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Monstrous Happiness:
A Comparative Study of Maternal and Familial Happiness
in Neoliberalism
in Japanese and British Women's Writing in the 1980s

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DPhil
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June 2016

Statement

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

Signature:.....

UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

Nozomi UEMATSU DPhil in Sexual Dissidence in Literature and Culture

Monstrous Happiness:

A Comparative Study of Maternal and Familial Happiness

In Neoliberalism

In Japanese and British Women's Writing in the 1980s

Summary

My thesis is a feminist comparative project on Japanese and English women's writing, historicised within the social discourses of the 1980s, reading the literary texts of Fumiko Kometani, Doris Lessing, Banana Yoshimoto and Jeanette Winterson. Treating these texts as contemporary, this thesis questions the rhetoric of optimism, with ideas such as "liberty" and "happiness" in the beginning decade of neoliberalism, interrogating how this rhetoric empowers and influences women's life choices in the 1980s. Simultaneously, I consider how these women writing in the 1980s respond, criticise, and explore this optimism in relation to maternity and maternal relationships: I examine the rhetoric of maternal/familial happiness in relation to the neo-liberal narrative of normativity. In this sense, happiness works as a force for normativity.

I argue that neoliberalism offers women new possibilities for various kinds of labour: it opened up more labour opportunities in the public sphere both in the UK and Japan, whilst nonetheless continuing to encourage women to engage in physical labour, child birth through marriage and heteronormative relationships. These two contradictory agendas, the new opportunity for women to work in the public sphere and the requirement to stay at home to reproduce, nurture and look after family members, caused a huge tension in neoliberal lives, and the fictions that represent them at the time. Building from the works of Sara Ahmed and Lauren Berlant, I argue that happiness is the affective glue that holds together and smoothes over this tension between women's self-fulfillment in the public sphere and in the domestic sphere. To be happy, after all, women were told (and are still told) they needed to be proximate to the conventional family unit.

This study thus seeks to contribute to comparative literature across the East and the West, affect studies, contemporary women's writing and feminist literary criticism.

Table of Content

Aknowledgement

Introduction Part One	6
Part Two.....	42

Part I

Chapter One.....	84
Leaky Maternal Bodies: Disability, the Disenfranchised and (Un)Happiness in Thatcher's Britain in Doris Lessing's <i>The Fifth Child</i> (1988)	
Chapter Two.....	130
The Battle for Bloody Freedom: The Representation of "Good Blood" for "Freedom" in Fomiko Kometani's <i>Passover</i> (1985)	

Part II

Chapter Three.....	163
In Pursuit of Bloody Happiness: Every Happiness Has a Blood Lining: A Collusion between Postfeminist Labour and Women's Happiness in Banana Yoshimoto's <i>Kitchen</i> (1987)	
Chapter Four.....	220
The Troubled Monstrous Mother: Maternal Desire, Technology and Happiness in Jeanette Winterson's <i>Sexing the Cherry</i> (1989)	
Conclusion.....	261
Bibliography.....	299
Appendix.....	310

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Introduction: Part 1

“Women’s Happiness” in Neoliberalism

Are not women of the harem more happy than women voters? Is not the housekeeper happier than the working-woman? It is not too clear just what the word *happy* really means and still less what true values it may mask. There is no possibility of measuring the happiness of others, and it is always easy to describe as happy the situation in which one wishes to place them.
(*The Second Sex* by Simone de Beauvoir)¹

[W]hile I believe that increasing the number of women in positions of power is a necessary element of true equality, I do not believe that there is one definition of success or happiness. Not all women want careers. Not all women want children. Not all women want both. I would never advocate that we should all have the same objectives. Many people are not interested in acquiring power, not because they lack ambition, but because they are living their lives as they desire.
(*Lean In: Women, Work, and The Will to Lead* by Sheryl Sandberg)²

In 1949, when Simone de Beauvoir published *The Second Sex*, she already recognised the difficulty of defining and measuring happiness, specifically that of “women”. Seen in the quotation above, de Beauvoir talks about the difficulty of defining women’s happiness partly because of class differences between women: ‘women voters’ and ‘working-woman’ are presumably considered ‘more educated’ than women in a ‘harem’ and ‘house keepers’, yet their class difference does not necessarily promise which category of women become happier. Over 60 years later, at the time of neoliberalism, when women in most nations can vote and pursue their careers (although this is not

¹ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. by H.M. Parshley (London: Penguin, 1972 [1949]), p. 28. Emphasis by de Beauvoir.

² Sheryl Sandberg, *Lean In: Women, Work, and The Will to Lead* (Croydon: WH Allen, 2013), p. 10.

universally the case), the CEO of the Social Network Service Facebook, Sheryl

Sandberg continues this focus by writing on the complication of defining woman's

happiness. Sandberg acknowledges that there is no one meaning of 'happiness' or

success, since happiness depends on one's desire for life, choices that one makes. Yet,

with her disclaimers against a single meaning to happiness, Sandberg implies that

women's happiness depends on women's choice: the choice to have children or not; the

choice to have career or not; the choice to have both. Either choosing a career or not is

still perhaps a question of transcendence and immanence in de Beauvoir's existentialist

terms:

Now, what peculiarly signalizes the situation of woman is that she—a free and autonomous being like all human creatures—nevertheless finds herself living in a world where men compel her to assume the status of the Other. They propose to stabilize her as object and doom her to immanence since her transcendence is to be overshadowed and for ever transcended by another ego (conscience) which is essential and sovereign. The drama of woman lies in this conflict between the fundamental aspirations of every subject (ego)—who always regards the self as the essential—and the compulsions of a situation in which she is the inessential. How can a human being in woman's situation attain fulfillment? What roads are open to her? Which are blocked? How can independence be recovered in a state of dependency? What circumstances limit woman's liberty and how can they be overcome? These are the fundamental questions on which I would fain throw some light. This means that I am interested in the fortunes of the individual as defined not in terms of happiness but in terms of liberty.³

³ De Beauvoir, p. 29.

According to de Beauvoir, the possibility of women's fulfilment (transcendence) is limited, and constantly in conflict with their immanence, which is to be trapped in the endless cycle of daily routines such as washing and cooking, and even larger tasks like giving birth. Women's achievement is a constant 'drama', as on the one hand, all people naturally regard themselves as essential, but on the other hand, women are made to feel othered and inessential by society. In order to free themselves from this situation, de Beauvoir argues that to achieve women's happiness and independence, they need to fully conduct their liberty, and thus she is more interested in looking at women's liberty than happiness. De Beauvoir's account on the relation between women's liberty and happiness is to some extent understandable, as women needed to have choices for their desires in the first place. However, in the time of matured capitalism, when women are considered to already have "more" choices than before, the relationship between liberty and happiness is possibly more entangled than in the time de Beauvoir sought the path for women's liberty. What does it mean for women to have choices to achieve their happiness, in the time of neoliberalism? Is it possible to think about women's solidarity in a time of individualism? Is it possible to imagine women's solidarity across cultures?

This thesis takes up the concept of women's "happiness" and locates it in a

neoliberal context: I consider that the culture of promoting “happiness” and “liberty” we witness in the 2010s as the harvest of the 1980s, when the politics and culture of neoliberalism was formed by the language and rhetoric of optimism. Although adhering to the ideas of affect studies (which I will explain in more detail below in this introduction), I turn more attention to look at how this optimistic rhetoric in neoliberal culture influences women’s lives as well as women’s writing in the 1980s, and how women writers criticise and explore this optimism for social and conceptual change. This project draws on feminist scholarship, and I will discuss not only abstract “feeling”, but investigate how this regime of happiness relates to the politics of bodies in relation to maternal and familial relations, and to the lived physical and political lives of women. In this neoliberal regime, what sorts of bodies are expected to be reproduced, and what sorts of bodies are considered to bring happiness to the individual and for the social collective? I argue that happiness in neoliberalism produces a border between a kind of happiness that is normative and acceptable, and a kind that is unsanctioned and even deemed monstrous.

This thesis will look at the examples of neoliberalism from Japan and Britain, considering these two countries achieved considerable developments of neoliberalism,

and incorporated its economic and social agenda deep into their culture. The contemporary politics and culture we witness in the 2010s can be discussed as the harvest of 1980s, and I will explore how discourses on and around women's happiness in neoliberalism pervade across cultures and impact on women's choice. Furthermore, I will discuss how women's happiness is still ultimately often an issue of maternity, specifically of giving birth to healthy children, by reading women's writing in the 1980s, by Jeanette Winterson and Doris Lessing from Britain, and Fumiko Kometani and Banana Yoshimoto in Japan.

In this Introduction, I will provide the theoretical framework that supports my thesis on happiness as a coercive regime, which I will call 'monstrous happiness'. I will first introduce the historical context of neoliberalism in both Britain and Japan, and closely look at Margaret Thatcher's rhetoric on the complementary relation between happiness and liberty. Then the focus will shift to demonstrate the recent critical and theoretical (re)assessment of happiness held by affect studies, referencing Lauren Berlant and Sara Ahmed. Through explaining theories from disability studies such as ableism and assemblages by Rosemarie Garland-Thompson, I will aim to clarify how my understanding and usage of the concepts of optimism, happiness and liberty are

different from these thinkers. Finally for this section, I will describe the phrase ‘monstrous textual faultline’ and how the phrase will play a mutable yet significant role in this project, laying out the methodologies I employ in this thesis, such as ‘cultural materialism’ and comparative feminism. I will draw on the idea of “faultlines” from Alan Sinfield, and in this section I will explain how this concept describes the paradoxes that arise when there is dissidence between conflicting social agendas, and how it relates to my thesis on monstrous happiness. Comparative projects by nature involve a great deal of political sensitivity, and I will manifest my positionality in regard to this project.

1. Contexts: From Welfare State to Neoliberalism

In this section, I will look at relations between Thatcher and her understanding of liberty and happiness in neoliberalism. In order to establish this argument, however, it is first essential to look at the development of neoliberal politics leading up to Thatcher’s government. Here I will look at the historical contexts from the 1960s to the 1980s. In her book *The Harvest of the Sixties* (1995), Patricia Waugh explains

how contemporary lives, culture and politics in Britain were indeed the harvest of the 1960s, in which people ‘witnessed enormous transformations in attitudes to authority, sexuality, censorship, and civil liberties’.⁴ For Waugh, literature is a useful and appropriate medium with which to critically analyse contemporary lives:

To write an account of a historical period through which one has lived is in some sense to write an autobiography where the past and future are necessarily and often mysteriously shaped by the writer’s present situation. To write of 1960 in the mid-1990s is to be conscious of trying to define a legacy whose implications and ramifications are far from clear. We are still living the harvest of the sixties and to that extent we cannot entirely bring its meaning or significance to conscious articulation: to declare that it was an indubitably bad harvest or an unusually rich one seems premature. Which is why literature, operating in the mode of particularity, indirection, metaphor, and imaginative projection, complements the more global verdicts of rational political analysis as a means of facilitating the recognition of who and where we are.⁵

Indeed, Waugh’s writing in the 1990s on reflecting the 1960s suggests, although discerning the whole significance and meaning of a period is impossible to achieve, looking at the reflection of a particular decade on culture is a valid way of looking at the world of “now”. Moreover, Waugh’s focus is limited to examining only English literature and culture; since that time, the world has become “globalised” (although the term is not free from political controversies) due to technological innovations, I

⁴ Patricia Waugh, *Harvest of the Sixties: English Literature and its Background 1960 to 1990* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 5.

