested in her constant movement and fidgeting. They are, however, futile attempts to escape her unborn child:

...she walked, strode, ran along country lanes, she fantasized that she took the big kitchen knife, cut open her own stomach, lifted out the child. (p.59)

Her desire to take ‘a big kitchen knife cut open her own stomach’ (p.59) to free herself from the enemy inside violently suggests the restrictive and persistent trauma of her pregnancy. Even before his birth, it is clear that Harriet is already repulsed by and fearful of her fifth child. It is this reaction which can be read in multiple ways: as the catalyst for the family’s response to her pregnancy and eventually Ben; the cause of Ben’s ‘difference’ through Harriet’s excessive use of medication during pregnancy; or a symptom of her isolation, exhaustion, and suggested ante- and post-natal depression.

Once born, Ben is not only ignored but actively excluded and rejected. He is locked away in his room, or as it is repeatedly and significantly called ‘his little prison’ (p.75), and eventually sent to an institution. He is rejected by the family. Luke’s explanation of the family’s decision to send his brother Ben away to an ‘institution’ is particularly revealing: ‘Luke explained, “They are sending Ben away because he isn’t really one of us.”’ (p.93). It proposes that it is in fact Ben’s difference from the family norm which determines his monstrosity; Ben’s difference is the primary motivator for his abjection. Braidotti’s observation that ‘the monster is the bodily incarnation of difference’²¹⁹ is a painfully apt description of Ben. This difference is manifested in descriptions of his appearance and behaviour; with his ‘heavy-shouldered hunched look’, his ‘forehead sloped from his eyes to his crown’, and his ‘greeny-yellow eyes’ (p.60), Ben is described as not only different from his family, but different from human norms, indeed different from any recognisable animal. It is this undefinable, unrelatable difference that drives others’ reactions to him.

²¹⁹ Nomadic Subjects (2011), p. 216.

Harriet is implicated in Ben's monstrosity through this experience of difference. When pregnant with Ben, Harriet becomes a subjugated figure through her difference to those around her. This is not only through her anachronistic resistance to social change and decision to stay at home and mother. Rather, Harriet doesn't experience the pregnancy in the way expected of her both by her and by those around her; her newly experienced exhaustion, discomfort and unhappiness cause her too to become a 'bodily incarnation of difference'. This is particularly apparent through the repeated references to experiencing 'pregnant woman's time' (p.52); these descriptions serve to demonstrate how pregnant women's experience of temporality is different from those around them, measured by 'the growth of the hidden being.' (p.52). Yet, Harriet is even disconnected and isolated from this differentiation; for her 'time was endurance, containing pain.' (p.52). Temporality for Harriet is not calendar or measured, but rather, as with the description of Connie, an extended series of tortuous moments desperate for liberation from the 'creature' within. Emily Clark is not interrogating the text far enough when she states that 'Maternity is not rejected in this story.'²²⁰ She identifies that it is only with Ben 'the fifth child that Harriet's pregnant body seems to violently turn against her and indeed, it is not her body which imprisons her so much as the body within, and a very specific body at that.'²²¹ Revelling in the apparent liberatory potential of providing a story to the mother figure, Clark fails to recognise Harriet's own abjection and also her involvement in the abjection of Ben which complicates the presentation of the mother figure in this fiction.

This implication in Ben's abjection can be read through the imagination hypothesis I explored in Braidotti's discussion of monstrosity. Struggling to deal with and understand her fifth pregnancy, Harriet starts to imagine: 'Phantoms and chimeras inhabited her brain.' (p.52). Harriet's persistent imaginings and obsessing illustrate her desperate attempts to understand the painful battle her pregnancy seems to have thrust her into: 'Sometimes she believed hooves were cutting her tender inside flesh, sometimes claws' (p.52). Playing on the prejudice pervading the imagination hypothesis, Harriet's fantasies seem to be conjuring up the hybrid, 'botched creature' (p.52) she is gestating. Once born and Ben's physical difference, animalistic monstrosity, is evident, there is an implication of Harriet's guilt in creating such a beast.

²²⁰ Emily Clark, 'Re-Reading Horror Stories: Maternity, Disability and Narrative in Doris Lessing's *The Fifth Child*', *Feminist Review*, 98, (2011), pp. 173-189, (p.178).

²²¹ *Ibid.*

This reading alone is too neat and limited, however. Harriet's imagination here, as for Connie, can also be read as a source of comfort from her pregnancy of 'endurance' and 'pain' (p.52). Desperate to understand her challenging pregnancy, her imagination resorts to familiar fantastical figures from literary traditions hoping to help her 'endure' the slow passing of gestation of this unknown being. Through this imaginative, fantastical discourse, the text provocatively resists genre categorisation. Harriet and indeed Lessing, through her writing of Harriet, resort to familiar fictional figures of monstrosity to communicate the fear of the Other within. The 'hooves' and 'botched creature' she describes resonate with the horror or picaresque genre; intertwining these alternate genres into the otherwise realist narrative has a disruptive effect. Watkins reads this 'resistance of the territoriality of genre' in Lessing's writing through a Deleuzian 'minor' lens.²²² Considering the realist 'mode' as the dominant, Watkins describes how Lessing 'periodically and deliberately' utilises a variety of minor genres, picaresque, urban gothic, fantasy, to not only unsettle the categorisation of genres, but also expose our discomfort with the lack of definition and our consequent desire to define, races, sexes, and people.²²³ Serving a deconstructive function then, Lessing's use of multiple marginal genres has a deliberately destabilising and unsettling effect. The text of course offers no 'safe' resolution to these genre possibilities, instead occupies the possible and not definable. In so doing, the text forces the reader to observe without defining. Experience without limiting. Read through Harriet's experience of mothering Ben, this further serves to thrust the maternal and monstrous figures directly into a conversation regarding difference, subjectivity and thought.

2. Restricted Access

Narrated by an omniscient narrator aligned closely with Harriet, Ben is presented to the reader almost entirely through Harriet's experience of him; he is as Robbins describes him 'afforded no interiority'.²²⁴ Any words he does express are often about himself, but unsettlingly in the third person: 'Poor Ben' (p. 132). The avoidance of first-person speech for Ben only serves to further exclude him from his own agency and forces the reader to read Ben's presence in relation to Harriet's position as his mother and as our primary point of access to his story. Ben,

²²² Watkins, p.120.

²²³ Ibid., p.138.

²²⁴ Robbins, p.99.

as Kristeva's description of the abject describes, functions as 'neither subject nor object'²²⁵ within the text; he is presented as both a monster and/or a product of others', and in particular Harriet's, responses to him. Even though the work is titled after Ben, it is not his name that identifies him in the title, but rather his ordinal position 'fifth' as a 'child' of Harriet and David's. It is not until the sequel Ben in the World (2000) that the reader is allowed a glimpse of Ben's interiority. The title of The Fifth Child not only further objectifies and abjectifies Ben, identifying him solely through the ordinal logic of Harriet and David's progeny, but it directly and provocatively implicates Harriet and David in his abjection. The title locates them as complicit in his creation, both the creation of his life and monstrosity.

I am not here endorsing a patriarchal history of blaming 'the mother' for the wrongs of her child. Rather, I am recognising the complicated relationship Harriet in particular has with her own reproductive function in this text, the guilt, responsibility and love she struggles to deal with when negotiating the conflicting expectations of mothering in contemporary society. This complexity and the persecution she feels are acutely apparent in the moment of meeting Ben, shortly after giving birth to him. Desperate to disguise her initial disgust towards him, Harriet, with the nurses, the doctor, her mother and David looking on, tries to breastfeed Ben for the first time: 'there was a strain in everyone, apprehension.' (p.61). When Ben bites her and fails to latch, the 'disapproval' is directed directly at Harriet (p.61). Through her creation of the monster and subsequent rejection, Harriet is complexly implicated in his monstrosity. David also feels conflicted for creating Ben, but not to the same extent that Harriet does; he is more easily able to protect himself and his family from Ben. Consequently, Harriet feels alone and judged by David: 'Even David, she believed, condemned her.' (p.74). Once again drawing a comparison between past habits and contemporary society, Harriet complains that she is blamed, that it is her 'fault' as the mother for Ben's creation (p.74). Throughout the text, Harriet feels wounded by people's implication of guilt towards her.

The reader is persistently invited to join in this condemnation of Harriet and cast doubt on her ambivalent relationship with her fifth child Ben. Focussing primarily on her perspective of events, the text initially seems to be providing a necessary and liberating voice to Harriet, the mother's story. It quickly becomes apparent, however, that the integrity of this narration is repeatedly being brought into question. Throughout, Harriet is told that the 'creature' or

²²⁵ Ibid., p.1.

‘monster’ she thinks she has created is in fact ‘normal’. Representatives from multiple institutions, doctors, teachers, neighbours and even members of her own family, attempt and yet ultimately fail to label Ben’s difference; in doing so, Harriet in her desperate attempt to identify not who but ‘*what*’ (p.66) he is becomes further implicated in his monstrosity. This was evident from the moment of conception, when, desperate for help with her challenging pregnancy, the doctor ‘just looked dubiously at her stomach, sighed, and wrote her a prescription for more sedatives’ (p. 59). Clark describes how Harriet’s ‘narrative of his [Ben’s] difference, which is essential to her narrative of her own motherhood, is understood by other characters to be indicative of Harriet’s difference rather than his.’²²⁶ Repeatedly throughout the work Harriet bemoans and questions why she ‘was always treated like a criminal’ (p.94). It is the frequency of these doubts and our limitation to Harriet’s perspective which has the potential to unsettle the reliability of her view of events. Like the people surrounding Harriet, the reader is invited to join in ‘exchanging condemnations’ (p. 46) regarding the validity of her reaction to Ben and her responsibility in creating him. The fact that the reader never receives validation of firstly *what* Ben really is and secondly *why* he is as he is - was he a product of his mother’s excessive maternal desire, rejection, exhaustion or tranquilizer abuse, or was he perhaps suffering some disorder or disability as Clark suggests, or was he really as the descriptions of him suggest a creature from another time - reveals that these are the wrong questions to be asking. And yet, as Braidotti points out in regard to teratology, they are precisely the questions ‘monstrous’ difference has historically compelled people to ask. What is important then is rather why we as readers are so compelled to ask such questions and how the reading effect of the text so deliberately forces us to do so.

3. Abject Bodies: Repulsion and Desire

Why is it that we as readers are so compelled to assign blame for the creation of the ‘monstrous’ Ben, and why is Harriet the one who is made to feel like a ‘criminal’ for having and loving him? Kristeva explains this form of abjection by turning her gaze to the mother’s body. Like the scene of Harriet struggling to breast feed Ben, whose ‘fierce sucking’ literally ‘drained every drop’ (p.64) Harriet had, her body and actions differ from the ‘norm’; in this case this is the ‘norm’ of the happy mother she was before and is expected to be now. It is precisely this difference which provokes both ‘fascination and horror’.²²⁷ It is a compelling mixture which

²²⁶ Clark, p.182.

²²⁷ Kristeva, Powers of Horror, p.1.

according to psychoanalytic theory through the ‘attraction and repulsion’ logic forms the basis of the mechanism of desire. This aspect of ‘fascination and horror’, ‘attraction and repulsion’ is experienced directly as a result of people seeing Ben: ‘Harriet knew that sometimes people went up to look at Ben, out of the fearful, uneasy curiosity he evoked...She knew when they had seen him, because of the way they looked at her afterwards’ (pp.73-74). This description depicts both repulsion towards the baby itself, and repulsion at the mother’s creation of and conflicted desire for the baby. Evocative of the ‘freak shows’ Braidotti mapped, we see here the ‘simultaneity of opposite effects’ provoked through encountering ‘monsters’. Extending this reading, Harriet, the mother figure, through the gazes directed at her is thrust into a position of intersecting social norms, personal judgement and challenging maternal and social relationships. It is not the difference alone which causes her to be conceived as an abject figure to those around her within the text, but her failure to conform to the dominant discourses surrounding her responses to this difference, whether medical, temporal, or social.

This is particularly evident when the family has resigned itself to send Ben away. While they are rejecting his difference, Harriet is still struggling to love Ben, save him, and reconcile this with her desire to save herself and the family from him. Harriet’s relationship to Ben is epitomised by Kristeva’s statement that the abject ‘is something rejected from which one does not part, from which one does not protect oneself as from an object.’²²⁸ On receiving an ultimatum from her husband that ‘It’s either him or us’ (p.90) Harriet feels she has no choice other than to protect her child and goes to retrieve Ben from the institution to which they have banished him. This scene is not only placed central to the text, literally and narratively, but with 11 pages has the most pages dedicated to it (pp.92 - 104). The significance attributed to this event in the book serves to reinforce the significance of the relationship between mother and child, and with it the abjection of the mother, whose maternal desire is deemed by the family and those around her as something monstrous. Reading Ben, the fifth child, as potentially the result of Harriet’s maternal desire, the fact that her ‘eyes have always been bigger than her stomach’ (p.34), positions his figure as the product of her ‘*excess*’, and furthermore a characterisation of the abject. Through her repulsion and yet desire to protect him, Harriet is herself forced into the position of the abject; she is both literally and figuratively sitting at the family table, which plays so central a role in the family interactions, and yet

²²⁸ Kristeva, Powers of Horror, p.4.

gradually she is rejected from the family unit. It is her conflicted maternal desire that causes her, not David, Ben's father, to be rejected by the familial and social groups surrounding them.

Driven by this maternal love to protect, Harriet travels to the institution to rescue Ben; on arriving she is confronted by the embodiment of liminality through the figure of Ben. Drugged and bound, his passive body is further objectified as a personification of the abject. From each orifice his internal fluids seep and flow into exterior space; the vivid description of him reinforces the repulsion of this physical transgression of borders. His orifices mark the border between interior and exterior space; the fluid transgressing these borders serves to remind us of our animalistic origins:

His pale yellow tongue protruded from his mouth. [...]. Everything – wall, the floor and Ben – was smeared with excrement. A pool of dark yellow urine oozed from the pallet which was soaked. (p.99)

Ben's body characterizes Kristeva's description of abject bodies. Ben becomes a borderland figure; indeed, following his time in the institution, Ben's body occupies the ultimate borderland, that of life and death. The descriptions of Ben as 'a dead weight' (p.102) who 'lay like a drowned fish on the slab' (p.100) as Harriet rescues him from the institution locate him specifically on the border between the two. Sullivan identifies the disruptive potential of this liminality; he considers how both Ben's appearance and behaviour 'make it difficult for his parents to deny their animality and therefore their mortality'²²⁹ and so they reject him. Also reading the fiction through an abject lens, Robbins draws on her reading of Kristeva to explore the 'generic instability' derived from the abject and found in Lessing's work. I continue her thinking and propose that this particularly abject moment, through the bodily descriptions, the reader's repulsion, propels the reader to the 'limits of meaning' that Robbins describes.²³⁰ It is in these limits when the stability of genre categories disintegrate, bodies leak, and the artificiality of organising logic is exposed, that we can untangle the categories defining us, mother, woman, human. As a liminal figure, Ben defies and unsettles the categories by which the other characters define themselves and so becomes a figure of repulsion and is rejected. Notably his difference is not so unsettling because it reminds us of what we are not, but of what we are, were, and could be.

²²⁹ Sullivan and Greenberg, p.115.

²³⁰ Robbins, p.94.

Observations of bodies remain a constant throughout the text, particularly that of Ben. The physicality of the descriptions of Ben's body disturbs our differentiation between our anthropological origins and our culturally constructed identities. His 'heavy-shouldered hunched look' and 'sloped' forehead (p.60) I described earlier are acutely reminiscent of our Neanderthal ancestry.²³¹ Ben's anachronistic, animalistic appearance unsettles literary, societal, and biological norms. His 'grunts and snuffles and roars' (p.68) are so removed from the other playful, articulate children in the Lovatt family that it is easier for the protagonists to attribute his features to another species, to 'his kind' (p.85). The language used to describe him, such as 'troll' (p.69), 'creature' (p.66), 'goblin' (p.61), explicitly references fantastical genres within, as I have discussed, a realist narrative. The uncertainty surrounding Ben's difference, his resistance to literary and biological categorisation, and indeed his constant provocation to categorisation, contain a layering of discourse I described in Braidotti's work on the monster. This layering provokes a movement of thought both within the fiction and within the experience of reading it. Attempts to define and understand Ben oscillate, and never remain, between the real and fantastical, between the human and monstrous, between the Neanderthal and present; it is this uncertain liminality that makes Ben an instructive figure for considering modes of thought also.

4. The Potential of the Liminal Space

The family home which Harriet and David set up together is similarly such a 'borderland'. It is privy to a constant stream of people passing through; the house is a liminal space and a location for crossing thresholds, both literally and figuratively. This reading is hinted at in the text with repeated references to it as a 'hotel' (p.18); their regular guests initially establish the home as a space of temporary residence and of permanent transience. Interestingly, like the pregnant body of Harriet, the disruption to the family unit comes not from the turmoil of the outside world, from which they have fortified themselves in the house, in their 'kingdom' (p.30), but rather from the inside space with the presence of Ben. Margaret Moan Rowe describes this invasion from within as a form of 'domestic terrorism'.²³² The term 'terrorism' seems particularly apt since it draws on ideas of a subjugated force, working insidiously to

²³¹ This is an argument considered in further depth by Clare Hanson in 'Reproduction, Genetics, and Eugenics in the Fiction of Doris Lessing', *Contemporary Women's Writing* 1:1/2 (December 2007).

²³² Christine De Vinne, 'The Uncanny Unnameable in Doris Lessing's *The Fifth Child* and *Ben in the World*', *Names*, Vol. 60 No. 1, (March 2012), pp. 15–25, (p. 17).

disrupt the dominant powers. The terrorism is not only from Ben's presence, but also Harriet's conflicted relationship with him, more acutely her struggle to love him.

Read as such, this form of terrorism suggests the destabilising utility of mapping maternal desire; it, like Connie's 'becoming minor', must work within a dominant structure, in this case the family, societal, medical expectations which seem to critique and condemn it, and indeed Harriet for following her desire. Interestingly these critiques take on different forms; the family rejects Harriet for her maternal desire for her son, the social and medical figures for her lack of desire. Nevertheless, the critical potential of this desire arises through the literary depictions of its collisions with contemporary and patriarchal powers. David's ultimatum and the doctor's disapproval are both encountered through the implicated mother's perspective and serve to cause the reader's doubt: doubt about the legitimacy of Harriet's perspective; doubt about the origins of Ben's monstrosity; doubt about the family's response to Ben. It is in this perpetual doubt, from which the reader is provided no concluding certainty, that acts of terrorism arise. These literary acts of terrorism are evident in the deconstruction of and resistance to categories, biological, social, literary; in the critique of characters' treatment of the monstrous mother; and in a destabilising of rational, singular mode of thinking.

Because of the deliberate, deconstructive ambiguity mapped here, and that Lessing in the epigraph admits to, the text occupies a similarly liminal space and consequently provokes discomfort and repulsion from the readers. Her declaration '...We like to think we can solve everything, but we can't always'²³³ serves as a provocation to read it through this ambiguous lens and resist the urge to solve it. This reaction to ambiguity of discomfort and repulsion can primarily be read through the character of Ben. I have read him as a monstrous figuration; I have also resisted the urge to 'solve' him. In doing so, I have mapped but not simplified the various aspects and possibilities of both his monstrosity and his relationship with his mother. This mapping has located him in the 'figurative borderlands' that Roberta Rubenstein describes through her reading of him. This is not only between 'the real and the fantastic'²³⁴ as Rubenstein suggests, but also between both his and Harriet's interior and exterior spaces, between animal and human, between life and death, and between the human and inhuman.

²³³ Rothstein, 'The Painful Nurturing of Doris Lessing's *The Fifth Child*'.

²³⁴ Roberta Rubenstein, 'Review: *Enfant Terrible*', *The Women's Review of Books*, Vol. 5, No. 10/11 (July 1988), p.62.

Nestled in this resolute ambiguity, the reader is unable to make the text ‘safe’, neat or simple; the reader must then think through the multiple even when uncomfortable.

By forcing the reader into the ‘unsafe’, the ‘disturbed’, this text directly implicates the reader in the potential of the abject figure. We are not simply invited to reject the monstrous Ben, and with him his mother, the narrator and creator of his monstrosity. It is rather the deliberate ambiguity surrounding these figures which invites us to question the rejection of them both within and outside the text. The text exposes how monstrosity derives from a negative treatment of difference and how within this marginalised difference is the potential to think through difference, and so challenge its hegemonic ability to define and confine. This ‘thinking through’ is not reinforcing a structured discourse of binary difference; instead it is facilitating an unstable, flexible mode of thought that does not rest on definitions but exposes them as social constructs and embraces the ambiguity between them. Just as Caliban’s constant movement in The Tempest catalyses the action in the play, and Connie’s imaginative time travels propel her to act and resist, so the constant movement of thought in The Fifth Child catalyses thought beyond the dominant, normative structures that create monsters.

IV

My mapping of mothers, monsters and machines in this chapter has identified various aspects of the feminist female subject, reproductive technologies, and the critical potential of creative thought. In particular, this chapter has engaged in a consideration of difference and subjectivity, identifying them to be central to the subordination of mothers, monsters and machines and those considered Other. Without wanting to limit the complexity of the rhizome I am cultivating, I will in this section of the chapter briefly outline some of the main arguments I have made here. Without wanting to impose a false segregation on these arguments, I am going to organise them into two sections: the feminist female subject and the critical potential of reading. I am making this momentary, and somewhat strategic, distinction to make clearer two of the plateaus of my thesis; I want to note, however, that these plateaus remain very much interrelated.

1. The Feminist Female Subject

This chapter began by mapping critical theory to establish how difference is a fundamental aspect of subjectivity, how we discuss it and experience it. Drawing primarily on the work of Braidotti, I opened by arguing that what we understand as negative difference, a factor that has changed over time, shapes how and who is perceived as Other and consequently subjugated within society. Through my reading of both Haraway's cyborg manifesto and Braidotti's reading of teratology, I noted various examples of how reproductive technologies complicate our treatment of difference, at times reinforcing it and at times allowing a certain liminality that has the potential to unravel it. I discussed the example of visual technologies used during pregnancy and noted how their utilisation has altered how we conceive and experience the maternal and foetal subjectivities during gestation. I mapped how Haraway's cyborg is a deliberately liminal figuration that allows us to think through the complexities of subjectivity and technology without reinforcing the negative differences these biotechnologies can enforce. I explored how by further challenging and shaping what we understand as mother, monster and machine, reproductive technologies have the potential to reinforce norms as well as affirmatively complicate them. Through my reading of Haraway's cyborg manifesto, I argued, however, the need to think beyond binaries when considering varying utilisations of reproductive technologies. Through her manifesto's pleas, I established my own position declaring the need to think creatively and critically when considering these technologies because they are complexly implicated in an advanced capitalist matrix. Following Braidotti's work on teratology, I considered the historical roots of this treatment of difference and creation of Otherness. My reading of her work enabled me to establish how the inherent and embodied liminality of pregnancy is a source of Otherness, but also potentially a source of liberation. Uncovering a tradition and multiplicity of discourses on monstrosity and motherhood, I mapped a landscape of negative difference. I read the monstrous maternal figure through the lens of abject theory to discuss how such liminal figures can provide direction for thinking differently about and through difference.

Both Lessing and Piercy's texts presented the feminist female subject's relation to motherhood as complex and conflicting. Within Lessing's literature, maternal love, that doesn't meet societal norms, is monstrous, repellent to those around her and indeed herself. Interestingly much like in Piercy's text, the mother figure is both pained but ultimately mobilised to act by her love for her absent child. And yet, both mothers are vilified because their relationship with their child does not conform to normative expectations, locating the female subject, the mother, directly in a discourse of confining negative difference. Read

through my lens of abjection, I mapped the reader discomfort produced within Lessing's narrative, not only through abjection, but also uncertainty.

I identified this reader discomfort and uncertainty as a deliberate tool to counter the dangerous certainty demonstrated in the application of ARTs in Piercy's work. The protagonist Connie's pain at losing her daughter frames the way she experiences the varying modes of reproduction in the futures she visits, namely with awe, nostalgia and most often disgust. In the main future in *Mattapoissett*, she encounters a utilisation of ARTs that liberates the sexes from reproduction, creating a utopian and egalitarian society. In another future, she encounters contractual application of ARTs for reproduction; women's bodies are commodified for sex or reproduction, never both. Within the text, the varying forms of reproduction depicted present the significance of political, social, medical and juridical intrusion in the application of ARTs. Piercy's work utilises the varying utopic and dystopic presentations of these biomedical intrusions to demonstrate their potential to isolate, liberate, commodify and humiliate women.

In Lessing's work, I explored how the fiction limited to the mother's perspective catapults the reader into a narrative of doubt. The supposed monstrosity of the child and, because of him, the mother invites a consideration of how we construct subjectivities through difference and how motherhood and gender are entrenched in these discourses. My reading examined how thinking through the figures of the monster and the mother, who function like 'domestic terrorists' to destabilise from within discourses of negative difference, inserts a mobilising form of doubt and allows for multiplicities, of narrative, of subjectivity, of readings (numerical and interpretive). My reading of the in-between modes of thinking catalysed by both texts, particularly I noted by Lessing's, demanded a mode of thinking which had the potential to challenge and think beyond divisive differences and confining norms.

My mapping of these critical liminal figurations in Haraway and Braidotti's works presented our relation with technology to be ever more intrinsic and invisible. It also, significantly, argued that this relation is far too important to be left to the heuristic, defining discourses of science or capitalism. I noted how this position informs and directs my mapping in this chapter as well as the rest of the thesis. I concluded from my critical reading, that we need creativity and imagination to mobilise thought in order to think through the complexities of our times to avoid falling into binary logic or reinforcing advanced capitalist and medical hermeneutic thinking.

2. The Critical Potential of Reading

My reading of critical and literary terrains demonstrated that from Caliban, to Connie, to Ben, liminal figurations have a destabilising, mobilising and so vitalistic effect when considering difference and subjectivity. This vitalism, returning to the thinking explored in my introductory chapter, is precisely this mobilising effect to activate thinking beyond static norms. I explored the theory and literature to map in greater detail how and why this is the case. Through my mapping of literary figurations, I established certain similar aspects between how the differing figurations function, whether mothers, monster, machines or all three. By resisting a singular reading and so destabilising certainty, these figurations catalysed a mode of thinking that can be potentially liberating when applied to the complicated terrain of reproductive technologies.

My mapping of the literature demonstrated how thinking through figurations can create a multiplicity of meanings; by occupying liminal borderland subjectivities, temporalities, and genres to list a few, the reader has to think through these multiplicities also. My reading of Piercy and Lessing's texts considered how figurations function by catalysing thought in flux; this flux, or movement in thought, is the affecting function of reading and thinking through literary figurations. As well as functioning through their liminality, they also function through their relationality. The figures of mothers, monsters and machines within both Piercy's and Lessing's works enabled access to considering various aspects and moments of relationality, whether between humans and technology, human and animal, mother and child, life and death. My reading of figurations demanded we understand these creative tools as dynamic, multiple, functioning figures that create and demand a similar mode of thought in the reader. I examined how reader response to these figures is a vital aspect of their critical potential. It is precisely this critical potential that I map further through chapters three and four.

3. What next

In the next chapter I extend my engagement with the feminist female subject by examining in greater detail an embodied understanding of subjectivity. I map how the gestation of pregnancy complicates this embodiment. Notably, I map how literary landscapes presenting this gestational embodiment, in particular ones complicated by the use of reproductive technologies, can inform my critical discussion and literary explorations. I stated at the outset

of this chapter that by investigating the significance of difference on our understanding and experience of subjectivity, I would be considering the ‘O’, the exclamation at encountering difference from *The Tempest* and *Brave New World*. My work in this chapter has demonstrated the significance and subject defining and confining power of this ‘O’. Similarly, it has argued the need to think through this ‘O’, how we respond to and treat difference, within the realms of reproductive technologies and women. I have demonstrated how literary figurations provide access to thinking through this ‘O’ and mapped the dynamic thinking such liminal figurations can provoke. The next chapter complicates further how we understand subjectivity by developing our understanding of its embodiment; through these complexities, I examine methodologies of creative critical thought which allow thinking through difference and embodiment without defining or confining our experiences of them.

Chapter Three: The Becomings of Pregnancy: Mapping Transforming and Transformative Gestational Spaces.

The King is pregnant.

(Ursula Le Guin, The Left Hand of Darkness, 1969)²³⁵

Although both sexes clearly do have material bodies, only women, because of their more intimate association with reproduction, were seen as intrinsically unable to transcend them.

(Margrit Shildrick, Leaky Bodies and Boundaries: Feminism, Postmodernism, and (Bio) Ethics, 1997)²³⁶

Pregnancy is an embodied experience. Furthermore, it is an exclusively female embodied experience. There are significant social, political, and personal implications of this fact that have been considered repeatedly within the programme of feminism.²³⁷ Whether it is liberating or limiting for the female sex, pregnancy remains both a significant embodied potential experience for women and a factor that reinforces gender difference. It is also a factor that is changing. Thanks to developing IVF and early life support technologies, the gestation period within the female body need no longer be limited to 40 weeks, need no longer be limited to the genetic mother, and need no longer be the consequence of sexual intercourse. Consequently, the relationship between the female body and the gestational process is changing. The speculated societal impact of these medical possibilities is explored and complicated in the context of the epigraph taken from Ursula Le Guin's seminal and fantastical text The Left Hand of Darkness (1969). The above quoted exclamation presents the significance of this experience to both the subject embodying the pregnancy and the society built around it. The pivotal declaration 'The King is pregnant' is succinct in its composition but powerful; the head of the country, of patriarchy has become pregnant. This declaration is remarkable not only because the text, and this scene, depicts the social, political and personal significance of whose body becomes the gestational space in reproduction, but because it taps into the fear and hope at the centre of reproductive technologies that I have been examining in this thesis and will be

²³⁵ Ursula Le Guin, The Left Hand of Darkness, (London: Orbit, 2012 (1969)).

²³⁶ Margrit Shildrick, Leaky Bodies and Boundaries: Feminism, Postmodernism, and (Bio) Ethics, (London: Routledge, 1997), p.26.

²³⁷ Sarah LaChance Adams and Caroline R. Lundquist. (eds.), Coming to Life: Philosophies of Pregnancy, Childbirth, and Mothering, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013).

examining further in this chapter: what is the impact of woman's changing reproductive capacity on gender difference and how is this impact affected when we remove this capacity from her body?

In this chapter, I am extending my critical engagement into considerations of embodied subjectivity. The figures of the cyborg and the monster that I discussed in the previous chapter aided my mapping of the borderlands. These figures provided creative and critical access to the liminal subjectivities embodied and experienced by those considered Other, among whom are women, mothers and alternate mothers. As the epigraph from Shildrick suggests, material embodiment is a significant aspect of subjectivity, but for the female subject, because of her reproductive capacity, it has persistently been a defining, and limiting, aspect of her sex. Consequently, it remains relevant to considerations of the feminist female subject, whether pregnant or not, fertile or not, or a mother or not. Although the figures of the monster and cyborg enabled me to consider critically certain forms of embodied subjectivity located in the borderlands of what is considered 'human', they do not provide access to considering the matter of these bodies and, to quote Butler's leading publication in this field and the Aristotelian pun she notes, why considerations of these bodies matter.²³⁸

I will be delving beneath the surface of the embodied subject woman to the reproductive space within. I will map further how thinking through figurations can engage creatively with the real and why this thinking is particularly necessary for the feminist female subject. This necessity, I will demonstrate, is because woman's ability to provide the gestational space in reproduction remains the delimiting factor of embodied gender difference. My reading of Lessing's literature in this chapter maps how pregnancy catalyses becomings for women; the gestating of life in woman's reproductive space is a dynamic aspect of woman's embodied subjectivity. My reading of Piercy's literature maps how biotechnologies are altering, however, both how we view and understand this space and how it can potentially be used. Firstly, however, in section I of this chapter I develop my questions regarding embodiment. In doing so, I demonstrate why I deem it so necessary at this point in this thesis to interrogate more intimately questions of female embodiment and subjectivity, and why the gestational process of pregnancy is so fruitful in this endeavour.

I

²³⁸ Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, *ibid.*

Bodies: The Female Embodied Subject

My discussion in this thesis thus far has addressed various considerations of bodies. I have mapped literal, figurational, and philosophical discussions of bodies. Before I focus in this chapter on intimate embodied aspects of the gestational process of reproduction, I will outline here what I now understand by this complex and loaded term: body. This outline forms the two parts of the theoretical section of this chapter: within the first part, I review my consideration of ‘bodies’ thus far, and reveal why it is necessary now for me to use a pluralised form of the noun; in the second section, I locate these bodies in discursive and cultural practices to consider how Butler’s influential work provides both methodological tools and a departure point in my exploration of physical embodiment and reproductive practices.

1. The Bodies in This Thesis

I opened this thesis with an empirical observation of the media’s response to a body, a frequently viewed, publicly scrutinized and commodified celebrity’s body. This discussion was used not only to highlight the overwhelming impact advanced capitalist values can have on how we view bodies, but on how we practice embodied aspects of our subjectivity such as our sexuality and reproduction. In the case of Beyoncé, who I discussed in the opening, I considered how her physical body has become the object of advanced capitalist values and public fetishization. Consequently, the popular media, which although not representative of majority opinion necessarily is indicative of populist and commercially viable thought, struggled to reconcile this function with the reproductive function which they claimed she had outsourced. I presented a pregnant, female body problematized by public expectations and advanced capitalist values; I also presented the biotechnologies available which further complicate the blurred distinction between body, technology, and social capital.

To consider the significance of this blurring distinction for woman, I then moved my focus on to the feminist female subject’s body at the centre of feminist discussions. This body is still a physical entity rather than a figurational tool, but as I discussed in Chapter One it is a highly contested discursive site of political ideals and arguments. I examined the split in feminist thought towards the growing use of reproductive biotechnologies. Within this discussion, there was relative consensus that woman’s physical body remains, as I stated in my opening chapter, the initial marker of gender difference and, drawing on the work of Butler,

the location for its practicing and enforcement of not only gender difference, but with it, compulsory heterosexuality.²³⁹ Yet there was division on the potential of the changes women's bodies were undergoing. Catalysed by the developing and widening availability of reproductive and contraceptive technologies, the volume and number of feminist voices discussing the embodied female subject grew vastly during the second wave of feminism from the 1970s.²⁴⁰ Some considered the growing control women could have over their own contraception and reproduction liberating, while others feared the potential medicalization of woman's domain of pregnancy was eroding the very gender difference that was so specific for the oppressed female sex. Most significantly, as I noted in the previous chapter, this discussion still centred on a real woman's body, on a material subject.

It is within this feminist context that my reading of the body moved beyond the physical. To examine the social subjugation imposed through bodily, sexual difference, I examined more closely, among other thinkers, the work of Julia Kristeva. In her essay 'Stabat Mater' (1977), Kristeva's exploration of discourse and writing pushes the physical embodied experience of pregnancy and mothering quite literally to the margins. Simultaneous, and in the margins, to Kristeva's critique of the mothering 'myth' perpetuated by Christian discourse is an intimate account of her own, personal, embodied experience of mothering. In her essay the body is both a marginalised and personal site of experience as well as a socially and discursively constructed figure of normativity and oppression. I developed my understanding of marginalised figures in Chapter Two by exploring Kristeva's further work on the abject body, which although deeply rooted in embodiment also reads the body within a wider context of cultural criticism, philosophy and psychoanalysis.²⁴¹ The further my work occupies critical theory, however, the further the physical body is located figuratively, critically and culturally in the margins, a place from which the French feminists in particular struggle to take it out.

I considered further the French feminists' work on this marginalised female feminist subject in Chapter One. Using the work of Irigaray, I tracked her discussion of Lacan and phallogocentrism to reveal that following this thinking not only is woman not the Other of man, but she is not represented within language at all. For Irigaray, the female body and

²³⁹ Butler, *Bodies That Matter*.

²⁴⁰ Judith Evans, *Feminist Theory Today: An Introduction to Second-Wave Feminism*, (London: Sage Publications, 1995).

²⁴¹ Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*.

linguistic distinctions of its fluidity and femininity become a resource for mimicking and destabilising the hegemony of the phallus. Irigaray's prolifically discussed essay 'When our lips speak together' (1977) demonstrates the figurational and discursive resource that the body can provide to feminist thinking. The body in the French feminists' thinking is both an unrepresentable phenomenon and a figurational and critical tool. This reading of bodies although drawing from physical matter is often criticised for being too speculative, too utopian and too esoteric.²⁴²

Whilst both levelling and to a certain extent responding to this criticism, post-structuralist thinker Braidotti works to reconcile the critical, psychoanalytical and philosophical thinking on the body with the material through her nomadic project. Braidotti develops her thinking from the physical body and traverses philosophical and figurational thinking on it to establish her own conceptualisation of it: the embodied nomadic subject. She is keen to note that within this project, the body she is considering is to be understood as neither an exclusively biological nor an exclusively sociological entity. Rather, as I discussed in Chapter One, it is the location, material, spatial, and temporal, for the multiple, complex and evolving differences that intersect and constitute the subject. Drawing on embodied experiences and realities, Braidotti constructs a figurational subject to aid understanding the embodied subject 'woman' as 'a site of multiple, complex, and potentially contradictory set of experiences, defined by overlapping variables.'²⁴³ Braidotti reveals the necessity of reading embodiment through such a lens; she notes that in this, as she describes it, post-human, post-anthropocentric era we can no longer be certain of what the 'body' actually is.²⁴⁴ More recently, Braidotti has contributed to this consideration of embodied subjects in our contemporary age with The Posthuman (2013). Braidotti here presents a reading of the embodied subject at a time in which the concepts of embodiment and subjectivity are far from stable, self-contained or singular. Her publication proposes a complex consideration of bodies that informs both which bodies I consider in this thesis and how. In it Braidotti deconstructs the certainty of a self-contained, physical body and compels considerations of embodiment into the critical sphere, whilst endeavouring to remain rooted in the physical, material reality of embodiment.

²⁴² Whitford.

²⁴³ Nomadic Subjects, (2011), p. 128.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., p.192.

I use the plural form ‘bodies’ because the bodies in this thesis are not singular; they are not self-contained; they are not solely a biological entity and they are not solely discursive or figurational. The bodies I am discussing in this chapter are physical locations; they are the locations for culturally constructed, discursively maintained and physically practised subjectivities; they are varied, intimately experienced, becoming entities; they are the locations of personal and of social practices and values. Consequently, to consider an embodied subject and more specifically what this embodied subject is experiencing and practicing, I must then consider further what this ‘body’ is in terms of the culture and society that surrounds and affects it. As I have established in the previous chapters, utilising the distinction of what a body ‘is’, however, is flawed in two ways: firstly, because static ideas of what certain bodies ‘are’ or ‘should be’ have historically been the grounds for negatively perceived difference and discrimination; secondly, because an embodied subject, both its matter and subjectivity, not that these are two distinct aspects, are in states of transformation and multiplicity. It is limiting then to consider what a body ‘is’, so rather following Braidotti’s example I will through my reading of the literature map instead what it ‘becomes’.

When talking about bodies, I again remain conscious not to fall into old traps of Cartesian dualism, disconnecting the matter of bodies from the consciousness of the subject. Both Braidotti’s and Butler’s works respectively go a long way in rejecting this dualism and considering the body and mind as related aspects of a complex, historically and discursively located, becoming subject. I turn now to Butler’s work to map her complex and extensive efforts to demonstrate the significance of locating the embodied subject, temporally, historically and discursively when addressing issues regarding discourse, embodiment, and gestational spaces.

I want to note here that in this thesis I describe the embodied location of reproduction as a ‘gestational space’. The term ‘space’ is loaded with meaning and full of critical potential. I am not only using the term literally, to consider wombs, surrogates, artificial wombs, petri dishes and various locations now capable of being utilised in the reproductive process, I am also using the term figurationally, utilising its potential as a figure for thought following on from my discussion in the previous chapter. Drawing from my understanding of Deleuze’s *Bodies Without Organs*, the ‘space’ that I am referring to is, as he states, ‘not space, nor is it in space’ rather, like Deleuze states, this space ‘produces and distributes [intensities] in a *spatium*

that is itself intensive.’²⁴⁵ I develop this thinking further in this chapter through Plato’s conception of a ‘receptacle’, the space used in reproduction, to demonstrate how this figure has been and can be used to explore discursively constructed aspects of female embodied subjectivity. My use of the term ‘space’ then suggests not a lacuna, but rather a dynamic dimension in which transformations, whether biological, personal, social or critical, take place and which itself is being transformed. The location for human reproduction is a space which can change shape, change people and change societies. The ‘gestational space’ is a materially bordered space, as I discuss later, which can and is repeatedly crossed, both physically and critically. This embodied, gestational space can also function as a figuration for thought; I demonstrate how reading through this figuration can deconstruct certainties, dissolve borders, and demand dynamic modes of thinking.

2. Butler and Bodies

If the body is not a ‘being’, but a variable boundary, a surface whose permeability is politically regulated, signifying practice within a cultural field of gender hierarchy and compulsory heterosexuality, then what language is left for understanding this corporeal enactment, gender, that constitutes its ‘interior’ signification on its surface?²⁴⁶

Butler’s Bodies that Matter (1993) is instrumental in my consideration of embodiment. Her efforts to both, as she notes, ‘retrieve the body from what is often characterized as the linguistic idealism of poststructuralism’ and consider ‘scenography and topography of construction’ provide my project with compelling ideas as well as an enriching methodology.²⁴⁷ When I discuss ‘matter’ in this section, I am referring to the physical matter from which the subject is constructed, the actual cells that constitute the embodied subject. The body I am talking about is very much ‘real’, a material biological entity; because my reading of it here is in relation to discourse, I understand this material entity as both a critical terrain and a creative resource. When I discuss ‘discourse’, I am referring to the culturally constructed matrix in which this embodied subject is located. Butler’s eminent work in the poststructuralist field of bodies and discourse provides an informative terrain in which to examine the borders between the two. I am identifying this relation between body and discourse as a border because this term

²⁴⁵ A Thousand Plateaus, p.169.

²⁴⁶ Gender Trouble, p.177.

²⁴⁷ Bodies That Matter, p.27, p.28.

constructively allows me to pinpoint both the assumed separation of these two entities, body and discourse, and the possibility, through creative critical thinking, to cross this border, deconstructing it, and blurring the boundary between the two. My reading of Butler here identifies the (de)constructive tools she provides in this endeavour and the points of departure I can find within her work.

The epigraph to this section from Butler's earlier work Gender Trouble (1990) pinpoints precisely the shift in my focus from my previous chapters to this chapter. I established in the first chapter that embodied subjects are dynamic, complex, and constituted of multiple, constantly changing layers of difference; in the second chapter I argued that normative discourse functions through these differences to shape our understanding and experience of embodied subjectivity; now I address the issue of reconciling these normative discourses, whilst working within them, to the bodies they define. Butler actively works in Bodies that Matter to unpick the 'antagonistic' positions of body/matter and power/discourse that have repeatedly arisen within feminist and critical thinking.²⁴⁸ She rejects the notion that the body is some form of passive matter awaiting inscription through dominant patriarchal discourses. Instead, she builds a complex consideration of the matrix which active embodied subjects both occupy and sustain. I examine this further in this section, but through this examination I note the significance of the very language and figures used in Butler's discussion of bodies and matter. An example of the potency of this language is in the epigraph to this section; its narrative of 'boundaries' and 'surfaces' hints at a space in embodied subjectivity which extends behind the permeable surface of embodied matter. Butler hints here at a multidimensional understanding of subjectivity that cannot be read on the material surface of the body, the visible exterior through which the performance of gender is initially communicated.²⁴⁹ This multidimensionality suggests an understanding of embodied subjectivity that includes aspects of subjectivity that are not only not visible, but perhaps also not always discursively representable. By taking place internally, impacted by hormonal- and biotechnologies that are not always visible, and by being monitored through visual technologies that impact our discursive and juridical understanding of the external and internal embodied spaces, I propose that maternity both requires and facilitates such a consideration of subjectivity. Butler suggests a space beneath the 'permeable' and 'politically regulated' surface which demands consideration. My reading of Butler considers both why and how she steps away from viewing

²⁴⁸ Bodies that Matter, p.28.

²⁴⁹ Gender Trouble.

the embodied subject as a ‘blank surface’ awaiting inscription and instead delves under the surface to the complexities and productive, both physically and figuratively, space within.

My move in this chapter from cyborgs to embodiment is not away from the borderlands; the borders I am mapping here, however, are primarily embodied. Kaye Mitchell’s reading of Bodies That Matter in her essay ‘Bodies That Matter: Science Fiction, Techno culture and Gendered Bodies’ (2006) is highly informative in reading these embodied borders in our contemporary era. She takes a constructive departure from the utopian cyborg in Donna Haraway’s work. She draws on Arthur and Mari Louise Krokers’ theory of data bodies to establish that not only is modern, technologized subjectivity located in the borders, but that the very borders of this subject are and have always been, both literally and discursively, transgressable:

In Kroker’s idea of the data body and in the discourse surrounding cyborgs, the boundaries of the body itself and, relatedly, the boundaries of the “human” are at stake. The suggestion of much technocultural theory is that contemporary technology has rendered these boundaries unstable, permeable, and negotiable; the theorists differ in their apprehension of how positive or negative a development this is, whether it amounts to freedom or a threat. But Judith Butler recognizes that bodies are – and have always been – impossible to fix and delineate clearly...²⁵⁰

Mitchell’s reading of these contemporary conceptions of embodiment identifies that it is not solely through our interaction with technologies that the borders of our bodies, what is both physically and discursively understood as ‘human’, are transgressed. She turns to Butler to reveal that these borders have always been transgressable. In this regard, she is noting that these borders of ‘human’ subjectivity, the categories by which we define and understand ourselves, are not fixed certainties. Rather her reading of Butler, which mine supports, confirms that they are culturally (self)constructed subjectivities, in that our language and behavior perpetuates and consolidates the categories which define us. Mitchell also determines that science fiction is vital in considering the implications of this within a critical feminist context. Before demonstrating how literature provides access to considering the permeability of embodied borders, I will discuss further what I mean by borders, and in particular embodied borders. With this aim, I am going to address the following questions in turn: To what extent are the borders of the embodied subject culturally constructed and discursive or material and physical?

²⁵⁰ Kaye Mitchell, ‘Bodies That Matter: Science Fiction, Technoculture, and the Gendered Body’, Science Fictions Studies, Vol. 33, No. 1, Technoculture and Science Fiction (March 2006), pp. 109 – 128, (p. 116).

How are these borders constructed and deconstructed through feminist theory and literature? And what is their significance when considering the feminist female subject and her reproductive capacity?

2.1.To what extent are the borders of the embodied subject culturally constructed and discursive or material and physical?

I will not consider this question through a binary lens. Indeed, it is evident from the start of Butler's work that she similarly rejects a dichotomous view of this question. Butler states clearly that her work is in part born of an effort to step beyond the dichotomous discussions surrounding discourse and matter.²⁵¹ Furthermore, she is responding to common criticisms made of poststructuralist thinking which she identifies as the concern that if everything is culturally constructed then, as she states, does 'matter' matter at all.²⁵²

In the opening of Bodies that Matter in response to these concerns, Butler locates her subject in a matrix; it is a matrix which confines the subject, but which through the subject's repeated actions and discourse, the subject simultaneously maintains. Her description of this matrix allows access to re-understanding the discursive and material aspects of an embodied subject. This extract from her work depicts the matrix as historically originated and discursively maintained:

Indeed, if it can be shown that in its constitutive history this "irreducible" materiality is constructed through a problematic gendered matrix, then the discursive practice by which matter is rendered irreducible simultaneously ontologizes and fixes that gendered matrix in its place.²⁵³

Butler here is identifying the multi-dimensional, gendered matrix which constructs the subject within it, and in this case 'fixes' its gender. This is not a passive subject somehow blank prior to signification. This is a subject functioning within the matrix, whose discursive and social practices are normalized by the matrix; this matrix, however, is co-constructed by the self through the very discursive and social practices utilized by the subject. The language Butler uses adds to this reading. The fact that the discursive practices 'render' the matter 'irreducible'

²⁵¹ Bodies that Matter, p.28.

²⁵² 'One hears warning like...If everything is a text, what about violence and bodily injury? Does anything *matter* in or for poststructuralism?', *ibid.*

²⁵³ *Ibid.*

is significant on two counts: firstly, the verb ‘to render’ identifies the somewhat sculpting impact of discursive practices on embodied subjects, causing them to change their behaviour, their bodies; secondly, the contradictory adjective ‘irreducible’ suggests that this matter cannot be reduced or altered. Notably it is this contrasting verb choice ‘render’ which reveals the contradictory fixity and dynamism of this discursively maintained matrix; it is a matrix that has the potential to both statically trap the subject in confined categories and to catalyse dynamic modes of thinking which alter both the subject and matrix itself.

According to Butler’s work then, the subject is both constructed by this matrix and constructs it. She goes on to explain:

If the body signified as prior to signification is an effect of signification, then the mimetic or representational status of language, which claims that signs follow bodies as their necessary mirrors, is not mimetic at all. On the contrary, it is productive, constitutive, one might even argue performative, inasmuch as this signifying act delimits and contours the body that it then claims to find prior to any and all signification.²⁵⁴

In this instance, Butler is confounding the notion that language and discourse somehow ‘represent’ or ‘mirror’ the body, rejecting the idea of a body prior to and awaiting signification. Rather Butler suggests that language has the productive ability, to ‘contour’ or rather establish the borders of what is understood as a body. Butler’s own use of language in this description of the matter, discourse and subject formulation is noteworthy since it replicates the concepts of surface and interior she hints at in her earlier publication Gender Trouble. The suggestion of ‘contours’ of the body simultaneously marks the borders of this body, while admitting that these borders are both material and discursive as well as both constructed and constructing.

Discourse, within both Butler’s and my own work, however, is not definitive. In their revealingly conflicting readings and discussion of Butler’s work, Griselda Pollock, Adrian Rifkin, Richard Easton, Herta Gabriel, and Toni Suriano agree and are careful to note that Butler at no point collapses the material body into discourse. When making this distinction, Suriano significantly identifies the reciprocity and mutability of this relation between discourse and matter:

²⁵⁴ Bodies that Matter, p.29.

TS: And for me, what I came to consider from Butler is that the matter, that's the materiality of the body, is effected and affected by discursive formations which then constitute sex of the materiality of sex.

TS: It is always becoming. It's never a being

AR: And that becoming is always in discourse²⁵⁵

Rifkin's use of the term 'becoming' is significant. Through it, we can see the potential of Butler's position on matter and discourse. Neither are static independent structures, both have the potential to change, to 'become'. Discourse does not define what a subject 'is', rather through the subject's use of discourse it does 'effect' and 'affect' what the subject 'becomes'. This extract perhaps hints at a dominance of discourse over matter, but I argue that since discourse is produced by and through matter, this dominance is simultaneously interchangeable. Examining Suriano's use of the terms 'effect' and 'affect' here provides a concise answer to the question I posed at the beginning of this section: to what extent are the borders of the embodied subject culturally constructed and discursive or material and physical? 'Effect' is identifying that a change is produced and 'affect' is identifying the ability to produce change. Consequently, I understand from Butler's work that the subject is not embodied matter beyond discourse or awaiting inscription through discourse. This previously supposed division or as I state 'border' between matter and discourse then is reciprocally permeable. This poses compelling ideas regarding further tools in the matrix in which we exist, such as biotechnologies. Since, although discourse appears to be a tool apparently external to the embodied subject, because the subject uses this tool, the subject becomes figuratively shaped by discourse and simultaneously shape it. This is true of any tool, whether discourse or reproductive biomedical technologies. It is this fact which highlights why firstly such tools must be read critically, and secondly why embodied subjects must be read in the context of the tools that affect them and that they effect. The supposed borders then between the embodied subject and discourse, or indeed any tools we use, have the potential to be both definingly fixed and progressively dynamic. The task of feminist critics, as I pose it, is to deconstruct the hegemony of the fixities in discourse and to encourage a constructive dynamism within that takes into consideration the embodied subject 'contoured' within this matrix.

2.2. How are these borders between matter and discourse constructed and deconstructed through feminist theory?

²⁵⁵ Griselda Pollock, Adrian Rifkin, Richard Easton, Herta Gabriel & Toni Suriano, 'A conversation on Judith Butler's bodies that matter: On the discursive limits of "Sex"', *Parallax*, 1:1, (1995), pp.143-164 (pp. 144 – 145).

Butler's brief but considered essay 'Response: Performative Reflections on Love and Commitment'²⁵⁶ provides insight to this question and useful tools for my own endeavour. This is particularly regarding how discourse is constructed and could be deconstructed through her work. In this article, she presents a deconstructive reading of love, language and the embodied subject. When exploring the very notion of love and the act of professing the ubiquitous quote 'I love you', Butler firstly locates the material subject. She both describes their desires, feelings, and the physical production of the words, at the centre of this idea of 'love'. She then locates the quoted expression historically and discursively. In doing so Butler establishes that we should not understand this material body as merely a 'substance' producing this feeling, expressing these words, rather we should understand it as a 'modality', a momentary act of relating and responding to those around you. As Butler states:

"The body" is not a substance, but a modality that registers the full expanse of our relations. As such, it is there in the words, spoken or written, even as it is not there, but here. In other words, the body is given and withdrawn at the moment in which we rely on language to convey our love to someone else.²⁵⁷

This description epitomizes the bind of materiality and language as well as providing an enriching lens for viewing it. In this instance of expressing 'I love you', the body, a cellular and physical matter, is driven by chemical responses, emotions and relationality with another body, and the muscles, breath and vocal chords of this body are required to produce the words, 'I love you'. In that moment, the body submits to the contract of language on which it relies to communicate its meaning, but from which it is excluded, absent. This description of the body informs my consideration of the female feminist embodied subject. It is a description which allows for and indeed requires relationality and material responsiveness with the Other; both aspects are crucial when including reproduction and motherhood in the discussion. It also locates this body temporally, in its moment of action as well as in the historicity of this action and discourse. To demonstrate this, Butler provides us with the reading of the body as a 'modality'. Thinking of the body as a 'modality' forces us to understand the multiple dimensions, social, temporal, historical, of an embodied subject whilst taking into consideration the materiality of its embodiment.

²⁵⁶ Judith Butler, 'Response: Performative Reflections on Love and Commitment', *Women's Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 39, No. 1/2, Safe (Spring/Summer 2011), pp. 236-239.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p.237.

Reading Butler's article in the context of her more substantial work regarding modes of conceptualising and considering the embodied subject is illuminating, particularly because as Braidotti notes, not all bodies are created equal.²⁵⁸ Indeed, depending on gender, race, class among other things, bodies can have very differing positions in relation to discourse. Much of Butler's work in Gender Trouble, and to a lesser extent Bodies that Matter, focuses on the question of how sex and gender difference are both branded, discursively, onto a body and reinforced through bodily acts or performativity. Through her work, she provides a productive bridge between philosophical thinking and feminist critical theory. Her engagement with other feminist and critical thinkers confirms that she is certainly not the only feminist thinker to consider questions regarding female subjectivity, embodiment and discourse and she is by no means the first. Indeed, her work demonstrates how feminist theory has been significant in unpacking this relationship between discourse and the female feminist subject. This can be found in Butler's extensive utilisation of the work of Irigaray in the first chapter of Bodies that Matter. In this chapter, Butler examines, amongst other things, Irigaray's significant work in response to both Lacan and the phallogocentric contract of language to consider the absence of the feminine in discourse and the consequent feminist challenge.

Butler repeatedly identifies the challenges Irigaray, writing the feminine, contends with. In her interview with Vasu Reddy, Butler describes the bind of both feminism and subjectivity, in that we are limited to the discourse which perpetuates the subordination of minorities. She describes how in the moment we attempt to express our position, whether as women or any subject deviating from the dominant norm, we must utilize a language that perpetuates our minority position:

This means that in the most intimate encounters with ourselves, the most intimate moments of disclosure, we call upon a language that we never made in order to say who we are.²⁵⁹

She is clear to confirm again that this is not a language that exists without us; there is no signifier without a signified, just as there can be no love without a lover or indeed loved. As her article about love suggests, to identify a signified, we create and require signifiers. Butler references Derrida and Irigaray's work on phallogocentrism to reveal, however, that woman, as the minor, the subordinate, is excluded from this discourse, which is constructed through the

²⁵⁸ Metamorphoses, pp. 15-20.

²⁵⁹ Vasu Reddy & Judith Butler, 'Troubling Genders, Subverting Identities: Interview with Judith Butler', Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equality, 18:62, (2004), pp.115 – 123, (pp.116-7).

major, the phallus. In Bodies that Matter, she admires the mimicry used by Irigaray to challenge the hegemony of the discourse that both excludes woman from representation and makes her implicit in it. Butler remains skeptical, however, of Irigaray's efforts:

Does the voice of the philosophical father echo in her, or has she occupied that voice, insinuated herself into the voice of the father? If she is "in" that voice for either reason, is she also at the same time "outside" it?²⁶⁰

What is particularly interesting about these questions is the language Butler herself utilises to pose them. In asking whether Irigaray, when writing the feminine, can occupy both inside and outside of patriarchal discourse, she is establishing a permeable border between the two. She is also admitting that it is not the locating of oneself on one side *or* the other of this border which can be so disruptive, but rather locating oneself across the border, in and between the differing sides, a 'disruptive *movement*' as Butler describes it.²⁶¹ Such a statement, although suggesting doubt, also reveals a deconstructive potential of occupying a borderland. As I mapped through figurations within Lessing's literature in the previous chapter, this potential lies in the ability to critically deconstruct borders by occupying multiple spaces simultaneously.

Butler reminds us of the necessity of this endeavor by turning to Foucault and arguing that discourse is a weapon for power as well as a powerful weapon. She makes this clear by discussing how the body and discourse can both be understood as tools and locations for the perpetuation of power and political force. To this aim, Butler draws some persuasive ideas from Foucault's Discipline and Punish (1975) and the 'materialization' of the prisoner's body.²⁶² As she describes:

The "soul brings [the prisoner] to existence"; and not fully unlike Aristotle, the soul described by Foucault as an instrument of power, forms and frames the body, stamps it, and in stamping it, brings it into being. Here "being" is in quotation marks, for ontological weight is not presumed, but always conferred.²⁶³

She determines that the soul he is describing is a normative and normalising power, perpetuated through power structures such as discourse. And yet this discursive instrument has the potential to not only shape a subject but 'bring them into being'. Again, Butler's use of language when discussing Foucault is informative. She describes how power, in this instance manifested in the

²⁶⁰ Bodies that Matter, p.36.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² Ibid., p.33.

²⁶³ Ibid., p.34.

idea of the soul, has the ability to ‘form’, ‘frame’ and ‘stamp’ the body. She describes this impact of power on matter herself: “‘Materiality’” designates a certain effect of power or, rather, *is* power in its formative or constituting effects.²⁶⁴ Once again, Butler’s reading deconstructs the border between discourse and matter, not only revealing the reciprocal effect between the two, but in this case admitting that at times there is no distinction between the two, a dangerous fact for bodies considered subordinate in discourse.

To respond to the question then at the beginning of this subsection: How are these borders between matter and discourse constructed and deconstructed through feminist theory? I argue that Butler’s consideration of Irigaray’s work provides a case study in both how and why it is necessary to dissect the constructedness and consequently deconstruct the distinction between discourse and matter. She states repeatedly that discourse can be used to perpetuate power dissymmetry and control subjects. Butler recognizes and even at times emulates Irigaray’s attempts to mimic the dominant voices in discourse,²⁶⁵ and yet she admits that reconstructing it risks repeating it. Although Butler goes on to reveal why Irigaray’s mimicry is questionable, I would argue that Butler’s reading of her does reveal a ‘disruptive movement’ of thought catalyzed by recognizing and occupying, through mimicry, both major and minor positions in discourse. There is a potential here in the subject occupying multiple states which I investigate further in the literature. The risk in this context is that the deconstruction remains on the page. Butler’s reading of Irigaray posits both her battleground and her weapon to be in discursive practices and language. Although matter is considered, this deconstructive method risks locating the body as a solely discursive tool and leaving the matter in the margins. To draw from Butler for this thesis, whether understood as a modality or a nomad, we must understand the embodied subject as a functioning, complex, multiple, and becoming entity. It is only when seen through this lens that we can begin to permeate the power structures affecting and effecting both the matter and the discourse from which subjectivity is formed.

2.3. What is their significance when considering the feminist female subject and her reproductive capacity?

The significance of re-conceptualizing these supposed borders between matter and discourse in regard to the female feminist subject is apparent in Butler’s discussion of Plato’s

²⁶⁴ *Bodies that Matter*, p.34.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.32-34.

‘receptacle’. The methodology she utilizes to develop her discussion from Irigaray’s reading of this figure is particularly informative to my project. Butler’s reading of Plato’s Timaeus presents a complex, interweaving, mimetic discussion of the ‘inchoate drama of sexual difference’ played out on and through matter.²⁶⁶ My reading of Plato’s Timaeus and Butler’s response to it examines three particular areas: how the feminine subject is subsumed into the maternal; how matter and discourse are both subject to phallogocentric power; and how the critical and creative acts of reading and writing can unravel this power.

The Timaeus is a dialogue by Plato that has catalyzed considerable feminist discussion. In it Timaeus expostulates on the formation of the universe. As he states, his talk is ‘beginning with the origin of the Cosmos and ending with the generation of mankind’.²⁶⁷ It is the latter part of his thinking regarding mankind and reproduction that is of interest here. Various discussions of the dialogue have dissected certain terms Plato, as a ‘father of philosophy’, used and the implications of these terms for discursive and philosophical traditions. One such term was the *chora* or receptacle; it has been associated repeatedly by critics and translators with the feminine subject and reproductive capacity.²⁶⁸ Butler compellingly describes this receptacle as not only a ‘figure *for* the excluded’ feminine, but by performing its representative function this figure serves to further exclude the feminine, both discursively and as she later states materially.²⁶⁹ She focuses deliberately on just one section of Plato’s Timaeus to locate the origins of the exclusion of women from discourse and ontology.²⁷⁰

The first site of this ‘exclusion’ within the Timaeus that I address is the discussion of the female and maternal subjectivities; within Plato’s works the two are flippantly and yet revealingly absorbed into one another. According to Plato all women contain ‘an indwelling creature desirous of child-bearing’.²⁷¹ This creature or ‘womb’ as he notes has both the active ability to ‘cast the body into the uttermost distress’ and, following the ‘uniting’ of the two sexes, become the ‘invisible’, ‘unshapen’, ‘soil’ waiting to be ‘moulded into shape’.²⁷² This description subsumes the female into the maternal, reducing her subjectivity to a desire to

²⁶⁶ Bodies that Matter, p.49.

²⁶⁷ Plato, Timaeus, ed. trans. R. G. Bury, Plato in Twelve Volumes, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1929), p.47.

²⁶⁸ Emanuela Bianchi, ‘Receptacle/*Chōra*: Figuring the Errant Feminine in Plato’s Timaeus’, Hypatia, Vol. 21, No. 4, (Fall 2006).

²⁶⁹ Bodies that Matter, p.42.

²⁷⁰ Bianchi, p.125.

²⁷¹ Plato, p.251.

²⁷² Ibid.

reproduce and removing agency from the female subject entirely. It uses the notion of an active womb to understand the subjectivity of the whole woman as passive, unshapen, waiting to be moulded. The 'invisible, unshaped, and all-receptive' seems to posit this ability for gestation as an absence of self, the potential of which I consider further through Lessing's literature later in this chapter. Butler notes the synecdoche in use here and argues that since the 'nurse, mother, womb, the feminine is synecdochally collapsed into a set of figural functions ... Plato's discourse on materiality ... is one which does not permit the notion of the female body as a human form.'²⁷³ So by figuring the maternal/feminine, by seeking and presuming to represent it, Plato's receptacle places it as a point of exclusion.²⁷⁴ Following a consideration of the male fantasy of autogenesis, Butler identifies how Plato's figure of the receptacle causes the material, maternal, feminine power of reproduction also to be taken over by phallogocentrism.²⁷⁵ Once again we find the female embodied subject in the margins of human subjectivity, in which not only she is defined by her womb, but both she and her womb have become agentless objects devoid of subjectivity.

It is not solely Plato's rhetoric, reducing a supposedly passive woman to a womb and rendering her abject and object to the active man in reproduction, that catalyzes the most interesting thinking from feminists, however; it is also the various critical readings his work has inspired. Demonstrating this, Butler follows Irigaray's work deeper into Plato's writing to consider further the consequences of his discourse. The paragraph which is of particular interest to them is one that hypothesizes on the idea of creation. Although we are relying on a translation here, the choice of feminine pronouns and traditionally female nouns reveals a discourse that thinks in terms of hierarchical sex dichotomies:

Wherefore, let us not speak of her that is the Mother and Receptacle of this generated world, which is perceptible by sight and all the senses, by the name of earth or air or fire or water, or any aggregate or constituents thereof: rather, if we describe her as a Kind invisible and unshaped, all-receptive, and in some most perplexing and most baffling way partaking of the intelligible, we shall describe her truly.²⁷⁶

The woman in this section is located as Other of the subject, and the description of her posits her as 'invisible' and 'unshaped'. She is excluded both in the rhetoric of the passage and as a

²⁷³ *Bodies that Matter*, p.53.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.42.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p.43.

²⁷⁶ Plato, p.119.

function of it. Since in her passive ‘all-receptive’ state, she must just be offering a reflection of the dominant, active, male. Butler notes this in her own reading of Plato: ‘in the place of a femininity that makes a contribution to reproduction, we have a phallic form that reproduces only and always further versions of itself, and does this through the feminine, but with no assistance from her.’²⁷⁷ So by representing through the male, phallic, dominant perspective, the consequent representation is not indicative of the real, the material, embodied feminine subject, far from it. It is in fact this description of receptivity applied to the female subject that is positing her as absent in this phallogocentric contract.

Within her introduction to Irigaray’s reading of *Timaeus*, Butler considers Irigaray’s claims regarding the exclusion of the feminine from discourse. Butler identifies Irigaray’s mimetic strategy to expose phallogocentric logic; from this, Butler determines that the feminine can only exist by becoming an ‘inscriptional space’:

...the specular surface which receives the marks of a masculine signifying act only to give back a (false [in the case of Irigaray’s project]) reflection...²⁷⁸

This description of Irigaray’s work notes its discursive resistance to embodied marginalization. Butler explores extensively Irigaray’s utilisation of a ‘rude and provocative’ mimicry in her reading of Plato to allow her own writing to function as a ‘specular surface’. The consequence is that Irigaray’s reading of Plato offers a deliberately false, warped reflection and in so doing reveals the absence of the female subject within his work. According to Butler’s reading of Irigaray, woman is both discursively and materially excluded through the phallogocentric contract. Butler congratulates Irigaray for her aim of revealing the contradictions at the heart of Plato’s founding, but contradictory, logic that posits the feminine as both formless and forming, passive and active, invisible and specular. Butler, however, again critiques Irigaray’s mimetic method which by repeatedly citing Plato and occupying his words in order to locate the excluded feminine within, risks locating the feminine further on the outside.²⁷⁹ I agree with Butler’s concerns that the feminine remains excluded through Irigaray’s writings and I would add that the body remains primarily discursive also. The mimicry she utilises is too subtle to displace or deconstruct the hegemony of the master. One example is her critique of the receptacle: ‘And the receptacle, the place of becoming, remembers nothing.’²⁸⁰ Her memetic

²⁷⁷ *Bodies that Matter*, p.42.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p.39

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 41 – 42, p.48.

²⁸⁰ Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, (New York: Cornell, 1985) p.310.

device here is arguably too ordered to incorporate the actual power and deconstructive potential of female embodiment. Her work does, however, hint at this dynamic potential contained within this 'place of becoming'. Nevertheless, Irigaray's description of the receptacle and embodiment remains on the page, focused on Plato's work; while the lived experiences of the embodied female subject, the pain, the challenges, the strength, the transformative potential, seem poignantly absent.

Despite questioning the efficacy of her method, Butler deliberately replicates Irigaray's 'rude and provocative' reading of Plato to unpick what she considers the 'hyperbolic' problematic and 'speculative excess' in his portrayal of the receptacle and exclusion of the feminine.²⁸¹ Through her own cyclical, mimetic and self-consciously hyperbolic reading of Plato, Butler teases out the primary problems with conceptualizing the receptacle and with it femininity through this lens. Like Irigaray, she plays with dichotomous thinking to push it to its limits and so unravel the hegemony of the phallus. There is, however, a potential in the figure of the receptacle that Butler maps deconstructively but fails to utilize affirmatively: namely, being transformative and formless, passive and active, invisible and specular, can in fact be as liberating for the embodied female subject as limiting.

Bianchi's tracing of the receptacle and these liminal aspects of it provide a concise understanding of why Plato's text and this figure have been so productive to feminist thinkers and how it can continue to be so. As she describes, the receptacle offers 'a fecund and generative philosophical terrain in which feminist rethinking of corporeality, spatiality, figurality, temporality, and life may take [its] place.'²⁸² Following Butler and Irigaray's deconstruction of Plato's writing, here we find the constructive aspect of this figure that excludes the feminine. In doing so, it has itself become a productive figure for considering this exclusion and potentially, as certain readings attempt, for becoming the site of its re-inclusion.

Bianchi constructs a convincing reading of this figure which determines both how and why it can be read as constructive for feminist thought. She likens the figure of the receptacle to the borderlands. This is a notable term that has also arisen in Butler's work on matter and discourse and that I consider further within Lessing's literature. Drawing on a reading of Gloria Anzaldúa's Borderlands/La Frontera (1987) and reaffirming the critical significance of

²⁸¹ Bodies that Matter, pp.36 – 37.