⁵ Waugh, pp. 1-2.

therefore argue that it is worthwhile to look at a political harvest across cultures.

As well as Britain's transformation in the 1960s, Japanese economics and culture experienced a similar and significant change in this decade. Japan's economic growth was enormously compressed during that period. The Tokyo Olympics, held in 1961, are an emblematic event of Japanese economic success, coming back from the brink of the "loss" of the Second World War.⁶ Student protests were active and highlighted social transformation in the sixties and the emergence of a "counter culture", as a result of the miraculously swift growth of the economy in the post-war era. The expansion of this vigorous growth of economy and capitalism played a particularly significant role in the consolidation of compulsory heterosexuality and sexism, spurred on by the welfare state. Reiichi Miura explains that, theoretically, welfare states guarantee full-employment (lifetime employment) based upon the "right to exist", which is affirmed by constitution 25 in the Japanese Constitution as the 'right to maintain a minimum standard of wholesome and cultured living'. Lifetime employment is closely embedded with the guarantee of the right to survival, as it is accompanied by dependents' benefits. In other words, lifetime employment

⁶ It is worthwhile to note that the Tokyo Olympics are going to be held again in 2020, as was announced in 2013. To have the second Olympic in Tokyo seems nostalgic view toward the legacy of the 1960s, when Japanese economics was considered as rapidly growing.

was not only for a worker's survival but also for "his" dependents to maintain a family life, and as a result the form of the nuclear family become normalised, through this complementary relation between lifetime employment and dependents' benefits.⁷

The sociologist Nicholas Rose also claims that welfare state's governance is formed with the nuclear family as its prototypical model, in which a man is a worker and a woman a housewife, with a stable income and stable lives.⁸ Thus, such welfare states as these can be seen to contain systematic sexism.⁹ During the rapid economic growth of the 60s, women in business were not treated equally to men. They were (and still are) paid a lower salary than men, and it was traditional to give up their careers when they married. Many women had to move from the public to the private sphere for the sake of supporting their husbands, who worked in industry. In Japan, the feminist movement was launched during the 1970s and the Equal Employment Opportunity Act for Men and Women was finally established in 1985.

Further to Waugh's connection of the 1960s to the 1980s, I contend that the present 2010s are the harvest of the 1980s. I also assert that the social and political

⁷ Reiichi Miura, 'Posuto-Feminizumu-to-Daisanpa-Feminizumu-no-Kanōsei' [Postfeminism and the Possibility of The Third Feminism] in *Jendā-to-Jiyū: Riron, Riberarizumu, Queer* [Gender and Liberty: Theory, Liberalism and Queer], ed. by Miura Reiichi and Shizuka Hayasaka (Tokyo: Sairyū-sha, 2013), pp. 59-79 (pp. 67-68).

⁸ Nicholas Rose, 'Advanced Liberalism' in *Power of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 137-166. Qtd. in Miura, p. 68.

⁹ Miura, p. 68.

situation of the 2010s and the pervasive discourses around “happiness” are rooted in the events and politics of the 1980s. In this section, I will first outline the political context of the 1980s, and secondly look at four examples of contemporary politics in the 2010s that have their roots in the 1980s: riots in the UK, the response to the earthquake in Japan, policies for gender equality in Japan and gay marriage laws in the UK. This section serves to provide a background to the literary analysis that will follow, in considering the social and political situations of the 1980s, and their reflections in the 2010s.

The neo-liberal policies of the 1980s caused huge social disparity between the rich and the poor, which deeply affects our lives in the 2010s. In the 80s, Britain and Japan were both led by conservative leaders: Margaret Thatcher in Britain (1979-1990), and Yasuhiro Nakasone in Japan (1982-1987). Both Prime Ministers worked closely with President Ronald Regan (1981-1989), and advocated to reform for building up “small governments”. Small governments prominently aim towards efficient management of human resources by replacing lifetime employment with more flexible, non-regular employment, reducing benefits for dependents. On one hand, this transformation of labour contracts led to the end of the welfare state:

citizens whose labour conditions are on a temporary basis cannot afford as easily to construct their own families. On the other hand, women were considered as a new possible workforce, a complex situation that I will explain in detail below.

Along with labour reform, small government encouraged the commercialisation of the public welfare and public sectors. For example, British Petroleum (BP 1979), British Telecommunication (BT 1984), British Gas (1986) and British Airways (BA 1987) were privatised in the UK, and as for Japan, Japan Railway (JR 1987), Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Corporation (NTT 1985), Japan Tobacco Inc. (JT 1985) and Japan Airlines (JAL 1985-7) were privatised from public corporations, in the name of liberalisation.¹⁰ The policies enacting these privatisations were justified as reducing the governments' economic liabilities, and enhancing market competition, from which unequal social structures were produced and broadened. Labour reforms and privatisation are some examples of the shift from a welfare state to neoliberalism, and I argue these reformations led to transforming their citizens' attitudes towards their lives. As Waugh states in the quotation above, the neo-liberal agenda specifically reformed how people "feel" and define their lives, along with market

¹⁰ I will look at the relations between Thatcher's neoliberal agenda and "happiness" in more detail in the section 'Haunted by Happiness' below.

orientations.

In the early summer of 1979, Margaret Thatcher was elected as Prime Minister in the UK. As David Harvey explains, she authorised drastic economic reformation to solve the economic stagnation that the UK suffered from under Labour administration in the 1970s. Harvey explains further that Thatcher's conduct for economic reformation 'entailed confronting trade union power, attacking all forms of social solidarity that hindered competitive flexibility'.¹¹ Thatcher's emphasis on loosening solidarity resulted in individualism, as she famously declares: 'there's no such thing as society, only individual men and women, and their families'.¹² This statement is paradoxical and raises the question: can a woman be an individual, while being a mother at the same time? On one hand, Thatcher enhanced individualism to gain flexibility for increasing Britain's workforce, and for that reason, the Conservatives dissolved the firm solidarity in the labour unions, seen in miners strikes. On the other hand, as we will examine in the first chapter on Lessing, the Conservatives enhanced conventional family values, reinforcing the family unit. In this mode of neoliberalism, women were encouraged to be eligible as an individual workforce; however,

¹¹ David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 23.

¹² *Ibid.*

simultaneously they were and still are expected to be mothers in conventional family units. In other words, the paradoxical agenda by the Conservatives still produced women's desire to have children, and therefore placed women in the double burden of having to choose either to be "a better mother" or to "work as much as a man".

Therefore, I contend, as I will expand upon in later chapters, that enhanced individualism was in immense tension with motherhood in the 1980s, when neoliberalism had begun to prevail.

In this section, I examine the definition of "happiness" and its relation to liberty in neoliberalism, and explain how this term is used in this project. I will first scrutinise how neoliberal icon Margaret Thatcher's usage of 'liberty' and happiness are compatible with right-wing discourse.

2. Thatcher, Happiness and Liberty

Margaret Thatcher wrote 'Reflections on Liberty' in 2000, ruminating on how it was important to enhance individualism in pursuing liberty, in her drastic transformation from the welfare state to neoliberalism. Thatcher explains that the policies administrated

by the Conservatives in the 1980s were required by the practical circumstances from the 1970s, the time called the “Winter of Discontent”, during which there were strong public sector strikes, protesting for pay rises. The combination of high tax rates for those who worked and welfare for the unemployed was seen by many to discourage the will to work. This, coupled with dissatisfaction with the socialist agenda (the Labour party and the Soviet Union), led Britain to be called the “Sick Man of Europe” at that time, as I mentioned in the previous section. Thatcher’s cabinet, from 1979, introduced monetarism (controlling the money supply) to stop inflation, public spending cuts and tax cuts: Thatcher argued that ‘removing the controls on prices, incomes, dividends, and foreign exchange was needed to allow key economic decisions to be made by the market’, and this, along with dismantling the trade union, ebbed ‘the tide of collectivism’.¹³ However, these programmes to transform from the socialistic and welfare state were not only restricted to the economic and political démarche for change; they were, for Thatcher, a moral issue:

Its purpose was, in a certain sense, moral, and again it had to be, because the problem was moral. We had to give people a renewed appetite for liberty and responsibility. The instinct for freedom had never been totally lost. It was too deeply rooted in the English speaking peoples for that. But it is not enough for a free people to fight for freedom—however heroically. A free

¹³ Margaret Thatcher, ‘Reflections on Liberty’, *Hofstra Law Review*, 28.4 (2001), 869-875 (p. 873).

people has to live freedom, and this we now endeavoured to achieve.
(Thatcher, pp. 873-74)

For Thatcher, as the problem of citizens in the welfare state was their (she believed, excessive) dependency on the government, the ‘liberty’ she believes in is one’s drive to fully make the most out of one’s ability, and so she encouraged citizens to be responsible for their own successes. She believed one should pursue one’s achievement by oneself, aided neither by the government or social structures, and individualism based upon the concept of liberty is, in Thatcher’s words, ‘far more beneficial than statism, as judged by almost any measure of *human happiness* and progress’.¹⁴ Her belief was that less regulation of the market and of labour structures would enhance and improve the situation of human happiness:

Given the right framework of laws, taxes, and regulation, most individuals will apply their talents and energies productively. They will certainly make far more effort on behalf of themselves and their families than they ever would for an impersonal entity called “government.” What government has to do is to set the right rules, so that the game— and it is never a “zero sum game,” remember—is played to the best of every player’s ability. That is on the positive side of human nature. And from it stems everything which the West has achieved and which the world calls progress.¹⁵

Happiness is for Thatcher something to achieve and gain through the game, namely,

¹⁴ Thatcher, p. 871, my emphasis.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

through an individual's efforts and maximizing of one's talents. '[H]uman happiness' is possible when one detaches oneself from the collective through flexible labour, and thus the neoliberal agenda is found in providing individuals with the rules for the game. As we can see, when Thatcher explains neoliberalism, liberty is closely related to 'human happiness'. In other words, for Thatcher, liberty is something that makes human happiness possible, and vice versa: liberty and happiness are complementary terms.

Thatcher titles her second section of 'Reflections on Liberty' 'Human Nature' as for her, it is natural for humans to be happy if we live in freedom. In this sense, Thatcher captures the features of the idea of happiness as universal. However, here Thatcher's explanation of liberty and happiness causes incoherence, because to 'live in freedom' means to become happy, but both liberty and happiness are something to be gained, not given. In this sense, as we will see, liberty and happiness have some standard to be upheld in the neoliberal system; it is ultimately, in this system, financial success that liberty is able to provide, so that happiness is caused. Thus, liberty and happiness are not universal, but specifically conditioned in the neoliberal mode, and related to financial success.