²⁸² Bianchi, p.126.

occupying liminal positionalities, Bianchi establishes how the discussions catalyzed by the receptacle figure are indicative of its positively generative potential:

Anzaldua's *Borderlands* may, by contrast, be seen as resonating with the indeterminacy and motile generativity of the receptacle/*chora*, as a zone of creativity where dwelling, living, being as *becoming*, is always already taking place.²⁸³

The language used here to describe the receptacle's potential reveals the key areas of interest for my explorations of embodied subjectivity and gestational spaces. In her writing, Bianchi identifies both the figure of the 'receptacle' and the embodied space as a 'zone of creativity'. This space is established through its resistance to singularity and immutability; Bianchi argues, and I will demonstrate through my reading of Lessing's literature that occupying such a dynamic space catalyzes becomings, critical, personal and social. Notably, she uses a comparison with Anzaldua's politically engaged publication to do this. The significance of this thinking when considering the feminist female subject, her reproductive capacity and biotechnologies through the figure of the 'receptacle' lies in both how we understand the embodied subject and the critical and actual impact of these modes of thought.

3. Thinking Through the Body

Drawing from my discussion in this section, I argue that the border between matter and discourse is permeable. Recognising this and working to demonstrate this is vital in the construction of the subject because discourse is a tool of power and matter is the site of the power imbalances and difference. As the readings of Plato maintained, there is a historic tradition of woman's bodies being both objectified by discourse and excluded from it. Butler and Irigaray's attempts to reclaim woman's body, through their discussion of the 'receptacle', reveal both the necessity of figurations in this discussion and the fecundity, in this case figuratively, of woman's wombs as a space in which matter and discourse collide. Returning to the opening epigraph of this section I, I want to consider further Butler's question about 'what language is left for understanding this corporeal enactment', and suggest that creative and imaginative language is left. By this I mean creative discourse used deliberately as a tool to destabilise the certainty of meaning and consequently to destabilise the certainty of thought as demonstrated through my reading of Butler and Bianchi. Through my reading of literature, I identify how when this is used for critical affect, by re-framing, re-figuring how we

²⁸³ Bianchi, p.142.

understand embodied aspects of female subjectivity, the potential is critically deconstructive and creatively productive.

This is where I depart from Butler's thinking. Her project is effective and the terrain of her discussion informative. She convincingly deconstructs the borders between matter and discourse; she demonstrates a method for conceptualizing this embodied subject within a matrix of discourse and power; she demonstrates a mode of reading the body that deconstructs this matrix of discourse and power. She does not, however, propose constructive methods for moving beyond this deconstruction. Through my reading of literature, I seek to do this. I seek to locate the embodied matter within a contemporary, advanced capitalist matrix in which the discourse of power is further perpetuated and complicated. It is precisely within these literary realms, Lessing's Marriages Between Zones Three, Four, and Five (1980) and Piercy's Body of Glass (1991), that I propose to explore further the implications for women of conceptualizing the transformative potential and transformations taking place in gestational spaces. I am reading the authors in a different order in this chapter, this time Lessing before Piercy, because I want to present a continuation of my discussion on embodiment and reproductive spaces thus far. With this aim, I map the transformative aspects of pregnancy in Lessing's work and then build on this understanding of shifting embodied subjectivity by mapping how pregnancy itself is transforming through the utilisation of ARTs in Piercy's.

II

The Becomings of Pregnancy in Lessing's The Marriages Between Zones Three, Four and Five

A great novelist is above all an artist who invents unknown or unrecognised affects and brings them to light as the becoming of his characters.²⁸⁴

Not all 'space-fiction' is confined to 'outer-space'; indeed, my reading of Lessing's work demonstrates this by mapping various considerations of female embodiment and maternal

²⁸⁴ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, What is Philosophy?, (London: Verso Books, 1994), p.174.

spaces. Although Lessing's The Marriages Between Zones Three, Four and Five (1980)²⁸⁵ is set in so-called 'outer-space' in an alternate universe, on the fictional planet of Shikasta, it is the protagonist Al·ith's becomings and goings across interior spaces, both geographical and embodied, that makes this work so fascinating. Al·ith's movements, and the chronicler's narration of them, reveal multiple aspects of the 'becomings' inherent in the experience of pregnancy. In this section, I focus on Al·ith's travels across geographical zones and maternal experiences to map the critical potential of these movements and identify what Deleuze describes as the 'unrecognised affects' in 'great' literature that are catalysed through the movement across borders, whether physical or literary. Following the methodology I discussed in the previous section concerning Butler's reading of Plato, I want to here consider in further detail the critical potential of literary explorations of female maternal embodiment. I map how the inherent instability in the process of gestating a pregnancy and giving birth can catalyse multiple becomings for women. I consider how reading these becomings on a literary terrain can contribute a vitalistic lens to discussions of woman's reproductive capacity.

The Marriages Between Zones Three, Four and Five is the second book from Lessing's science fiction Canopus in Argos series which comprises five books. Through its often liminal and provocative occupation of spaces, this series explores interesting ideas regarding both the spaces we occupy and how the spaces in us are occupied. Indeed, much of the series shares comparisons with some of Lessing's so-called 'inner-space'²⁸⁶ fiction. Roberta Rubenstein's consideration of Lessing's 'inner-space' literature identifies Lessing's recurrent interest in the exploration of imaginations and mental health. Through Al·ith's experience of pregnancy and mothering, there is, however, a deliberate blurring between these so-called outer and inner spaces; it presents an occupation of the 'creative zone' that I discussed through Bianchi's work, which reveals the separation of these two spaces to be artificial and the blurring of them to be highly productive. It is through the blurring and crossing of boundaries in this work, geographical, social and physical, that the female protagonist is challenged, changed, and so mobilised to think and live differently. Through my exploration of these aspects, I consider how the very experience of pregnancy, far from being solely a passive experience of a receptacle awaiting inscription, is actually a complex process. It propels the pregnant subject

²⁸⁵ Doris Lessing, The Marriages Between Zones Three, Four and Five, from the Canopus in Argos: Archives, (London: Flamingo, 1994 (1980)). All further references to this text are from this edition and given parenthetically in the text.

²⁸⁶ Roberta Rubenstein, 'Outer Space, Inner Space: Doris Lessing's Metaphor of Science Fiction', World Literature Written in English, Vol. 14, Iss. 1, (1975).

into passivity and activity, intimacy and alienation, internalised and externalised experiences, and through these aspects multiple forms of becoming, minor, woman, animal, imperceptible.

1. Al·ith Crossing Borders

Moving across borderlands can be a vitalistic act. My reading of Bianchi's work earlier in this chapter identified the critical and personal potential of occupying these liminal, dynamic spaces. I understand the vitalism of this movement through Braidotti's nomadic project. Most significantly to this chapter, I want to return to how Braidotti identifies that 'Nomadic Subjects are transformative tools that enact progressive metamorphoses of the subject away from the program set up in the phallogocentric format.'²⁸⁷ This description of the Nomad identifies the liberatory potential of conceiving subjectivity through this figure; subjects can engage in transformative processes that free themselves from the rigid structures set up through phallogocentrism, or as is the case for Al·ith the zones which divide the planet and the people occupying it. This process is evidently not always positive for Al·ith, and yet, as with Braidotti's nomadic project, we are repeatedly reminded of the necessity of it. According to Braidotti the positive and negative aspects of change and movement should not be understood as sentimental emotions, but as varying liberatory degrees of transformation and development.²⁸⁸ In her second edition of *Nomadic Subjects* (2011), Braidotti draws explicitly on psychoanalytical theory to determine both that 'the pain of loss' is inherent in any transformative process and that through nomadic politics this 'pain of loss' can be re-understood as a 'positive transformation'.²⁸⁹ This affirmative reading of becoming enriches my mapping of thought in movement within this chapter and thesis as a whole. My use of this affirmative nomadic lens to consider the physically nomadic and at times painful experiences in Al·ith's pregnancy in this section reveals both the physical act and cognitive practice of nomadism, the moving between various zones, to be an ultimately constructive process.

Al·ith's becomings and goings are initially catalysed by her obligatory marriage; this is apparent from the first page of the fiction in which the chronicler states that 'this famous marriage was being celebrated in the imaginations of both realms' (p.11). This observation reveals that despite their polemic differences, the people in the realms, or zones, relish the

²⁸⁷ *Nomadic Subjects*, (2011), p.12.

²⁸⁸ *Metamorphoses*, p.72.

²⁸⁹ *Nomadic Subjects*, (2011), p.80.

opportunity to cross their borders, if not personally then politically and culturally through their leaders. Yet, in stark contrast to the public anticipation and celebration, we are informed that ‘the two most concerned remained where they were’ (p.11). From the outset of the fiction there is a tension between the private and public experiences, between matter and discourse, between action and inaction, and between men and women.

Before considering this further through my exploration of Al·ith’s central becoming, her pregnancy, I will first establish her context and turn to her most explicit nomadism, her journeying between the eponymous ‘zones’. These zones divide the planet into five territories that are organised around geographical terrains and insular populations. The two zones presented to us in greatest detail are zones three and four. The differences between these two zones appear to be deliberately dichotomous: zone four is flat and under-developed agriculturally; zone three is up in the snow-capped mountains and agriculturally rich; zone four is led by a king and warlike; zone three is led by a council with Al·ith as the elected representative; it has an intuitive and peaceful society. The text, however, suggests much more than a simplistic critique of binary differences and gendered stereotypes.

The work opens with Al·ith being summoned by the omniscient ‘providers’, who are actually colonial figures we encounter in other parts of Lessing’s Canopus in Argus series, to cross the borders of her zone three and to travel to zone four. This is something she has not only never done, but never even conceived of doing. This becomes painfully apparent to Al·ith only on being confronted with the differences in the other zone. On witnessing the violent punishments devised and maintained by the citizens of zone four to prevent themselves from gazing up at the mountains of zone three, Al·ith realises that the citizens of both zones have suppressed the desire to look beyond their borders and expose themselves to difference. As she states: ‘Your people *won’t* look up there...but our people *never* look beyond our borders, and this is without any punishment or forbiddings’ (p.95). From early in the book, it is evident that the borders of these zones are more than geographical markers. The borders are internalised and an intrinsic dimension of the subjects they confine and evidently define; much like Butler’s explanation of subject formation, these are the very subjects whose practices and beliefs, not solely bricks or geographical terrain, maintain the borders’ presence. Phyllis Sternberg Perrakis notes the significance of these borders to the fictions’ populations; she states that ‘in both books [The Cleft and Marriages Between Zones...] the boundaries erected by human arrogance or fear

must be crossed if the human species is to survive.’²⁹⁰ Setting up a distinction between action and inaction here, she describes how a failure to move and to cross ‘borders’ and encounter the new causes cognitive, emotional and, for the communities in Marriages Between zones Three, Four, and Five, reproductive stagnation. Interestingly, although the ‘borders’ I discussed in regard to Butler’s work are ontological and here they are geographical, political, and as Sternberg Perrakis identifies emotional, the effect they have is the same. Whether constructed discursively or materially, whether functioning through fear or forgetfulness in the fiction, borders have the potential to be both defining and definitive.

2. Crossing Al·ith’s Borders

Al·ith reluctantly crosses the border and enters into zone four to follow instructions from the ‘providers’. She is instructed to marry King Ben Ata of zone four. Their marital bond is consecrated through a forced physical act and procreative union, but it appears to be the act of ‘fusing the imaginations of two realms’ (p.49) which is both the most challenging and most necessary part of their union. And yet, this text is far from being an allegorical or, as Martha Rowe in her chapter ‘If you mate a swan and a gander, who will ride?’ (1982) proposes, a mythological tale regarding binary, stereotypical gender differences.²⁹¹ Within the marriage, the differing perspectives and the processes the meeting of them catalyse reveal far more. As the term ‘fusing’ suggests, it is the meeting and intertwining of their differences that catalyses possibilities beyond, and productive change throughout their respective zones. Just as Deleuze states in A Thousand Plateaus, it is not the one difference or the other that catalyses becomings, it is precisely the intersecting and fusing of them in ‘the in-between’ space (p.293) in which productive becomings can be catalysed.²⁹²

The marriage establishes an ‘in-between’ space for multiple differences. There are numerous aspects that posit their union as an ‘in-between’: the deterritorialized space which functions as their marital home; the moments of physical contact between the two that catalyse conception, consideration, growing understanding, and eventually love; and the sharing of

²⁹⁰ Phyllis Sternberg Perrakis, ‘Chapter 9: The Porous Border Between Fact and Fiction, Empathy and Identification in Doris Lessing’s *The Cleft*’, Doris Lessing: Border Crossings, eds. Alice Ridout and Susan Watkins, (London: Continuum, 2009), (p.152).

²⁹¹ Marsha Rowe, ‘If you mate a swan and a gander, who will ride?’, Notebooks, Memoirs, Archives: Reading and Rereading Doris Lessing ed. Jenny Taylor (Routledge: London, 1982), (p.194).

²⁹² Phyllis Sternberg Perrakis, Doris Lessing: Border Crossings, eds. Alice Ridout and Susan Watkins, (p.152).

perspectives and experiences. This last 'in-between' space, sharing ideas and perspectives, seems particularly challenging for the two leaders. Ben Ata and Al·ith's initial encounter is filled with misunderstandings, unspoken emotions and desperate efforts to understand one another. It is within these conversations and the sharing of their thoughts that sparks of realisation, lines of flight from their entrenched modes of thinking, begin. This moment with Al·ith, however, reveals how ephemeral and tricky to grasp these 'in-between' moments are: 'Suddenly, and like light striking into her brain, she was dazzled. "Ben Ata, I've just had a ..." but it had gone.' (p.60). Aware of the significance of this 'in-between' state and its potential to facilitate thinking, they both turn to the Other to grasp this line of flight that seems to evade them. To seek further understanding of their situation and themselves they literally face the Other: 'They were looking at each other...both trying to enter in behind the sober, thoughtfulness of his grey eyes, the soft gleam of her black eyes, so that they could reach something deeper, and other.' (p.61). It is in the space between the two, and the efforts to understand the Other within this union, that their differences consequently collide and becomings are catalysed.

These becomings can most explicitly be read through Al·ith, who is frequently likened to a 'prisoner' in the marriage. It should be noted that despite never leaving his zone, Ben Ata is equally imprisoned in the marriage and his contact with people from other zones also catalyses considerable becomings for him; my focus here, however, is rather on the female and maternal figure of Al·ith.

Al·ith is changed by this union. At the outset, she is a strong, both physically and mentally, independent leader; she is then forcibly moved from her home, raped by her husband, impregnated, and then removed from her 'prison', which has now become her home. By the conclusion of the fiction, she is physically frail, cognitively questioning, and almost entirely nomadic. And yet despite these restrictions and her apparent discomfort she feels positively changed, freer and motivated to follow her dreams and curiosity further into zone two, an aspiration she hadn't even conceived of at the outset of the fiction. In Deleuzian terms it is only from this 'minor' position that Al·ith can become. It is only by abandoning the defining structures of power and self that Al·ith can mobilise change in herself and around her. As a consequence of the changes catalysed by her marriage and pregnancy, Al·ith is no longer the leader, the law-maker or the matriarch she was at the beginning of the text. She, like Deleuze's

own description of becoming, becomes a ‘deterritorialized variable’.²⁹³ She is uprooted and changed. We have an ontological process of becoming demonstrated within Lessing’s fiction here that I described in my previous chapter with Connie in Piercy’s work. As with my discussion of Connie in the previous chapter, it is only in her moments of reterritorialization when she returns to her home zone that she discovers how changed and changing she is.

3. Pregnant Becomings

Al·ith identifies her pregnancy, and in particular her pregnancy with a child from a different zone, as one of the primary causes of her deterritorialization. It is a process that demands a deconstruction of a singular understanding of ‘self’. This is evident from the moment she questions her pregnancy; in this scene, her sense of deterritorialization not only causes a disruption of certainty, but also a disruption of self: “I find there is a great deal I don’t know that I thought I did. For instance, can you tell when a woman is pregnant?” (p.83). We are repeatedly reminded that unlike her previous pregnancies, this pregnancy initially appears to be a destructive rather than constructive experience; through it she loses all sense of a unitary self as she gains new differences.

Turning to similarity to understand these differences, Al·ith discusses this uncertainty with Kunzor, a man from her home zone who is likened to a soul mate, a brother, and a lover. Kunzor identifies the differences she is encountering as the source of her transformation and uncertainty: ‘you are now host to a child from *there*’ (p.142). Repeating a term used in Lessing’s The Fifth Child, the description of pregnancy as playing ‘host’ sets up a supposed distance between maternal and foetal subjectivities only to dismantle these distinctions later. It appears that initially Al·ith’s encounters with difference have served to reinforce the polarities, but very quickly the borders between these differences start to become permeable. This is evident once Al·ith returns to her home country shortly after marrying Ben Ata and conceiving a child with him. It seems that not only does she feel lost to herself, but her land feels she is lost too: ‘Her land did not know her. She had become filled with a substance foreign to it’ (p.143). This quote resonates with Plato’s description of woman’s passive receptacle awaiting man’s active matter; Al·ith is described as being host to the differences, the ‘foreign’ from Kunzor. Furthermore, the discourse of foreign and native played out through the discussion of

²⁹³ A Thousand Plateaus, p.322.

the zones, and Al·ith's experience of them, serves to exacerbate her discomfort and alienation when encountering differences. Most significantly, because of her pregnancy these differences are played out on and through Al·ith. The reference to the 'foreign substance' filling her as she plays 'host' to her new child reinforces the idea that her pregnancy establishes a space within her, space which is being filled with difference.

This growing difference within her results in Al·ith feeling as if the baby was 'Not her son. She was seen as a channel or a vessel.' (p.193). As well as reminding us of Plato's rhetoric and the *chora*, the figure of 'vessel' resonates with the discourse utilised by surrogate mothers. In her detailed study of surrogacy, motherhood and technology in "'Native" Narratives of Connectedness', Elizabeth E. S. Roberts discusses how surrogates identify themselves as 'vessels', the very term many feminists critique for objectifying women's bodies for commercial practices.²⁹⁴ Roberts proposes that this term is used by these women as a form of protection; they use it to re-affirm the 'non-maternal connection' with the foetus they are carrying. Despite these women's attempts, Roberts observes that the experience of surrogacy is nevertheless a transformative, as she states 'hybrid', or as I argue Deleuzian 'in-between', one through this collision of differences.²⁹⁵ In Lessing's work, the discourse of vessel certainly serves a protective function for Al·ith, not necessarily to protect herself, however, from the difference within, but from the difference with herself, her changing and becoming. These terms then of 'hybrid' and 'in-between' used within surrogacy discourse are similarly applicable to pregnancy discourse; they identify the initial resistance to the blurring of subjectivities and gradual dismantling of a singular self evident in pregnancy.

Roberts offers a perspective on this dynamism of pregnancy in her discussion of surrogacy; she states that surrogacy can be 'viewed as both containing and corroding the borders of' nature and culture, biology and technology'.²⁹⁶ This reading casts an alternate light on Plato's supposedly passive receptacle. Despite utilising a similar discourse with 'vessel' to describe it, the gestational experience of pregnancy is in no sense passive; it is transforming and transformative for the women gestating the pregnancy. Through the utilisation of language, the surrogates in Robert's study, and also Al·ith in the fiction, are re-appropriating their relation

²⁹⁴ Elizabeth E. S. Roberts, "'Native" Narratives of Connectedness: Surrogate Motherhood and Technology', in *Cyborg Babies: From Techno-Sex to Techno-Tots* eds. Robbie Davis-Floyd and Joseph Dumit (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 205.

²⁹⁵ Ibid. p.207.

²⁹⁶ Ibid. p. 207.

to the foetus within them and the changes they themselves are undergoing. Their becomings are catalysed by relationality with (an)Other, which challenges the very borders of a singular sense of self. Lisa Baraitser offers an explanation for this through her reading of Butler and maternal subjectivity:

Through Butler's reassertion of destruction, maternal subjectivity could be understood as a new subjectivity that emerges out of the encounter with the child. From the mother's perspective, we could say that as the infant destroys her, she is marked by the other, contending with self-loss, through which, according to Butler, an altered self may also emerge.²⁹⁷

Baraitser here is determining that it is through the relationality with this new Other that the sense of singular self is deconstructed. Although she suggests that an 'altered self' emerges from this process, I argue and will demonstrate through Al·ith's experience of pregnancy that the notion of a 'self' is abandoned entirely. Baraitser's language suggests this process to be marked by 'self-loss'; I would reframe this idea to say that for Al·ith, through her pregnancy and birth, the 'self' is marked by loss of a unified self and replaced by a more dynamic experience of subjectivity.

Pregnancy is an embodiment of dynamic differences and multiplicities. Enacted through the literary portrayal of Al·ith's pregnancy, we can explicitly see the 'generic instability' inherent in pregnancy which Ruth Robbins considers a trope throughout Lessing's work.²⁹⁸ This is primarily because as Robbins states 'the distinction between self and other...in pregnancy and childbirth, is far from secure.'²⁹⁹ In the case of Al·ith, this instability splinters a sense of a singular, static self, undoing the very notion of 'self' entirely. Marlene Goldman's reading of Deleuze in the 'Fictions of Timothy Findley' reveals an interesting position on becomings which is applicable here. She states: 'Deleuze asserts that becomings are predicated on two forms of combat: one involving an external opposition and the other involving an internal struggle between one's own parts.'³⁰⁰ For Al·ith these 'forms of combat' are encountered during her pregnancy. Its deterritorializing effect is particularly apparent to her

²⁹⁷ Lisa Baraitser, 'Mum's the Word: Intersubjectivity, Alterity, and the Maternal Subject', *Studies in Gender and Sexuality*, 9:1, (2008), pp. 86-110, (p.99).

²⁹⁸ Ruth Robbins, '(Not Such) Great Expectations: Unmaking Maternal Ideals in *The Fifth Child* and *We Need to Talk about Kevin*', *Doris Lessing: Border Crossings*, *ibid.*, p.94.

²⁹⁹ Robbins, *ibid.*, p.92.

³⁰⁰ Marlene Goldman 'Transvestism, Drag and Becomings: A Deleuzian Analysis of the Fictions of Timothy Findley' in *Deleuze and Literature*, eds. Ian Buchanan and John Marks, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), p. 200.

when she returns to her home country; with her growing form, changing needs, and conflicting past experiences, Al·ith feels an irreconcilable opposition and difference to her husband, the women around her, and to her past self, leaving her feeling as if she has no ‘self’ at all. This departure from a sense of singular self is noted when Al·ith meets with her sister again. After enquiring after her children, Al·ith discovers that not only do they not ask after her, they do not remember her: ‘*it is hard to remember you.*’ (p.147). This remark seems to reaffirm for Al·ith that through her travels, her pregnancy, her exposure to difference not only is her ‘self’ lost to her, but to her home and family also. On learning this, Al·ith contains her sadness, a trait adopted from zone four and alien to zone three. This new emotion is described as a ‘foreignness’ (p147) within her. What is evident is that the ‘foreignness’ filling and changing her is not solely her sadness or the child she is gestating, but the changes she is undergoing.

During her pregnancy, Al·ith has then become an ‘in-between-space’ for these differences. Her borders, whether physical, psychological or emotional, have become permeable through her pregnancy. This is evident in the scene in which she is paraded in front of Ben Ata’s people, so that they may rejoice the marriage and the pregnancy which is deemed the public proof of a successful union. As she is carried through Ben Ata’s zone, the gauche display of her body and her pregnancy in a gold dress, which explicitly objectifies her as one of Ben Ata’s treasures, reveals the public investment in her pregnancy: ‘there was the evidence of this marriage, the strong triumphant curve of her stomach’ (p.181). The description of the ‘triumph’ projected onto her changing form marks the visible and public fascination in the pregnancy and most significantly Al·ith’s body. The borders of her body are quite literally transgressed through this pregnancy and the public demands made of her private space. This transgression of a physical space impacts all aspects of her so called ‘inner-space’. She becomes a threshold. This is not only to the baby to which she will give birth, but to the societal demands and expectations made of her as a pregnant woman.

This collision of differences and multiplicities reaches a climax with the description of Al·ith giving birth. This experience is both profoundly alienating and transformative for Al·ith. Plato’s *chora* or receptacle resonates with the description of Al·ith at this time as ‘a channel or a vessel’ (p.193) to Ben Ata’s son; she becomes the ‘invisible’, the ‘unshaped’, and most poignantly the ‘all-receptive’.³⁰¹ In reaching the threshold moment of birth, Al·ith feels she

³⁰¹ Plato, p.251.

becomes this receptacle entirely, shaped by the many women and expectations surrounding her. As a consequence, her labour is different from any birth she had experienced before; it is complicated by the new emotions and expectations of the women supporting her through labour: 'Al·ith was being rocked by all kinds of emotions that she most heartily disliked and found out of place' (p.201). It is precisely this deterritorializing effect of being 'out of place' that means this labour mobilises changes in Al·ith. These changes are not simply negative for her, however. They catalyse a complex array of emotions that Al·ith struggles to deal with: '...thrilled through and through with the wildest emotions of love and possession – but she had not felt anything like this before, and was uneasy that she did so now.' (p.202) Experiencing birth in this new and different environment is conflicting for her; there is both a loss and a jubilation at her experience of the new.

In a rejection of the societal demands to conform to the new differences around her, in a rejection of the overwhelming public interest and investment in her pregnancy, and in a rejection of the embodiment of this imposed identity, Al·ith returns to what she describes as her 'animal' instincts; through this new experience of childbirth and childcare she returns to her flesh. To borrow from Deleuze's writing, she becomes animal. Once her child is born, her inner fantasies spill into her outer actions as she realises a dream she'd had during her pregnancy and starts 'licking [her baby] clean, as an animal does' (p.202). Al·ith is still a threshold, but rather than only the child transgressing her interior and exterior spaces, her imagination and actions are transgressing too.³⁰² Deleuze's description of becoming animal in Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature resonates with this moment: 'To become animal is to participate in movement, to stake out the path of escape in all its positivity, to cross a threshold, to reach a continuum of intensities.'³⁰³ Al·ith's nurturing of her child demonstrates this movement of imagination, of desire and of flesh. She nuzzles her child 'like a mare with a foal, or a dog with its newborn young.' (p.202). Unlike her other new experiences through this pregnancy and birth, this one fills her with the 'positivity' and vitalism described through Deleuze's becoming animal; Al·ith is 'thrilled through and through with the wildest emotions of love and passion.' (p.202) towards her infant son. This act of becoming animal with her child transgresses multiple borders, between her imagination and her actions, between her societal behaviour and bodily desires, between her body and her child's. These transgressions

³⁰² Gerald L. Bruns, 'Becoming-Animal (Some Simple Ways)', New Literary History, Volume 38, Number 4, (Autumn 2007), pp. 703-720.

³⁰³ Kafka: Toward A Minor Literature, p.13.

are demanded by Al·ith's pregnancy, labour and mothering in this new zone. Despite its inherent instability and rather because of it, pregnancy, birth and mothering enable Al·ith to confront and eventually escape the societal norms and expectations surrounding her, to allow her fantasy to cross into reality, to follow embodied desire. Read thus, pregnancy and birth have the potential to be infused with societal expectations and demands while also providing an affirmative and transformative experience for Al·ith.

The impact of these differences on her is particularly acute once Ben Ata returns. Following the emotional and physical transformations of pregnancy and birth, not only does Ben Ata fail to recognise Al·ith and indeed mistakes her for their servant Dabeeb, but Al·ith fails to recognise herself too: 'She did not like what she felt, though she did not recognise it.' (p.206). In becoming receptacle, threshold, woman, multiple, animal, Al·ith has exposed herself to new emotions and experiences; she has changed. The maternal experience and consequent becomings are not simplistically positive, but as we learn by the end of the fiction, they are a part of the vitalistic process of Al·ith's becomings.

Al·ith's body is the location for considerable becomings and goings; it is the 'goings' that are most painful for her and yet eventually the most liberating. The forced departure from her son causes the most significant pain. On leaving him and returning to her 'home' land, Al·ith discovers that she has changed and her previous certainties, values, and knowledge are disrupted with new knowledge, curiosities and doubts. It is in this moment of reterritorialization that Al·ith discovers how much her pregnancy has transformed her; she feels homeless, uprooted from her old home and rejected by her new. And so, she decides to continue her travels. Following a desire that has haunted her throughout, Al·ith crosses into zone two. Repeatedly during the novel, she is drawn to the 'blue' of zone two, its colour its most discerning feature. This description echoes Deleuze's somewhat abstract instruction that 'it is through colour that you become imperceptible'.³⁰⁴ Indeed, his description of imperceptibility, arguably the most profound form of becoming, resonates with the sensory descriptions of zone two, a place where borders are imperceptible, both physically and mentally, and bodies, evocative of death,³⁰⁵ are molecular, part of their environment. Braidotti's similarly enlightening definition of 'becoming-imperceptible' as 'becoming one with a "Nature" – a

³⁰⁴ *A Thousand Plateaus*, p.187.

³⁰⁵ Rowe, *Notebooks, Memoirs, Archives: Reading and Rereading Doris Lessing*, ed. Taylor, p.203.

living environment – which never ceases to grow and flow³⁰⁶ suggests an ultimate form of becoming that seems limitless, without borders. In a text in which borders are initially definitive and defining, this realised ambition of Al·ith's reinforces the ultimately affirmative and positive reading of her travels, her marriage, her pregnancy and the consequent transformations she experiences. It is here in the blue that she decides to stay, not stationary, but moving, part of, merging with the blue. The chronicler describes this borderless, merging: 'We are the dull blue base to the wildest subtlest flame.' (p.244). This figure of the flame evokes the intensity, potential power, and uncontainability of this zone and Al·ith's becoming imperceptible within it. I am not condoning the forced separation of a mother from her child here. Rather, I am identifying that the transformative experience of pregnancy and then the recognition of the new differences and Otherness created in the progeny is a dynamic and ultimately affirmative one.

4. Chronicler's Becomings

The narration of Al·ith's maternal experience is as illuminating as the narrative itself. Just as Al·ith's sense of a singular self fragments on having and then leaving her child, so does the certainty of the chronicler, our narrator. Although the fiction is narrated self-referentially by a chronicler from zone three, multiple other chronicles from multiple other artistic mediums are referenced. These differing versions are entirely dependent on who is writing, drawing, singing, when and where. Even the chronicler admits: 'I do not believe that any of our artists, or our ballad-makers or songsters, have got anywhere near the truth of that scene' (p.185). It appears that the 'truth' of Al·ith's story is entirely dependent on the narrative perspective and as Rowe argues the 'social reality' of that perspective:

The "Chronicler" is the most distinct voice of the chorus. He has told us all along how key events are shown by the picture-makers of the various zones, how they are fixed for a moment in an ideological version and then reconceived, repainted, as the social reality of the zone changes.³⁰⁷

The fiction repeatedly hints at other possible readings, while admitting that none are totally true. This multiplicity of possibilities, notably communicated via the presentation of the Chronicler, present the critical potential of story-telling and imagination.

³⁰⁶ *Transpositions*, p. 202.

³⁰⁷ Rowe, *Notebooks, Memoirs, Archives: Reading and Rereading Doris Lessing*, ed. Taylor, (p.204).

This resistance to a singular narrative comes to a climax once Al·ith is in zone two and the chronicler feels compelled to present his own position:

And here I must raise my voice, say something – not on my own behalf of course, for there is no ‘I’ here, can only be the ‘we’ of equals and colleagues. (p.242)

His rejection of the singular, unitary ‘I’ reveals both the multiplicity of interpretations available and the multiplicity of selves experienced through imaginative creative thinking. As he states: ‘I am... what I am at the moment I am that...’ (p.242). This simplistic and yet somewhat profound statement proposes insights to the dynamic process of thinking and creating. The static verb ‘to be’ that he uses is mobilised, made to become through the sentence, through repetition, and the act of creating this verb enables. The ‘I am’ descriptions are momentary, transitory, and multiple; through his engagement in the creative process, the chronicler admits then that he too, like Al·ith, becomes.

Through the simultaneous and multiple readings of Al·ith suggested within this narrative, the reader is confronted with the potential and power of narrative and discourse. The chronicler himself makes this clear when offering a ‘footnote’ on his role to record. He describes his editing process to be driven by a respect, and sometimes even fear, of writing’s potential to create change: ‘Describing, we become’ (p.243). In his footnote, he recognises the ability of language and narrative building to shape life and catalyse becomings. The chronicler offers further insight: ‘Al·ith am I, and I Al·ith, and every one of us anywhere is what we think and imagine.’ (p.244). Blurring the boundaries between the writing and written subjects, the Chronicler suggests the profound potential of thinking and imagining to the creation of subjects, namely, to propel us, the reader, the thinker, to become ‘what we think and imagine’. Recognising the power of discourse, this argument is returning to my discussion of Butler and the receptacle earlier in the chapter; through the chronicler’s self-conscious narrative building we are reminded, with caution, of the power of discourse to shape matter and consequently of the significance of the stories we read, write, tell.

This narrative dynamism, this resistance to resolution which I discussed in the previous chapter regarding Lessing’s writing, is also evident here and becomes even more significant in her later work discussed in the next chapter; her writing does not allow stable, ‘safe’ resolutions. The multiplicity of perspectives in Marriages Between Zones Three, Four and Five as in The Fifth Child, and as we will see in The Cleft, forces the reader to reject a singular reading of these characters and this narrative. Because of the explicit presence of the narrative

voice in Marriages Between Zones Three, Four and Five, however, we are forced to accept these various ‘truths’ as complex, multiple aspects of imaginative processes that intersect with, but as Deleuze states are not confined to the liveable or lived. I am not proposing here that Lessing somehow ‘intended’ these functions in her work, rather I am demonstrating how her writing provides a highly productive space in which as a reader I can map this thinking. As well as being a literary forum for considering nomadic embodied subjectivity catalysed through the experience of pregnancy then, Marriages Between Zones Three, Four and Five becomes a Plato-esque receptacle itself which through my reading functions as a figure for creation and a laboratory for thought.

The question remains then of what we can do with this reading of Lessing’s fiction and how I can relate this creative reading to my critical investigations. The narrative style I have outlined here builds a fiction that is as evocative and ephemeral as the cumulative moments in Al·ith’s becomings; moments of certainty and stability are given in the fiction only to be taken away. This imaginative, flexible narrative voice offers a methodology for thinking about maternal embodied subjectivities, not through limiting certainties and singularities, but through, to take from the title, a ‘marriage between zones’. It is the marriage zone, the in-between, between imagination/reality, society/embodied, certainty/uncertainty, that invites a mode of thinking critically within a creative space, again between the two, that is instructive to this thesis. My reading of this fiction offers a way of thinking beyond the pages of the fictional text and the critical concerns; it allows us, through and within these in-between spaces, to think vitalistically about multiple aspects of embodied maternal female subjectivity.