3. Critical (Re)assessments of Happiness

In recent years, there have been a number of academic and creative works written in affect studies on optimism and happiness in neoliberal times.¹⁶ While the philosophy of happiness stretches back to the Greek hedonists, it is only in recent years that cultural studies has developed an interest in happiness, particularly through queer and feminist lenses. In particular, Eve Sedgwick's article in 2002, 'Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading' starts by talking about affect and these two fields, and actively engages with happiness in Euro-American academia. At the same time, Japanese academics, especially in sociology, also show their interest in happiness. The most recent contributions in cultural studies are published by Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness* (2010), and Lauren Berlant *Cruel Optimism* (2011) in English, and *The Happy Young in a Despairing Country* (2012) by Noriyuki Furuichi and *Anti-Happiness* by Saeki Keishi (2012) in Japan. Why does happiness matter so much in recent years as

¹⁶ To look at the critical stream of affect studies, see *The Affect Theory Reader*, ed. by Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010). Gregg defines affect as follows: 'Affect arises in the midst of *inbetween-ness*: in the capacities to act and be acted upon. Affect is an impingement or extrusion of a momentary or sometimes more sustained state of relation as well as the passage (and the duration of passage) of forces or intensities.' (p. 1). Gregg's definition of affect studies is highly theoretical and abstract, and my focus in this thesis on affect, although I utilise Ahmed and Berlant's arguments on optimism (liberty and happiness), will be more politically and historically grounded than Gregg and Seigworth, and thus I am taking my distance from this overly abstract understanding of affect.

reflected in this critical interest? Why is happiness such an important topic in contemporary life?

It is notable that the noun “happiness” is uncountable. The *Oxford English Dictionary* records that the plural – “happinesses” – was used until approximately 1886 and since then, “happiness” is used only as a singular noun. This singularity of the noun suggests that, to some extent, happiness is considered as an ultimate “truth” that everyone can pursue; namely, there is a premise that happiness has a universal quality. It seems there is “one” happiness on which everyone can agree. In her book *The Promise of Happiness*, Sara Ahmed defines happiness: it is ‘constantly described as human desire, as being what we aim for, as being what gives purpose, meaning and order to human life’.¹⁷ The history of happiness is a history of variable associations, how happiness is associated with some life choices and not others, how happiness is imagined as being what follows from a certain kind of being. She explains that recent research shows how people ‘feel’ about their happiness: if they are feeling ‘good’, they are happy.¹⁸ What matters in measuring happiness is that there are standards to measure the feeling. That means there is a certain kind of happiness that we feel good about

¹⁷ Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness*, p. 1.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

“achieving”. In this sense, happiness is a social good that we can “gain”, “find” and “have”. When one’s feeling is proximate to that certain specific happiness, the subject feels good. In other words, to be happy, one *has to* complete some standard of happiness. Ahmed argues there are some indicators of happiness, such as marriage, family construction, and wealth accumulation. These become the ‘happiness duty, since there is a certain expectation that one has a duty to promote what causes happiness’.¹⁹

“Duty” calls ones to follow happiness, and it works as a collective obligation. Therefore when an individual in a society cannot find or have happiness, giving rise to a gap between the individual and happiness as a social good, it is often seen as the individual’s fault for not being able to follow normative happiness.

According to Ahmed, one perceives happiness from others. For instance, when Ahmed reads Rousseau’s *Emile*, Sophie, the wife of Emile, believes that marrying Emile is her happiness precisely because marrying him makes her parents happy.

Contrary to the way in which Emile is raised, to become an independent citizen through experience and self-determination towards his life, Sophie is always destined to be a housewife, learning domestic skills such as needlework and cooking. As Rousseau explains:

¹⁹ Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness*, p. 7.

[S]he loves virtue because it is dear to her revered father, and to her tender and worthy mother; they are not content to be happy in their own virtue, they desire hers; and she finds her chief happiness in the hope of just making them happy.²⁰

Here, the way in which one (in the quotation above, Sophie) perceives happiness is as held in-between oneself and another. This proximity works as an affect in perceiving happiness. However, if one refuses to accept and share another's happiness, this proximity has been destroyed or causes friction between the two. The acknowledgement of this friction turns happiness into a site of crisis. If one could not follow the outline of a mutually shared happiness, it is not the idea of normative happiness that is questioned; rather, it is one's ability that is called into question, proclaiming that he or she does not have the ability to follow the norm. As Ahmed writes:

What is striking is that the crisis in happiness has not put social ideals into question and if anything has reinvigorated their hold over both psychic and political life. The demand for happiness is increasingly articulated as a demand to return to social ideals, as if what explains the crisis of happiness is not the failure of these ideals but our failure to follow them. And arguably, at times of crisis the language of happiness acquires an even more powerful hold.²¹

The place where this friction happens is the place at which the boundary emerges

²⁰ Qtd. in Ahmed p. 56.

²¹ Ahmed, pp. 6-7.

between one's happiness and another's, and I will explain this perspective of happiness below in this introduction, where I read Winterson's *Oranges are Not the Only Fruit* as a case study for Ahmed's theories about happiness.

Lauren Berlant, in *Cruel Optimism*, also investigates the affective structure of "the good life", a concept that is similar to happiness. Berlant's interest is in 'optimistic attachment' and this 'involves a sustaining inclination to return to the scene of fantasy that enables one to expect that this time, nearness to this thing will help you or a world to become different in just the right way'.²² However, again, optimism becomes cruel when one finds an object/scene that ignites a sense of possibility, but one cannot actually 'attain the expansive transformation for which a person or a people risks striving; and, doubly, it is cruel insofar as the very pleasures of being inside a relation have become sustaining regardless of the content of the relation, such that a person or a world finds itself bound to a situation of profound threat that is, at the same time, profoundly confirming.'²³

Ahmed's and Berlant's argument on how one shares and internalises the idea of happiness/optimism to some extent coincides with my own theoretical account of

²² Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011), p. 2.

²³ Berlant, p. 2.

happiness. Further, marriage, family construction, and wealth accumulation are indeed very often considered to be happy duties to achieve in one's life, and this happiness can be the place of crisis, if one cannot follow them, as Berlant argues. However, what is neglected in their argument on such affect is that happiness in neoliberal life *still* needs to be (re)considered from a physical perspective, especially in relation to maternal bodies, when it comes to the issue of women's neoliberal lives. Neoliberalism enhances women's liberty, and yet it also complicates the understanding of the relation between feminism, women's bodies and freedom. For example, one "happy" duty, marriage, is promoted by society to encourage reproduction in order to give rise to the next generation. The purpose of producing the next generation is to come up with further work power for the accumulation of national wealth. Moreover, children who are "assets" for the nation are expected to be able-bodied, namely, to have a normative body. As such, dutiful happiness is closely tied to physical production, and consequently to normative bodies. In other words, when we think of women's happiness, it is inevitable to think about its relation with eugenic discourse, and with women's body and their choices.

Rosemarie Garland-Thomson radically reassesses eugenics from its historical usage

related to the Nazis. In conversation with Ruth Schwartz Cowan, she articulates

eugenics as ‘a way of shaping human communities or shaping human populations’.²⁴

For Garland-Thompson, the word “human” raises the question of who is to be included

in the word “human” and in the community: she asks ‘what we mean by human, what

we mean by flourishing, what we mean by health?’²⁵ This question seeks to expose

what kinds of beliefs and assumptions shape the concept of human. For example, she

discusses that Down syndrome is indeed one of the iconic human variations in disability,

and trying to erase its existence is the very example of the utopian ‘World Human

Project’ (Garland-Thomson), in which the belief that eliminating people with disability,

thanks to prenatal screening technology, will bring a better world, place and future to

society.²⁶ Underlying the Down syndrome argument is the issue of quality of life.

There is a prediction that the disabled person cannot be happy, since their health is not

sufficient. Behind the word “health”, the suffering and burdens of families are always

assumed. As such, the politics of disability is often based on an underlying ideology of

happiness. The application of this ideology of happiness is not limited to families, but

²⁴ Ruth Schwartz Cowan and Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, ‘Past and Present of Eugenics’, *Biopolitics*, 1.1 (2012), <<http://bio-politics.org/>> [accessed 15 July 2012].

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Garland-Thomson, ‘Seeing the Unusual: Thoughts on the Ethics of Showing Disability’, at *Sensualising Deformity: Communication and Construction of Monstrous Embodiment*, Conference (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, 15 June 2012).

also to the larger community. Individuals are required to contribute themselves for the productivity of society.²⁷

My research will build on Ahmed and Berlant's theorisation of happiness by focusing on this physical side of "normative" happiness, and on how women are represented as monstrous for having fallen out of or failed to accurately achieve normative modes of happiness. Ahmed and Berlant have developed their arguments around happiness and optimism in neoliberalism and I am to some extent following their argument on affect studies in the current queer and feminist critical and academic stream. In my thesis, I differ from their arguments in that I specifically explore the concepts and rhetoric around neoliberal "happiness" and "liberty" in relation to women's bodies and health, in women's literary writing. In addition, my project is interested in the conversation and comparison between texts and politics between the East and the West, Japan and the UK, in regards to "happiness" and "liberty" in

²⁷ For alternative approaches to the disabled body, which do not analyse the social discourse around disability, but aim to reimagine the disabled body, see for example, Margrit Shildrick, "'Why Should Our Bodies End at the Skin?': Embodiment, Boundaries, and Somatechnics", *Hypatia*, 30.1 (2015), 13-29. Shildrick situates herself within an approach to disability called Critical Disability Studies (CDS). CDS is different from disability studies (the social model of disability: SMD), with its use of theoretical approaches. Whilst SMD is motivated by analysing social and political oppressive structures around disability, CDS calls into question the identity politics of SMD and its rights-based issues. Shildrick considers disabled bodies through the Deleuzian model of the 'assemblage', as well as using Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological account of the body. Famously, Merleau-Ponty talks about the corporeal relation of a blind man with his cane, his tool becoming part and extension of his body. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. by C. Smith (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), p. 165. For some theorists, Haraway's concept of the cyborg is adopted in disability studies as well; see for example, Fiona Kumari Campbell, *Contours of Ableism: The Production of Disability and Abled-ness* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

women's lives. Finally, this thesis is interested in the relation between happiness, women's bodies and maternity. These relations are interlinked as my thesis explains how happiness is often considered to be produced from a healthy way of raising up children by good maternal care. In this interlinking of maternity, children and health, monstrosity can find a way to seep in.

4. The Monstrosity of Happiness or Monstrous Textual Faultlines

'Monstrous Happiness' is a somewhat awkward oxymoron for what I aim to describe about contemporary lives, through the literary and discursive analysis of this project. The phrase is perhaps a way to find the 'faultlines' that neoliberal agendas produce, which especially relate to women's life choices in relation to maternity, family and happiness for the possibility of change.²⁸ In fact, stories, narratives and discourse on happiness in neoliberal life are, in a way, Gothic. David Punter defines one of the characteristics of Gothic as follows:

Gothic is, on the whole, proliferative, it is not intrigued by the minimal: in its trajectory away from right reason and from the rule of law it does not choose to purify itself but rather to express itself with maximum – perhaps magnum

²⁸ I use the term 'faultlines' in the sense that Alan Sinfield defines in his book *Faultlines*, which I will explain in detail below.