III

How Pregnancy is Becoming in Piercy’s Body of Glass

...owing to being filled with potencies that are neither similar nor balanced, in no part of herself is she equally balanced, but sways unevenly in every part, and is herself shaken by these forms and shakes them in turn as she is moved.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁸ Plato, Timaeus, p.125

Creation is always perilous, for it gives true life to what has been inchoate and voice to what has been dumb.³⁰⁹

The period of gestation in reproduction not only catalyses transformations and becomings for the embodied subject but is undergoing considerable transformations itself. The description of reproduction in Plato's Timaeus hinted at this dynamic potential pregnancy can have for women and that I have demonstrated through my reading of Lessing's writing. In this section, I map on the terrain of Piercy's Body of Glass (1991) my own understanding of the last part of this epigraph: '[she] shakes them in turn as she is moved'. By this I mean woman's creative, political and personal potential to reinscribe herself discursively as an embodied subject; through my reading of Piercy's text, I demonstrate how this is made possible both despite and because of the changes that pregnancy is undergoing. Rather than following the somewhat familiar readings of these changes to pregnancy as either limiting or liberating, I map how Piercy's work presents a cautionary tale on the exclusion of the embodied female subject from creating life. Through her exploration of multiple forms of reproduction, multiple utilisations of technology, and multiple narratives, Piercy constructs a terrain of the potential becomings of pregnancy, how it itself is transforming, and how women can empower themselves in this process. Like Butler's reading of Plato's receptacle, Piercy, as the epigraph from her work suggests, realises the power of creatively working with and through discourse to ensure that when considering the changing experiences of pregnancy, it becomes a site of woman's inclusion rather than exclusion. I demonstrate how by utilising creative faculties, following my thinking from the previous section, how far from being solely 'shaken' by pregnancy's becomings, women have the potential to affect the utilisation and understanding of ARTs and reproductive practices and so 'shake them in turn.'

Since the implementation, practicing and consideration of reproductive biotechnologies takes place within social, political and economic matrices, the ways in which these practices are altering the experience of pregnancy, and for whom, cannot be understood simplistically. Braidotti notes a reason for this by tracing the cultural trend of a common patriarchal fear regarding women's vital role in reproduction:

In postmodern times, however, this male anxiety about the missing father must be read alongside the new reproductive technologies. They replace the woman with the

³⁰⁹ Marge Piercy, Body of Glass, (London: Penguin, 1992 (1991)), p.91. All further references to this text are from this edition and given parenthetically.

technological device - the machine - in a contemporary version of the Pygmalion myth, a sort of high-tech 'My Fair Lady'³¹⁰

The most significant aspect of this observation is in recognising that these biotechnologies are not developed or practiced in a cultural vacuum; they are the tools of patriarchal, commercial, and medical systems that can have significant impacts on embodied subjects and gender difference. Significantly, reproductive technologies, through their ability to create life, make this impact on not only women but humanity even more significant.

Feminist science fiction literature, particularly since the 1970s, has provided a vital forum in which to consider the effects of reproductive technologies on reproduction and so women (see Chapter One). Responding in part to the changing environment around them and utilising a genre traditionally dominated by male writers, feminist science fiction writing delves deeply into the social fears surrounding the potential effects these biotechnologies pose and interrogates directly the, as Nadia Khouri describes them, 'system[s] of power relations' that affect them.³¹¹ Engaging in this feminist tradition, Piercy's text contains direct allusions to William Gibson's cyberpunk work Neuromancer (1984) and the Jewish folklore of Golem. This rich intertextuality places her writing directly into an ongoing and multi-layered discussion regarding biotechnologies, creating life, and society. More significantly, Piercy's literature can and indeed should be read directly within the traditionally patriarchal domains of Jewish folklore and science fiction, located as minor. In doing so, the work offers a relocating and reformulating of the female subject, as Ruth Anolik notes: 'Rewriting the texts to include female figures of authority and power, [...] Piercy reveal[s] the possibilities of female creation and power that are surpassed by traditional golem stories.'³¹² The act of creating, both as a reproductive aim and a narrative construct, in Piercy's work provides a complex and provocative terrain for considering the complex and provocative implications of biotechnologies on reproduction and woman.

A primary concern pervading Piercy's work is that of creating life. Beyond the issue of what kind of life is being created (see Chapter Two), there is also extensive consideration of

³¹⁰ Rosi Braidotti, "Cyberfeminism with a difference", http://www.let.uu.nl/womens_studies/rosi/cyberfem.htm#fn24, [accessed 01/07/14].

³¹¹ Nadia Khouri, 'The Dialectics of Power: Utopia in Science Fiction of Le Guin, Jeury, and Piercy', Science Fiction Studies, Vol. 7, No. 1, (March 1980), pp.49 -60, (p.49).

³¹² Ruth Bienstock Anolik, 'Appropriating the Golem, Possessing the Dybuk: Female Retellings of Jewish Tales', Modern Language Studies, Vol. 31, No. 2 (Autumn 2001), pp. 39 – 55, (p. 41).

how the life is being created and in whose body, if in a body at all. Anolik identifies this focus as the primary source of Piercy's subversive potential: '[Piercy's] revision, [...], appropriates creative power to the female character through the biological channels of sexuality and childbirth.'³¹³ Multiple forms of pregnancy are considered in Body of Glass and with them, the politics, commerce and communities effecting these practices, and effected by them. Piercy's depiction of a future society resonates with Braidotti's own description of contemporary society:

Moreover, if it is the case that the human body, and hence also the maternal feminine (the matrix), are now inscribed in the techno-industrial and military apparatus, it follows that they are neither metal nor flesh, but rather a highly contested social space, traversed by capital flows and hence power relations.³¹⁴

Piercy's text demonstrates this position of Braidotti's: women's bodies, whether maternal or not, have become, through the developing biotechnologies, further contested spaces of advanced capitalism and power. Indeed, Piercy's statement, 'I am always interested in who controls technology in any given society at a particular time',³¹⁵ confirms the necessity of reading biotechnologies in the context of the powers that control the developing reproductive technologies and the implementing of them.

1. How Pregnancy's Becomings are Implicated in Matrices of Power

The protagonist Shira, in the Body of Glass, has a son; she conceived him with her husband without technological intervention. From the opening scene, we are led to understand how controversial this fact is for the community in which she lives. The novel opens with a court scene and with Shira nervously awaiting the state's decision regarding the care of her son; her relationship with her child is being explicitly scrutinized and controlled by this commercially motivated state system. Throughout the text, we are confronted with moments in which Shira must counter the state's explicit and implicit attempts to control her role as mother, a direct collision of the body and power that I critiqued through my reading of Butler. Shira lives in the commercial, multi-national, economic and political state of Yakamua-Stichen (Y-S). The state, which functions on advanced capitalist principles of production, profit and human capital, has

³¹³ Ruth Bienstock Anolik, 'Reviving the Golem: Cultural Negotiations in Ozick's The Puttermessaer's Papers and Piercy's He, She and It, Studies in American Jewish Literature, Vol. 19, (2000), pp. 37 – 48, (p.41).

³¹⁴ Transpositions, p.30.

³¹⁵ Marge Piercy, 'Telling Stories about Stories', Utopian Studies, Vol. 5, No. 2, (1994), pp. 1 – 3, (p.2).

altered the experience and very process of reproduction; its efforts to manage its citizens' behaviour, for commercial gain, begin from the moment of conception and indeed the method of conception also.

In Y-S, infertility is not only increasingly common, because of an earlier environmental disaster, but is now a trend. The consequence of this is an implicit and at times explicit social pressure to conform to normative, technologized methods of reproduction; these methods, as we gradually learn through Shira's rejection of them, insidiously reinforce state control and commercial profit. As Shira observes: 'One of the standard subjects for gossip among corporate women my age is exactly how you are trying to make a baby – comparing technologies' (p.259). Because of the prevalence of technologies available and the subtle market pressures, much like contemporary Western society, the rhetoric has shifted from why not try them, to why didn't you try them. This pressure is motivated by advanced capitalist demands. Braidotti observes the pervasive nature of advanced capitalist values when considering the posthuman subject:

Advanced capitalism and its bio-genetic technologies engender a perverse form of the posthuman. At its core there is a radical disruption of the human-animal interaction, but all living species are caught in the spinning machine of the global economy.³¹⁶

Braidotti recognises here the danger of the 'global economy' or rather advanced capitalism which facilitates behaviour that feeds its own capital. Piercy's text further reveals the risk of a posthuman pregnancy, in which the becoming-machine is inseparable from the becoming capitalist machine. In Piercy's fiction, directly expanding on the dystopian world depicted in Woman on the Edge of Time, there is an explicit commodifying of the embodied subject; in the society of the multis women's, and men's, bodies belong to commerce. Whether through work, fashion, body augmentation, recreational sexual activity, or reproduction, there is a clear socially imposed standard for the citizens to maintain; these standards are subtly directed by the commercial and political institutions directing and profiting from them.

In Piercy's work these discursively maintained normative values are particularly apparent in the realms of gestation. To the awe and disgust of those around her, Shira gestated her pregnancy to term and without technological intervention: 'I conceived the ancient way and bore the baby to term. In fact I lost status with my co-workers because they felt it was a bit

³¹⁶ The Posthuman, p. 7.

gross' (p.259). The social disapproval and judgement pose an insidious mode of controlling behaviour and reinforcing advanced capitalist practices; it is an explicit presentation of discourse's constitutive power over matter and indeed vice versa, with societal norms being dictated by bodily functions and bodily practices being dictated by norms. People's clothing, language, property and use of biotechnologies conform to societal pressures and Y-S rank norms; Shira notes the Foucauldian self-regulating power of these social norms: 'Everyone was too conscious of being observed, of being judged.' (p.7). Reinforcing the position I drew from Butler's work, language, power and embodiment are not distinct from one another, but rather complex, interrelated and relational aspects of subjectivity and society.

These aspects of state control and capitalist gain are not always so insidious; at times, they are explicit and invasive. The state of Y-S utilises technology to monitor and control the quality of their population: 'Further, every pregnancy...was monitored genetically and developmentally' (p.157). This intrusion of state control and medical investigation to the molecular level is one raised by Rose in his publication I discussed in the introduction, The Politics of Life Itself. Drawing directly from Foucault's work in The History of Sexuality, Rose describes bio power as 'more a perspective than a concept' which he uses to refer to, in particular, 'regimes of authority, and practices of intervention [over human vitality, morbidity, and morality] that are desirable, legitimate, and efficacious.'³¹⁷ This is a 'perspective' that I investigate in further detail in the next chapter; in this chapter, we can identify the necessity and practice of critically assessing government and commercial intervention into human reproduction through the character of Shira. Indeed, a justification Shira gives for avoiding biotechnologies during her pregnancy is that she is 'suspicious about the conditioning they use on preemies.' (p.259). This behaviour conceives the 'production' of a healthy foetus a necessity for the state, a responsibility of the mother and a requirement as a citizen. It is a terrifying and invasive prospect which removes the women's subjectivity from the process; she is now a location for human capital production. Shira articulates this level of state and technological intervention by describing the process of gestation and reproduction as one involving multiple 'parents': 'At Y-S they used to say every baby has three parents nowadays – the mother, the father and the doctor who does all the chemistry. And there Y-S is the fourth parent.' (p.259) It seems the only place Shira's child is safe from this intervention is in her womb. Consequently, unlike most women in Y-S, who 'induce labour in the eighth month to avoid

³¹⁷ Rose, p.54.

stretch marks' (p.259), she carries her baby to term: 'I carried the baby nine months because I didn't want to give my child up to Y-S so early' (p.259). In Y-S, the womb, like the many readings of Plato's receptacle, can simultaneously be both a passive space awaiting Y.S. inscription and an active space resisting commercial infiltration; in the fiction, it is both a location for the production of human capital and commercial gain as well as the only location in which a foetus is protected from these forms of control.

In Y-S, reproductive technologies are ambivalently prevalent; they have the power to give life as well as grow and shape it into a form that suits them. In vitro fertilisation and gestational monitoring technologies are both tools which alienate women from their maternal capacity while supposedly liberating them. This matrix of power evidently functions explicitly through medical provision, observations and juridical support. Like Lessing's text, an individual's behaviour and societal expectations can serve to reinforce and prescribe 'normative' behaviours. As an extension of Shira's direct battle against this matrix of power, Piercy provides parallel narratives and characters that catalyse an unravelling of these advanced capitalist patriarchal powers. My reading of them demonstrates how they do this and how the critical act of creating, both life and literature, can enable this process.

2. Re-imagining Woman's Inclusion

Piercy utilises multiple narrative methods to reinscribe woman, to discursively locate her as a complex, embodied and empowered subject in the matrices of power present in her text. She primarily does this through the secondary characters as well as a secondary narrative running parallel to Shira's story. This method presents again the critical potential of thinking through the minor position. The parallel narrative is a re-telling of the Jewish golem folktale. Ruth Anolik has written about female feminist writers' attraction to this tale. She notes how for female writers, part of their attraction to this tale is their, women's, previous exclusion from it, both through the patriarchal narrative content and the written method of communicating.³¹⁸ In a sense, by re-writing this story, Piercy is deliberately locating herself in the minor position, and in writing the minor she works to destabilise the dominance of patriarchy from within.

³¹⁸ Anolik, 'Appropriating the Golem, Possessing the Dybuk: Female Retellings of Jewish Tales', p.40.

Anolik identifies another attraction of the story as the question of creating life: ‘The golem represents the human appropriation of the divine power to create life.’³¹⁹ Unambiguously, in Piercy’s text this story is told to the cyborg Yod by Shira’s grandmother, Malkah, Yod’s initial programmer. Consequently, the act of creating life is prevalent throughout the text; the various modes of creating life and their implications provide a perspective to the implications of shaping the ‘unshapen’ matter presented by Plato. It is the re-telling of the golem tale by Malkah and the alterations that she makes that invite the inclusion of creative thought to considering this process. Piercy herself in her 1994 essay ‘Telling Stories about Stories’ identifies Malkah as synonymous with what she views as the role of the writer and critical thinker.³²⁰ The relevance of these roles can be identified in Malkah’s alterations to the story; in its re-telling, she introduces the creator of the golem Rabbi Judi Loew’s granddaughter, Chava. The introduction of this female character, a midwife, provides a compelling perspective to patriarchy’s attempts to create life which I will discuss shortly. Her inclusion, or rather the adaptations to the narrative to allow her inclusion, also draws attention to the relevance of story-telling and the power it can provide to the story teller and the listener. Malkah, like the narrator in Lessing’s work, has this creative power. This power derives from the counter narratives that both these story-tellers, Piercy and Malkah, offer to the singular, dominant, patriarchal discourse; in the process, both present woman’s creative potential, whether with creating fiction, thought, or life.

The character Chava’s act of ‘a double midwifing’ (p.146) allows further exploration of this potential to create. Chava is considered ‘an honorary aunt’ and life giver to the whole community (p.544). She works tirelessly as a midwife; irrespective of the risks to herself, she supports the women of her community through pregnancy and birth. Unusual for her historical context (p.152), Chava is a scientist and an educated woman. Anolik reads Chava through her knowledge of science as a precursor to the male scientists in Shira’s society. This reading, however, overlooks the significant matrilineal focus the role of midwife plays. As the very title midwife and its middle English etymology of *with woman* suggest, Chava serves as a link and helper to women during pregnancy and labour, not solely to the foetus like the biotechnologies in Shira’s society. In a sense this undoes the trend which Ann Oakley identified in contemporary and Piercy’s contextual society, in which Oakley critiques the dispensing of the maternal figure through the use of developing biotechnologies as an intermediary to foetal

³¹⁹ Anolik, ‘Appropriating the Golem, Possessing the Dybuk: Female Retellings of Jewish Tales’, p.40.

³²⁰ Piercy, ‘Telling Stories about Stories’, pp. 1 – 3.

care.³²¹ The presentation of Chava allows for the inclusion of a women-centred, anti-medicalised approach to pregnancy and labour.

Chava's first act of 'midwifing' is to the women in her community, offering a contrast to the technologized pregnancies and births in Shira's world, her second is to Joseph, the golem. This second act of midwifing, however, is through language and reading. In an act that mirrors Rabbi Loew's creation of Joseph through words, Chava also uses her knowledge of language to teach the golem to read (p.152). Chava's empowering of Joseph through language and reading mirrors Malkah's empowering of Yod through story-telling. It is through this story telling process that both Joseph and Yod learn about society and relations between people. It is through these stories that they learn how to articulate and experience emotions, and consequently, how to love. Language and discourse are intimately entwined with the creation of material subjects, whether Yod or Joseph. It is through incantation that the golem is brought to life; it is through literature and poetry that Yod learns to think and feel; it is through story telling that both learn to love and so live. In both cases matter is activated and shaped by discourse most significantly and most successfully when the discourse is utilised and shaped by women. Evolving the original Jewish folklore in which the golem is given life through words spoken by a Rabbi, it is in Piercy's work primarily the female characters that use this power to create through reading and language. It is through this access to language and stories that the life created can think independently and resist the dominant forces. Beyond posing a contrast to the technologized pregnancies in Y-S, the inclusion of Chava then suggests the potential of language, imagination and relation as a means of finding a way out of the patriarchal, advanced capitalist matrix.

This endorsement of matriarchal relations is further explored in the primary narrative through the character of Nili. Nili is initially introduced as the bodyguard of Shira's mother. Throughout the text, we learn what a richly nomadic figure she is: bisexual, partial cyborg, partly nomadic, serving as a deadly bodyguard and loving mother. She occupies the borderlands of subjectivities to destabilise certainties and catalyse thought. I describe Nili as a partial cyborg because it is a query that has come up a number of times in discussions of this

³²¹ Ann Oakley notes '...the new interventions relating to antenatal care [as opposed to intranatal and postnatal]... are revolutionary because, for the first time, they enable obstetricians to dispense with mothers as intermediaries, as necessary informants on foetal status and life-style.' *The Captured Womb: A History of the Medical Care of Pregnant Women*, (Basil Blackwell: Oxford, 1984), p.155.

text. Neil Badmington reflects on the various definitions; although he acknowledges Clyne's and Kline's classic definition of a cyborg as part human and part machine (see Chapter Two), he resists identifying Yod or Nili as true cyborgs in favour of questioning the ethics of defining 'humanity'.³²² In detailing the relevance of these titles, however, Badmington misses a significant aspect of Nili's, Yod's and Joseph's 'humanity' that is presented in Piercy's work. In the text 'humanity' seems to be defined as being born of woman (p.258). Indeed, the novel sets up a distinction between being made and born, 'You were made not born' (p.391), only to complicate it through cyborg figures such as Nili, who was made, and born, and further made and enhanced. Supposed 'humanity' then is becoming as constructed as machine. Much like my discussion in Chapter Two proposed, it seems the very distinction between the two is indiscernible.³²³ Yod is made through programming and language; Nili is made through human gestation; both, however, are then further developed and shaped through biotechnologies. Perhaps most significantly, both are mobilised through love, both parental and romantic. The text problematizes the very notion of creating life in a technologized age, rendering the difference between making and gestating a complex combination of the discursive, with programming and biotechnologies, and the material. Central to all forms of creation, however, is, as in Lessing's Marriages Between Zones Three, Four and Five, relationality with anOther; whether between Joseph and Chava, Yod and Shira, or Nili and her matriarchal community, these subjects become empowered, mobilised and developed through their relationships and indeed love of others.

It is the relationships between men and women that are most significant to the fiction and most altered by the varying uses of ARTs. In this regard, the matriarchal society that Nili lives in offers a didactic and nevertheless technologized contrast to the Y-S powers. This can most poignantly be seen in the discussions of motherhood between Shira and Nili. Shira's self-described, 'archaic' experience of pregnancy is directly contrasted with Nili's highly technologized one. Utilising reproductive technologies is presented as liberating for Nili. This is, as we learn, because she does not come from one of the highly state controlled 'multis', but from a remote matriarchal society. In this society biotechnologies are used to liberate women from the burden of requiring men, and reproduction is viewed as a privilege for the whole community. Nili and her community utilize 'sperm banks' (p.259) and 'all that funny lab stuff'

³²² Neil Badmington, Posthuman, (London: Palgrave, 2000), pp.91 – 93.

³²³ I am taking this position on proximity and zones of indiscernibility from Deleuze, A Thousand Plateaus, pp.300-315.

(p.489) to ensure reproduction is free from biological, gendered, and indeed commercial expectations. Here we have a utopian embodiment of the potential to ‘shake [the biotechnologies] in turn’, so to utilise ARTs for matriarchal and minor need as opposed to commercial and patriarchal gain. These alternate utilisations of ARTs can be read as a didactic exploration of the potential they hold for women. They allow Nili to live in a matriarchal society in which ‘The little ones are raised by several mothers’ (p.489) and she is able to travel, work, and protect her community. Through her society we are offered a counter position on the potentials of ARTs. Although the text presents ARTS as a tool for advanced capitalist practices in the colonisation of the subject’s commercial capital through Y-S, here we see their potential to liberate women from patriarchal societies and heteronormative coupling.

This difference is not only evident in the varying approaches to reproduction, but also in Shira and Nili’s approaches to mothering. Both characters are geographically distanced from their young children for significant periods of time. For Nili this is a privilege, for Shira a torment. Yet for both, like for Al·ith in Lessing’s work, consideration of this physical and emotional separation between the subject mother and her child Other is productive in catalysing the subject’s becomings. This can be read in Shira’s efforts to understand Nili’s positive attitude towards leaving her child. Her liberation from heteronormative coupling and celebration of communal parenting is contrasted with Shira’s constant pang for her son which pervades the novel. Evocative of the physicality of Connie’s longing for her child in Chapter One, Shira describes her situation as much like a physical dismembering, unable to fully function: “‘A mother without her child is a cart trying to run on three wheels,’” (pp.100 -101). Rather than understanding this as a description of the painful experience of losing a limb as Shira intended, Malkah turns this idea on its head: “‘So a three-wheeled cart is a wheelbarrow, and it works perfectly well’” (p.101). This re-imagining by Malkah reinforces, as Nili’s attitude does, the potential liberation of re-imagining how we conceive and consequently experience the relationship between mother and child. Furthermore, it is a direct endorsement of alternate forms of parenting facilitated by reproductive technologies.

This is a position which Badmington notes is made all too apparent when encountering Shira’s own dysfunctional relationship with her absent biological mother and her intimate one with her Grandma, Malkah, her adoptive mother: ‘Shira’s belief in the natural bond between mother and child is quite clearly contradicted by her relationship with Riva – her ‘biological’

mother – for what the novel shows is a *lack* of innate connection between the two characters'.³²⁴ These varying approaches to mothering present diverse perspectives on the ideas of creation, perception, and responsibility. This is a comment altered by the physical distance between mother and child, but not diminished. It is also a comment that becomes deeply troubled when creation and responsibility of offspring is taken over solely by a man.

3. The Act of Creating

Motivated by the desire to protect their communities, both Avram and the Rabbi Loew take the creation of life into their own hands. In a technologized version of the golem story, we discover that it has been the obsession throughout Avram's scientific career to artificially create life. Enveloped deep in the bowels of a deserted building, Avram's lab takes on the role of the womb. Evoking ideas I considered in my discussion of Plato's receptacle, the empty space awaiting inscription, it is in this womb like space that Avram constructs, programmes and gestates the life he is attempting to create. Multiple scholars have drawn comparisons with Frankenstein. Indeed, it is a parallel drawn, critically, by the cyborg Yod himself (p.533). Through this literary allusion, we have a nod to the familiar male anxiety and fantasy of autogenesis that I cited from Braidotti's writings at the beginning of this section.³²⁵ Unlike Frankenstein's creation, however, Yod is not Avram's first attempt. As the tenth letter in the Hebrew alphabet, the name Yod suggests that Avram has failed nine times already, ten if you include the biological son who carries Avram's paternal disappointment with him throughout the fiction. Built with the intention to protect and defend, Avram's cyborgs have failed because they have been too violent and unable to work with people (p.98).

And so, for the first time with Yod, Avram admits defeat and invites two women to help him construct life. By working to foster new life, Malkah and Shira perform another 'double midwifing'. Their jobs are to programme and develop the emotional and social sides of Yod. Their inclusion replicates an arguably binary presentation of the 'feminine' by providing instruction on intangible, notably social qualities such as empathy and love to Yod. Utilising poetry, literature and storytelling, they do just that. Their inclusion, like Chava's act of 'a double midwifing' (p.146), reinforces the utility of including, not excluding women from the process of creating life. Their inclusion in this instance, most interestingly, is not so much

³²⁴ Badmington, p.94.

³²⁵ Braidotti, "Cyberfeminism with a difference".

a physical gestation, but a creative and emotional one. Significantly then, women's access here to creating life can be understood through their utilisation of language and its power to imagine, create, and, most significantly, relate. As a perversion of the traditional material embodied bind of women to reproduction here Malkah and Shira nurture life in Yod through language and creativity. Serving as an antidote to Avram's obsessively material and violent efforts to create life, the text is offering a *sortie* or solution in the forms of discursive creation and imagination. The fact that these *sorties* are provided by women, figures traditionally bound by their materiality, presents the significance of storytelling and imagination to the creation of life.

The decision to place the ancient Jewish story of golem parallel to the modern dystopia serves to further play with ideas regarding creation and imagination. It provides a contrast and context to the thinking explored in the primary narrative. This is particularly apparent in the tale of golem, the creature conjured from the earth through incantations by Rabbi Loew. Drawing on ancient Jewish literature, Anolik reflects on the significance of the name 'Golem': 'In the Talmudic literature, the word "golem", which literally means "unformed substance," is associated with women: "Thus an unmarried woman is called a golem, since her nature is not fully rounded until she is married" (Minkin 43).'³²⁶ This reading as well as the creation of the golem from the earth relate directly with Plato's description of a receptacle as 'invisible', 'unshapen' 'soil' waiting to be 'moulded into shape.'³²⁷ This understanding of creation as the ability to take a substance and shape it is illuminating in regard to the female figures. Within Piercy's work, women are always shaped by their experiences of reproduction. As the figures of Chava, Nili, Malkah and even Shira demonstrate, however, by working imaginatively within and with dominant discourses, they too have the ability, and arguably the necessity, to shape both the act of creation and the creation itself. Through their utilisation of language, storytelling, and computer programming, they are not passive figures awaiting inscription, rather active participants in processes of creation.

This immense power to create is utilised ethically by Shira when rather than choosing to create life, she makes the difficult choice not to. The narrative follows Shira's growing love story with Yod. Through her work programming him and his exposure to various literature and experiences, he becomes her perfect partner and the ideal stepfather to her son. In order to save Tikva, however, and prevent further exploitation of his skills, Yod commits suicide, killing his

³²⁶ Anolik, 'Appropriating the Golem, Possessing the Dybuk: Female Retellings of Jewish Tales', p.42.

³²⁷ Plato, p.251.

creator Avram in the process. In his final, poignant message to Shira, he explains the reason for his death and the need to never recreate him; it is a torture for him to have consciousness but not be free from his creator and defensive function. In contrast to the discussion earlier in which life is only attributed to those who were given birth to, in his message the repetition of the verb 'to die' serves to suggest that in whatever form he did have life. What is most compelling about this moment is that despite his efforts, Shira, the figure of mother, life giver and creator in the fiction, must resist the urge to create him again. She has the means, capabilities and opportunity, but it is her decision not to which suggests the most interesting aspects regarding creation; the ethics of how, who, and what to create. The final chapter, entitled 'Shira's Choice' presents the responsibility of this process. It is painful and conflicting for Shira as she comes to the realisation that she has no right to create a life for her purpose only: 'I feel empowered to make a living being who belongs to me as a child never does and never should.' (p.581). This justification that she offers incorporates the primary aspect I have been mapping here in Piercy's work: the empowerment that reproductive biotechnologies enable, the forms of power they incorporate, and the necessary ethics that must be applied in the application of these technologies.

Woman's utilisation of technologies is fundamental to Piercy's text and enriching to our understanding of woman's ability to simultaneously be transformed by them, materially and socially, and transform their implementation; Shira's relationship with virtual technologies is particularly informative in this endeavour. Shira works with Yod to defend Tikva in the virtual matrix, through which all modern commerce and communication takes place. It is Shira's and his journeys within the matrix, transforming their forms, their sexes, their selves, to successfully negotiate, trick and overcome the patriarchal capitalist powers that are particularly fascinating. Speaking in relation to virtual spaces and subjectivity, computer scientist Sadie Plant describes how the virtual matrix serves as a technologized form of receptacle, or womb; it is a space full of potential, but not free from the power matrices confining matter and discourse: 'Cyberspace is the matrix not as absence, void, the whole of the womb, but perhaps even the place of woman's affirmation' (Plant: 1995, 60)³²⁸ Much like the many re-readings of Plato's receptacle, both the womb and the matrix have the potential to be transformative and transforming spaces filled with potential and yet both have the potential to be dominated and controlled by patriarchal and capitalist forces. In both cases, discourse and

³²⁸ Sadie Plant, 'The Future Looms: Weaving Women and Cybernetics', *Body and Society*, Volume: 1 issue: 3-4, (November 1, 1995), pp: 45-64, (p.60).

creativity enable woman access to discourse to reinscribe herself within these dominant matrices. Even Plant's description of woman and the virtual domain explicitly relates to Irigaray's mechanism of imitation and distortion: 'Plant suggests that woman, like the computer and cybernetic system, is a simulation mechanism, performing and imitating the self in a political gesture that usurps the categorical construction of woman as nature'.³²⁹ And so we can see that it is through these discursive devices that we return and reconfirm my reading of Plato's description of the receptacle. By recognising the dominant discursive powers, woman, like Piercy, has the potential not only to be shaken by biotechnologies and patriarchal power, but as the thinking in her work catalyses, she has the ability to shake them in turn.

IV

I opened this chapter stating pregnancy is an embodied experience. This statement, within the realms of feminist critical theory, contemporary society and literature has been mapped, complicated and considered within this chapter. By exploring Butler's writing on bodies and matter, I have enriched my reading of embodied subjectivity; I have further enhanced this reading with the inclusion of the matrices of power through which embodiment is constructed and which it constructs. Butler's critique of Plato's receptacle and Irigaray's reading of it allowed me to further consider reading methodologies and the application of imagination when thinking through figurations. Through my reading of Butler and Plato, I established how the gestational experience of pregnancy allows compelling consideration of both female embodied subjectivity and female reproductive capacity in contemporary society. Returning to and reinforced with the Deleuzian thought I had discussed in the previous chapters, I mapped this thinking further in the literary terrains of Lessing and Piercy's respective works and explored various aspects of the transformative potential of experiencing and writing about pregnancy as well as the various and critical, for both woman and society, ways in which pregnancy is itself transforming. Following the example I set out in the previous chapter, I will outline here some of the key contributions this mapping has made to my thesis.

1. The Feminist Female Subject

³²⁹ Plant, *ibid.*

This chapter includes and maps the embodiment of the feminist female subject. Tracing previous feminist thought, I used, in particular, Butler's work on matter and discourse to demonstrate how the distinction of body/matter and discourse/power are artificial. They are complex and interrelated aspects of our consideration of embodied subjectivity in contemporary society. Using Butler and Irigaray's reading of Plato's receptacle, I included woman's reproductive capacity as a critical aspect of our understanding and experience of this embodiment. The figure of Plato's receptacle gave me access to mapping both women's changing experience of their maternal function in contemporary society and the critical potential of the methodologies and figurations we use to consider this embodiment. The figure of the receptacle allowed me, once again, to explore the critical and creative potential of literally, figuratively and critically occupying liminal spaces. The figure of the receptacle enabled me to include woman's reproductive capacity and pregnancy within this discussion.

I have used examples of reproductive technologies that further complicate this aspect of embodiment; by returning, throughout the chapter, to the feminist female subject I explored how the transforming and transformative potential of woman's reproductive capacity affects becomings in both women and society. This discussion propelled multiple lines of flight. My reading of Al·ith's pregnancy and experience of motherhood in Lessing's Marriages Between Zones Three Four and Five provided me with a terrain to map the various, and not always positive, becomings gestating a pregnancy can catalyse. At moments in my reading of Lessing's work, I related these becomings to contemporary experiences of gestating pregnancies, in particular the discourse used and experiences felt by surrogates gestating pregnancies. This reading allowed me to consider how pregnancy facilitates a deconstruction of 'self' and invites a more complex, dynamic, multifaceted experience of subjectivity for woman. My reading of Lessing's literature illustrated how this transition is catalysed by confrontations with the Other, with difference, and with change experienced through pregnancy, birth and motherhood.

My reading of the various forms of reproduction and creating life in Piercy's text allowed me to examine more specifically the various ways in which the experience of pregnancy, through the utilisation of ARTs and the implication of the power structures surrounding the subjects, is transforming. I mapped how this impacts woman in various and complex ways. In both texts the society and power structures surrounding these women had significant impact on their experiences of pregnancy and subjectivity. I identified the various

ways in which utilisation of ARTs has the potential to both limit woman to her embodied subjectivity and to liberate her. I observed how various forms of power can be perpetuated through biotechnologies and reiterated the need to think critically and creatively to counter the potentially limiting and normalising effects of these powers.

2. The Critical Potential of Reading

From the readings of Plato's receptacle, to the reading of Al·ith's journeys, to the various intertextual readings and re-imaginings in Piercy's literature, reading has remained a critical and creative tool in this chapter. In particular, my work has demonstrated how reading and thinking through creative spaces can mobilise dynamic modes of thinking. To demonstrate this, my reading of Butler, Irigaray and Plato explored how thinking through figures of embodiment can be a limiting and liberating exercise. I considered how the figure of the receptacle catalyses understandings of female embodiment and pregnancy as both a passive act awaiting inscription and an active space for creativity and creation. It is, I noted, the method of thinking and imagining through this figure that enables these differences and multiplicities.

This position on reading not only reinforced for my thesis the critical potential of thinking through figurations, but also the critical potential of thinking creatively. I demonstrated this further through my reading of the literatures, and the use of storytelling and narrative building in both texts. In Lessing's literature, the inclusion of the chronicler's voice added an enriching aspect to Al·ith's tale and my thesis. This chronicler self-consciously selected and considered multiple and contrasting tellings of Al·ith's story. This inclusion of multiplicities allowed thinking through the multiple, but also revealed the creative power and potential of constructing narratives for both writer and reader. This idea was explored further in my reading of Piercy's text and her explicit intertextual utilisation of various other stories. By rewriting and reimagining these narratives, Piercy offered, much like Irigaray's reading of Plato, a re-imagining and re-inclusion of the feminine within traditionally male works. Reinforcing the power of discourse and creativity to re-figure spaces, thought, and subjectivity, my reading of Piercy's work noted that the act of imagining and creating was vital and vitalistic to understanding and experiencing our embodied subjectivity.

3. What next

Throughout this chapter, my reading of embodied subjectivity has taken into consideration the power matrices in which the subject functions and exists. Perhaps the most powerful matrix influencing how and who reproduces is that of the family, both the biological organising of people and the historical documenting of genealogical pasts. My next chapter will present in more detail what I mean when I talk of power, how it is manifested in the families and genealogies we construct, and how this is significant to considering the feminist female subject, her reproductive capacity, and developing biotechnologies.

Chapter Four: Thinking through the Family: Family Genealogies and Genealogical Methodologies in Piercy's The Third Child and Lessing's The Cleft.

In the era of techno-bodies, the maternal body not only reproduces the future, but also carries the burden of inscribing futurity within the regime of high-tech commodification which runs today's market economies. (Rosi Braidotti, Transpositions, 2006)³³⁰

Brooding about this whole question sparked off speculation and then that spinning of the imagination that can lead to the birth of stories. (Doris Lessing, The Cleft, 2007)³³¹

Family structures are changing; due to varying factors determining access and availability, reproductive biotechnologies, from ARTs to contraceptives, are both facilitating and guiding these changes.³³² In this chapter, I am mapping these changes on two plateaus. Following Deleuzian thought, these plateaus are distinct from one another but not entirely separate and I will draw the connections between the two. The plateaus are: the genealogical family tree and, drawing from my reading of Deleuze and Foucault, the genealogical method. I consider on both these plateaus how the hierarchical arboreal nature of the genealogical 'family tree', and the matrices of power it incorporates, should be read as limited and limiting.³³³ In the process, I examine how a mode of reading and thinking through these landscapes, informed by the genealogical methodology, can expose such matrices. I am reading forms of advanced capitalist and patriarchal power as manifested through the figure of the matrix here because this figure, drawing in particular from my reading of Butler (see Chapter Three), allows us to consider power not as a force imposed upon a subject, but as a complex aspect of subjectivity and familial relations. My reading of the changing forms of family reveals the implications of power on these changes; these implications are further impacted with the inclusion of ARTs. I apply the genealogical method to my reading of these family figures to demonstrate how my methodology of mapping certain literary landscapes can facilitate such exposure and mobilise thinking beyond. At the centre of the changes in reproductive practices and these familial

³³⁰ Transpositions, p57.

³³¹ Doris Lessing, The Cleft, (London: Harper Perennial, 2007), preface. All further references to this text are from this edition and given parenthetically.

³³² Margrit Shildrick, Leaky Bodies and Boundaries.

³³³ Timothy Laurie and Hannah Stark, Reconsidering Kinship: Beyond the Nuclear Family with Deleuze and Guattari, Cultural Studies Review, vol 18, no. 1, (March 2012), (p.26).

matrices of power is the female embodied subject. Braidotti notes this in her own work, used as the epigraph to this chapter, and utilises a discourse that relates temporality, and how we conceptualise it, with these changes in reproduction and family. Although she focuses on futures here, and feminist futures are regularly a popular focus in discussions of subjectivity and power, the changing figures of the family tree and linear patriarchy, which draw on past lineages, demand that I examine the past in these changing family structures also. I incorporate this question of temporality and methodology in my mapping of critical terrains of genealogy and reproductive technologies. It is in the literary considerations of these varying family structures and the genealogical modes of mapping them that I locate the feminist female subject and the critical potential of the 'spinning of imagination' these literary texts provoke.

Before exploring these various landscapes, critical and literary, I want to return to the Piercy text I discussed in the previous chapter, Body of Glass (1991). The narrative content of this text serves as a strategically literal illustration of the intersections between reproductive biotechnologies, advanced capitalism and familial structures that frames the thinking in this chapter. Furthermore, the narrative form of this text hints at a mode of thinking about temporality that invites us to reconsider family and subjectivity in more creative ways.

In Piercy's Body of Glass traditional, monogamous, heteronormative forms of family and reproducing are not only troubled, they are rendered obsolete. In Chapter Three, I examined the impact of reproductive technologies on creating and gestating life. In this chapter, I am widening my lens to locate these acts of creating in their familial and social context. Piercy's text provides a terrain for considering these aspects in a relatively strategic form. The developing biotechnologies and their varying availability, both in the society imagined in Piercy's text and increasingly in our contemporary society, radically alter woman's location within the reproductive process and consequently the familial and social structures, whether the woman decides to reproduce or not. Just a glance at contemporary Western society confirms that this speculation was particularly portentous. Endemic in our advanced capitalist culture, there is a schizoid pressure on women regarding reproduction and pregnancy: corporations are starting to provide egg freezing to encourage women to work more and have families later; simultaneously, the media is lambasting women, and more recently now men, for leaving it too

late while also fetishizing the pregnant female celebrity body.³³⁴ The assisted reproduction industry is booming, prospering on the pressure for genetically related progeny and the marketing of control and hope. As I discussed in the previous chapter, this is a phenomenon Piercy has speculated about in her work. Within Body of Glass, flesh, machine, and digital programming have become contested sites of reproduction, insidiously controlled by and/or resisting advanced capitalist powers.

This impact is evident from the opening scene of the text. Set in a court room in which the state is deciding the custody of Shira's child following her divorce from her husband, this scene marks a poignant critique of and departure from state endorsed heteronormative parenting unions. From the moment Shira leaves the court devastated by the commercial, political, and capitalist powers deciding her family's fate, the narrative works to undo this normative and restrictive power over familial relations and the reproductive potential of women. This 'potential' is explored in multiple ways through-out the work. Whether embracing state regulated biotechnologies, rejecting them, or utilising independently developed biotechnologies, to varying success, women have complex and compelling experiences of biotechnologies and reproduction. Following the court ruling, in which Shira's husband Josh gains custody of the child and Shira is punished, both personally and professionally, for her decision to break up the nuclear family unit, the text reacts: mothers, Shira, Nili, Malkah, Riva, become rebellious figures independent of patriarchal and advanced capitalist powers; fathers, Avram and Josh, attempt and fail to parent without women; and patriarchal figures, Avram, Josh, Gadi, and the Multis, are violently and, somewhat inevitably, destroyed. The text offers a rather unambiguous critique of patriarchal led, heteronormative nuclear family units. The patriarchal, linear lines of inheritance and family manifested in these units are both upheld and distorted through the varying uses of biotechnologies. These distortions leave space for new forms of family, inheritance and subjectivity to evolve.

The matrilineal genealogy in Shira's family, in which children are given to grandmothers to be cared for, is in fact not 'linear'. Consequently, by resisting hetero family norms, ARTs, and the Multis, these non-normative family forms invite an interesting examination of family, female subjectivity and power that is both facilitated by and

³³⁴ Mark Tran, 'Apple and Facebook offer to freeze eggs for female employees', The Guardian, (15th Oct. 2014), <http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2014/oct/15/apple-facebook-offer-freeze-eggs-female-employees> [accessed 1/10/17].

independent from technological developments. Shira, her mother and grandmother, unlike the other women in the text, (self)consciously and deliberately conceive and gestate their progeny without biotechnological intervention. Nevertheless, despite male inclusion in conception, these women establish families that are absent of men. And to further displace the patri-linear chronology of family, they leave their children to their mothers, so the grandmothers, to be brought up. Shira is falsely led to understand that it is a tradition in her family; she learns later, however, that this ‘tradition’ is actually a story constructed in her family to allow each of them to pursue professions which counter the dominant capitalist forces. This narrative aspect hints at how our past, and its effect on how we live now, is constructed through the stories we tell in the present.

This drive to avoid and resist the dominant forces through alternate forms of reproducing and parenting is mirrored in Nili’s matriarchal society, in which child rearing is both highly technologized and entirely communal. Patriarchy is displaced by these matriarchal families; men are rendered redundant in the family structure, albeit not entirely in conception. Yet, once again patriarchy is not replaced with a linear form of matriarchy, but rather with a cyclical, rhizomatic form of family, in which familial care is not a biological fact but a social privilege and communal responsibility. Directed by Deleuze’s examination of the psychoanalytical family in *Anti-Oedipus*, my reading of these re-imaginings of family is not replacing a normative model with an ‘abnormal’ one, or even merely ‘rearranging the family furniture’ as Timothy Laurie and Hannah Stark describe it in their reading of Deleuze.³³⁵ Rather, my reading of both Piercy’s text here and the following literary texts in this chapter demonstrates how the act of reproducing and parenting can be both influenced by dominant capitalist forces and resistant to them. Whether fully utilising ARTs or not, these matriarchal, non-arboreal family structures originate in resistance to the dominant, capitalist, patriarchal powers; they function, and indeed by functioning they can be understood, as direct destabilising threats to these powers.

The speculation within the genre and narrative content also serves a destabilising function. Shira’s grandmother Malkah is a market leader in constructing chimeras: maze-like, imaginative forms of computer programming in the intensely contested space of the virtual world. Her chimeras creatively distract and mislead intruders and are considered a vital form

³³⁵ Laurie and Stark, *ibid.*, (p.26).

of virtual defence and offence. Thinking through the figure of a chimera offers a compelling figure for the potential of thinking imaginatively: ‘...in the creating of chimera of pseudodata, interior worlds of fantasy and disinformation, there is a real making new’ (p.90). Within the fiction, the imagination is a vital weapon wielded by Malkah in the battle against dominant forces. An ‘interior world of fantasy’ is similarly constructed through the narrative form and it creatively critiques contemporary advanced capitalist practices. Read thus, with the speculative context of these constructs, I argue that the fiction in itself functions as a form of chimera; it presents an imaginative terrain that works to destabilise the dominance of patriarchal, capitalist forces. My reading of the text then serves as a response to Braidotti’s call to arms: ‘We just need new genealogies, alternative theoretical and legal representations of the new kinship system, and adequate narratives to live up to this challenge’.³³⁶ On facing the current changes in reproductive practices and the limits of our conceptual frameworks, Braidotti here identifies the potential of imagination in this struggle. Locating a narrative in a different temporality, whether past or present, or different reality, as my reading of Piercy and Lessing’s works demonstrate, forces the utilisation of imagination and creativity, both from the writer and, as I demonstrate, the reader. In this chapter, I enrich my methodology of reading by mapping the genealogical methodology from Foucault and Deleuze’s work; my reading of literature through this lens demonstrates how it is by thinking through these worlds of fantasy that we can find and indeed create space for the ‘making new’.

I

Genealogies: The Family Tree and The Methodology

The individual is the product of power. What is needed is to “de-individualize” by means of multiplication and displacement, diverse combinations. The group must not be the organic bond uniting hierarchized individuals, but a constant generator of de-individualization.³³⁷

Traditional family genealogies present fixed narratives; they identify the ‘hierarchized individuals’ in a family’s history. In the first part of this section, I am reading the subject woman within this familial and genealogical context for two reasons: the arboreal family tree

³³⁶ *Transpositions*, p.102.

³³⁷ Preface by Foucault from *Anti-Oedipus*, p.xiv

is rooted in a past narrative and the contemporary narratives we construct about the past are both a reflection of our present and alter our current lived experience in the present; the nuclear family creates the individual, the product of power that Foucault notes in the epigraph. Reading woman within this network of historically ‘hierarchized individuals’ provides a critical lens to my reading of literature and so enriches and informs my consideration of contemporary embodied female subjectivity and reproduction. In the second part of this section, I discuss the genealogical method. It is quite different from the familial genealogies I am critiquing in that it is a method of mapping and exposing power structures. It is, however, also related; derived primarily from Foucault’s reading of history and power, I utilise this method to read the narratives we construct about our families and pasts, and the forms of power perpetuated through these narratives. It is this mode of reading that I explore further through my own reading of Lessing’s literature, posing the argument that this methodology enacted through literature offers a necessary vitalism to discussing the crisis of reproduction framing this thesis. Through their use of the word ‘genealogy’ these two sections are understandably related, but my reading of these two aspects will make evident how they are rather plateaus functioning in parallel and relation with one another, but not the same. I am interested in both the figure and the methodology of genealogies because both demand a mode of thinking about the subject within familial, social, and historical contexts.

Significantly, these contexts require a consideration of the implications of advanced capitalist power on the subject. Advanced capitalism, as I have discussed previously in the thesis, is an insidious form of power that permeates our contemporary society. Like capitalist logic, it functions on a system of commodification, profit, and power. Advanced capitalism, however, extends beyond market practices into our daily behaviour, effecting the formation of subjectivity. Braidotti, who has increasingly been turning her critical lens onto advanced capitalism, describes how it promotes ‘the commodification of existence, the culture, the discourses of ‘others’, for the purpose of consumerism’.³³⁸ Describing it as a ‘difference machine’, she notes that the forms of difference it proliferates are commodified, ruthless, and un-remitting:

³³⁸ Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Theory: The Portable Rosi Braidotti*, (Columbia University Press: New York, 2011), p.25.

As a consequence, the global system of the post-industrial world produces scattered and polycentred, profit-oriented power relations. In our post-cold war era, power functions not so much by binary oppositions but in a fragmented and all-pervasive manner.³³⁹

I understand advanced capitalism then as an unrelenting and ever mutating form of power that is central to our schizoid times. Familial genealogies are one of the places in which this power is played out on and through woman; ARTs further complicate how power is manifested and practiced through the making and organising of family groups. I demonstrate in this section how Foucault's methodology of genealogies offers a mode of re-thinking these lines of familial inheritance and power.

Throughout this chapter I take into consideration the relevance to my project of the etymology of 'genealogy'; it shares Greek roots with the term 'genes', the biological codifying of bodies and the identifier of kin. My reading of genealogies, both descriptive and methodological, explores how the embodied subject woman, whose body is the location for reproducing these biological kin, becomes largely subsumed into her reproductive function in genealogical models of both the past and present. One particular thinker whose work is vital when mapping genealogies is Foucault. Although Robbie Duschinsky and Leon Antonio Rocha both suggest that Foucault merely 'fleetingly gestures towards' the question of families in his work, I draw together some of these gestures in my reading here to inform my own position.³⁴⁰ Indeed, my reading of the epigraph from Foucault's introduction to Anti-Oedipus reveals the motivation behind this effort: considering the subject woman individualised from her context, whether sociological, historical or familial, risks falsely prioritising the individualised, singular female subject and disregarding the multiple and various aspects which constitute her complex and embodied subjectivity.

1. Genealogy: Constructing the Family Tree

Arborescent systems are hierarchical systems with centres of significance and subjectification, central automata like organized memories.³⁴¹

³³⁹ Nomadic Theory: The Portable Rosi Braidotti, p.25.

³⁴⁰ Robbie Duschinsky and Leon Antonio Rocha, Foucault, the Family, and Politics, (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2012), p.1.

³⁴¹ A Thousand Plateaus, p.18.

Genealogy derives from the Greek *genea* meaning generation and is used in multiple discourses to denote a tracing of familial heritage and inheritance.³⁴² An arboreal narrative is present in both historical and social contexts to describe these connections in the generational lines of family: the ubiquitous ‘family tree’. Indeed in many dictionaries ‘genealogy’ is offered as a direct synonym of ‘family tree’.³⁴³ This ‘tree’ figure elicits a hierarchized mode of thinking that follows lines of inheritance through the patriarchal figures; I propose that the descriptive function of genealogies, and the mapping of biological kinship, be read through a more critical lens. Since, as I have been discussing thus far in this thesis, how we think informs what we think. Indeed, in an interesting comparison with an arboreal figure from Deleuze’s work on modes of thinking in *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze justifies his rhizomatic approach by contrasting the tree with a rhizome. Despite rejecting binary logic, he uses this dichotomy to demonstrate the limitations of hierarchized, structural figures of thought such as the tree.³⁴⁴ This critique of arboreal models can be similarly applied to the genealogical model of the family tree. As the epigraph to this section states, arboreal models are systems that function through a process of ‘subjectification’, so the fixed categorising and identifying of a subject. Through this representational, categorising function, arboreal models are consequently systems that limit rather than describe lived experience. Further to this, these models are hierarchical; they detail the growth along a linear upward trajectory. When we apply this descriptive, ordering function to the ‘organizing’ of memories and people within family trees, they impose a structure on these memories and people, one that edits and hierarchizes them.

1.1.Reproductive to Productive Function

Women are not excluded from family trees. Within them, however, they function primarily as objects, passed from family to family, and their presence is intimately intertwined with their reproductive capacity. As Jennifer Shaw notes in her study on reproduction and biosciences, the woman, and in particular the reproductive woman, had a significant position within arboreal models. Shaw extends this understanding, by arguing that to a certain extent because of her reproductive capacity, woman became not only significant within the family tree, a facilitator of its growth, but an extension of the tree herself:

³⁴² *A Thousand Plateaus*, (pp.13 – 14).

³⁴³ <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/genealogy> [accessed 05/04/15].

³⁴⁴ *A Thousand Plateaus*, Introduction.

In early modernity, the pregnant body was understood in terms of generation, as a tree that bears fruit; by the 19th century, the pregnant body was a machine that reproduced the species.³⁴⁵

By subsuming the female body into the figure of the tree, Shaw identifies the significance of woman's reproductive function within genealogical arboreal models; woman's capacity to reproduce is fundamental to her role in the family tree. The description of 'generation' and bearing fruit locates this capacity in a historical genealogy of the family. Woman's reproductive body is both central to lines of inheritance and yet her own subjectivity is absent from them; she is merely a 'pregnant body'. The embodied subject woman plays a precarious and liminal role in these traditional models of genealogy, subsumed into her reproductive function and the patriarchal family line.

The changing discourse of Shaw's observation reveals woman's changing position not only within the familial structure, but also within society. Changing from tree to machine, so from reproductive to productive figure, her description identifies a commodification of woman's body and reproductive capacity taking place in 19th century Western society.³⁴⁶ This discursive shift in regard to women's bodies from reproductive to productive taking place throughout the 19th century in the industrialising Western world is considered in Stuart Murray's Foucauldian reading of reproduction and subjectivity. His reading proposes that the intrusion of biopolitical values is not only through medical practice, with an increase in monitoring, educating and supporting pregnancy and labour, but familial behaviour also. Murray extends this argument within the context of late twentieth century society by providing a critical reading of the neo-liberal family structure. Noting the molecular level of contemporary medical and social involvement in embodied subjectivity, he argues that 'in the age of genomic medicine' he worries that the 'neo-liberal model has also come to infect our conception of parenthood.'³⁴⁷ Murray is not only reading the medical advances in reproduction, which have significantly increased the level of medical intrusion, control and monitoring facilitated by reproductive technologies, but the changes in parenting practices also. He critiques the commercialised

³⁴⁵ Jennifer Shaw, 'The Birth of the Clinic and the Advent of Reproduction: Pregnancy, Pathology and the Medical Gaze in Modernity', *Body & Society*, 18:110, (2012).

³⁴⁶ *Transpositions*, pp.49 – 50.

³⁴⁷ Stuart J. Murray, 'Care and the Self: Biotechnology, Reproduction, and the Good Life', *Philosophy, Ethics, and Humanities in Medicine*, 2:6, (2007), (p.10).

outcome-driven discourse of ‘best practices’ that he proposes have infiltrated the family structure and parenting behaviour.³⁴⁸

Foucault notes this effect on parenting behaviour in his description of the changing approach to reproduction as production. He identifies parents, and in particular mothers, not only as producers of people but as biopolitical tools, so producers of productive population:

No doubt, it still serves to give rise to two lineages and hence to produce a descent; but it serves also to produce – under the best possible conditions – a human being who will live to the state of adulthood.³⁴⁹

Recognising the state interest, Foucault does not reject genealogical/biological motivations for reproduction, but rather notes the inclusion of capitalist motives also. These motives can be read in the discourse of ‘best possible conditions’ that Foucault describes. We can understand these ‘conditions’ as the cultivating of a healthy, prosperous environment for the raising of able, educated citizens; the responsibility to maintain these conditions is placed primarily on the mother, both explicitly and implicitly. The mother then is positioned as directly responsible not only for the reproduction of people, but more specifically for the production of citizens for the state.

Nikolas Rose extends this thinking into the twenty-first century with his reading of biopolitics in The Politics of Life Itself. He too locates the mother figure as central to mobilising these forms of power within the family:

In an age of biological prudence, where individuals, especially women, are obliged to take responsibility for their own medical futures and those of their families and children, these ethical principles are inevitably translated in microtechnologies for the management of communication and information that are inescapably normative and directional.³⁵⁰

Rose expands his reading of biotechnologies to include the technologies of education, observation and information. He describes how they are utilised within the growing medical branches, particularly those he describes as ‘somatic experts’³⁵¹ such as health visitors and therapists, to direct and mobilise women to ‘produce’ through an application of ‘coercion and

³⁴⁸ Murray, (p.10).

³⁴⁹ Michel Foucault, Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977 de Michel Foucault, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), p.173.

³⁵⁰ Rose, p.29.

³⁵¹ Rose, p.28.

consent'³⁵² the best possible outcomes in health, self-care and behaviour, for state and advanced capitalist interests.

Mappings of family and genealogy cannot be made then without considering power, political, advanced capitalist, phallogocentric, medical. Arguing this position, Chloe Taylor, 'Foucault and Familial Power' (2012), notes another way in which familial power is manifested over the individual. She interestingly identifies the genealogy of the family as an initially sovereign power itself over the individual, a force of individualisation, both creating and functioning through the 'individual' figure. She pinpoints the significance of blood rights in the manifestation of this power. She describes the ritualistic anniversary of birthdays and family anniversaries that evoke the bloodshed and birth that identify the subject in the family; these rituals serve to remind and underpin the genetic inheritance of blood rights that re-impose the sovereign power of the family over the individual.³⁵³ Noting how this power is utilised to reinforce norms, behavioural expectations, and differences, Taylor uses Foucault's work to uncover how the 'stable' notion of family perpetuates various forms of power over the subject.

Taylor concludes that in becoming an instrument of the state and a reinforcer of norms, the nuclear family is not a 'natural' organisation of people, but rather an extension of dominant patriarchal capitalist powers that both perpetuates and facilitates its dominance:

The family, like the prison and the asylum, does not exist because it needs to or because we have become so enlightened as to realize that it is the "best" way to deal with certain facts about human nature. Rather, it exists as it does as the result of power struggles in which certain people lost and whose histories of resistance have been forgotten.³⁵⁴

This position on the family, although somewhat extreme, does identify it as a, notably artificial, construct in which power can be practised in multiple ways; the maternal figure can be both a perpetuator of these forms of power and a victim of them. This reading of the influence of discursive and medical powers over and through the family is also evident in Katherine Logan's application of Foucauldian thought to family and sexuality. In her chapter 'Foucault, the Modern Mother, and Maternal Power: Notes Toward a Genealogy of the Mother' from Foucault, the Family, and Politics (2012), Logan makes evident how both sovereign and disciplinary forms of power are through this maternal role no longer distinct from one another,

³⁵² Rose, p.29.

³⁵³ Chloe Taylor, 'Foucault and Familial Power', *Hypatia*, vol. 27, no. 1 (winter 2012), p.203.

³⁵⁴ Taylor, p.215.

but rather complex aspects of power manifested through familial structures and practises.³⁵⁵ The historical shift over the 19th and 20th centuries has seen woman's function within genealogical models evolve from reproducing for familial power to producing for initially state and then now also advanced capitalist powers. This function has expanded from women's ability to gestate the next generation to her participation in policing and producing a generation through the mothering role. It is apparent that within Western genealogical and familial models then there is a persistent placing of the subject woman within a reproductive and increasingly productive matrix; what is at stake here then is the 'values' and 'norms' that this matrix is producing.

1.2. ARTs and the Family

My reading of the changes taking place in family structures exposes the advanced capitalist powers directing them. It is not only the subject woman who is affected by changing political climates and developing reproductive technologies, but also the very structure of the nuclear family is impacted by them too. The pervasive heteronormative nuclear family has the potential to be constructed as well as deconstructed by the growing usage and varying availability of reproductive technologies. With the increasing accessibility and affordability of IVF and surrogacy, for some, parenting is no longer limited to heterosexual, coupled, or even reproductively aged people; for those that have access, and that is a question of capital and geographical power, these technologies have the potential to alter the shape of the genealogical family tree. Consequently, the heteronormative nuclear family has become less of an advanced capitalist ideal; homosexual, single parent, and aging families are just as much targeted by both reproductive and commercial companies for their consumerist potential. With the rise of alternate family models, there is a growing market demand for ARTs. Susan Squire draws from Foucault's thinking in her chapter 'Reproducing the Posthuman Body: Ectogenetic Fetus, Surrogate Mother, Pregnant Man' (1995) to consider in detail the impact ARTs are having on family structures.³⁵⁶ She outlines the three figurations in her title to map the ways in which biotechnologies are allowing us to reshape and redefine the relation between us and our

³⁵⁵ Katherine Logan, 'Foucault, the Modern Mother, and Maternal Power: Notes Toward a Genealogy of the Mother', in *Foucault, the Family, and Politics*, eds. Robbie Duschinsky and Leon Antonio Rocha, (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2012).

³⁵⁶ Susan Squier, 'Reproducing the Posthuman Body: Ectogenetic Fetus, Surrogate Mother, Pregnant Man' in *Posthuman Bodies*, eds. Judith Halberstam and Ira Livingston, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), pp. 113 – 134.

progeny, both genetically and socially. Through these figurations, she exposes the significance of politics of location and the dominant powers in the reshaping and redefining of modern family forms. Through this discussion, it is made evident that heteronormativity may have once been the basis of the nuclear family, but as the growing utilisation of ARTs makes apparent, it no longer needs be.

The nuclear family pervading the genealogical ‘family tree’ is not then a reproductive accident, rather it is to a large extent a by-product of industrialised capitalist needs, adapting later to capitalist interests and now advanced capitalist powers. Nevertheless, the implications of these changes, facilitated by varying access to reproductive biotechnologies, have significant, and often unexpected, social as well as personal impacts for women. In addition to the numerous social changes facilitated by capitalist interests through the twentieth century, with the increase in women’s access to education, the workplace, and increase in divorce, biomedical changes have been significant in directing these changes. One particular example of this is the development of the contraceptive pill: Lara V. Marks in Sexual Chemistry - A History of the Contraceptive Pill (2001) explores the complex political and social context that motivated the production and availability of the contraceptive oral pill in America during the cold war years. She describes the fears of communism, the growing world population, and women’s unrest that drove the research and implementation of what became an unexpectedly revolutionary change in reproductive technologies and practices.³⁵⁷ With their new-found sexual empowerment, women no longer needed to be tied to the constricting ideals of marriage and motherhood; their position within relationships, the family and society changed radically. This example of one particular reproductive technology epitomises the intersections of political and capitalist interests through reproductive, or more specifically contraceptive, technologies. This particular example notes the significant impact of these powers on the woman’s body. These impacts can be, like the contraceptive pill, hugely significant for women and gender difference, and, like effects of the contraceptive pill, not always intended.

This broad mapping of the family and the genealogical family tree provides a brief glimpse into a complex matrix of power, patriarchy and society. The family and the arboreal lines of inheritance surrounding it must be read critically to include the forms of power it perpetuates,

³⁵⁷ Lara V. Marks, Sexual Chemistry - A History of the Contraceptive Pill (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 10 June 2001).

advanced capitalist, political, social, patriarchal, manifested in sovereign and disciplinary forms. What my reading of the above works reveals is that it is not necessarily the traditional heteronormative familial and genealogical organisation of people which can be so resistant to including difference and others. Rather it is the normative discourse constructing these models, the genealogical narrative reinforcing them, and at times the political and advanced capitalist interests utilising and pervading them. My reading has noted that the embodied female subject is located as both the perpetuator of these forms of power and is subsumed into them. My reading of Piercy's literature explores these aspects of the female subject, the nuclear family, and power further. In particular, my reading maps woman's position within these genealogical and familial structures to provide further insight into woman's position within society and the significance of her changing reproductive capacity to this position.

2. Genealogy: Deconstructing Past Narratives

Genealogy patently, all are agreed, concerns knowledge; it concerns power; it concerns probably above all the body.³⁵⁸

The descriptive function of familial genealogies described previously shares multiple similarities with the methodological one. The genealogical method, as the epigraph notes, maps the embodied subject within a matrix of power and knowledge. In regard to the family, the genealogical method most significantly, and certainly not exclusively, provides tools for deconstructing the hegemony of the heteronormative nuclear family. Taylor, who I discussed in the previous section, articulates this thinking and the potential of reading through a genealogical lens in the introduction to her article on genealogies and the family. She states:

Approaching the family genealogically, rather than seeking a single model of power that can explain it at all times and in all places, shows that far from this institution being a quasi-natural formation or bedrock of unassailable values, it is in fact a continually contested fiction that masks its own histories of becoming.³⁵⁹

Taylor here notes two particular issues that are vital to my reading of genealogies: the deconstructing of 'quasi-natural' constructs and the exposing of masked 'histories of becoming'. By tracing familial genealogies in the previous subsection, I have exposed the

³⁵⁸ Scott Lash, 'Genealogy and the Body: Foucault/Deleuze/Nietzsche' from *Theory, Culture and Society*, 2:2, (June 1984), pp. 1 – 17.

³⁵⁹ Chloe Taylor, p.202.

artificiality of the supposed ‘natural’ and ‘normal’ aspects of the family and uncovered some of the forms of power manifested through its practising, patriarchy, heteronormativity, capitalism. In this subsection, I map how the genealogical method can facilitate this exposure, as Taylor suggests, to reveal the becomings, the complex dynamic subjectivities, concealed and suppressed beneath. By unmasking these ‘histories of becoming’, this method allows for multiple, evolving understandings of the family and, significantly, incorporates questions of power and knowledge in this endeavour. My step away from a literal consideration of the female subject and ARTs here, and in my reading of Lessing’s work later, is deliberate. I am shifting my focus in order to discuss methods of reading and thinking which facilitate a more dynamic and inclusive mode of considering contemporary experiences of female subjectivity and reproduction.

2.1. The Method of Genealogies

One of the most discussed explorations of this methodology is Foucault’s essay ‘Nietzsche, Genealogy, History’ (1977). In this essay, Foucault outlines a genealogy of thought on the method of genealogies. His reading steps beyond Nietzsche’s polemic and proposes that genealogy, which unlike a history, deals with fragments, moments and anomalies, is neither static nor limited by definitive facts:

Genealogy is grey, meticulous, and patiently documentary. It operates on a field of entangled and confused parchments, on documents that have been scratched over and recopied many times.³⁶⁰

The evocative language that he uses describes a re-scratching and re-copying necessary in the genealogical endeavour; this visual, figurative wording is indicative of his methodology’s resistance to a singular, hegemonic reading of the past and with it our present. I propose considering this in relation to Deleuze’s cartographic methodology outlined in A Thousand Plateaus. In the opening chapter Deleuze sets out the difference between a map and a tracing. According to him, ‘the map is open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, reworked by an individual, group, or social formation.’³⁶¹ In contrast to a tracing which offers a fixed, static representation of a landscape, a mapping (see Chapter One) derives

³⁶⁰ Michel Foucault, ‘Nietzsche, Genealogy, History’ in Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews, ed. D.F. Bouchard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), p.139.

³⁶¹ A Thousand Plateaus, (pp.13 – 14).

its critical potential from its capacity for editing, drafting, plurality. A mapping provides a frozen moment of an evolving landscape. A mapping offers a located, complex and dynamic reading of a text. Although not associated with the genealogical method as often as Foucault, Deleuze, drawing on Nietzschean thought, clearly sets out here a methodology which demands a similar dynamism of thought and a similar multidimensional consideration of the subject and his or her contextual society.

This discourse of fragments, torn parts, re-workings utilised by both Deleuze and Foucault is indicative of their resistance to a linear and in particular teleological consideration of history and progression.³⁶² Foucault makes this explicit in his rejection of an evolutionary narrative, and ‘sacred origin’, of humanity’s progression. Instead he identifies the accidents, the anomalies, the moments that make up our past and that we invest meaning into in the present:

Genealogy does not resemble the evolution of a species and does not map the destiny of a people. On the contrary, to follow the complex course of descent is to maintain passing events in their proper dispersion; it is to identify the accidents, the minute deviations – or conversely, the complete reversals – the errors, the false appraisals, and the faulty calculations that gave birth to those things that continue to exist and have value for us; it is to discover that truth or being do not lie at the root of what we know and what we are, but the exteriority of accidents.³⁶³

What is most interesting about his description of the past here is the very significant connection he makes between the past and the present. According to Foucault, events in the past gain their meaning, so become inserted into a teleological historical narrative, through how we read them or rather construct this narrative in the present. Foucault’s genealogical method, through the identifying of the anomalies, the deviations and the errors, seeks to make this narrative forming visible. Like the arboreal family tree, the method of ‘genealogy’ is one of mapping lines of descent, power, and society; unlike this tree, however, this is not to impose these lines of inheritance, but to reveal their artificiality.

Both Foucault and Deleuze’s considerations of genealogies serve to expose the artificiality of the dominant narratives constructed within historical, familial, social discourses. Bruce

³⁶² For a more extensive discussion of the difference between a history and a genealogy, Foucault, ‘Nietzsche, Genealogy, History’, (pp.152 – 164).

³⁶³ Foucault, ‘Nietzsche, Genealogy, History’, p.146.

Baugh offers an explanation of this. Through his concise description of Deleuze's use of genealogies, he notes how for Deleuze: "Genealogy" refers to tracing lines of descent or ancestry.³⁶⁴ His use of the word 'tracing' in relation to Deleuze is significant. Unlike a methodology of mapping, which is a multi-stranded, multi-dimensional, dynamic reading of a text, a tracing, as I have discussed from Deleuze's work, is an 'organized, stabilized, neutralized' outlining of narratives, memory and people.³⁶⁵ He uses this term here, however, not, Baugh emphasises, to impose a linear progression on the descent, but to expose it. By noting how the genealogical model functions as a 'tracing' to artificially stabilize familial connection, he is exposing this 'structuralized' organisation and inviting an examination of the causes and effects that pervade it: 'One key precept of the genealogical method is that effects need not resemble their causes, as the forces that produce a phenomenon may disguise themselves (for example, a religion of love can arise out of resentment)'³⁶⁶. This is interesting in relation to Foucault's work and his rejection of evolutionary narratives. Baugh's reading of Deleuze invites a consideration of the connectedness between past events and current beliefs or practices, and the necessity of thinking through these causes and effects, so past narratives which are both constructed in the present and impact the present, to resist naturalizing them. In relation to reading ARTs, Woman, and gender difference, this method is vital. As we have seen, woman's reproductive function is all too frequently naturalised as an identifier of her sex and subjectivity. Allowing consideration of this subjectivity beyond the confines of these aspects is essential to liberating the feminist female subject from these potentially defining and limiting effects, while still including the presence of such effects in the discussion.

The genealogical methodology invites precisely such complexity. It, like Deleuze's cartographic figure, demands multiple readings, numerically and interpretatively; it is a method which facilitates a reading of the present through the past, a 'history of the present' as Foucault described it.³⁶⁷ It is precisely this complexity, this multiplicity and this critical ability that allows this methodology to be utilised in a variety of academic forums. In their introduction to a study of nursing, Margalida Miro-Bonet, Andreu Bover-Bover, Cristina Moreno-Mulet, Rosa Miro-Bonet and Concha Zaforteza-Lallemand utilize Foucault's genealogical methodology as a 'critical toolbox'; in doing so they provide an instructive understanding of Foucault's method.