– force, even if on many occasions this also involves considerable ineptitude. It tells stories within stories, it repeats itself, it forgets where it left off, it goes on and on; it ‘loses the place’. Endlessly it seeks for excess after excess, and does not draw a textual line under this.²⁹

Stories about happiness in neoliberalism proliferate like Gothic narratives, as Punter describes here. Stories on happiness encourage subjects to thrive and seek their happiness in society, and the stories excessively keep pervading, and in this sense, happy stories in this thesis are considered as monstrous. This concept of happy stories as Gothic echoes Kazuko Takemura’s explanation on ‘the collective story’, which I will discuss in more detail in Chapter 4. The collective story, as Takemura explains, arises as ‘a story’ *in nowhere but everywhere* through individual stories. Some women might consider that happiness lies in marriage and having children, and that is the “normal” story of happiness, but where does this “normal” story come from? We need to find the hidden and embedded textual lines of these excessive happy stories, finding the faultlines in them as a space for conceptual change.

Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield challenged the theories of New Historicism, which deploys a complicated relation between history and literature. New Historicism,

²⁹ David Punter ‘Gothic Origins: The Haunting of the Text’ in *Gothic Pathologies: The Text, The Body and the Law* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), pp. 1-18 (p. 9).

started in America, was solidly influenced by Foucault's ideas of history as about the imposition of power on the subject, and frequently sought to explore power relations inscribed in texts.³⁰ Simultaneously, they wanted to show that history was not only about dominant forces, and would look to the margins of history to see how unconventional or minor events/people could equally reveal something about not just a text, but the time period it came from. In other words, the text and history mutually illuminate each other, without being totalising forces. In many cases, the new historicist view of power was far from optimistic: for example, the idea of trying to "subvert" dominant power structures in new historicism always necessarily ends up in failure, in their analysis, since when something seems to subvert a power structure, they make the claim that power simply operates at a deeper level.³¹

On the other hand, Dollimore and Sinfield demonstrate the ways through which one could challenge power through detecting the 'faultlines' in power structures, where the two dominant power structures contradict each other, or overlap. Sinfield uses metaphors of 'stories' to exemplify 'the production of ideology' as 'the continuous and familiar discourses of everyday life'. He explains:

³⁰ See Stephen Greenblatt's essay 'Invisible Bullets: Renaissance Authority and its Subversion', in *Political Shakespeare: Essays in Cultural Materialism*, ed. by Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield, 2nd edn (Manchester: Manchester University Press, [1985] 1992), pp. 18-47.

³¹ The new historicist idea of 'subversion' is contrasted by the idea of 'dissidence' in cultural materialism, as I will explain below.

The strength of ideology derives from the way it gets to be common sense; it “goes without saying.” For its production is not an external process, stories are not outside ourselves, something we just hear or read about. Ideology makes sense for us—of us—because it is already proceeding when we arrive in the world, and we come to consciousness in its terms. As the world shapes itself around and through us, certain interpretations of experience strike us as plausible: they fit with what we have experienced already, and are confirmed by others around us.³²

For Sinfield, how we perceive the world is through the stories (ideology/norms) that are culturally produced by power structures and, in this sense, cultural materialists see literature as a powerful space in which to explore faultlines, and imagine ways, through dissidence, towards a new future system.³³ For them, ‘[t]he text is always a site of cultural contest, but it is never a self-sufficient site. [/] It is a key proposition of cultural materialism that the specific historical conditions in which institutions and formations organise and are organised by textualities must be addressed’.³⁴ Although Dollimore and Sinfield mainly work on the Renaissance, their ideas of history and its relation to literature is useful to read literary texts in other periods. My project considers

³² Alan Sinfield, ‘Cultural Materialism, Othello, and the Politics of Plausibility’, in *Faultlines: Cultural Materialism and the Politics of Dissident Reading* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992), pp. 29 -51 (p. 32).

³³ Sinfield differentiates the term between ‘dissident’ and ‘subversive’: whilst the latter suggests ‘achievement—that something was *subverted*—and hence (since mostly the government did not fall, patriarchy did not crumble) that containment must have occurred’, dissidence implies ‘refusal of an aspect of the dominant, without prejudging an outcome. This may sound like a weaker claim, but I believe it is actually stronger insofar as it posits a field necessarily open to continuing contest, in which at some conjunctures the dominant will lose ground while at others the subordinate will scarcely maintain its position’, Sinfield, p. 49.

³⁴ Sinfield, p. 49.

“happiness” seen in contemporary lives as made of “stories” one is drawn into collectively as noted above.³⁵ In this sense, I examine both literary texts and political discourses on optimistic stories such as happiness and liberty in the 1980s when I consider, especially in relation to the maternal and familial, to find dissidence to the power structures that neo-liberalism and its prevailing discourses put forward.

Monsters and monstrosity have rich histories in both literature and critical theories.

While I will not go through the entire history of the term, I intend to focus on the concept of border making and its vulnerability in a number of the key theorists of monstrosity.³⁶ J. Halberstam explains the definition of the monster in his criticism on gothic narratives: ‘the monster always represents the disruption of categories, the destruction of boundaries, and the presence of impurities.’³⁷ Margrit Shildrick turns to ‘the monster in order to uncover and rethink a relation with the standards of normality that proves to be uncontainable and ultimately unknowable’, and tells us that ‘it is in its operation as a concept – the monstrous – that it shows itself to be a deeply disruptive force.’³⁸ Such scholarship demonstrates that discussion of the monster and monstrosity

³⁵ Sinfield’s use of ‘stories’ as a metaphor for the production of ideology shares similarities with Kazuko Takemura’s in its explanation of ‘collective stories’. I will fully explain her ideas in Chapter Four on Winterson’s *Sexing the Cherry*. It may be that both scholars share an interest in the processes of discursive production/ideology.

³⁶ See Barbara Creed, Margrit Shildrick, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen and Judith Halberstam.

³⁷ Halberstam, p. 27.

³⁸ Margrit Shildrick, *Embodying the Monster: Encounters with the Vulnerable Self* (London, Thousand

often leads us towards the issue of boundaries, and yet, as Shildrick states, the binary structure that the monstrous give rise to does not mean that ‘the monstrous is [...] only an exteriority’.³⁹ As I explained in the last section, in this project, I will look at happiness as the place where the boundaries arise between child/mother (family), the individual and society, and across culture; in this sense, happiness is the place where binary structures are contested. What I would like to articulate here by the phrase ‘monstrous happiness’ is that happiness and the rhetoric around the term produce a system of inclusion and exclusion, determined by who is closer to the blueprint of happiness that neoliberal political and social discourses propose. As Diana Fuss asserts, ‘the figure inside/outside, which encapsulates the structure of language, repression, and subjectivity, also designates the structure of exclusion, oppression, and repudiation.’⁴⁰

The adjective “monstrous”, or the monstrosity of happiness in this project work as an axis with which ‘a multitude of fragments’, such as desire, gender, sexuality, embodiment, reproduction and the gothic, are ‘collected [...] and bound temporarily together to form a loosely integrated net – or, better an unassimilated hybrid, a

Oaks and New Delhi: Sage, 2002), p. 1.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Diana Fuss, ‘Inside/Out’, in *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories*, ed. by Diana Fuss (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 1-10 (p. 2).

monstrous body’, as Jeffrey Cohen describes.⁴¹ Indeed, gender has been a key concern in theories of monstrosity, often linking back to Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, as Cohen alludes to with his description of the creature. For example, Creed discusses monstrous femininity: ‘As with the more critically popular images of woman, those which represent woman as monstrous also define her primarily in relation to her sexuality, specifically the abject nature of her maternal and reproductive functions’.⁴² Thus, this project looks at happiness as the power structure that is produced and pervades from social discourses within neoliberalism, creating boundaries of inclusion and exclusion among citizens. In addition, I will focus on the exclusiveness of intimacy – especially maternity and maternal/familial relationships, how the concept of health is determined by “healthy” heteronormative relations, and healthy bodies, or how proximate one can be to such norms. As such, the term “monstrous” in this thesis is broadly used, yet a significant conceptual device to foreground the lines of inclusion and exclusion in societies, as well as make the textual faultlines of the stories about happiness recognisable.

⁴¹ Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, ‘Monster Culture (Seven Theses)’, in *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, ed. by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1996), pp. 3-25. (pp. 3-4).

⁴² Barbara Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1993), p. 151.

5. Comparative Literature and Feminist Literary Criticism

My thesis is a feminist comparative project on Japanese and English women's writing, historicised within the social discourses of the 1980s, reading the literary texts of Fumiko Komatsu, Doris Lessing, Banana Yoshimoto and Jeanette Winterson. Thus, by necessity, comparatism will be a prominent method of my research. As Sinfield explains, comparing different cultures is an effective way to understand the simultaneous processes by which ideology is produced and understood: it 'is apparent when we observe how people in other cultures than our own make good sense of the world in ways that seem strange to us: their outlook is supported by their social context. For them, those frameworks of perception, maps of meaning, work.'⁴³ Although comparative study will be an attractive tool as such, the feminist comparative approach contains great concern across cultures between "the West" and "the East". Margaret R. Higonnet explains the concern as follows:

A common complaint about comparative literature and feminist practice today is that they both remain confined within Western critical norms. As Rey Chow points out in *Women and Chinese Modernity*, however, such a critique runs the risk of displacing ethnic individuals such as herself (born

⁴³ Sinfield, p. 49.

and raised in Hong Kong), whose entry into a culture historically inflected by imperialism is already “Westernised.” A purist “nativism” would require non-Western critics to examine only non-Western topics, thereby reinscribing an idealist opposition between the West and “the rest,” or between first and third worlds. Such geographic and political dichotomies impede recognition of the complex interpenetration of cultures and of differences within “national” cultures.⁴⁴

Analysing Japanese culture and its literary works require a great deal of cultural and political sensitivity, for this comparative approach could easily subject the one culture to the other, and the approach of my research might serve to reconstruct orientalist power structures. Although there are a few comparative studies in feminist literary criticism for Japanese women’s writing, I will mainly draw on the work of Natsumi Ikoma, who is a comparatist on women’s writing in Japanese and English. Above all, categorising Japan and its culture as “the third world” would be a very arguable position, and on this account, Ikoma explains in her monograph *Desiring Literature* (2007) that Japan has indeed established an economic strength that ranks alongside that of western “developed” countries. In other words, it can be said that Japan has gained the status of ‘the subject’, not the object, – comparatively “Western” from the Japanese perspective, but remaining “Eastern” in the Caucasian West’s perspective. However, as Ikoma

⁴⁴ Margaret R. Higonnet, ‘Introduction’, in *Borderwork: Feminist Engagements with Comparative Literature*, ed. by Margaret R. Higonnet (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994), pp. 1-18 (p. 14).

argues, this economic development has produced an ambiguity in Japanese identity. She accurately analyses that in the post-war period, the USA positioned occupied Japan as the page on which the glamour, the sexiness, the authenticity, the power of ‘America as a winner’ was written.⁴⁵ The re-education of post-war Japan seemed to have been successful in schooling Japan as an honorary member of the West. However, this text in fact has a double standard: while this re-education allows Japan its status as a “developed” country, it still requires Japan to remain as other. That is to say, the message of the West is paradoxical: on one hand, it uses imperialistic discourse to control Japan and make it into “a copy” of a Western country, and on the other, it requires Japan to be other, the embodiment of what Edward Said argued in Orientalism.⁴⁶ Situated in-between these two texts, Japanese women writers have even more difficulty, as “the other within the other”, like mirrors set facing each other.⁴⁷ The gender differences between men and women are strongly pronounced in Japan, and

⁴⁵ Ikoma, p. 14. She explains that General Head Quarter (GHQ) provided poor Japanese citizens with sweets such as candies, chocolates and such. This infantilising of the Japanese firmly implanted the vivid and patronising image of ‘America as the winner’. Natsumi Ikoma, *Yogubō-suru-Bungaku: Odoru-Kyōjyo-de-Yomitoku-Nichiei-Jyendā-Hihyō* [Desiring Literature: British and Japanese Gender Criticism by Reading Mad Dancing Women], (Tokyo: Eihōsha, 2007).