³⁶⁴ Bruce Baugh, 'Genealogy', *Deleuze Dictionary*, Adrian Parr (ed.), (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010 (2005)), p.119.

³⁶⁵ *A Thousand Plateaus*, p.15.

³⁶⁶ Baugh, *Deleuze Dictionary*, p.120.

³⁶⁷ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, (Penguin: London, 1991 (1975)), p.31.

They identify the ‘destabilizing’, ‘denormalizing’ effects this method of reading the present through the past can have:

Genealogy sheds a destabilizing light on the “history of the present”, denormalizing current identities, institutions and patterns of thought and action; it assumes a deep link between knowledge and ethical-political action; and it aims to transform this reality by opening up new possibilities for thought and action.³⁶⁸

The researchers here pinpoint one of Foucault’s most vital tools: his ‘history of the present’. This phrase, used by him in *Discipline and Punish* (1975), identifies the contemporary critical potential and necessity for reading the past through the genealogical lens, a lens which exposes the matrix of knowledge and power that confines understandings of both past and present. These ‘new possibilities’ that they describe then are catalysed through a methodology of genealogical mapping, which they argue opens up a space for thought beyond the norms enforced through power and knowledge. Such a mode of thinking is essential when considering the utilisation and development of ARTs in contemporary society. Following my discussion earlier in this chapter, this is because these ARTs are practised within a context entrenched in various forms of commercial, political, and geographical power. In order to mobilise such thinking, Miro-Bonet, Bover-Bover, Moreno-Mulet, Miro-Bonet and Zaforteza-Lallemand locate the significance in Foucault’s methodology of identifying movements, actions and behaviours from the past to better understand the present. They demonstrate how for Foucault, the act of reading, and in his case reading the past, can be an intensely political and vital one. Understanding the genealogical method through this lens enables readers not only to examine historical conditions, but the contemporary context ‘reading’ these conditions. This is necessary because, as my reading of the literature considers, both the past and the present have the potential to shape gendered subjectivities and reproductive practices.

2.2. Embodied Subjectivity

Genealogies map embodied subjectivity. In his reading of Foucault’s and Deleuze’s work on Genealogies in ‘Genealogy and the Body: Foucault/Deleuze/Nietzsche’, Lash makes this argument by working to determine what a genealogy is and, perhaps an even more complex task, how it differs from an archaeology. For Lash, the relation of genealogies to bodies derives

³⁶⁸ Margalida Miro-Bonet, Andreu Bover-Bover, Cristina Moreno-Mulet, Rosa Miro-Bonet and Concha Zaforteza-Lallemand, ‘Genealogy as a Critical Toolbox: deconstructing the professional identity of nurses’, *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 70:4, (Aug. 2013), p.3.

from the methodology's resistance to origins. He notes how Foucault in particular draws on, as he describes it, 'Nietzsche's opposition to any idea of 'origins'''.³⁶⁹ From this position, Lash identifies how Foucault instead constructs genealogy through, as Lash states, 'a question of two processes – of 'descent' (*Herkunft*) and 'emergence' (*Entstehung*).'³⁷⁰ Understanding descent through a familial discourse similar to the one I considered earlier, a discourse of 'bonds of blood', of traditions, of society, Lash draws the conclusion that Foucault is not proposing a genealogy of merely thoughts or rather of, as Lash states, Nietzschean 'morals', but rather Foucault is constructing 'a genealogy of *bodies*'.³⁷¹ Indeed Foucault's own writings corroborate this argument. Locating the genealogical method as an ethical and almost correctional method, Foucault places the body central to his thesis in 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History':

Genealogy, as an analysis of descent, is thus situated within the articulation of the body and history. Its task is to expose a body totally imprinted by history and the process of history's destruction of the body.³⁷² .

Foucault here seems to understand genealogy as an analytical methodology which counters the dominance of 'history' over the body. I take from Foucault's work that it is this 'history', so the narratives constructed around the past, that not only 'imprint' the body, but shape, alter and define it. Returning momentarily to the central node of the rhizome I am cultivating in this thesis, I want to address the critical value of a methodology of reading that uncovers and makes visible this 'destruction of the body' and that locates the embodied female subject within a history of the constructed nuclear family. Such a methodology is essential when discussing biotechnologies that not only shape life, but produce it.

Following my reading of Foucault's thinking, I propose understanding the genealogical methodology as a deconstructive mode of narrative building. It is a methodology for mapping terrains that not only allows and makes visible the anomalies and exceptions, but in doing so undoes the hegemony of a singular or dominant narrative. What is more, as my reading of Foucault has demonstrated, this methodology also provides a lens for including embodied subjectivity in this mapping. Although my discussion of it here and in Lessing's fiction does not relate directly to contemporary reproductive technologies, my work has and does

³⁶⁹ Lash, p.4.

³⁷⁰ Ibid.

³⁷¹ Ibid.

³⁷² Foucault, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History', p.148.

demonstrate and develop a methodology of reading and thinking that is critical when considering these contemporary experiences. Namely, reading that exposes the artificial narratives that define embodied subjectivity and reading that mobilises a way of thinking that resists these limitations.

3. Feminist Genealogies

The genealogy of the family tree and the genealogical methodology are two distinct plateaus in my rhizome. Nevertheless the forms of power implicated in the genealogical mappings of family trees can be exposed through the genealogical methodology. Consequently, although I have divided my above mappings of genealogies into two sections, these two plateaus are not divided; they overlap and interrelate. Both sections reveal issues of power present within familial structures and practices. Both of my readings problematize linear, patriarchal lines of familial inheritance and the teleological notions of progression and inheritance that arboreal organisation of families promotes. I have explored in the second part of this section how the genealogical method works to undo linearity, by providing counter narratives to dominant historical readings and beliefs. This is a method which invites multiplicity when reading both the past and the history of the present; it is a method I develop and apply further within the literary terrains of this chapter. Most significantly, my readings of the genealogical figure and methodology here enrich the Deleuzian rhizomatic methodology I set out at the beginning of this thesis by allowing for the inclusion of power and the past.

To conclude this section and to identify precisely how and why thinking through genealogies is so vital to my project, I want to briefly turn to the edition of Australian feminist studies, edited and contributed to by Braidotti, which deals with feminist genealogies, enhancing the methodology of reading I am developing and demonstrating in this thesis. In an effort to critique and re-conceptualise a linear, teleological understanding of generationality in the 2009 edition of Australian Feminist Studies, Feminist Generations, Braidotti along with the various contributors engages in an informative discussion on the mapping and methodologies of genealogy. Although working primarily in the context of academic thought, the focus of the journal issue provides insight and invigoration to my drive to resist teleological lines of inheritance that replicate the very modes of patriarchal thought feminism is working to resist

and which limit complex considerations of inter-generationality.³⁷³ In her introduction to the special issue, Braidotti identifies the recurrent thread throughout the discussions:

The assumption that underscores them all is that we need to be more creative in thinking communities along the lines of non-linearity and social sustainability, so as to pursue an effective form of inter-generational justice. The challenge for us consists in finding ways to conceptualise and represent the continuity and connection across the generations in a manner that is adequate to the radicalism of the feminist movement.

This is one way of resisting the present; or rather, the theft of it.³⁷⁴

Braidotti demonstrates the significance of the ways in which we conceptualise generationality. Noting the issue of ‘inter-generational justice’, she seems to be calling attention to the ethical issue of inheritance, not only in the juridical sense, but the social, critical and personal. How we consider these aspects of inheritance and generationality are significant because they are entrenched in the power and discourse of linear patriarchy. In light of my reading in this section, I propose that how we think about and what we learn from the past alters how we live in the present; this practice is vital when considering how families are constructed and, with the increasing use of ARTs, who is constructing them. Simultaneously the present affects this reading of the past. Uncovering the elements of power in these readings is essential to resist fixing or naturalising them. And the advice Braidotti offers is ‘to be more creative’. It is the contribution of literature to this discussion that makes it so vital and creative to critical thought in this endeavour. It is precisely this literary creativity and vitalism I will map in the following two sections.

II

The Third Child, Marge Piercy

The individual is the product of power. What is needed is to “de-individualize” by means of multiplication and displacement, diverse combinations. The group must not be the organic bond uniting hierarchized individuals, but a constant generator of de-individualization.³⁷⁵

³⁷³ Rosi Braidotti, ‘Introduction’, *Australian Feminist Studies*, 24:59, pp. 3 – 9.

³⁷⁴ Braidotti, *Australian Feminist Studies*, (p.4).

³⁷⁵ Preface by Foucault from *Anti-Oedipus*, p.xiv.

From the title, Marge Piercy's The Third Child (2003) invites consideration of hierarchized linearity in the genealogical family. This title, referring to the protagonist Melissa, identifies her by her ordinal number in the nuclear family. We learn throughout the book that this ordinal logic includes and extends beyond the ordering of progeny, to the ordering of sexes, races, and classes. The family is both itself the product of and producer of an extensive genealogy of power that functions within the arboreal family tree as well as the structures of political power in North America. At the head of this familial and political dynasty is the unambiguous phallus figure, the father Dick Dickinson. Yet it is Melissa the 'third child' and her mother's relation to this figure that is of particular interest to my work because my discussion of these two characters considers the ways in which women are implicated in and perpetuate various forms of familial power. Drawing from Foucault's quote in the epigraph and my discussion of his work in this chapter, I use Piercy's fiction to identify and critique genealogy as a linear tracing of family. My reading of the genealogical family tree in Piercy's text considers how the nuclear family is a hierarchical organisation of people which has the potential to perpetuate advanced capitalist values and (re)produce social norms. A principle pervading these values and norms, and so pervading the contemporary construction of the nuclear family, is the notion of the 'individual'. This sense of unitary, fixed sovereignty, as Foucault notes above, is one predicated on a submission to and perpetuation of power.³⁷⁶ Piercy's text both critiques and resists the individualising processes that the nuclear family perpetuates. In mapping the female subjects within this matrix of power, I examine how female figures maintain this phallogocentric power as well as offer points of exit or de-individualisation from its individualising bind.

1. The Embodied Subject and the Family

The eponymous 'third child' and protagonist of the fiction, Melissa forms an individualised, limiting sense of self, explicitly through her relationship with her family. Despite Melissa's criticisms of the burden of expectations carried by her own family tree, an arboreal discourse is adopted to describe Melissa's resistance to her nuclear family and suffocating family tree:

Melissa felt stunted in her family. Outside, she would blossom, she would grow into someone different from anybody in her family, someone admirable, someone strong and good and loved by others. (p.14)

³⁷⁶ The Posthuman, p.49.

The language used to depict her stifled potential to 'blossom' and 'grow' resonates with the arboreal family tree she is resisting. Much like my reading of the arboreal genealogical model earlier, she is subsumed into the tree. It is Melissa herself who, like a tree, is 'stunted', 'would blossom', 'would grow'. Reinforcing the extent to which the familial narrative has defined her, Melissa evidently struggles to locate her own subjectivity beyond the discourse of family, heritage and breeding. Indeed, she is persistently 'individualised' and defined within the narrative through her relation to the family tree: she is the 'third child'; the daughter of Rosemary and Dick Dickinson; the object of familial and public scrutiny; the resister of the family unit. From this starting point, the narrative maps the consequent process of de-individualisation: the dissolving of certainty about who she is and should be.

The fiction follows her journey into university education and away from the confines of the family home. This journey is complicated and enriched by the relationships she forms, and in particular the passionately physical one she develops with Blake. The first time Melissa has sex with Blake is profound for her. The physical experience and emotional connection are liberating: 'They were someplace else, some hidden intense place of fierce sensations.' (p.47). Although entrapped by her embodiment, the biological connection to her family and the genetic legacy her mother repeatedly reminds her of, Melissa finds liberation through embodied experiences. The place of 'fierce sensations' that she occupies with Blake is theirs, secret, 'hidden', not accessible by her family or the outside pressures. Consequently, she feels she is able to begin a process of liberation to 'someplace else' away from her biological entrapment, away from the demands of being the 'third child'. This sensual, physical exchange between Melissa and Blake has a profoundly invigorating and mobilising effect on Melissa; reminiscent of Deleuze's description that becomings are always 'between' and 'among' (see Chapter Three), the effect is catalysed through her contact with anOther, the new experiences and differences she encounters through contact with Blake.³⁷⁷ This intensely physical relationship and this exploration of her own embodiment through her relations with Blake, open Melissa up to experiences beyond the defining relations of her family; they open her up to potential becomings beyond the family confines.

Before she forms this relationship with Blake, the only place Melissa can seek solace and escape from her family, is in music: 'Music was a place she could go and her family

³⁷⁷ Deleuze, Essays Critical and Clinical, p.2.

couldn't follow' (p.25). Again utilising a description of physical location, the liberation offered to her by music is profound:

Her music was like a foreign country she could run away to, where sounds and rhythms enveloped her and she could imagine herself dancing... (p.25)

Her response to music is deeply embodied, personally responsive, and beyond the judgement of her family. It consumes her, transports her away, motivates her to move, both physically and cognitively. Taking her to the 'foreign' suggests an exposure to the unknown, the new, again the Other. Considering that this is a liberatory space to which she can 'run away' from the confines of her familial home and pressures locates this space as a deterritorialized one, free from the rule, regulations and expectations of her family. The 'envelopment' of listening to music is total. Although accessed through the aural experience of music, it impacts all aspects of her subjectivity, through the freedom she enacts with her dancing to the freedom she experiences in her imagination. Indeed music mobilises her, to move, to think, to create. Music is significant here because it functions beyond discourse, the Deleuzian 'outside of language',³⁷⁸ politics, family and power, and so provides Melissa the space to de-individualise, to abandon the concrete notions of self to the malleable moments of embodied experience. The mobilisation it facilitates is, as for Connie (see Chapter Two), embodied and embrained; it is personal and evidently for Melissa, in being so, also profound.

For Melissa, these deterritorialized bodily moments, whether accessed through sex or music, are ephemeral. Passing with the notes of a song or the intimacy of an encounter, they last only as long as she experiences them. In being fleeting they contrast again with the unrelenting patriarchal monolith of her family, its history and the weight of expectation accompanying it. But also in being fleeting, Melissa struggles to gain and maintain access to these moments of deterritorialization. It is arguably her desire to do so, her desire to return to and occupy these spaces, that drives Melissa's efforts to free herself from the confines of familial expectations and social pressures.

Embodiment, however, is also the source of Melissa's entrapment. She is acutely aware of the genetic bind she has to her family and references it frequently. These references are made primarily through the discourse of 'flesh and blood' (p.35). This discourse returns us to Taylor's reading of Foucault and the family in which she notes the significance of familial

³⁷⁸ Deleuze, Essays Critical and Clinical.

rituals such as birthdays and anniversaries to enforce the power of birth and blood rights over the individual.³⁷⁹ This is all too apparent within Piercy's narrative. Melissa's own birthday becomes an opportunity for her mother to impose her control over her; through the gifts she gives, the clothes she expects her to wear (p.19), and the way she expects her to celebrate, Rosemary seeks to dictate Melissa's appearance, behaviour and self. Melissa is all too aware of her mother's possessive bind over her and it alters how she experiences life; namely, she experiences it from the position of minor and resistance. While receiving advice from her mother via her assistant, Melissa darkly interprets the assistant, Alison's warning 'She gave you life...' as a reminder of her mother's control over her and a threat: 'She had always thought it meant, she gave you life and she could take it back' (p.265). Returning to my reading of Taylor, we are reminded here more sinisterly of the power of blood, the genetic ownership of blood-rights, manifested through the mother/child dyad here. To a somewhat extreme extent for Melissa it is a power that can give life, shape it, and even potentially take it. Melissa's position draws a direct connection between genetic inheritance, possession and control. For Melissa, the bind of 'flesh and blood' means she grudgingly feels she is treated as an object to be dressed, directed and dictated to by, notably, her mother.

In contrast to her is Blake, who does not allow Melissa to celebrate his birthday (p.116) and who disdains anniversaries and holidays of all types. This contrast only serves to reinforce for Melissa the limiting effects of the nuclear family unit to which she is tied by genetic inheritance and birth. Blake is repeatedly set up in juxtaposition to Melissa. His mixed race provides him with a genetic ambiguity and nomadic freedom that Melissa envies: "I don't know what my parents were – Indian, Filipino, African-American, Malaysian, Polynesian – I'll never know." (p.51) While she is extolling his ambiguously mixed race and adoption, however, he points out to Melissa that his genetic inheritance is what renders him an outcast, unable to belong: "Don't envy me too much. I'm not the real offspring. They have their own flesh and blood children. I'm the add-on. I'll never be a real son." (p.35). Evoking the possessive familial discourse of 'flesh and blood', Blake's complaints reveal the hierarchy and possessiveness of genetic relationality within the nuclear family model. In replicating traditional family discourse when describing his relationship to his adoptive sister, he reaffirms Melissa's own critique of genetic binds and a hierarchy of genetic bonds: 'What's a sisterette? Not blood, not bone, but a lot more than nothing.' (p.83) This statement propagates a notion

³⁷⁹ Chloe Taylor, p.203.

perpetuated by the advanced capitalist ART industries: the hierarchy of genetic relationality. The assisted reproductive industry facilitates and profits from the preference for genetically related progeny, or when necessary a simulacrum of it through egg and sperm selection and purchasing. This is a position frequently proposed by ART critics.³⁸⁰ Marketing surrogacy, purchasing profiled sperm or eggs, the production of reproduction profits out of a desire to conceive, gestate and reproduce genetically related offspring. And yet, through an absence of these genetic bonds, Blake appears to be entitled then a nomadic freedom; Melissa's experience of him as a confident, liberated, independent and exotic person, seems to posit his liberation from the genealogical, blood-right confines as a dynamic and positive aspect of his subjectivity.

2. Blood and the Family

Melissa's mother Rosemary works tirelessly to uphold the supposed sanctity of bloodlines. As the central matriarch, she functions through Foucauldian modes of both sovereign and disciplinary power to maintain the status quo of the past family tree and future propagation of it: 'But Rosemary believed in breeding, in blood, in all the things that Grandpa too believed in.' (p.131) Rosemary upholds this position throughout the text. With her comparisons of having a family to breeding horses, this position is, however, bordering on the absurd:

Breeding is an unpopular term, although the owners of racehorses are paid huge sums for the genes of winners. Breeding can mean two things: the genes that an individual receives from his ancestors. Your father is the product of fine bloodlines as truly as any Triple Crown winner. Generation after generation has produced winners, generals, leaders of men. (p.246)

We return to 'bloodlines', 'genes' and the significance of genetic inheritance within the family genealogy. Here though, utilising a capitalist discourse of product and production, Rosemary's thinking relates directly to Foucault's concerns regarding the intrusion of power on reproduction. Noting the 'huge sums for the genes of winners' and comparing their family to the 'winners, generals, leaders of men' that are the 'product' of, significantly, Melissa 'father's'

³⁸⁰ For further discussion of this see Renate Klein, 'From Test Tube Women to Bodies Without Women', *Women's Studies International Forum* Volume 31, Issue 3, (May–June 2008), pp. 157–175. Liza Mundy, *Everything Conceivable: How Assisted Reproduction is Changing Men, Women and the World*, (Penguin: London, 2008).

bloodlines, there is an almost parodic locating of Rosemary as the perpetrator, the facilitator of the continuation of the genes and with them their capitalist and political powers.

Rosemary's efforts to maintain this power are manifested explicitly through her management and control of her children; she organises their education, friendships, clothes and significant life choices. Her control over them is also evident in more implicit, disciplinary ways, however. When Melissa trips while walking down the aisle at her brother's wedding, her crippling fear of her mother's reaction exposes this more implicit form of power and control over her children: 'Rosemary must have eyes in the back of her head – Melissa had often suspected that – because at the altar her mother glared at her.' (p.26). Here Melissa's fear does not derive from Rosemary's reaction, but like the function of Foucault's panopticon, it is from the fear of this reaction and the belief that Rosemary is observing and policing her behaviour at all times.

This form of policing is motivated by the 'best-practices mentality' Murray critiques in his description of neo-liberal family care. The forms of neo-liberal power manifested in Piercy's work are those propagated by the ideal of individualism and the capitalist maintenance of elitist class power. Alfredo Saad-Filho and Deborah Johnston describe this phenomenon succinctly in the introduction to their reader: '...neoliberalism is part of a hegemonic project concentrating power and wealth in elite groups around the world, benefiting especially the financial interests within each country, and US capital internationally.'³⁸¹ Rosemary works tirelessly, both independently and through her children, to facilitate this concentration of wealth and power; this is notably not her own but her husband's wealth, power and career: 'Her world was built on Dick and his career' (p.16). This 'world' of Rosemary's is maintained through her role as wife and mother; the 'care' she practices in these roles resonates with Murray's critique of this neo-liberal form of care: '...we find care is being redefined – care comes to be normalized, disciplined, technologized.'³⁸² Rosemary's management of her family is 'disciplined' most explicitly in the Foucauldian sovereign sense; placing herself as the representative and maintainer of her husband's power, she sets clear boundaries, rules and expectations, always reminding of the repercussions when not followed. Her regular emails advising on life decisions and directing expected standards for her children establish the

³⁸¹ Alfredo Saad-Filho and Deborah Johnston, eds., *Neoliberalism: A Critical Reader*, (London: Pluto Press, 2005) (p.1).

³⁸² Murray, (p.10).

position that her power over her children is reinforced through modern, technologized means. Rosemary's 'care' and attention, then, following neo-liberal notions of free market movement and capitalist gain, are to the maintenance and propagation of her elitist family tree and its power.

Melissa describes in a university essay the reason for her mother's support of family and tradition: 'Mother was big on tradition, since her family had none. They were the likeable ones, of no importance. Importance was important, I learned early.' (p.30) Seeming to come from an unknown family without strong roots, Rosemary works throughout the fiction to cultivate these roots in her marital family. Melissa's observation 'Importance was important' locates this family in a socio-economic and political matrix of power. Yet, although Melissa understands this drive to derive from a need for 'importance', this importance is not Rosemary's own, but rather, like the perpetuation of Dick's, not her, bloodlines, that of her husband. Following Taylor's reading of Foucault, we can identify here not a family of 'individuals' then but rather through Dick's sovereign position, and Rosemary's propagation of it, a family that perpetuates the individual of Dick, into which all the members are subsumed, an explicit form of phallogocentrism.³⁸³ Rosemary, through both sovereign, with her instructions and emails, and disciplinary, with her constant observation and judgement, forms of power is an upholder of Dick's power; she is a facilitator of his strength and growth. Indeed, by describing the 'generation after generation' of 'winners, generals, leaders of men', Rosemary is only describing the men in their family who represent it and prosper from it. By aspiring to the forms of social 'breeding' and training required to uphold such standards, Rosemary locates herself directly as the upholder of such standards and expectations, but is simultaneously subsumed into the phallogocentric tree.

Melissa's brother's marriage and first child are praised by Rosemary as the ideal continuation of their family's power. The two events serve as a binding thread throughout the fiction and as a direct contrast to Melissa's growing criticism of and departure from the family unit. Anticipation surrounding the birth of Richard and Laura's child depicts the importance of perpetuating the family line to Melissa's family: "So, what will they name the baby?" "Richard, of course. That's what they call the firstborn boys nowadays. Richard the Fifth. Quintus" (p.279). Again returning to the ordinal logic of hierarchies, this description of the

³⁸³ Chloe Taylor, p.203.

birth of their child functions in two ways; it arguably ridicules the patriarchal hierarchies of linearity; it enacts the familial commodification of the progeny, presenting with him a means of maintaining lines of inheritance and so retaining wealth within the family. In Piercy's text, reproduction and genealogies are tied up with capital, power, and the inheritance of both. While discussing the birth critically, Melissa and her boyfriend identify this factor as key to her brother's progeny: 'This was the birth of the heir to whatever.' (p.279). Family and inheritance then are about assets. This is both in regard to the commodity being produced and the continuation and inheritance of commodities through the family line.

This position is particularly poignant at the reading of Melissa's grandfather's will. In this scene, we witness explicitly the juridical maintenance of patriarchal familial linearity. Handing down weaponry and historical items from various great, great Grandfathers to Dick, Melissa's father, and Richard IV, Melissa's brother, her grandfather even notes in the will the 'historical treasures of our legacy' (p.132) which pass from man to man. As an aside, he permits the women in the family to select something from the house if their father desires it: '...they may select something from the house that pleases them, providing that it is not an item desired by their father...' (pp.132 – 133). Once again reinforcing the patriarchal power, the grandfather deems it necessary to let the father, Dick Dickinson, control what the women receive. In a final statement, the Grandfather also seeks to uphold heteronormativity through his power of bequeathing: 'All of the bequeathals to my daughter, Karen, are provisional upon her promise never to see Eve Kalman again so long as she may live.' (p.133) He only allows his daughter to inherit if she acquiesces and ends her relationship with another woman. In a vulgar demonstration of patriarchal, heteronormative power, the grandfather uses the will to control wealth, define legacy and maintain patriarchy. This scene, central to the book, illustrates explicitly the familial inheritance of power and the patriarchal and juridical controls over it.

3. Power and the Family

Driven by her own sense of redundancy and worthlessness within her family, Melissa becomes appalled at the relentless continuation of patriarchal wealth and power. Consequently, she decides to act:

Rich Junior, heir apparent to the Dickinson political dynasty, now had his own crown prince. God help girls who came along later. Blake was right: the dynasty would roll

on and on unless someone threw up a roadblock. After all, she wasn't dynastic. She was superfluous. (p.281)

The dynastic references in this extract are parodic; 'Heir apparent', 'dynasty', 'crown prince' infuse the patriarchy in Melissa's family with an inflated sense of the family's domination and legacy. This language both presents Melissa's critique of her family, but also the historical legacy of patriarchal power her family, manifested largely through her mother's work, is maintaining. It is the relentlessness of the power, in Rosemary's earlier description the 'generation after generation' of it, that has through Melissa's lens become a dynasty that, apparently unstopably, rolls 'on and on'. This pervasion from past, to present, through to future of her family's power terrifies Melissa. Its rootedness in teleological progression enforces its dominance. Recognising that she served no function in the familial 'dynasty', Melissa realises her, as a woman, required submission to and perceived absence from the family genealogy and establishes her resistance to the progression of the patriarchal dynasty. Unlike Rosemary who gladly subsumes herself into and indeed further cultivates the family tree, Melissa here critiques the demand to become a facilitator of the patriarchal power. She no longer wishes to be absent, to be 'superfluous'. Blake, however, has other motives and unbeknown to Melissa wants to not only overthrow her father's political and business interests, but overthrow the man himself. Naively unaware of Blake's motivations, Melissa works tirelessly with him on creating a 'roadblock'; informing themselves of her father's work and his violations, they build a picture of the ultimate patriarch, the phallus, Dick Dickinson, 'King Richard'.

The 'roadblock' that Melissa's boyfriend offers is, like in many of Piercy's fictions, a bloody revolt against the dominant powers. In this case the dominant force is considered to be Melissa's father, the man who uses the law to maintain his own power and to destroy the lives of Blake's own biological family. Aided by Melissa, Blake comes to the family home, the centre of the Dickinson family dynasty, enters the living room and, following a confrontation, murders Dick. This scene marks a tragic end to the narrative. It is particularly tragic because rather than deconstructing the power of the family, it reaffirms the dominance of familial power over the subject. Blake, who initially appears to be a nomadic subject, liberated from possessive family control or racial heritage, seems to commit this murder to avenge his own biological father. It is not explicitly confirmed by Blake, but it is suggested throughout that Dick's assessment of him is correct: he has a '...doomed obsession with [his own] father.' (p.332). Replicating the significance of family and inheritance in this text, Blake responds to a burden

he inherits from his biological father, the burden of revenge. This final tragedy depressingly reaffirms in this text the possessive tie of genetic and generational inheritance. It is Melissa's description of the murder that confirms the genealogical bind Blake is trapped in: 'Now everyone would say he was a murderer, son of a murderer.' (p.335). Echoing the inherited dynastic titles referred to throughout, 'son of...', Melissa's simple statement exposes both the entrapment of familial inheritance, and through her expressed 'everyone would say' also the bind of family functioning within a larger social context. This impotent act of resistance bloodily evokes the possessive tie of genetic and generational inheritance.

What is tragically ironic in this scene is that once again the maternal figure is subsumed into the patriarchal role; women are not liberated through this violent act, they are forgotten. Melissa's mother, who has been described as Melissa's tormentor and the persistent upholder of the family unit throughout, is assumed innocuous by Blake and spared her life. In a similar act of 'forgetting', the final chapter describes Melissa after the event. Heavily medicated and committed to a 'rehabilitation' centre following failed suicide attempts, she lacks energy, mental clarity and freedom: 'In between was a thick layer of smog that choked her so she could not cry and scream, so words were fish shapes that escaped into the greyness and she was left groping for herself.' (p.338) As a consequence of the event, the murdering of the patriarch, Melissa is far from liberated; she is through the description of her being 'choked' quite literally silenced. Where previously her embodied senses had provided her a form of liberation from her family, a route to discovering a new more dynamic form of subjectivity, now, she is unable to access these senses. She is silenced, unable to 'cry and scream', and in the 'greyness' of her environment she is figuratively blinded, left 'groping for herself', unclear what or who that is. Melissa here is not only placed in a mental institution by her mother so that she can be forgotten by the public, but she is starting to forget herself.

Melissa's torpidity and inertia, her incarceration at the hand of her family, her silencing, her inability to even reflect on the preceding event, these are the reasons that the narrative fails to escape the familial bind it so passionately critiques throughout. It is not that I am proposing murdering the mother figure as a solution to this limitation, but rather reflecting more critically on the murdering of the father and offering Melissa a space beyond the family confines. In the final two chapters we once again witness people trapped in their family roles and by their inherited pasts. Blake's 'roadblock' to the family dynasty serves merely to ensure his own

entrapment in the linearity of ‘murderers’ and Melissa’s in the social and political demands of her family’s genealogy.

Families loom large in this fiction. They form the values, behaviours and confining ‘selves’ of the characters in the text. Although the fiction poses brief *sorties* through embodied experiences, it ultimately offers no solution or hope to the bind of familial inheritance. Instead the fiction serves as a warning regarding these binds and signposts directions towards salvation. The warning offered is concerning the individualising and commodifying power of the nuclear family unit. Setting this narrative within the heart of the nuclear family, a wealthy and politically empowered one propagated by explicit disciplining and punishing forms of power, provides a critique of this matrix of power. It provides this critique through the eponymous ‘third child’ Melissa. Her treatment by, resistance to, and disgust with her family and in particular her mother all serve to present the forms of power working on and attempting to work through her. The narrative facilitates a critique that recognises the power structures inherent within and perpetuated through not only the family then, but in particular with the presentation of Melissa and her mother the women within the family. Normative gender, sexual and social values are manifested and enforced within the family unit. Furthermore, the text demonstrates the patriarchal values both subjugating and perpetuated by the maternal figure, Rosemary, the maternal body through which the ‘dynasty’ is extended and the maternal figure who propagates the phallus’s norms and values.

With references throughout and ending in the shedding of blood, the narrative draws our attention repeatedly to the body, the genetic codes of genealogy held within, the social contexts it performs, and the potential it contains to become beyond. The signposts towards salvation appear to lie within this embodied subjectivity. Published after Piercy’s ‘Body of Glass’, we are here presented with not a technologized embodied space, but a nevertheless politicised and embattled one. The body, in this case the reproductive and female body, is the battlefield for the forms of hegemonic, patriarchal, political and capitalist power critiqued in ‘The Body of Glass’. The body is also the location for movement beyond these powers; Melissa’s embodied experiences of music and sex are profoundly deterritorializing for her. They offer moments of becoming to her, allowing her glimpses of a more complex, dynamic subjectivity beyond the unified, individual enforced through her familial role. Yet, these moments of deterritorialization are fleeting. As a consequence of her role in the failed and bloody resistance to her father, Melissa is pacified, disconnected, mentally and physically, from

any form of deterritorialized movement. If the text is serving as a warning, I propose we read these desperate and failed efforts to revolt as a warning also. Returning to the epigraph from Foucault which I quoted at the beginning of this subsection, this warning should be extended to the nuclear family grouping that goes precisely against Foucault's cautions. It has the potential to unite individuals through 'hierarchized' bonds and consequently renders them subject to power, power of the family, power of advanced capitalism, power of the state, and power of the past.

III

The Cleft, Doris Lessing

Time, in this non-narrative conception, is not an unfolding towards a proper end that we grasp in the present, where the past might be used: time is an 'open whole' where the past can always produce new potentials for new futures, which in turn open up new pasts.³⁸⁴

Brooding about this whole question sparked off speculation and then that spinning of the imagination that can lead to the birth of stories.³⁸⁵

Lessing's The Cleft (2007) constructs a fiction around the family. Lessing's work, unlike Piercy's The Third Child, self-consciously maps this process of narrative construction; it documents the moment in a fictional history when men were first born into an all-female community and families came into existence. Lessing's narrative provides multiple layers to this act of mapping the past; it presents both the story of an early female civilisation, the Clefts, and the story of the Roman chronicler struggling to map this past community. It is through my reading of the chronicler that I map a methodology for reading a 'history of the present', so a complex consideration of temporalities, narratives and subjectivity. The epigraph above from Colebrook's article as part of the Australian Feminist Studies edition on feminist time, which I discussed earlier in this chapter, describes the critical potential of such a non-teleological, complex conception of the past. Her consideration of how the past is not something that can be 'grasped' and then 'used' resonates with Foucault's critique of the forms of power manifested

³⁸⁴ Clare Colebrook, 'Stratigraphic Time, Women's Time', Australian Feminist Studies, 24:59, (2009), pp. 11 – 16, p.14.

³⁸⁵ Doris Lessing, The Cleft, (London: Harper Perennial, 2007), preface. All further references to this text are from this edition and given parenthetically.

in the narratives we construct about the past. Reading the fictional evolution of the family within this temporal and genealogical frame allows me to consider how a methodology of mapping these narratives, evident through my reading of the figure of the chronicler, facilitates the opening up of ‘new’, multiple past narratives and in so doing allows space for a creativity which provokes a mode of thinking that can make new and potentially multiple futures possible. Although the narrative does not discuss reproductive technologies explicitly, my reading of this text considers further the potential of creative, non-linear modes of thinking to my discussion of changes in reproduction and family.

1. The Cleft

The Cleft is one of Doris Lessing’s final publications and like some of her earlier, more critically discussed works, such as Marriages Between Zones Three, Four, and Five, it tackles issues surrounding gender, difference and literary creation. Phyllis Sternberg Perrakis draws multiple comparisons between The Cleft and Marriages Between Zones Three, Four, and Five. As I discussed in the previous chapter, she notes the act of crossing boundaries ‘erected by human arrogance or fear’³⁸⁶ to be central to both:

Very often these forms are experimental and exploratory, involving the crossing of various kinds of boundaries, of genre, gender, and even of species. These crossings almost invariably involve characters in difficult or painful experiences that detach them from old ways of thinking or being and open them up to the possibility of new kinds of speculation and growth.³⁸⁷

I considered in Chapter Three the potential, personal and critical, of occupying and crossing boundaries. In this chapter, I focus on the second part of Perrakis’s quote. Namely, the ability mobilised both within the fiction, documented through the chronicler’s ‘challenge’ of constructing the history, and through the experience of reading it, to detach from ‘old ways of thinking’ and to open up to ‘new kinds of speculation’. This seems like a challenging position to take on Lessing’s The Cleft considering the primary criticism aimed at it is its apparent submission to ‘old’ binary and gendered ways of thinking. Jennifer A. Wagner-Lawlor surveys a number of these criticisms in her work in Postmodern Utopias and Feminist Fictions

³⁸⁶ Phyllis Sternberg Perrakis, ‘The Porous Border Between Fact and Fiction, Empathy and Identification in Doris Lessing’s The Cleft’, eds., Alice Ridout, Susan Watkins, Doris Lessing: Border Crossings, (London: Continuum, 2009), p.152.

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p.143.

(2013).³⁸⁸ She argues, however, that these critics are missing the ‘crux’ of Lessing’s work and I wholeheartedly agree with her. I would argue that this ‘crux’ is in part identified by Roberta Rubenstein’s discussion of Lessing’s much earlier writing, however; Rubenstein notes, in her work The Novelistic Visions of Doris Lessing: Breaking the Forms of Consciousness (1978), that Lessing’s texts are rather predominantly about ‘linear and circular modes of cognition’.³⁸⁹ Not limiting the ‘modes of cognition’ mobilised by this text to linear or circular models, I want to demonstrate the text’s ability to mobilise dynamic and at times even rhizomatic ways of thinking.

The Chronicler, arguably unwittingly, offers instructions to read and indeed think through such a dynamic, subjective, problematising lens at the opening of the fiction. He does this by starting his history with Maire’s, a Cleft’s, testament. In stark contrast to his attempts and failures to impose a singular, linear logic on the documents available to him, the history Maire offers is self-professedly fragmented and multi-layered. In her record, she admits her own inability to access her past. This past is rendered inaccessible through the uncertainty of memory: ‘Yes, I know, you keep saying, but what you don’t understand is that what I say now can’t be true because I am telling you how I see it all now, but it was all different then’ (p.7). She presents here the absence of a singular ‘truth’ in the construction of the past. For Maire, this ‘truth’ is absent because by telling the history now, it is influenced by the present. Like Foucault’s ‘history of the present’, what we say about the past is determined by how we live, what we think, and who we are now. The inaccessibility of Maire’s past is not only because she is remembering it many years later, but because through the process of collective remembering, any semblance of singular certainty is lost. She describes this process of documenting orally their communal history and how through it any faction of a so-called truth is abandoned:

When the story is told to the young ones – they have a name, they are called Memories - it is told first among ourselves, and one will say, ‘no, it was not like that,’ or another, ‘Yes, it was like that,’ and by the time everyone is agreed we can be sure there is nothing in the story that is untrue. (pp.8- 9).

History for this community is a conversation, a fiction and a malleable memory edited by many. The ‘truth’ of their history then is multiple, collaborative, constructed, and not cemented. The

³⁸⁸ Jennifer A. Wagner-Lawlor, Postmodern Utopias and Feminist Fictions, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

³⁸⁹ Cited in Jennifer A. Wagner-Lawlor, p.96.

significance of this to my own thesis is that it presents a mode of thinking that emerges from the chronicler's own efforts. By placing this extract of Maire's history at the beginning of the book, the reader is to a certain extent offered instructions: read, think, enjoy, but do not cement, do not hold true, just, as the chronicler must, imagine. It is precisely this instruction that is instructive to my thesis and the mode of thinking I am mapping.

These varying and compelling modes of reading are also evident from the title of Lessing's The Cleft which already indicates several layers of meaning to the text. Initially it appears that the title is functioning as a simple identifier of gender and difference. The Cleft is the name given both to the rock formations in the cliffs looming above a founding, female, and auto-reproductive community, and also to these women and to their genitalia. The term rather provocatively, and reminiscent of Plato's receptacle, subsumes this community of women into their reproductive organ and biological sex. Although the title of 'Cleft' was apparently always used by the early female community to describe the geological formation and themselves, its reductive function of gender definition, the Clefts (female) and the Squirts (male), is revealed to only have become necessary with the arrival of 'the Squirts' or 'the Monsters' and with them difference: 'Males, females. New words, new people.' (p.13). This succinct line encompasses a common trope in the fiction: confrontation with difference catalyses change. The Clefts, the geological formation, the women, and most specifically the biological genitalia, are repeatedly identified as the direct source of this difference and change; significant to my reading of them and the focus of this thesis, they are the locations and generators of change, through new life and difference.

2. The Title's Multiple Functions

An explicit connection is repeatedly made between the biological and geological clefts; this provokes my reading of the narrative function of the title The Cleft to be more than simply descriptive. By this I mean, the title's multiple, interrelated allusions offer a lens through which to read and map some of the more compelling aspects of the text, the human subject, their environment, and narrative construction. I propose then reading the title as not simply outlining or even highlighting the themes of the book. Instead, I propose reading the title as a functioning, mobilising figure for thought. It is through this lens that the text becomes a space for thinking beyond binary definitions, teleological narratives, and defining norms; it becomes a landscape for mapping the act of reading, creating, and thought.

The introduction to the ‘history’, or indeed fiction, from Maire sets up one of the potential functions of thinking through the Cleft; it subtly, through its description of the various cleft figures, offers a contemporary, environmental reading of the work, which resonates with my understanding of the ‘Anthropocene’. This understanding is informed by Braidotti who describes this current ‘bio-genetic age’ as ‘the historical moment when the Human has become a geological force capable of affecting all life on this planet.’³⁹⁰ She describes an interdependence between human, animals and nature that allows them to function because of one another, not despite. Our contemporary ‘Anthropocene’ era is one in which the balance of these connections is distorted and we, the Anthropos, are not only affecting but destroying the environment around us. Published in 2007, a year after Al Gore’s influential An Inconvenient Truth (2006), The Cleft appears amidst a growing awareness of and concern about our current environmental crisis. From its opening pages, with a description of a symbiotic relationship between human and environment, The Cleft documents this evolving dependency on and eventual destruction of nature. Maire, an appointed ‘memory’, presents her account of her community’s changing relationship with the Cleft. Noting how their community cultivated, protected and utilised the rock, she explains how connected their female sea-loving community was to this piece of land, their entire world: ‘We are The Cleft and The Cleft is us.’ (pp.9-10). This is an explicit invitation to read the rock-face and the female community in direct relation to one another. Consequently, the descriptions offered of the rock’s connection to the moon, to life and death, to seasons and weather allows an ‘Anthropocene’ reading of the women and their environment. Reinforcing this position, the relation between the humans and their evolving landscape catalyses changes in both; the environment is cast as both protector and potential killer of the humans, with the caves offering sanctuary while the forest, river and Cleft itself pose risk and potential death. Eventually through the book, however, the landscape is shaped by the Monsters and the Clefts; the monsters utilise resources in the forest to establish their own community and eventually destroy the cleft (p.254) while the Clefts not only adapt their environment for life but also for ritual and religious purposes, with the killing rock (p.123). The title, by demanding thinking through ‘the Cleft’ in all its forms, invites us to consider the interconnectedness of these elements, human, nature, environment.

³⁹⁰ The Posthuman, p.5.

The geological Cleft's presence is central throughout the fiction. Descriptions of the rock face bookend the fiction. This apparently circulatory logic, starting and finishing with descriptions of the Cleft, is echoed through the Monsters' travels around the island; this narrative aspect offers a clear resistance to linear teleology and narrative structure within the book. Towards the end of the text, once the male and female communities are well established and growing, the leader of the male group forms an expedition party in the hopes of discovering their environment and a new place for them all to settle. They travel far, for a considerable length of time, and face numerous challenges on their journeying. While exploring an underground cave system, they discover that they have returned to their point of departure, the Cleft. On seeing and recognising the distinct stone formation, the chronicler remarks that having circled the island they have found 'an end where a beginning had been.' (p.210). Members of this group then accidentally destroy the Cleft. Replicating this apparently circuitous logic when the Cleft is destroyed, so the chronicler decides the 'history' ends: 'The explosion of The Cleft is both the end of a tale and the beginning of the next, Historians who wrote long ages before me agreed on that – and so let it be.' (p.260) Repeating the cyclical mode of thinking, he recognises that on ending his own 'tale', another will begin. It is this declaration that leads me to read this narrative, however, not as circular. In both cases, for the expedition team and the chronicler, the return to and ending with the Cleft is not a return to the same Cleft at the beginning. In both cases the Cleft is changed, weather beaten, altered by the people around it and eventually destroyed, and so are the men encountering it again. The men in the expedition team have faced hardships, lost members of their group, learnt new lessons about women and life. The chronicler has battled with the task of documenting this community; he has aged (p.258); he has revealed changes in his family and personal life; he too is changed. It seems then that the Cleft here marks moments of reterritorialization for these men and the chronicler. Returning to the stem, the Cleft, marks moments on their continuing journeys, whether as the first humans or as the Roman chronicler. These moments do not return to the starting point; they do not return to a point which is simply altered; rather, they return to a familiar space filled with the potential of more 'beginnings', further journeying, and, in the case of the chronicler and his task, multiple drafts of history. This presents the narrative and the travels it documents as not linear, and also not circular, or even spiral, but with the multiple possibilities they contain simultaneously, past, present and future, the intertwined, but independent narrative strands, as more rhizomatic, returning, for now, to the stem, the Cleft, but changed.

The title serves a further function; it demands the consideration of the constructedness of memory and history. At the opening of the text, the chronicler makes it clear that he did not select the title of the book. He notes that that was done by the many historians before him whose testaments and records form the basis of his narrative (p.7). In a continuation of the consideration of this process of naming, the Chronicler offers up a name for himself for the purposes of this book, 'Transit' (p.24). Refusing to offer an explanation or indeed his 'real name', his self-selected title suggests a far more dynamic reading of the history, one that involves a process of movement. His reference to the text's title edited and chosen by others and to the deliberate application of his own appellation makes evident the self-conscious process of naming and with it writing history, and the power of the chronicler, or chroniclers, in this process. In this context, the text's title The Cleft appears to be less a certain identifier, than a selected and edited label applied by documenters and historians many years after the civilisation existed. My reading here of the title and its layers of meaning, the provocations and considerations it contains encapsulate the elements of difference, gender, family, narrative building, and creativity that I map further in this text. In doing so, I consider further how the tales we build, like the names we select, the histories we document, and the families we construct, are not the teleological lines the chronicler is struggling so desperately to create, but rather spirals, rhizomes, fragile strands that can be re-edited, re-written, and re-thought.

Through scraps of documents and oral histories, the chronicler constructs a fiction, posing as a history, of the Clefts and the Cleft. This fiction, rather in contrast to Piercy's text of individualisation, does not focus on individual characters. Instead it maps communities, a people: 'We only had Shes, didn't we, only Clefts...' (p.10). These people, or women, are auto-reproductive and even raise their offspring as a community, oblivious to notions of genetic ownership or inheritance. Indeed the first differentiation within this group, is of 'old' (p.13) and 'young' (p.68). This difference only arises, however, once 'the Monsters', an evocative description of the new difference, the men, are born; difference breeds difference and the group begins to splinter, forming fractions but still not 'individuals'. The Clefts themselves initially thought in terms of 'the people', community; everything is a part of the community and the history or memory they preserved is understood as 'our story' (p.8). They saw no need for individual tales. In contrast to Piercy's text in which the protagonist struggled under the burden of individuation imposed through her family, Lessing's fiction offers a community that appear, initially, to be liberated from the burden of family, individualisation and with these factors, power.

When individuals are mentioned they function as figures rather than developed characters; they are not depictions of complex subjectivities, but rather by the chronicler's own admission they figure moments, moods and changes in the developing communities. The first Cleft to evolve from the community, driven 'by a new inner nature' through her encounters with 'the Monsters', names herself; rather than being described by her function of cleaning the water, so named 'Water' like the others who perform this function, she asks to be called 'Maire' (p.68). The chronicler documents her journeys to the monsters' camp, her births, and her leadership of the evolving Cleft community. He then interrupts his documenting to reveal that through the stories told about her, Maire and her friend Astre have 'become more than themselves.' (p.102). Indeed, he notes how through their function of catalysing change throughout their early community, 'they were not young females, but founders of families, clans, tribes – and at some point, ages later, evolved into goddesses.' (p.102). Emerging from the group, these individuals do not function as complex depictions of 'real' people, but rather figures of family, fecundity and change for a growing nation. By presenting characters not as multi-dimensional representations of people, but rather as narrative tools, the narrative similarly appears to function beyond a dualistic or reductive representation of an evolving female community. Consequently, I propose reading this fiction not as representative of a story, but as a space for figuring thought on the construction of narratives, notably here narratives about women, families, and difference.

Further reinforcing this reading of the text is the presentation of the chronicler. The chronicler is the character that gets developed in the most depth; he is an aging Roman senator who regularly interjects into his narrative and reflects on his struggles to document this early female population. Although he himself declares 'What kind of a man I am is not really of importance in this debate...' (p.6), his frequent narrative interjections, reflections on his own life, and considerations of the editing process, reveal that the 'kind of a man' he is, notably an aging, privileged, Roman man, is fundamental to the kind of narrative being constructed. Sternberg Perrakis' reading of 'empathy and identification' in *The Cleft* similarly identifies the narration of the 'historical metafiction' through the Roman's lens as crucial to the work's border crossing function, between genres, genders and species.³⁹¹ This function, she argues, derives primarily from his empathetic responses to and identification with the people he is

³⁹¹ Sternberg Perrakis, p.143.

documenting.³⁹² Reinforcing the significance of reader response and textual effect that I have mapped through this thesis, her article presents the significance of the stories we tell, both how we tell them and who tells them. I agree. Because the chronicler interweaves his own life experience with his struggles to tell the tale of the Clefts from the, at times, conflicting fragments of history available to him, the narrator and processes of narrative construction becomes as significant as the narrative itself. This persistent presence of the chronicler's voice functions twofold here: it reinforces the need to read this text through the position of the chronicler; it creates a layering of narratives that diminishes the possibility of presenting a singular or irrefutable history.

3. The Clefts and the Monsters

The chronicler's reading of the past centres on the beginning and consequent impact of the first male babies to be born into an all-female community. I deliberately use the term 'reading' here to not only suggest that the past is a topography of narratives to be explored, but also to identify the creative and critical act of reading these narratives in its presentation. The 'history' being constructed by the Roman chronicler imaginatively incorporates many of the key issues I have been discussing in this thesis around the female subject and reproduction. Within these, one significant area I have discussed previously is the birth of difference and through this the creation of monstrosity (see Chapter Two). Indeed, the catalyst of his endeavour to write the history is of significance to his consequent focus on gender difference: 'It was because of my observations in the nursery wing that I decided to attempt this history, despite the difficulties' (p.62). In the nursery wing the chronicler observes his son and daughter innocently discovering their anatomical difference and building on their understanding of sexual difference. The chronicler describes the mix of emotions his daughter feels on discovering her brother's penis and her absence of penis: 'She was intrigued, shocked, envious, repelled – she was gripped by strong contradictory emotions' (p.60). Describing her realisation through a, questionable, Freudian lens of penis envy, the chronicler assumes multiple aspects of her discovery. What his description of her interest, anger and eventual tears does depict, however, is the significance of her discovery of this sexual difference, both to her and her father, the chronicler. It is this significance that the chronicler admits drives his work and evidently shapes his reading of the histories available to him.

³⁹² Ibid., p.156.

Motivated by this realisation, he sets out to trace the birth of humanity beginning with the Clefts; the scene in his nursery informs both why he reads the histories available to him and how. Consequently, he does this through a provocatively dualistic lens. At multiple points in the fiction his observations seem to too neatly summarise the sexes. Even from the opening pages: ‘This little scene seems to me to sum up a truth in the relations between men and women.’ (p.6). His stubbornly simplistic reading of gender difference and the ‘truths’ he presumes contrast with the complex histories he is constructing in parallel. These are histories in which we are reminded persistently, through the chronicler’s own interjections, that there is a distinct absence of ‘truth’: p.7, pp.21-29, pp.44-45, p.55, p.71, pp.101-103, pp.135-138, pp.184-187, p.192, pp.206-207. Despite multiple criticisms regarding the reductive nature of this portrayal of gender, I agree with Wagner-Lawlor’s assessment of the developing binaries; she proposes we read them not as poorly developed character constructions but rather as deliberately reductive figures: ‘There is little that is appealing about either the males or the females in this tale, who are reduced to more or less cartoonish versions of masculinity and femininity.’³⁹³ I would extend Wagner-Lawlor’s reading of this approach, however. Once again, we are forced to read this text through a figurational lens. Thus, the text opens up to rather than closes possibilities for thinking through the issues of gender and difference it presents. Consequently, I propose that the deliberately dichotomous reading of the growing differences between the Clefts and Monsters, notably provided through the chronicler’s historical documentation, functions in a profoundly figurational way: it demonstrates quite persistently the effect of differences on subjectivity, language and family and further to this the significance of narrative construction in facilitating these effects.

I will first address the effects of difference; the emerging gender difference has a significant impact on multiple aspects of the Cleft community. The chronicler’s dualistic reading of this change functions to map the unfolding effects of binary difference on the Clefts. He notes how it began with the birth of the Monsters:

And then the real change, the defining change, the birth of the deformed ones, the Squirts, the Monsters. The beginning of squirming emotional discomfort, unrest, discontent: the start of awareness of themselves, their lives. (p.34).

³⁹³ Wagner-Lawlor, *Postmodern Utopias and Feminist Fictions*, pp.94 – 95.

He describes here how being exposed to something new, by facing the Other, like in Marriages Between Zones Three, Four, and Five, the women are forced to reflect upon themselves. This process of reflection is described as one of 'unrest' and 'discomfort'. Much like Al·ith's curious unrest driving her to cross borders, expose herself to new differences and become, it is this 'squirming', this activation of curiosity that motivates the Clefts to think and discover themselves. In considering who they might be, they discover who they are not and so their differences with one another become apparent; they no longer think in terms of the whole, the 'people'. Instead, they start to think through difference, an initially challenging and often divisive act: 'They were Clefts---well, of course, but although they had been in the valley with the people they once called Monsters, their minds must have been full of like, unlike; same, other; - full of differences.' (p.77). Before the male 'monsters' arrived, the clefts had never thought of themselves as women, as young and old, as self and other, they were simply 'people', a homogenous community. For the Clefts, difference is the source of self, by this I mean exposure to difference provokes an exploration of personal subjectivity, and with that initially doubt, fear and change.

One of the primary changes catalysed by the birth of these male 'monsters' and encounters with difference is in the construction of 'families' and the emergence of parental possessiveness. Previously the Clefts were not possessive about progeny: 'They suckled any babe around that needed it, there was not then such a feeling of *mine*, or *not mine*, among these ancient people.' (p.81). The text initially appears to offer a refreshing corrective to the claustrophobic, power producing nuclear families evident in my discussion of Foucault and family and critiqued in Piercy's text. It becomes apparent in Lessing's work, however, that once familial likeness appears, the physical manifestation of blood-lines and genetic inheritance, that family groupings too begin to appear: 'And her face, this very young child's, was the same as the young male's.' (p.99) Responding emotionally to this likeness, her feelings towards her child and the 'Monster' with whom she made this child change; the communal forms of parenting dissolve in favour of nurturing one's own: 'These three were a family, as one would know one, but what they made of it we may only guess.' (p.100). These changes and these developing differences are evident in their language; 'new thoughts' and with them new words evolve: 'Fathers...a word that no one had needed, but now reverberated against the sound of mothers.' (p.87) This description of 'fathers' reverberating against the sound of 'mothers' locates us in a binary mode of thinking. The evocative verb to 'reverberate', however, sets up precisely the impact of encountering the Other, an impact that has effects

beyond the initial encounter; encounters between differences, whether gendered or familial, reverberate throughout the community of Clefts.

Until this point, the Clefts had had no need for mapping or even being conscious of family genealogies. Since reproductive sex had taken place at first autonomously and then randomly, depending on the moon's changes and the Clefts' location, the lines of family lineage had been as untraceable, varied, and as complex as the history the chronicler is documenting. Compellingly reinforcing the significance of bloodlines discussed in Taylor's reading of Foucault and my reading of *Piercy*, here we once again have the recognition of genetic inheritance being a catalyst for constructing family groups. The chronicler intrudes into the narrative to offer his own experience of parenting; this is a perspective that further reaffirms ideas of ownership, possession and lineage within not only family groupings but nations. Having lost both of his sons from his first marriage and at the thought of sending his third son to fight for the Roman empire, the chronicler describes, through a possessive discourse, how he 'gave three of his sons for the empire' (p.64). This simple reflection reveals much of his position on family and indeed nation. Both are owners of the progeny and future; the sons are described as 'his' to give and the empire's to take.

Through his further descriptions of his family and his desire to start a second family, it becomes clear that his experience of family and lineage contrasts considerably with the Clefts and Monsters he is describing; most significantly, as the quote previously suggests, his family is functioning to propagate a wider system of power: the 'empire'. He notes, however, that there are also similarities with the families he proposes evolving amongst the Clefts and Monsters: 'So much I believe has not changed. But if those old people could come back, and observe, and see, and find so much unchanged, then other things they would not understand at all. My account of my marriage, my Julia, my first and second families, they would not recognise....' (p.63) These contrasted perspectives are thought provoking regarding changing models of family and the intrusion of state power. Perhaps more compelling, however, and provoked by the chronicler's own writing and his Foucauldian description of a 'present history' (p.63), is how these perspectives are constantly layered over one another throughout the fiction. The effect is to remind us how the chronicler's present experience most certainly guides the past he is presenting. His descriptions of his family intrude in his narrative to reinforce the connectedness of narrative and narrator, the relatedness of the present and the past, and the non-linearity of the modes of thinking this text constructs.

4. The Chronicler

The inclusion of the chronicler's own life and his own editorial decisions deconstruct the hegemony of a singular, teleological past and instead presents the past as a narrative resonating from the author's present. The chronicler regularly interrupts his mapping to either reflect on his own life, the challenges of constructing this 'history', or the various other 'histories' available. These interruptions are vital to my consideration of the genealogical methodology and modes of thinking it provokes; they invite the consideration of a multiplicity of pasts, selected from a multiplicity of sources, edited by a historian, affected by the present in which the history is constructed. The effect of this is to propel the reader into a space in which no singular 'truth' exists but multiple are possible. To unravel the supposed 'truth' of the genealogy of the Clefts further and reveal this complexity, the chronicler describes this multiplicity of pasts available to him. He defends his consequent absence of certainty: 'Yes, I know what I am telling you doesn't add up to sense but I told you, there are many stories and who knows which one is true?' (p.20). This defence is pivotal to our consideration of thinking through his methodology of reading and writing. It begins with his abandonment of 'sense' or 'truth'; by admitting that things don't 'add up' and stepping, deliberately, away from logical reasoning, he is liberating the narrative, and so our reading of it, from the confines of reason and truth. Further to this, he locates his reading in the midst of 'many stories'. This positioning and reference to some of these 'many stories' provides a further layering of narratives. His reflection that it is impossible to know which of them is 'true' allows a reading that resists such defining and instead maps possibilities. It seems then that 'sense', 'truth', and certainty are not available to the chronicler and through him then also the reader. Instead we are provided with a form of Deleuzian multiplicity in which multiple stories are offered to us simultaneously, without hierarchy or certainty. Consequently, we can read the chronicler's efforts not through the teleological, linear lens of familial genealogies, but rather through the lens of Foucault's genealogical methodology that I discussed earlier, fragmented, subjective, problematising. Much like in my readings of Lessing's other works, uncertainty creates an affirmative, mobilising space in this text in which the reader is forced to reside without resolution.

The complication of temporality within the fiction serves to compound this mode of thinking. Within his mapping of the Clefts, time is elastic, vague, and most significantly, highly personal. This is a challenge to the chronicler, whose Roman means of strictly measuring time serves as a contrast to the Clefts' subjective experience of it: 'We Romans have measured, charted, taken possession of time, so that it would be impossible for us to say, "And then it came to pass"' (p.101). This contrast remains a challenge for the chronicler throughout the narrative; he struggles to reconcile his measured, ordered, clock time with the 'and then it came to pass' time of the Clefts. The Clefts' sense of time, being personal, is marked by events, but not measured by them. Consequently, the chronicler can document the order of their history, but not the duration: 'This historian has no means of knowing how long the Clefts' story took to evolve.' (p.101) Repeated throughout his description of the story are admissions to not knowing the duration of an event or the passing of time. What is left is guesses, doubts, further invitations to imagine: 'What I am about to relate may be – must be – speculative, but it is solidly based on fact....' (p.25) My reading of this text, however, has revealed the 'facts' which he uses to stabilise his tale to be as fabricated as his speculations themselves. The mode of thinking this mobilises then must be creative and cannot be definitive.

The removal of certainty or the notion of an accessible truth from mapping the past is a surprisingly revolutionary act; it is, however, one that must be handled with caution and ethics. By removing certainty, the chronicler creates a space for thinking beyond truth and facts, and beyond a linear progression of a singular history. He provides a space in which both he and the reader can invent. Indeed, through his efforts to validate his narrative and his instruction to 'speculate', the chronicler himself identifies this potential and necessity at the beginning of his narrative. To quote again: 'I am establishing my credentials here, right at the beginning of my story. What I am about to relate may be – must be – speculative, but it is solidly based on fact.' (p.25). His description here is particularly revealing to this methodology, utilising both 'fact' and speculation. The narrative occupies the borderlands between the two and herein lies its methodological potential to my project. It is this space for invention created through his genealogical mapping of the past that should be transferred to how we think about our present. This is a methodology which can be both limiting and liberating, depending how it is utilised. When thinking 'beyond truth and facts' there is always a risk of abuse of power and manipulation of sentiment or effect; this mode of reading and thinking can only remain affirmative and liberating as a tool for considering subjectivity and ARTs when it exposes the forms of power affecting them and remains critical of the many potential effects they have.

Through the application of this genealogical method to the methodology of reading I am demonstrating, however, the forms of power manifested in these narratives can be made visible. What's more, through the utilisation of imagination, as instructed by this text, and, like the Cleft's history, multi-voiced conversation, these forms of power can also be resisted. Consequently then, the freedom this methodology provides to think beyond the confines of the norms and the rigidity of our current matrices is what provides this method of writing and thinking with so much potential to mobilise, move thought, and create.

I established this potential of speculation and re-editing from my reading of Foucault's genealogical method. As I discussed earlier, Foucault states:

Genealogy is grey, meticulous, and patiently documentary. It operates on a field of entangled and confused parchments, on documents that have been scratched over and recopied many times.³⁹⁴

This extract from Foucault's thinking both enriches my reading of Lessing's work and my position on a genealogical methodology. The evocative language describes multiple parchments and documents as well as multiple re-copyings and re-scratchings. The method of mapping and thinking identified through my reading of Lessing's work demands similar multiplicity and movement; as the chronicler admits through his editing process the fiction is a 'history' constructed through scraps, fragments, and re-copyings. Lessing's fiction, like the rhizomes I described earlier in this thesis, presents an entangled web of narratives. And yet, it functions precisely because of these complexities. The chronicler's genealogy functions to map perspectives on a past civilisation; it functions to describe his own contextual society; it functions to invite consideration of gender difference; it functions to invite critique of familial structures; it functions to reveal the constructedness of history and the power in the stories we tell. Through this multiplicity, it functions in a non-linear, non-hierarchical, and mobilising way to facilitate and not limit layers of thought. It is this facility of reading and thinking made evident through the chronicler's narrative that contributes so vitalistically to my thesis. My mapping of this literary terrain has identified moments when the text mobilises us to think in a complex, dynamic way that is not only instructive, when applied to contemporary issues of gender difference and reproduction, but, as I argue in the concluding chapter, vital.

V

³⁹⁴ Foucault, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History', p.139.

This chapter addresses two key aspects of my thesis: the issue of power and the feminist female subject; the critical potential of creative thinking in (re)considering these forms of power.

In investigating the genealogical family tree and the genealogical method, I revealed less *how* we consider these figures and more *why* it is necessary to do so. I followed the thinking of Foucault to illustrate how the genealogical family structure is one infused with various forms of power, sovereign, state, patriarchal and advanced capitalist. I used the literature of Piercy to further explore these criticisms and in doing so, expose the presence of genealogical family pasts in our present. The conclusion of this reading reminded us of the necessity of cultivating new, more dynamic, flexible modes for thinking about and constructing families and hinted at the creative potential of literature to do so. In drawing on the limitations to escape the familial bind in Piercy's work, I moved to Lessing's literature. This text allowed me to map in greater detail the critical methodology of genealogies traced from Foucault's and Deleuze's thinking. By examining the role of the chronicler, in particular, I noted the significance of writing a 'history of the present', so the relationality between temporalities and subjectivities.

1. The Feminist Female Subject

Throughout these discussions, I have returned my thinking to the feminist female subject. Consideration of this subject within the contexts of the literatures I read resonates with the plea made by Braidotti in the Australian Feminist Studies Journal that 'we need to be more creative in thinking communities along the lines of non-linearity and social sustainability, so as to pursue an effective form of inter-generational justice.' My work in this chapter has drawn out the significance of the 'chronicler', the narrative voice, the genealogist. This writer of narratives performs a reading of the past that determines how it is understood in the present and so how it will be acted on in the future. The significance of this simultaneously authorial and reading position is made most apparent in the conclusion I draw from Lessing's work. In this conclusion, I noted how the ethical methodology of reading literature that I have developed and demonstrated both serves as a creative embodiment of this mode of thinking and a critical catalyst for the reader to enact this mode of thinking.

Through my reading of Foucault and Deleuze, among others, I located the feminist female subject in a particular matrix of power, the family. I mapped how this biological and

social structure can become a tool of various forms of power. I noted how the female subject is simultaneously subjugated and perpetuator of these various forms of power. Considering the genealogical methodology, I mapped in the critical terrains, I noted how modes of thinking have the potential to uncover the artificiality of these narratives for power and reveal their manifestation in past, present and future discourses. My reading of Piercy's text considered this female subject and maternal figure further, admitting embodied experiences as both a bind and point of liberation from this familial matrix. My reading of Lessing's text contributed less explicitly to the discussion of the female subject, but did map a mode of thinking relevant to considering this subject further.

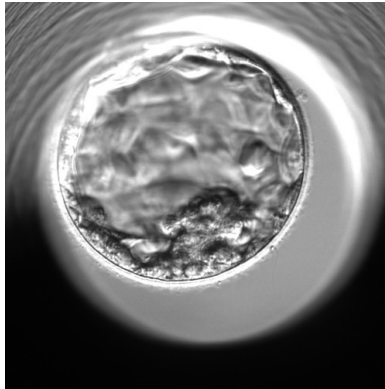
2. The Critical Potential of Reading

The primary contribution of this chapter is arguably in mapping and demonstrating this potential, particularly through my reading of Lessing's fiction. By reading the subject within a familial and genealogical context, I have also considered methodologies of mapping. Following Foucault's genealogical method, and enriched by my reading of Deleuze's work, I mapped how the process of reading the past can be instructive in not only considering the present, but in mobilising ways of thinking for the future. My reading of Lessing's text examined in particular the role of the chronicler, the actual reader, to demonstrate a method of reading that facilitates thinking through multiple possibilities and speculating beyond. It was in fact the chronicler's narration of the evolution of humanity and families within the fiction that was most significant to my thesis. Functioning like Foucault's genealogical method, the chronicler's own doubt and admissions provided a method of reading, indeed through the act of editing and creating, that was resistant to singularity and certainty. I uncovered the potential of literature to locate the narrative and reader within a deliberately and provocatively 'uncertain' space. Resisting definition, such narratives have the potential, as my reading of The Cleft mapped, to mobilise a rhizomatic form of reading and with it also thinking. I concluded that Lessing's literature provided a method for reading and thinking that could counter the entrapment in patriarchal and family norms presented in Piercy's text. I proposed that such literary and critical dynamism is necessary when considering the feminist female subject within a familial and reproductive context; we must allow for the anomalies, the exceptions, the multiple forms of subjectivity to counter the patriarchal, normative forces shaping them.

3. What next

This methodology of reading creative terrains and mobilising thinking through them leads to the conclusion of my thesis. In my final chapter I locate the relevance of the method of reading and thinking mapped here to our current times; in doing this, I underpin the arguments I have been developing through this chapter. Notably, that we need such complex modes of thinking that include all the possibilities and potentialities these reproductive biotechnologies contain. We need a mode of thinking that ethically includes the embodied subject while admitting it is both a victim and perpetrator of the forms of power manifested in these biotechnologies. We need a mode of thinking dynamic enough to contain the constant evolving of these technologies that is also complex enough to offer a momentary freeze frame without suggesting a permanent fact. We need a mode of thinking that resists replicating past narratives of power and instead reveals the constructedness of present norms. I have demonstrated in this chapter and this thesis how this mode of thinking can be accessed, mobilised and applied through literature. I will occupy this facility through a personal and political mapping of my positionality in the next chapter, the intermezzo.

Intermezzo: My Brave New World



(Five Day Old Blastocyst, 11/09/2015)

For the reading of these books seems to perform a curious couching operation on the senses; one sees more intensely afterwards; the world seems bared of its covering and given an intenser life.

(Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own, 1928)³⁹⁵

I knew when I started this project that as a woman, a feminist, my positionality was fundamental to the thesis I was constructing. Even though I was not then a mother, I had already felt the limitations, social and professional, and expectations of my potential to gestate a pregnancy. When starting, I had no idea how much my life would parallel and be informed by this project. While writing it, I have experienced pregnancy loss, infertility, IVF, given birth to two sons, seen my professional landscape shift and my social value alter. I am changed. Challenged. Enriched. The methodology of reading that I have developed and performed in this thesis has functioned threefold: it has been informative, expanding my engagement with certain critical thinkers and mapping multiple aspects of ARTs and subjectivity; it has been invigorating, forcing me to resist as well as exposing the urge to too neatly stabilise my understanding of these aspects and mobilising me to think more openly, more flexibly, more affirmatively about the challenges they contain; and it has been affecting, changing how I understand myself and the world around me. This utility of literature, of the reading of and the writing about it, is explored in Virginia Woolf's A Room of One's Own (1928). Using her seminal talk on women and fiction as a starting point for my own positionality, I want to reflect further on how my work in this thesis, the methodology I have demonstrated, actually functions

³⁹⁵ Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own, (London: Penguin Books, 2000 (1928), p. 108.

beyond the texts I have been mapping. This section, this intermezzo, presents a line of flight from the rhizome I have been cultivating; it is included to provide the feminist positionality of my work and a creative application of my methodology of thinking through reading.