⁴⁶ Ikoma, pp. 11-18. Although Said’s works are largely criticised because of the elisions of women’s writing from his criticism, Denise DeCaires Narain draws on Said’s idea of the ‘connectedness of the world’ to post-colonial women’s writing through the representation of servants. See ‘Affiliating Said Closer to Home: Reading Postcolonial Women’s Texts’, in *Edward Said: A Legacy of Emancipation and Representation*, ed. by Adel Iskander and Hakem Rustom (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), pp. 121-141.

⁴⁷ For other criticism on Japanese women’s writing, see also *The Outsider Within: Ten Essays on Modern Japanese Women Writers*, ed. by Tokomo Kuribayashi and Mizuho Terasawa (Lanham, New York, Oxford: University Press of America, 2002).

working in the public sphere was extremely hard for Japanese women in the post-war period and the 1960s, as I mentioned in the previous section. Here I would like to clarify that in writing on Japanese women, I would not necessarily allow my status as a Japanese citizen to position my voice as a representative of all Japanese women. I would like to resist the temptations to *represent* the monolithic view of Japanese women's experiences, and my project must take into account political sensitivities and interpersonal difference as I compare the one culture to the other. Conversely, given my training in the discipline of English literature, and my position as an English language speaker, cautious handling of comparing two cultures without prioritising the West over the East is required: while it is never possible to be completely neutral, it is not this project's aim to regard and conclude that the West (Britain) is progressive and politically more generous than the East (Japan). Reserving cultural difference and its sensitivities, it is worth taking the risk to look more closely at the more nuanced similarities and differences within the similarities in this "global" culture; in other words, while noting the need for sensitivity, it is still worth looking at cultures comparatively in a global context. While being wary of globalisation itself, this project aims to disentangle the stories around women's lives in developed countries such as

Japan and Britain by finding the faultlines in neoliberal rhetoric. The neoliberal agenda and its rhetoric (mostly by politicians as we have seen) encourage women's emancipation along with market liberalisation, and yet their promises of happiness have terms and conditions that impact on women's bodies, their health, and their maternal abilities, not limited to looking after their children, but also in the ways in which women are raised by their mothers. The second part of this introduction will demonstrate the issues that have been discussed so far, analysing the key interests of the project through reading Winterson's early writings, *Fit for the Future* and *Oranges are Not the Only Fruit*.

Introduction: Part 2

1. Haunted by Happiness: Neoliberalism, Sexuality and Maternal Relations

in Jeanette Winterson's Writing in the 1980s

I had no respect for family life. I had no home. I had rage and courage. I was smart. I was emotionally disconnected. I didn't understand gender politics. I was the ideal prototype for the Reagan/Thatcher revolution. (Jeanette Winterson, *Why be Happy When You Could be Normal?*, p. 134)

Oranges is a threatening novel. It exposes the sanctity of family life as something of a sham.
(Winterson, *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, p. xiii)

I did forgive Mrs Winterson but she never forgave me; she believed my success was a Faustian pact.
(Winterson, interview in the *Guardian*)

As a part of the introduction for my thesis, I take up Winterson's early writings,

Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit (1985), her fitness guidebook *Fit for the Future* (1986)

as well as her recent memoir *Why be Happy When You Could Be Normal?* (2011) as a

case study for the ideas that the subsequent chapters will analyse in detail.¹ Through

this section, I will lay out the key issues this thesis explores and demonstrate the ways

in which they interrelate, entangle and most importantly, at times, conflict. First, I will

establish the close relation between the rhetoric of Winterson's early writing in the

¹ Hereafter each text will be abbreviated as *Orange*, *Fit* and *Why*.

1980s and that of neoliberalism, especially through the Thatcherite revolution, examine the way in which Winterson was influenced by Thatcherism in her youth, and how her political attitude towards neoliberalism has developed: is it accurate to describe Winterson as a neoliberal writer? Through her working-class background in Northern England, to “climbing up the ranks” as a successful writer, to being awarded an OBE in 2006, Winterson’s success since the 1980s is emblematic of Thatcher’s radical transformation from the welfare state to neoliberalism, as demonstrated in the first part of this introduction: the “liberty” that Thatcher proposes is closely related to enhancing individualism, with individual “happiness” becoming possible only by detaching oneself from the collective (the church, family, the working class and the welfare state itself). In this section, I will consider how Winterson as a writer was influenced by neoliberalism in the 1980s, and how its emphasis on individualism helped make her success possible. Later in her memoir *Why*, she reflects on the early 80s and the emergence of Margaret Thatcher, how she was attracted by Thatcher’s speeches, and how unaware she was of the consequences of her policies at the time. Indeed, careful reading of both Thatcher’s reflections on her time in power and Winterson’s early writings, especially in *Fit*, reveal a common ground of enhancing individualism,

flexibility, and the belief in “change” from stagnation in order to obtain happiness. In the second part of this section, I will focus in particular on Winterson’s two autobiographical publications *Oranges* and *Why*, and the chapter of Ahmed’s *The Promise of Happiness* titled ‘Unhappy Queers’, to exemplify the ways in which happiness is/has been a site where issues of sexuality, family and maternity become entangled for Winterson. In *Oranges* and *Why*, happiness is directly interwoven into the narrative of family life, its relation with sexuality, and how the failure to achieve happiness is related to the failure to provide good maternal care, especially for the queer child of *Oranges*, ‘Jeanette’. Indeed, happiness is a pivotal issue in the socio-political context of the 1980s as well as in Winterson’s early writing. As discussed above, the 2010s can be seen as the harvest of the 1980s; the social and political issues laid out in Winterson’s works of the 80s come to fruition in the 2010s, as seen in her autobiography. Through this discussion of Winterson, I aim to lay out in more detail the key issues – neoliberalism, the 1980s, blood, adoption, mother-daughter relationships, and happiness – that I will focus on in subsequent chapters of my thesis.

1. Winterson, Thatcherism and Neoliberalism

Winterson's critics focus predominantly on her writing style as postmodernist, such as crossing borders and presenting dualisms, or as a 'lesbian' writer.² Although other contemporary writers from the UK and Japan are taken up for my thesis, and not all of them share the same characteristics as her, it is useful to focus on her work, as indeed Winterson chiefly illustrates the qualities of and contentions within neoliberalism: individualism, class shift, her queer identity, social recognition of it and her support of Thatcherism in the 1980s.³ This section will also help to clarify some of the key ideas of neoliberalism and how they can relate to literature.

Born in Manchester, Winterson was adopted into a working-class religious family in rural Lancashire, Accrington. Her first novel, *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* (written during 1983-84 and published in 1985), mixes autobiography and fantasy, describing her childhood to adulthood in a *bildungsroman* narrative.⁴ In this novel,

² For example, in Merja Makinen's *The Novels of Jeanette Winterson: A Reader's Guide to Essential Criticism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), she divides her discussion of *Oranges* into two chapters, on *Oranges* as a lesbian text, and as a postmodern text.

³ On the potential relations between neoliberalism and sexual identity, see, for example, John D'Emilio, 'Capitalism and Gay Identity', in *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality*, ed. by Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell and Sharan Thompson (New York: Monthly Review, 1983), pp. 100-113 and Rosemary Hennessy, *Profit and Pleasure: Sexual Identities in Late Capitalism* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

⁴ Isabel C. Anievas Gamallo argues that the *Bildungsroman* narrative form of *Oranges*, its realistic description of self-development, is overthrown by its usage of fantasy and fairy tales. See Gamallo,

when the religious mother finds her daughter Jeanette having sex with a girl, she gets the church to perform an exorcism on her, and she casts her out of the church. This semi-autobiographical novel by Winterson won the 1985 Whitbread Prize and was adapted for television in 1990 by the BBC. In my work on *Oranges*, I will read *Why*, published in 2011, as a supplement to it: Winterson reflects back on the same material with a higher degree of realism and her own advantage of hindsight. Centrally, both texts deal not only with Winterson's sexuality, but also with class issues. Without a doubt, being raised in a working-class environment strongly affected her identity, as did being raised in Northern England. Her family's poverty is vividly portrayed in her writing:

Where you are born – what you are born into, the place, the history of the place, how that history mates with your own – stamps who you are, whatever the pundits of globalisation have to say. (*Why*, p. 16)

Winterson's birth mother was a factory machinist and her adoptive father mended roads, shovelled coal for ten hours with occasional overtime, saving his bus fares by cycling and only being able to eat meat twice a week (*ibid.*). Especially in her memoir in 2011, Winterson explicitly and self-consciously tells her readers about her own relation to

⁴ 'Subversive Storytelling: The Construction of Lesbian Girlhood through Fantasy and Fairy Tale in Jeanette Winterson's *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*', in *The Girl: Construction of the Girl in Contemporary Fiction by Women*, ed. by Ruth Saxton (New York: St Martin's, 1998), pp. 119-34.

neoliberalism, of which individualism and the concomitant possibility of class mobility are two key traits. She desires to take off from the circumstances in which she was raised to make a “change”, and her ambition is so strong that the neoliberal agenda of the 80s, which made escape/liberation possible, was glamorous for young Jeanette:

I didn't want to be in the teeming mass of the working class. I wanted to work, but not like him [her adoptive father]. I didn't want to disappear. I didn't want to live and die in the same place with only a week at the seaside in between. I dreamed of escape – but what is terrible about industrialisation is that it makes escape necessary. In a system that generates masses, individualism is the only way out. But then what happens to community – to society?

As Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher said, in the spirit of her friend Ronald Reagan, celebrating the Me decade of the 1980s, ‘There is no such thing as society . . .’ [/] But I didn't care about any of that when I was growing up – and I didn't understand it either.

I just wanted to get out. (*Why*, p. 17)

Her desire to get out to where she feels she belongs led to her successful admission into the University of Oxford, where she studied English literature. Obtaining this degree made her class shift possible, as she articulates in her memoir. Indeed, individualism, the belief in bringing out the most of her ability and potential, had the power to change her life from the circumstances she was brought up in. As a result, she dissociated herself from her class, church, her family and mother. (Winterson was forcefully expelled because of her same-sex desire and lesbian relationship, as I will discuss

below.)

Winterson's life and her success because of her writing robustly interweave with Thatcherism. In the early stages of her life, Winterson reflects that Thatcher and her speech inspired her escape from the environment she lived in. The neoliberal agenda that Thatcher proposed, especially in its individualism as the path to a happy life, detaching from "society" as Thatcher proclaimed in her speech, was in many ways a spur to Winterson's success. The young 'Jeanette' in both *Oranges* and *Why* is attracted by the 'new culture' that Thatcherism propounds:

In the late 1970s, Margaret Thatcher appeared, talking about a new culture of risk and reward – one where you could achieve, one where you could be anything you wanted to be, if you would only work hard enough and be prepared to abandon the safety nets of tradition.

[...]

Thatcher seemed to me to have better answers than the middle-class men who spoke for the Labour Party, and the working-class men who campaigned for a 'family' wage, and wanted their women at home.

I had no respect for family life. I had no home. I had rage and courage. I was smart. I was emotionally disconnected. I didn't understand gender politics. I was the ideal prototype for the Reagan/Thatcher revolution.

(*Why*, pp. 138-39)

Winterson explains how Thatcher and Thatcherism attracted her because 'she knew the price of a loaf of bread':

She was a woman – and that made me feel that I too could succeed. If a grocer's daughter could be prime minister, then a girl like me could write a

book that would be on the shelves of English Literature in Prose A–Z.

I voted for her. (*Why*, pp. 138-39)

As I discussed in Part One of this Introduction, Thatcher's writing 'Reflections on Liberty' reveals that happiness and liberty are complementary terms, and that they are to be gained by playing the game, in terms of the market and as an individual. As Winterson acknowledges in her memoir, she voted for Thatcher, and indeed, her early writing in the 1980s clearly shows her concordance at that time with Thatcher's doctrines on liberty and happiness.⁵ Supporting the neoliberal political agenda by voting for Thatcher and projecting ideas of her own success in seeing Thatcher's, Winterson writes her first semi-autobiographical book, *Oranges*.

Looking back at the time when the book was written, in the introduction of *Oranges*, Winterson describes her life in poverty in London, but with her ambition to be a writer. Winterson lived in a two-bedroom flat with only a hip bath, with her actress flatmate Vicky Licorish: 'She had no money, I had no money, we could not afford the luxury of a separate whites wash and so were thankful of the fashion for coloured knickers which allowed those garments most closely associated with our self-esteem,

⁵ While Winterson clearly shows neoliberal tendencies and support for Thatcher in her early works, her attitude evidently changes over her lifetime, as can be seen in her criticism in *The Passion* (as I discuss below) and to some extent rejection of Thatcherism in her autobiography. At the same time, it is important to recognise the value that neoliberalism had in enabling Winterson to succeed in her life, despite the neo-conservative elements that cause difficulty for many women.

not to be grey.’ (*Oranges*, p. xi). In a similarly self-conscious way, Winterson looks back at *The Passion* (1987) a decade after it was written, and notes the influence that Thatcher and neoliberalism had on her writing. She ‘wrote *The Passion* in 1986, the boom-time of the Thatcher years, clock-race of yuppies and City boys, rich-quick, never count the cost’ and she ‘wanted to write a separate world, not as an escape, as a mirror, a secret looking glass that would sharpen and multiply the possibilities of the actual world’ (*The Passion*, preface [1996]). For Winterson, seemingly in accordance with Thatcher’s doctrine quoted above, life is a game for individuals, as seen in her novella *The Passion*. When Villanelle, a Venetian transvestite with webbed feet working in a casino, dithers over visiting the Queen of Spades for queer/lesbian intimacy, she considers how she plays the game for initiating romantic love with the Queen: ‘You play, you win. You play, you lose. You play’ (*The Passion*, p. 66). For Villanelle, life and acquiring romantic (queer) love is a gambling game, which is always accompanied by risk and rewards, just as in the casino. Sexuality, intimacy, love and happiness are based upon individual choices, something to quest for and to be gained in Winterson’s writing in the 1980s, mirroring the social discourses at the time about market liberalisation and “liberty” as Thatcher described it. Winterson seems very much

interested in and sometimes even supports Thatcher's neoliberal doctrines, in such passages as these. Indeed, in the 2010s, when she reflects back on her writing, she explicitly makes the connection between her work in the 1980s and Thatcherism, and she admits that she was ignorant of the effects of Thatcher's agenda.

2. *Fit for the Future* and Neoliberal Agendas⁶

A year before the publication of *The Passion*, Winterson was still financially challenged, and published a non-fiction fitness guidebook for women, titled *Fit for the Future: The Guide for Women Who Want to Live Well* (1986), to earn a little money.⁷ Critics such as Jane Haslett and Rebecca O'Rourke only mention the existence of the book in their criticism related to Winterson's other works; as for O'Rourke, she even criticises *Fit* as 'fatuous' (O'Rourke, p. 64).⁸ These scholars regard *Fit* as a trivial work written just for money and not "serious" enough to discuss in academic writing. However, I would argue that *Fit* is an extremely interesting resource to observe the compatibility of

⁶ See Appendix for the book cover of *Fit for the Future*.

⁷ Susan Onega, *Jeanette Winterson* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), p. 54.

⁸ Jane Haslett, 'Winterson's Fabulous Bodies', in *Jeanette Winterson: A Contemporary Critical Guide*, ed. by Sonya Andermahr (London: Continuum, 2007), pp. 41-54 (p. 41); Rebecca O'Rourke, 'Fingers in the Fruit Basket: A Feminist Reading of Jeanette Winterson's *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*', in *Feminist Criticism: Theory and Practice*, ed. by Susan Sellers (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), pp. 57-69.

Winterson's early writing with the neoliberal doctrine of the 1980s, especially with women's well-being and its relation to neoliberalism. In the first page of *Fit*, she puts forward the manifesto that women 'need three things; STRENGTH, STAMINA and FLEXIBILITY' [*sic*] to 'get the most out of [her] life and [her] body' (*Fit*, p. 16, emphasis in original):

You owe it to yourself to be beautiful. You should write this phrase on the wall over your bed, in your bathroom, in your diary, on your babies' bib, in your computer programme. Graffiti it in the toilet at work or scratch it in your desk at school. Repeat it in times of stress, shout it in traffic jams. Most important of all believe it. The future is built upon the present which is why you cannot hope for a better time – you can only create one. This book offers not miracles, it demands that you concentrate on yourself and fulfil your own extraordinary potential; there are no solutions that you don't already possess. (*Fit*, p. 1)

In this quotation, readers can witness similarities between Winterson's tone and Thatcher's rhetoric in persuasion for readers/citizens to change their attitude towards their lives, encouraging a self-responsibility. As I quoted in the previous section, Thatcher asserts: 'We had to give people a renewed appetite for liberty and responsibility. [...] A free people has to live freedom, and this we now endeavoured to achieve.'⁹ In this quotation from *Fit*, Winterson asserts that it is women's self-responsibility to be beautiful, and a better future is only generated and set by

⁹ Thatcher, 'Reflections on Liberty', pp. 873-874.

actively engaging with the present moment, not just hoping for it. She demands potential female readers to focus on themselves and discipline their bodies, enhancing their individualism to bring up their hidden power, bringing out their best qualities to reach for a better future time. This optimistic rhetoric to encourage the reader echoes the way in which Thatcher attracted the public, including Winterson, calling for a better future, and better life in which each citizen has the responsibility to fulfil her/his own talent and potential. Thatcher wanted citizens to have a ‘moral’ craving for freedom, ‘to live freedom’ and to play well in the game: ‘What government has to do is to set the right rules, so that the game—and it is never a “zero sum game,” remember—is played to the best of every player’s ability.’¹⁰ Likewise, Winterson says that ‘all of ordered reality is a game’ (*Fit*, p. 122) and asks women readers to ‘prioritis[e] your bodies’ to ‘alter your life’:

So there we are. Isn’t it time you took advantage of your own natural resources and made the most of yourself? If you’ve been reading this book so far with a certain amount of scepticism, I don’t blame you. It’s true that being fit and living well won’t spirit away the mounds of washing up or the filthy cat litter, nor will tedium and boredom become automatically things of the past. Everywhere religion and quasi religion (under which heading I include the fitness package) are making claims on your soul and assuring you that all manner of things will be well, if only you believe. I’m not asking you to believe anything except that you are exceptional, and I’m not

¹⁰ Thatcher, p. 871.

offering any solution you don't already possess. The energy and the determination are already there for the using. For a woman, physical confidence is in itself a change for the better. Behind every great man there's a tired woman and it's time we stopped making time for their greatness and made time for our own. I am convinced that living well in body and mind allows us to create for ourselves the kind of social and professional space we want. It's a mistake to think that driving ourselves into the ground is the only way forward. We have to work hard, and you'll have to work hard at getting fit and staying that way, but it's a different kind of endeavour to the soul-destroying grind a lot of us put up with in the name of personal progress. (*Fit*, p. 47)

Winterson explains that for women, keeping fit does not change the fact that domestic labour is necessary, and the quotation above shows that women in history supported men for their success, but Winterson encourages women to believe in their exceptional talent and stop sacrificing themselves for their families, and instead focusing on themselves. As such, here, although Thatcher and Winterson share an interest in enhancing individuals' potentials, they differ in their understanding of family. Thatcher famously asserted that 'there is no such thing as society, but there are men, women and family'. However, Winterson goes even further, focusing on women, but not their families, and even encouraging women to at least sometimes prioritise themselves over their families.

For both Thatcher and Winterson in the 1980s, "liberty" was a watchword to

make “change for the better” in one’s life, and to ‘live well’ within the (neoliberal) optimistic rhetoric. Winterson encourages women, and this encouragement towards “change” for a better life, is to build up flexible bodies and for their bodies to be flexible. Flexibility, in a neoliberal sense, derives from the idea of Post-Fordism. While Fordism enhanced mass-production and mass-consumption, supported by organised labour, as characterised in such welfare states, Post-Fordism allowed for more flexibility in life-style, through shorter-term contracting. Anita Harris explains that the ideal subject that contemporary society admires is someone who is ‘flexible, individualized, resilient, self-driven, and self-made and who easily follows nonlinear trajectories to fulfilment and success’.¹¹ Shelley Budgeon explains that such characteristics are demanded of ‘young women’, to be adaptable in a society that values flexibility. The connections between flexibility for the individual middle-class aspiring woman’s body and flexibility in post-Fordist terms are to some extent compatible, since ‘[y]oung women are often held to be key beneficiaries of a range of socio-economic changes that now characterize Western societies and the neoliberal tropes of freedom and choice are increasingly associated with the category “young women”’.¹²

¹¹ Anita Harris, *Future Girl: Young Women in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 16.