There is an irony to including Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* here. When I began this thesis, I had a study. I had a desk on which the books were piled by focus and ordered by need. I had long, quiet mornings for reading, writing, and reflection. I had well paid teaching jobs and the time to attend cultural events. I am writing this sitting on the floor of my bedroom in hushed moments while my sons sleep. My desk has been moved into the loft and my study converted into a nursery. At risk of being chewed, lost or broken, my books have been stored away and returned to the library. Daily there is a new pile of laundry next to me awaiting attention and the coffee that used to enliven me now sustains me. I have experienced no greater exhaustion than four years of pregnancies, fertility treatment, breastfeeding, and infant sleep demands. I have suffered no greater cognitive stagnation than the relentless routines of feeding and sleeping that having a toddler and baby demand. I have experienced what Woolf warns of as the death of creativity, the death of writing: female domesticity. And yet, when I occupy the literary landscapes and map the thinking that my readings provoke, I am energised, I am mobilised, I am, while still sitting surrounded by laundry and toys, moved. Like the protagonists in the texts I have read, physical and spatial limitations have not hindered my cognitive wanderings. Like the chroniclers and narrators in the texts I have read, developing a dynamic way of reading, a multiple, more complicated way of reflecting, I have been provided with tools for navigating these aspects of motherhood and life. I have found and made space in the literary landscapes they provide to think and to live.

My engagement in reading, thinking, and writing then has not so much been an academic exercise as, fulfilling its feminist focus of the personal and political, a lifeline. It is not only the experience of reading a narrative that resonates with my own experiences that can be enriching, but the cognitive, personal and political tools with which has provided me. As with my own project, Woolf's emotive and vivid descriptions of reading literature place the effect on the reader as central to her consideration of the works. These effects are multiple and significant. As Woolf declares of good writing, it 'bares life of its covering'; this thesis too has sharpened my awareness of the assumed beliefs and the powers directing not only my access to and experiences of the reproductive technologies but also my experiences of being a woman and mother. More profoundly, as Woolf declares good literature enables an 'intenser life'; the

reading in this thesis has activated my thinking and invigorated my engagement outside the, at times, relentless demands of mothering.

As I have with my previous chapters, I want to inhabit this methodology of reading and mode of thinking by presenting one final reading. It is a reading of the image in the epigraph of this chapter. Although it is not a reading of a text, this does not undo the critical utility of literature that I have been presenting throughout; rather it presents the transferability of my methodology of reading and thinking through reading. The image of the blastocyst is personal, and political. This is an image of my son. The image resolutely resists a singular reading. Taken in a petri-dish through a microscope from above, the photo has no top or bottom; it has no definitive or singular point of visual perspective. Turning the photo in my hands, considering which way to frame it, I discovered that all angles were possible and all equally beautiful. The perfect circular shape, the undulations and shadows, the promise of cells clustering together, multiplying, growing, this two-dimensional image of a multi-dimensional blastocyst captures a world of possibility. I decided that if I didn't know *how* I should read it, then I should appraise it multiple times, from multiple angles, not one more important than the other, but all simultaneously contributing to my readings of the blastocyst, of the technologies that created it, and of the life it is promising. I use the plural 'readings' because I want to offer here the various aspects and possibilities contained within this frozen moment of burgeoning life. These readings demonstrate the vitalistic potential of the methodology of reading I have been evolving throughout this thesis as well as its application to the significant strands of the rhizome I have been cultivating: the feminist female subject, ARTs and thinking creatively. Such plurality of thought, particularly in the context of reproduction and the feminist female subject, has never been more necessary. In our current Brexit, Trump era of politics in which a rhetoric of negative difference and divisive power has become more prevalent on political podiums and mainstream media, we need an antidote. The reading I offer of this blastocyst, the multiple lines of flight it propels and perhaps most poignantly, the love it contains, provide just that.

The cells, captured here on day five of their life cycle have multiplied, have clustered and grown to form this circular shape, evocative of some distant planet, a 'brave new world' containing potential futures. The photo is of a living cluster of cells; they are moving, multiplying, and growing. When undergoing IVF, you are given a diagram of the progression of cell growth. It doesn't stop. It is constant and prolific. This photo captures a moment just before the cells, here multiple, teeming with vitality are about to burst out of the circular form,

ready to implant and grow further. By capturing this moment, the image, like my reading within this thesis, does not stop this growth; it frames it, momentarily and not definitively. The image was taken and given to me at a time that was intense with hope, worry, fear and joy. As I untangled myself from the stirrups following the embryo transfer and cautiously shuffled away from the hospital bed, I was hypnotised by its beauty. I gazed at it, at this unknown future, unknown life, asking myself would it implant, daring myself to think beyond to whether it would survive gestation and birth, and even whether it would be a girl or a boy, how would it look, what would it be like. Then as now, the image poses more questions than it can answer; residing in those questions, those potentials, resisting the urge to resolve them is both terrifying and liberating.

The image accesses then multiple temporalities, present potentials and hopes, future possibilities, and as any person will know who has undergone such invasive treatment, also past trauma, loss and hope. It is deeply emotive. The image paints a picture of pained pasts. It compels the reader to ask what journey a person has to go on to submit their body to such clinical invasion, such physical pain, such fragile odds. Whether an egg donor, a surrogate, a single mother, a lesbian couple, an infertile couple, there are a multitude of potential pasts contained within the science this image utilises.

The 'brave new world' this image hints at is made possible through the brave new world of reproductive science, now so developed that it can take single cells and nurture them into complex living beings. With this inclusion of science, however, comes power, political, economic, geographical. This image is available through a science that is unavailable to so many. Dependent on geography, costs, politics, age and sexuality, access to this technology in the UK is determined by politicians, policy makers, pounds and all too often a postcode lottery. Globally, access is determined equally often by commercial means, with this technology at times utilised to outsource reproduction to women in economically less developed countries. The increasing utilisation of IVF and surrogacy by the wealthy and well known is shifting the discourse on female embodiment, commodifying its advanced capitalist value as well as its reproductive function. Glancing at this photo reveals a global and yet simultaneously personal space impacted by networks of power that determine who can reproduce via these means and who cannot. The 'brave new world' that it contains hints not only at the potential life it presents, but also the possibilities of shaping the life that the science provides and, by determining questions of access and availability through political and capitalist interests, potentially directs.

The image then contains multiple forms of vitality: the vitality of matter, new life growing; the hope and promise of a long-awaited child; the cells just about to break through the perfect circular form; the vitality contained in the potential of science to create life; the vitalism of life contained within a petri-dish; the emotions provoked through reading and thinking through this image. Perhaps most profoundly, this image and my reading of it contains love. This is not some trivial sentimental or romantic love. This love, evident in my reading of this image, evident in the literatures I have read in this thesis, evident in the drive to create life, is an activating, empowering, and mobilising force. I can think of no more powerful antidote to the divisive, fear-filled rhetoric of current leading politics than the affirmative force, and relational action of love. Luce Irigaray's The Way of Love (2002) presents an interesting position on this inter-subject, relational force that could be brought into conversation with literature on questions of female subjectivity and ARTs as a continuation of the work in this project. My reading of the blastocyst contains multiplicities, allowing many without hierarchy. It admits itself as a momentary capturing of an evolving landscape. It adopts speculation and imagination to consider the futures posed by such an image. It lies the political, personal, and advanced capitalist potentials alongside one another. It locates the feminist embodied subject amidst these potentials. It locates ARTs, specifically in this case IVF, amidst the possible utilisations.

Arising from these possibilities, from uncertainty, from the in-between, these mobilisations inevitably take at times an unpredictable, certainly non-linear form and direction. Arising from reader response, these mobilisations can at times appear random and disordered. Woolf describes eloquently this experience when sitting in the British museum and jotting her responses to texts on women and fiction. Comparing her notes to the ordered listings of the colleague sitting next to her, she looks dismayed at the apparent chaos her responsive readings have produced: '...my own notebook rioted with the wildest scribble of contradictory jottings. It was distressing, it was bewildering, it was humiliating. Truth had run through my fingers. Every drop had escaped.'³⁹⁶ Describing her own rhizomatic form of thinking, she identifies that within this multiplicity of ideas, within this creativity, the monolith of 'truth' is deconstructed, melted away. My reading too throughout has used reading literature to expose and deconstruct supposed truths about female subjectivity, motherhood, and reproductive

³⁹⁶ Woolf, p.32.

technologies. In doing so, I like Woolf have at times felt 'bewildered', overwhelmed by the multiple strands of thought my readings have produced. But amongst these 'scribblings', amongst the rhizomatic meanderings my readerly responses display, I have encountered then something closer to my 'truth', to use Woolf's words, closer to the many 'truths' of being a woman in contemporary society. Namely, there is no singular 'truth'; experiences are varied and multiple, both within woman, between women, and between genders. Allowing for effected, complex, and at times 'contradictory jottings' when responding to literary landscapes, allows for a contribution to academic discussion much closer to the life it is examining.

Presenting and producing these personal, effected readings in academic form, communicating and defending the methodology that produces them is important. It is important for me, for the female feminist subject I am discussing, and for the academic fields I am engaging with. The act of writing my reading, the act of ordering, 'couching' and presenting such personal, effected, 'wild' and at times 'contradictory' readerly responses refines these responses. The rigor required to write these responses, especially when sitting on the floor amidst the debris of motherhood, is refining. Attempting to refine, however, without limiting these responses creates an intensity to both my responsiveness to the text and the critical thinking I am mapping within these literary landscapes. What is more, writing these readings not only intensifies my experience of them but locates them in a necessary conversation. Working within feminist, critical theory, I am acutely aware of the political urgency and personal need of such ongoing conversations. This placing of my own voice in such a conversation is not, like more traditional academic disciplines, in order to discredit those before me and stake my own 'truth'. Far from it. Rather, it is to speak with gratitude to those before, place my own voice alongside those speaking now, and make space for those who will continue the conversations. It is only through such discursive multiplicity that feminist theory and literary critique can continue to engage with the subjects it seeks to represent. When discussing the significance of joining this tradition of women and fiction, Woolf says: 'For masterpieces are not single and solitary births; they are the outcome of many years of thinking in common, of thinking by the body of the people, so that the experience of the mass is behind a single voice.'³⁹⁷ For me, reading literature not only then mobilises my thinking, but also my writing; my reading of literature provides me with my voice. This is a voice that I contribute, not to my own 'masterpiece', but the masterpiece that is woman, subject, writer, and mother.

³⁹⁷ Woolf, p.66.

Conclusion: Critical Thinking Through Creative Spaces

Writing has nothing to do with signifying. It has to do with surveying, mapping, even realms that are yet to come.

(Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 1988)³⁹⁸

But the storyteller will be there, for it is our imaginations which shape us, keep us, create us – for good and for ill. It is our stories that will recreate us, when we are torn, hurt, even destroyed. It is the storyteller, the dream-maker, the myth-maker, that is our phoenix, that represents us at our best, and at our most creative.

(Doris Lessing, Nobel Lecture, 2007)³⁹⁹

I opened this thesis with Deleuze's words: 'Writing has nothing to do with signifying. It has to do with surveying, mapping, even realms that are yet to come.'⁴⁰⁰ These words served as a guideline for my departure from an interpretive reading of texts. Mapping them instead as spaces for thinking creatively, I have developed a methodology of thinking through reading that facilitates an affirmative consideration of the complexities contained within women's experiences of ARTs. I have proposed that such a reading identifies and makes space for multi-layered, dynamic thought more fitting with the lived experience and more questioning of the powers seeking to direct these experiences. Consequently, I have demonstrated a method of reading, of seeking and mobilising a deterritorialized mode of thinking through mapping literature that is applicable to further contemporary critical enquiries and creative terrains.

This thesis has constantly walked this tightrope between the critical and creative. Each chapter in turn has contributed to both whilst demonstrating the vitality of a liminal method of reading between the two. With the mapping of the deterritorializing effect of literature derived from Deleuze's work, the feminist positionality of my reading and utility of figurations from Braidotti's, and with Butler, Haraway and Foucault's respective works sharpening my critical lens on embodiment, biotechnologies, and power, there are multiple contributors to the methodology of reading and feminist enquiry I have been developing. I am not the first to bring Lessing into conversation with contemporary critical thinkers; my reading of Robbins,

³⁹⁸ A Thousand Plateaus, p.5.

³⁹⁹ Lessing, 'Nobel Lecture: On not winning the Nobel Prize', 2007.

⁴⁰⁰ A Thousand Plateaus, p.5.

Rubenstein, Sternberg Perrakis, and Watkins has enriched my explorations of Lessing's writing. I am also not the first to read Piercy from a contemporary feminist position; the work of Anolik, Copley, Khanna, and Khouri have directed my feminist approach to Piercy's work. The originality of the method of reading I have demonstrated is in the intersections between all these positions; my reading seeks to draw critical approaches, feminist ethics, and literary dynamism together to contribute originally to discussion on the feminist female subject.

My initial engagement was motivated by the need to consider the feminist female subject when the keystone of gender difference, our reproductive function, is being transformed by the utilisation of reproductive technologies. My work has mapped how developing ARTs have a significant effect on the women using them, shaping how, when, and with whom they reproduce. My discussions through Piercy's literary terrains have revealed that the impacts these technologies are having on subjectivity and gender difference are multiple, complex, and constantly shifting. Drawing further from Piercy's work and both her utopic and dystopic visions of reproductive technologies (Chapters Two and Three), I have mapped these matrices of intersecting forms of power, capitalist, national, and patriarchal, that alter the availability, utility and effects of these technologies. Throughout my chapters, I have connected these mappings with the shifting landscape of ARTs in the UK, using these discussions to both enrich my method of thinking through literature as well as critique issues affecting the development and application to these biotechnologies. As a continuation of this utility and confirmation of its necessity, the recent legal battle between the NHS and the equality watchdog regarding transitioning transgender people's access to fertility services reveals precisely why further exploration and more flexible modes of thinking are required.⁴⁰¹ A symptom of transitioning is infertility. Despite complying with national guidelines, transgender people have been unable to access NHS fertility services, such as sperm or egg freezing, due to prejudiced and normative interpretations of their medical needs. We must critique normative discourse and develop more flexible modes of thinking about ARTs so that they do not become tools utilised to maintain dominant norms or perpetuate political or commercial interests.

This is a global issue also; with the growing availability of surrogacy tourism, international egg and sperm trade, and IVF, bodies, reproductive spaces, and genders are being impacted by

⁴⁰¹ <https://rightsinfo.org/transgender-fertility-rules-revised-nhs/> [accessed 14/04/19]; <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2019/mar/31/transgender-fertility-row-ends-with-a-draw> [accessed 14/04/19].

global economic and policy interests. To complicate these impacts further, they are increasingly being played out in the digital world. Recent reports have revealed that employers are encouraging their female employees to use health apps in order to not only monitor but use for their own interests information on their employees' menstrual cycles and pregnancy status.⁴⁰² Reading these changes through a binary lens of limiting or liberating does not admit the complexity of their effects, the risks of the various forms of power directing these effects, and conversely the potential of their vitalism. These potentials are only possible when read critically, taking into consideration the forms of power manifested through their implementation, and creatively, allowing their multiple possibilities. In order to mobilise a mode of thinking that includes the multiplicity of applications of ARTs, the dynamism of the science, the embodiment of the subjects utilising ARTs, the forms of power directing these aspects, not one at a time, but all intersecting with one another, my answer is found in reading, notably reading Lessing's literature, and the thinking it propels.

1. Returning to the Rhizome's Stem and Beyond Gender Difference

There are three key threads weaving through both the critical and literary sections of my chapters which facilitate this engagement with thinking through reading: figurations, which function as a lens for mapping literary terrains multi-dimensionally, reading them as spaces for movement rather than static representations; the 'in-between', a critically mobilising space I sought through my mappings; and embodiment, which serves as both the focus of my critical enquiry and a resource for my reading methodology.

The most significant thread is figurations. Whether the mother, the monster, the machine, the womb, the chimera, the Cleft or the chronicler, figurations have been central to my mapping of literature, my accessing of critical thinking, and my consequent multi-plateaued responses to the texts. The mother is the most predominant figuration throughout the chapters. An example of a figuration's utility is Connie from Piercy's Woman on the Edge of Time, the first mother figure we encounter. I read Connie as a monster, a time-traveller, a mental-health patient, a victim, a violent revolutionary, an adoring mother, and an abuser. This is not one reading instead of the other and not all simultaneously but each as an intertwining aspect of an evolving subject. This richness in readings is precisely the 'potential' that figurations provide

⁴⁰² <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/apr/13/theres-a-dark-side-to-womens-health-apps-menstrual-surveillance> [accessed 14/04/2019].

to my exploration of the literary terrains and developing biotechnologies. They facilitate a mode of thinking that contains multiplicities and contradictions. This mode of thinking fulfils the plea to provide ‘new orientations’⁴⁰³ of thinking about the material female subject that I opened the thesis with (Chapter One): it facilitates a consideration of the material female subject that includes its various, sometimes contradictory, and everchanging aspects; it counters the reductive discourse of limiting or liberating surrounding ARTs and allows for a spectrum of positions more fitting with the many experiences of them. The mother figure Connie enables me to map this spectrum: the medical, capitalist, and juridical powers implicating ARTs; the women affecting and effected by them; the utopian and dystopian applications of ARTs that are perceived differently depending on positionality; the disgust, greed, resistance, love altering the utilisation and provision of such ARTs. Reading and thinking through figurations facilitates the mapping of these ‘in-between’ applications of, responses to, developments in ARTs.

The next thread is the ‘in-between’: in-between texts, genres, subjectivities, subjects, zones, ‘truths’, temporalities, mother/child, man/woman, and life/death respectively. My readings of the mother/child dyad demonstrate how occupying this in-between functions. Through the varying uses of reproductive technologies (Woman on the Edge of Time), through the various intrusions of dominant powers (Body of Glass, The Third Child), and through the presentation of the woman’s own experiences of and at times ambivalence towards motherhood (The Fifth Child, Marriages Between Zones Three, Four, and Five), this dyad has provided a kaleidoscopic lens for mapping a shifting landscape of love, loss, abjection, the splintering of a singular sense of self, and the catalysing of becomings. The most critically mobilising aspect of this dyad, however, is encountered through the challenging and transforming relationality between mother and child, more precisely the catalytic effects of creating, containing, and meeting new differences. Some of the literatures I read presented an emotional distancing between mother and child (The Fifth Child, The Third Child), some a physical (Woman on the Edge of Time, Body of Glass), and some both (Marriages Between Zones Three, Four and Five, The Cleft). The complexity and vitality of this relationality is poignantly evident in my reading of Al-ith immediately after she has given birth to her child from another zone in Lessing’s Marriage’s Between Zones Three, Four, and Five. To the shock of those around her, she is overcome by her inner fantasies to nuzzle and lick her infant. By responding to her inner

⁴⁰³ Pitts-Taylor, p.10.

desires towards this new Other and resisting the surrounding differences to the women around her, she crosses thresholds, embodied, imagined, social. In so doing, she feels an affirmative, albeit momentary, and mobilising elation.⁴⁰⁴ In this relational moment, between mother and child, subject and Other, fantasy and reality presented through the description of Al·ith's post-partum body and behaviour, thinking moves across boundaries. By mapping these liminal, mobile moments, by exposing the powers confining them, and allowing the multiple possibilities contained in them, subjects, both the read and reading, rendered inert through limiting powers and beliefs can be invigorated, can too be moved. I proposed in Chapter One that such vitalistic energy can enrich our mode of thinking about emerging biotechnologies. It does this twofold: by seeking the utilisations residing in the in-between and so contributing to a discussion of them that contains the varieties of applications possible; in the momentum this liminal vitality catalyses to mobilise thinking about these various utilisations and the various forms of power affecting them.

The third thread running through the chapters, directing my engagement with figurations and thinking through the in-between, is embodiment. Embodiment in this thesis is a terrain to be read, a directive to read across borders, and a provocation to expose our own desires to read and regulate bodily behaviours. My reading of Clive Scott (Chapter One) led me to identify the embodied subject's reading response and utilise it as the foundation of my position on the literary texts. My engagement with Butler located this embodiment in a discursive matrix; while my consideration of her discussion of Plato's 'receptacle' identified the creative utility this embodied figure can have to critical thought (Chapter Three). Throughout my chapters, I demonstrated a reading methodology that includes reader response and thinks through embodied figures to engage in feminist enquiries regarding difference and motherhood (Chapter Two), reproductive practices and changing experiences of pregnancy (Chapter Three), and intersecting forms of power (Chapter Four). While locating the embodied subject in matrices of power in Chapter Four, the figure of Melissa in Piercy's The Third Child presents the ability of embodied experiences, in her case of music and sex, to counter the limitations of dominant discursive binds. The female body, as a literary figuration and as a point of personal responsiveness, is a terrain and a tool then that not only directs us *where* to think, but, by including the disruptive, transformative facility of it in my mapping, also *how*. One scene that epitomises this facility is from Lessing's The Fifth Child; it presents Harriet's

⁴⁰⁴ Lessing, Marriages Between Zones Three, Four, and Five, p.202.

attempts to breastfeed the son she has so disliked throughout her pregnancy. In a desperate effort to love him, to conform to expectations and to please the doctor, midwife and husband anxiously watching her, Harriet overcomes her own disgust and forces her nipple into her infant's mouth.⁴⁰⁵ Descriptions of this scene are uncomfortable, for both Harriet physically and the reader emotionally. Through narrative effects of disgust and discomfort, we, the readers, are cast into the company of the watchful audience, self-consciously forced into a position of judgement over Harriet's failed attempts to use her body as 'expected'. Simultaneously, the descriptions of Harriet's exhausted, wounded, leaking post-partum body, expose and so challenge borders of inter/external, life/death, love/repulsion. Bodies then, the literary figures', the critical subjects', and the readers', are responsive, personal, political, complex, and contested. Precisely because they are, they are also a resource, as a figuration, as a critical terrain, as an embodied responsive reader, for working through the powers that are affecting them. Drawing on Kristeva's writing on the personal, marginalised experiences of motherhood,⁴⁰⁶ my readings of ARTs within the literature have demonstrated that varied experiences of female embodiment specifically must be included in discussions of ARTs, not simply to incorporate the aspects implicated, but to enrich them. It enriches precisely by thinking through the embodied female's simultaneous deconstructive liminal facility and her power to create, both literature and life.

2. Literature: New Orientations

In order for these aspects to function deconstructively and affirmatively as opposed to facilitating further manifestations of the powers I have critiqued, I have applied a feminist ethics to my reading of literature. It is an ethics that locates woman and reproductive technologies within a context of the forms of power, patriarchal, advanced capitalist, medical, affecting them. The previous three strands form the central part of my methodology that by critiquing various forms of power provide a way of exploring this ethically driven feminist thought through literary explorations. This thesis, rhizomatic in its scope and methodology, providing 'new orientations'⁴⁰⁷ to questions of female subjectivity and ARTs, contributes then to the cross disciplinary field of 'feminist cultural studies of technoscience' that I identified in

⁴⁰⁵ Lessing, *The Fifth Child*, p.64.

⁴⁰⁶ Kristeva, 'Stabat Mater' (1977 (tr. 1985)).

⁴⁰⁷ Pitts-Taylor, p.10.

Chapter One.⁴⁰⁸ More significant, however, are the ‘new orientations’ this thesis presents to and through literature; it contributes to the reading of literature as an ontological tool, as a pedagogical resource, and as a critical field.

In demonstrating the critical efficacy of literature, I have presented its ontological application as a dynamic space for thinking. Reading the literatures within a context of critical thought, I have used the literature twofold: to further explore and extend this critical thought and to further explore and extend literary investigations. In doing this, I have shown that they are not two independent aspects of my thesis, but rather complex plateaus, interconnected and interrelated, for a consideration of thinking and living. Braidotti is instrumental in my approach to literature as a feminist critical resource and my drive to formulate more imaginative and innovative ways of considering the feminist female subject (Chapter One). Developing a literary toolbox from Braidotti’s work to present the diverting lines of flight in this thinking, I have utilised a range of figurations, topographical language, and personal response. My reading of the title of Lessing’s The Cleft demonstrates this ontological application. Reading the appellation as a figuration, I accessed multiple aspects of the text’s function: the issues of biological sexual difference it describes; the potential Anthropos reading it presents; the point of Deleuzian reterritorialization it allows; and the deconstructive facility of self-consciously naming and editing that it embodies. Constructing this multi-layered, Foucauldian and Deleuzian informed reading of a single figure, my reading of Lessing’s literature uses her literary landscape to map issues of narrative construction, subjectivity and difference. Consequently, my readings of The Cleft and throughout the thesis present a form of creative critical writing that by mapping literature identifies imaginative terrains in which to engage in contemporary critical thinking. The reading in the intermezzo demonstrates the culmination of the various plateaus that inform this methodology and its cross-disciplinary utility. The ontological value of literature has been presented in this thesis but its reach and potential application have by no means exhausted.

The pedagogical value of this thinking functions most effectively when brought into contact with academic fields including and beyond literature. I have throughout this work engaged in a conversation, between critical theory, literary texts, contemporary concerns. My engagement with Plato’s receptacle in Lessing’s Marriage’s Between Zones Three, Four, and Five typifies

⁴⁰⁸ Lykke and Smelik, p.7.

the enriching intersections of critical thinking, literature, and contemporary concerns. The utilisation of just the word ‘vessel’ in regard to Al·ith’s pregnancy facilitates this engagement.⁴⁰⁹ Through this figure I applied contemporary sociological analysis of surrogacy, drew on the mobilising facility of Plato’s receptacle, and read Lessing’s literature to explore the splintering of the singular self experienced through pregnancy. It is a form of reading that would be made even richer with the inclusion of further alternate voices. I propose this methodology for reading, this feminist focus, and these literary terrains as the foundation of further multidisciplinary conversations. I have no doubt that medical, economic, geographical and historical fields would add enriching plateaus to the rhizome I have been cultivating. What’s more, this cross-disciplinary engagement through literary analysis can be applied to map different crises; through my readings of Piercy and Lessing, I have noted feminism in the virtual space (The Body of Glass), violence and contemporary youth culture (The Fifth Child), and the crisis of masculinity in reproduction (Marriages Between Zones Three, Four, and Five and The Third Child) as areas of interest that could all benefit from further critical exploration. I am not alone in identifying this need for multi-disciplinary engagement in contemporary issues. In 2016 the Nuffield Council on Bioethics began an inquiry into the ethics and implications of genome editing.⁴¹⁰ Noting a particularly crucial and neglected area of this science, in July 2018 they published a further ethical review focussing on human reproduction in the discussion. Expressing issues long feared and fantasised about in the science fiction forum, they called for the profound need for further research and debate on the application, regulation and utilisation of this science for ‘the welfare of the future person’.⁴¹¹ They emphasised the need for a broad range of disciplinary and cultural perspectives in the discussion. The deconstructive, multi-layered, and so creatively enriching method of reading I have presented works to map contemporary discussions in a way that exposes assumed ‘truths’, imagines possible outcomes, and facilitates multiple voices. Such a perspective would contribute an affirmative and mobilising lens to the discussions of biotechnologies as well as challenge any normative, teleological logic present.

As a consequence of mapping these functions of literature, this thesis has most originally contributed to the reception of the works I have read. Piercy’s and Lessing’s writings, and

⁴⁰⁹ Lessing, Marriages Between Zones Three, Four, and Five, p.193.

⁴¹⁰ <http://nuffieldbioethics.org/project/genome-editing>

⁴¹¹ <http://nuffieldbioethics.org/wp-content/uploads/Genome-editing-and-human-reproduction-short-guide-website.pdf>, p.2.

consequently my engagement with them, make somewhat different contributions to my thesis. The texts I selected from Piercy cover different decades, but my reading has located their value to be nevertheless essential to engaging in contemporary discussions regarding ARTS. Piercy's Woman on the Edge of Time and Body of Glass fully and somewhat self-consciously, in the case of Body of Glass, engage with the science fiction genre. The literatures provide fantastical terrains in which to imagine the multiple implications for women and society of utilising reproductive technologies. Specifically, these are the ways in which women, as embodied subjects, whether mothers or not, are implicated in and perpetrators of complex systems of power, patriarchal, medical, social, capitalist. These discussions served as terrains to map the various utilisations of ARTs as neither entirely positive nor negative; rather, these mappings explored how they are intrinsically implicated in the forms of power that shape our society and subjectivity. The literatures, however, although hinting at points of exit within the texts, with imagination (Woman on the Edge of Time), virtual chimeras and storytelling (Body of Glass), and embodied experiences (The Third Child), ultimately fail. The desperation and yet inability of her texts to break from the power matrices binding them is evident in the violent assaults concluding each fiction, against the psychiatric staff (Woman on the Edge of Time), the dominant capitalist forces (Body of Glass), and the father (The Third Child). These assaults are always fatal and always a failure, resulting in either the death or further entrapment of the perpetrator. Piercy's work does undoubtedly provide landscapes for critiquing the contemporary, and does present tools to potentially mobilising thinking beyond the dominant powers it critiques, particularly through story-telling and imagination. The impotently violent resistances, however, within the narratives, the stagnation of the critique of powers within her work, and the residual frustration that permeates her texts, mean they do not catalyse the same affirmative, mobilising effects that Lessing's writing does.

Not all fictions then present deterritorializing terrains to mobilise the modes of thinking I have been mapping. Both Piercy and Lessing's work occupy genre borderlands and play deliberately with metanarratives; both are female focussed; both challenge dominant discourses. These shared features have rendered them compelling terrains for my mapping of the feminist female subject and ARTs. Lessing's work, however, utilises narrative voice (The Cleft), narrative effect (The Fifth Child), and narrative construction (Marriages Between Zones Three, Four, and Five) more prominently and self-consciously. She constructs characters that function more figurationally than representationally. In the works I have read, she locates her narratives deliberately and often uncomfortably in the sometimes, the possible, the maybe. It

is these devices that allow me to use her literary terrains to access the affirmative critical utility of literature to thinking differently.

My most significant finding and the most invigorating to my thesis is my reading of Lessing's literature. Rather than offering a reimagining of the literal, I have found Lessing's work to provide scope for considering and extending the critical. Her work does not solely present enriching terrains for mapping subjectivity, becoming and thought; it subtly, predominantly through the self-referential narrative voice (Marriages Between Zones Three, Four and Five, The Cleft), and with it the exposure of significance of how we read, write, edit and think, allows us to investigate *how* we consider these ideas. It is through these latter aspects that we find the critical apparatus for potentially thinking through the forms of power that construct and direct the effects and potentials of ARTs. Progressively through her work, the volume of the narrator's voice increases and with it the presentation of the significance of the stories we tell. In The Fifth Child, the narrator is omniscient with intimate, but not complete access to the mother figure Harriet. Through subtle avoidance of all the 'facts', the reader is forced into a position of ambivalence and uncertainty. This effect is more explicitly adopted in Lessing's later works. In Marriages Between Zones Three, Four, and Five, the narrator increases their presence throughout the work. They remain faceless to a certain extent, but admit their position as a chronicler working amidst a multitude of chronicles. In The Cleft, the narrator is the most significant figure in the fiction. Through the inclusion of his self-conscious narrative construction, his admissions of doubt, his references to multiple possible histories, the narrator's voice facilitates a mapping of thought that, like the Cleft's own oral history is an ongoing conversation of personal experiences, numerous voices, and countless re-edits. Thinking through these deliberately uncertain and multiple spaces has application to the questions regarding the feminist female subject, both the personal effected reader and the feminist political subject, I introduced in Chapter One. Namely, reading certain literatures can catalyse a dynamic and affirmative mode of thinking that allows us to map the complex, intersecting and shifting challenges the feminist female subject faces when negotiating reproductive technologies in our contemporary society. This form of thinking counters the heuristic discourses currently shaping the implementation, application, and development of ARTs.

This thesis serves as a starting point for more work to be done on Lessing's writing and a further application of her thinking to contemporary questions. Her Canopus in Argus series

received perhaps the most mixed responses within literary reception.⁴¹² Yet my thesis demonstrates, through my close mapping of Marriages Between Zones Three, Four and Five, that this series presents literary landscapes rich in critical potential. It thinks beyond the scope of the realist or science fiction genres that have stunted its reception and facilitates consideration of contemporary issues acutely relevant today: genome editing, migration, terrorism, minor subjectivities, and creative thought. To further this engagement with Lessing's writing, I propose that her later works demand an Anthropocene reading; The Canopus in Argus series, Mara and Dann, and The Cleft all contain compelling positions on humanity's relationship with, utilisation of, and damage to their environment. Lessing's work provides diverse landscapes for mapping contemporary critical thought and for demanding dynamic modes of thinking within these landscapes.

And so, like the chronicler in The Cleft, we too find 'an end where a beginning had been'.⁴¹³ This is not in some circular form, but like the rhizome figure that opened this project, it is a reterritorialization of the various strands of this thesis to the central node, the epigraph that frames this project and presents the ability of literature to 'recreate us'. Lessing's final publication Alfred and Emily (2008) presents this utility of narrative voice. In it Lessing no longer uses a narrator figure; instead she herself is narrator. Occupying an embodiment of the epigraph I opened this thesis with, 'it is our stories that will recreate us',⁴¹⁴ Lessing writes an autobiography/fiction that quite literally 'recreates' her parents. She rewrites their history and her own genealogy, undoing their unhappy marriage through the stories she tells. This utility of storytelling to shape how we live, this appeal to create is the focus of Lessing's Nobel speech, from which the epigraph comes. In her speech, Lessing poignantly concludes her imaginative exploration of the personal and social value of reading and writing, by considering our world in tatters. Describing a post-apocalyptic scene, ravaged by wars and environmental disasters, she presents us 'torn, hurt, even destroyed'. Lessing proposes that it is through our stories, like a 'phoenix' from the ashes of civilisation, that we will recreate, around the campfire of inspiration, relate, and start anew. This facility is not confined to her remarks in the speech; they pervade her writing. The presentation of the narrator, the utilisation of the effecting function of the narrative voice, the exposure of the editorial process in the construction of the narrative in Lessing's writing are aspects that have enabled me to map the significance of

⁴¹² Watkins, Doris Lessing, p. 87.

⁴¹³ Lessing, The Cleft, p.210.

⁴¹⁴ Lessing, 'Nobel Lecture', *ibid.*

storytelling to how we think. We are not yet battling in the ruins of civilisation, sharing tales by campfire light, but we are in a period of flux. The direction of the changes is unknown; yet stories in this thesis, the reading of them, and writing about them, mobilise a social conscience and encourage a cognitive flexibility and creativity that enriches our engagement with these changes. Because of the risks that these changes reinforce divisive, oppressive, and normative forms of difference and power, my work proposes that such flexible, creative, and complex modes of thinking and relating are fundamental tools for negotiating our changing times.

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