¹² Shelley Budgeon, ‘The Contradictions of Successful Femininity: Third-Wave Feminism, Postfeminism and “New” Femininities’, in *New Femininities: Postfeminism, Neoliberalism and Subjectivity*, ed. by

In a similar way, as the title of the book *Fit for the Future* suggests, this “fit” is not only about gaining health, but also about a belief in the plasticity of the citizen and their bodies, to fit into society and the agendas of neoliberalism. In this sense, Winterson’s text is eloquent and political, and there is value not only in reading it as a ‘fatuous’ fitness guide book, but considering it as a manifestation of neoliberal agendas on women’s well-being in its time.

3. Winterson, Maternity and Happiness through Blood and Adoption

I have discussed how Winterson was strongly and directly influenced by Thatcher’s neoliberal rhetoric in her youth, especially the idea of individualism to bring out one’s potential, and how she encourages intended female readers’ self-development of body and mind in *Fit*. For Winterson, enhancing women’s well-being is directly related to their individual happiness. Indeed, on one hand Winterson encourages female readers to catch a tide of individualism to change their lives, bringing out their exceptional potential, but on the other hand, in both her early and her recent work, she longs for and shows her aspiration towards a maternal connection. Happiness and its failures are, for

Winterson, always already entangled with her own sexuality, her family and her (adoptive and biological) mother(s).

Winterson's literary works reflect the interests of this thesis not only in regard to neoliberalism, but also in relation to ideas of maternity, family, sexuality and happiness. Indeed, Winterson is haunted with the idea of becoming happy, dealing with what she finds to be an unforgivable relationship with her mother throughout her work.

Winterson acknowledges she was 'emotionally disconnected' in the early 80s as seen above, and this is most likely from her emotional struggle and problematic relationship with her family, especially her adoptive mother, with regards to her sexuality. In *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal?*, Winterson looks back over her life, from her childhood in the 1960s up to the 2010s. This autobiography has numerous similarities with *Oranges*: problematic bonds between mother and child, the fraught relationship between same-sex intimacy and the church, Winterson's class mobility from working-class to a successful writer, and her detachment from a small community in Lancashire to engage in higher education at the University of Oxford.

In 2011, Winterson reflects on her time of radical change in the 80s, when she became a professional writer, looking back and seeing the effects and results, the path

that she made from her psychological pain. Both in *Oranges* and *Why*, Winterson's life is described as full of crisis, particularly in her relationship with her mother. Her family, especially her mother, was involved in the Elim Pentecostal Church: for the mother, 'Sunday was the Lord's day, the most vigorous day of the whole week', and they often listen to the radiogram for the World Services in order to 'record the progress of [her] missionaries' (*Oranges*, p. 4).

In Winterson's *Oranges* and her autobiography *Why*, happiness is a site of irreconcilable dispute between the mother and daughter. To be happy, the daughter has to be "normal" in her mother's way and is required to follow the social norms of a little isolated town in Lancashire, which are being heterosexual. Mrs Winterson, the mother of 'Jeanette' in both *Oranges* and the autobiography, is a devoted Christian, and she does 'not understand mixed feelings' in her world (*Oranges*, p. 3). For her, there are only two kinds of people, friends and enemies:

Enemies were: The Devil (in his many forms), Next Door, Sex (in its many forms), Slugs. Friends were: God, Our dog, Auntie Madge, The Novels of Charlotte Brontë, Slug pellets. (*Oranges*, p. 3)

The mother's eccentricity can be also seen in the way she brings up her child. Due to her hatred of her own body, she intentionally does not engage in normative sexual

intercourse for reproductive purposes. (*Why*, p. 104) Instead, she adopts a foundling, Jeanette. She brings up her daughter as ‘a missionary child, [/] a servant of God, [/] a blessing’ (*Oranges*, p. 10). The mother believes that the ‘child of hers is from the Lord’ (*ibid.*), and she is annoyed with the Virgin Mary since she had a child without any intercourse before her. In one scene of *Oranges*, the mother persuades her little prophet to work for a Christian future: ‘We stood on the hill and my mother said, “This world is full of sin.” [/] We stood on the hill and my mother said, “You can change the world”’ (*ibid.*).

In these circumstances, Jeanette believes that she is the chosen one, and her mother had high hopes for her achieving a good Christian life. Without a doubt, at this point Jeanette was willing to be a visionary prophet in her future. To educate this prophet, Mrs Winterson does not send Jeanette to school till the council sent her a notification to bring her in. The mother resists educating Jeanette in the institution and longs to do it in her own way. In this religious Christian household governed by the power of the mother, the individual’s pursuit of happiness is not allowed and not forgiven. For pursuing one’s happiness, one needs to involve a great deal of sacrifice. Winterson writes in her autobiography:

God is forgiveness – or so that particular story goes, but in our house God

was Old Testament and there was no forgiveness without a great deal of *sacrifice*. Mrs Winterson was unhappy and *we* had to be unhappy with her. She was waiting for the Apocalypse. (*Why*, p. 9, my emphasis)

This quotation shows how the mother's happiness imperatively involves other members of her family. Mrs Winterson needs to make her family join her faith so that she can prepare for the Apocalypse. Due to the mother's unhappiness, Jeanette the daughter is involved in the mother's apocalyptic project to 'change the world'. However, the mother's expectation for her daughter is betrayed when she finds out her daughter is having an intimate relationship with another girl in the church. In other words, when the daughter finds a way to pursue her own happiness, such as being with another person, it involves a great sacrifice, and happiness becomes the site of crisis in the eyes of her community and family.

4. Jeanette's Lesbianism and Her (Un)happiness

After her homosexual relationship with Melanie (in *Why*,) Helen is exposed to her mother, Jeanette is labelled as the 'Devil', a 'demon' and 'Satan' by her mother and the church, where she has spent most of her time since she was adopted. This scandal leads

the church to administrate an exorcism upon her. The church called Jeanette and her girlfriend to come to the church ‘as usual’. When Jeanette arrives at the church, ‘it was very full as usual and every time I caught someone’s eye they smiled or nodded. It made me happy’ (*Oranges*, p. 102). Before she is asked to repent, Jeanette feels happy because she finds comfort being in the church. However, when she is called by the pastor and the exorcism begins, her happiness that until now she could share with the church, starts falling apart.¹³ This is the very moment that Jeanette’s own happiness can be shared neither with her mother nor with other members of the church. She is pushed out from the line of the norm and considered as transgressive and a monster, and this is the very moment Jeanette needs to take a step to detach herself from collectivism, to see herself as an individual, and make her choice to move away from life with her family in Accrington. In this sense, Jeanette’s imperative of sexuality (being different, an individual) in a sense comes together with the promise of neoliberalism: you can choose.

Why gives more details about the relationship after the exorcism, and in chapter eight, titled ‘Apocalypse’, comes the most dramatic and significant moment for Jeanette

¹³ The exorcism is also described in *Why*, pp. 80-82.

and her mother. After the exorcism, Jeanette promised her mother not to see the girl again. However, she met another girl Janey in town, and perhaps in fear that Jeanette will bring Janey to the house while her parents are on holiday in Blackpool, Jeanette's mother locks her out of the house while they are away. Jeanette and Janey cycle to Blackpool and confront her mother, asking:

[W]hy she had done it. Why had she locked me out? Why didn't she trust me? I didn't ask her why she no longer loved me. Love was not a word that could be used between us any more. It was not a simple do you?/don't you? Love was not an emotion; it was the bomb site in between us. (*Why*, p. 112)

Here, they have a critical disagreement over Jeanette's sexuality and her happiness.

After Mrs Winterson found that Jeanette is in love with Janey, she articulates to Jeanette that she is 'no longer [her] daughter' (*Why*, p. 112), because 'Sex disgusted her. And now, when she saw [Jeanette], she saw sex' (*Why*, p. 104). The mother demands an explanation for her daughter's sexuality, saying just one word: 'why'. This interrogative adverb could imply the following questions: 'why' Jeanette cannot please her mother just the way the mother wanted to be pleased, 'why' the daughter is not what the mother wants. Jeanette answers this question, saying '[w]hen I am with her I am happy. Just happy'; after a pause, the mother replies: 'Why be happy when you could be normal?' (*Why*, p. 114) Here, being normal in the mother's sense is, in other words, being

heterosexual and being a devoted Christian, “fitting” in with their local society.

Therefore, it seems that the happiness the mother proposes to her daughter is not a transparent, transcendent and universally positive emotion. Rather, it seems happiness has strict criteria that one/Jeanette should follow. In other words, if one’s happiness is not one she or he can share with other members of family, community, and society, that person has a transgressive happiness and as such, she or he is a monster who is to be removed from the community and demonised the way that Jeanette is by her church.

Winterson’s unhappiness, unrecognisable to her mother because of her sexuality, proves that “happiness” is an affect that is established through sharing positive emotions. In the third chapter of *The Promise of Happiness*, titled ‘Unhappy Queers’, Ahmed talks about the queer archive in which unhappiness is always predicted and caused by non-normative sexualities. Ahmed argues how queers are often associated with negative affects and objects in literature. In relation to their association with negative affects, she also discusses how unhappy endings could play an important role in queer archives:

Unhappiness might involve feelings that get directed in a certain way, and even give the narrative its direction. We can ask how queer fiction attributes and locates unhappiness and how queer fiction might offer different explanation [*sic*] of queer happiness rather than simply investing its hope in alternative images of happy queers.¹⁴

¹⁴ Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness*, p. 89.

Queer identity and queer lifestyles are seen as the cause of unhappiness to their families, even if they do not consider themselves as unhappy. In the first section of Ahmed's chapter, 'Just happiness', Ahmed theorises how happiness is a shared affect, which should be inherited from generation to generation in queer archives, and this explanation provides an understanding of the (un)happiness in the relationship between Mrs Winterson and Jeanette. According to Ahmed, happiness is a script in which gender and sexuality should be straight, and if they are not, there should be a straightening. In this sense, happiness scripts are straightening devices, in which everybody should queue up, waiting to receive happiness from another. If you are not in a straight line, Ahmed explains, you will be considered as deviant, and you will be threatened with unhappiness. Therefore, deviation can involve unhappiness:

Happiness is not just how subjects speak of their own desires but also what they want to give and receive from others. Happiness involves reciprocal forms of aspiration (I am happy for you, I want you to be happy, I am happy if you are happy) and also forms of coercion that are exercised and concealed by the very language of reciprocity, such that one person's happiness is made conditional not only on another person's happiness but on that person's willingness to be made happy by the same things.¹⁵

So, according to Ahmed, the rhetoric of the enforcement of happiness is like this:

¹⁵ Ahmed, p. 91.

I am happy if you are happy.
 I will only be happy if you are.
 I will be unhappy if you are.
 Your unhappiness would threaten my happiness.
 You have a duty to be happy for me. (*ibid.*)

Ahmed's description of happiness as a script provides significant connections with

Jeanette's relationship with her mother. The mother's disagreement with Jeanette's

happiness to be with her lover, denotes that from her mother's perspective, Jeanette is

not on the straight line of becoming happy, deviant from the line of happiness.

Simultaneously, Jeanette has to be unhappy for her mother, because she wants her to be

"normal". Jeanette left her house at the age of sixteen, with no safety net, detached from

her family, and her success from there is strongly related with the neoliberal agenda, as

we saw above.

Ahmed goes on to contrast and compare two works, of a putative lesbian canon,

Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* (1928) and the film *Lost and Delirious* (2001),

directed by Léa Pool, and based on the novel *The Wives of Bath* (1993) by Susan Swan:

The recognition of queers can be narrated as the hope or promise of becoming acceptable, where in *being* acceptable you must *become* acceptable to a world that has already decided what *is* acceptable. Recognition becomes a gift given from the straight world to queers, which conceals queer labour and struggle, the life worlds generated by queer activism. It is as if such recognition is a form of straight hospitality, which in turn positions happy queers as guests in other people's homes, reliant on

their continuing good will. In such a world you are asked to be grateful for the bits and pieces that you are given. [...] A revolution of unhappiness might require an unhousing; it would require not legitimating more relationships, more houses, even more tables but delegitimizing the world that “houses” some bodies and not others. The political energy of unhappy queers might depend on not being in house.¹⁶

This is an especially interesting idea in relation to Winterson’s autobiographical works, as Jeanette is literally locked out from her house by her mother, as discussed above, and this is the spur towards a new kind of lifestyle for her, leaving behind the safety and comfort of community, recognition and family, to becoming a self-determined individual pursuing her own success. Ahmed, talking about some endings of queer texts, seems to try to clarify the rhetorical process used by heterosexual communities: how they encourage the queer to be happy by assimilating to the objects that heterosexuality easily achieves. Therefore, talking about queer happiness/unhappiness is to consider who is to be included in the community, in which only limited numbers and certain kinds of people are allowed to achieve their happiness.

Conclusion

To conclude, we can see clearly here many of the key interests of this project, and their

¹⁶ Ahmed, p. 106.

intersections: happiness and its failure, its relationship with maternity/family, and its relationship with neoliberalism and “liberty”. This section began by discussing Winterson’s faith in neoliberalism and particularly in Thatcher in the 1980s, with a discussion of how Thatcher and Winterson put forward their beliefs in ‘Reflections on Liberty’, *Oranges are Not the Only Fruit*, *Fit for the Future*, *The Passion* and *Why be Happy When You Could be Normal?* Following from this, I considered a fundamental difference between Winterson and Thatcher’s accounts of individualism, as Thatcher pushes for the importance of family, while Winterson challenges this importance, encouraging women to sacrifice less of themselves for men. At the same time, Winterson’s own writing shows her complex connections and detachments from ideas of motherhood and family, in particular looking at how (religious) community and sexuality impacted on her relationship with her adoptive mother. Finally, this section drew some connections between Ahmed’s theories on happiness and sexuality and Winterson’s works, to clarify the position this thesis takes on “happiness” as a shared affect, determined by communities and not readily available to all.

Introduction Part 2

2. Chapter Outlines

This thesis consists of two parts, and each part has two chapters (giving four chapters in total). Both parts compare literary texts by one Japanese and one British woman writer, and focus on women's happiness connected to their maternal experiences or experiences in relation to their mothers, in early neoliberalism.

Part One: Grotesque Maternity: Happiness, Blood and Eugenics in the 1980s

in Doris Lessing's *The Fifth Child* (1988) and Fumiko Kometani's *Passover* (1985)

In Part One, I will take up two texts: *The Fifth Child* (1988) by Doris Lessing and *Passover* (1985) by Fumiko Kometani. Each text shares a scepticism towards monolithic or universal understandings of "happiness" and "liberty" in terms of women's experiences of maternity. In this part, I argue that ultimately in both cultures, the mode of neoliberalism, in which the terms "liberty" and "happiness" are widely touted as the key words in opposition to socialism, promise a "better" future (than

socialism offers) for women to be able to be part of the business sphere, if they can become “individuals”. However, the “better” lives and the life in “liberty” that neoliberalism offers and promises did not necessarily mean liberation for women from washing-up, domestic labour, or literally from “labour”, giving birth to children. Such optimistic terms as liberty and happiness not only promised a “better” future, putting forward a rhetoric of progress, but also become entangled with converse ideas, such as conventionalism and conservatism, in particular in relation to gender and sexuality. Both Kometani and Lessing shed light on the falsely universal quality of optimism, as I discussed above in section two of this introduction, exploring ideas such as “liberty” and “happiness” in relation to maternity, and both writers depict that the blueprint for a “happy” maternal life is always already embedded within eugenics: namely, the promise of happiness for maternity is often only achievable in reproducing healthy, able-bodied children.

Chapter One: Leaky Maternal Bodies: Disability, the Disenfranchised and

(Un)Happiness in Thatcher’s Britain in Doris Lessing’s *The Fifth Child* (1988)

Chapter One contextualises and reads Doris Lessing's *The Fifth Child* (1988) as a criticism of the Family Acts conducted by Thatcher's government in 1980s Britain. This chapter principally draw attention to the main and minor protagonists' "anomalous" bodies and their relation to ablism, which underlies the British government in its utilitarian campaign to strengthen the values of "conventional families". Lessing's text shows the ways in which society makes a mother be intimate with her child, simultaneously distancing them from society, and relating the child's health to the idea of "happiness".

To establish this close maternal relationship, first of all, I will look at the Family Acts that the Conservatives propounded in the eighties, and investigate the rhetoric involved in their justifying the blueprint of the "conventional family" (the nuclear family, with a stable income, purchasing a home, based upon family "morals", and "healthy" reproduction and nurturing). From this point, secondly, I will show how the couple Harriet and David internalise the "happiness" of the conventional family in *Fifth*, and the ways in which their happiness is destroyed by the birth and growth of their fifth child, Ben, by the effect of the story's Gothic narrative. Positioning *Fifth* in the neo-Gothic revival movement by women writers, I will argue how the Gothic narrative

is employed in an effective manner in *Fifth* for blurring the boundaries of the bodies between mother and child: using the theories of Margrit Shildrick, I read it as the leakiness of the bodies in the text making readers uncertain as to who is the monster, the baby or the mother. The leaky maternal body, which represents the intimate physical relationship between the mother and the baby, and the Gothic narrative both lead to distancing the mother-and-child from society, as the mother/child are seen as monsters. Finally, this chapter will point out the manner in which Ben is always closely associated with minor characters in the novel (the disabled and the unemployed). From these readings, Ben's monstrous physicality and Harriet's fixation on a "happy (conventional) family" show Lessing's accusation of the exclusive and utilitarian society that Thatcher made for Britain: behind the "happiness" that neoliberalism offers, the citizens in such utilitarian societies are asked to be productive and have able bodies, and especially for forming "happy conventional families", mothers are asked to give birth to "healthy" children, who are productive for society at large.

Lessing fills the novella *Fifth* with numerous allegories, especially exerting herself to describe how a happy marriage and family life are a sham through the couple, Harriet and David Lovatt's monstrous fifth child, Ben. Ben is a baby whose physicality

is abnormal, and who physically and psychologically tortures his mother and family.

The story is set in London from the 1960s, when the conservative couple meet, till their troubled child turns into a teenager in the 1980s. They planned to have at least six children (p. 14), filling their Victorian house with a huge garden in the suburbs of London. With the support of their grandparents, the couple manages raising five children, but Ben has a peculiar attitude: while growing in Harriet's womb, Ben abuses her physically, as if he is poisoning his mother; as a young child, he seems to have killed their pets and injured his siblings. Unhappiness is represented as contagious to other parts of their family. Harriet's sister Sarah's husband has a physical disability and is unemployed because of this difficulty; he also left his family several times, and their daughter has Down syndrome. Ben is an extremely ambiguous figure, but his monstrosity is closely related to destroying the happiness of the Lovatts: there is an intimate physical relation between the mother and child, disability and happiness.

Chapter Two: The Battle for Bloody Freedom: The Representation of "Good Blood" for

"Freedom" in Fumiko Kometani's *Passover* (1985)

In this chapter, I look at the Akutagawa prize winning text, *Passover* [*Sugikoshi no Matsuri*] (1985) by Fumiko Kometani. *Passover* deals with how the concepts of “freedom” or “liberty” promise women “better” lives, but the blueprint of “progress” that (western) democracy propounds in Japanese literary contexts is embedded in the rhetoric of eugenics, that is, for sustaining “good blood”. Kometani is a Japanese writer who immigrated to the USA to study fine art in the 1960s and married a Jewish American playwright Josh Greenfeld. Her artwork shifted from drawing to writing with the birth of their second son, Noah, who has brain damage. Her autobiographical novel *Passover* reveals how the “liberty” and “freedom” that the main protagonist dreamed of in coming to America are betrayed and the liberalness that the ‘west’ lays claim to is based upon the premise of giving birth to an able-bodied child.

In this chapter, the novel *Passover* is analysed through reading the relation between maternity, disability and the idea of “liberty”. *Passover* is written autobiographically, based upon Kometani’s own experience: her immigration to the USA to pursue her dream to be a painter, her interracial marriage, her giving birth to a disabled child and her struggle to adjust herself to Jewish culture. Michi is the main character, who is a Japanese woman, and she married Al, a Jewish American. Michi, Al,

and John their first son all visit New York for a week of vacation. This holiday becomes possible only because their second son Ken, who has brain damage, is finally accommodated in an institution for disabled children. Michi is worn out from an intense thirteen years of childcare for Ken, and hopes to meet her close friends in New York, but her husband Al asks instead that they join his family's Jewish commemoration, the Seder. During the ceremony, the Seder reminds Michi of her struggles with his Jewish family and her life with Ken, and her dream to paint that became impossible to achieve with her child's disability. At the end of her recollection, and in the middle of the ceremony, Michi goes to the bathroom, in which she sees her exhausted face in a mirror, and she decides to leave the house and Al's Jewish family to find a "better" life for herself.

In reading *Passover* in the context of the 1980s as well as neoliberalism, I will point out that the previous critics mainly and only focus on how the term 'liberty' ('Jiyu'[自由] in Japanese) is re-appropriated from Jewish culture (especially from Exodus, in which the story of Passover is described). Michi thinks on the way in which the Jewish people gained freedom from the Egyptians who had enslaved them, in order to obtain her own freedom. However, I argue that these critics dismiss the significant

description of the desire for “pure blood”, both in Exodus and in Kometani’s text. This problematic description of longing for pure blood is not only closely interwoven in Exodus and *Passover*, but looking at the social discourse of the 1980s in Japan will convince the reader of an underlying drive in Japanese society that “happy maternity” is found in having “healthy” children. An article in the Japanese fashion magazine *Vingt-cinq* titled ‘To Protect Good Blood’ provoked protest from the women’s activist group *Soshiren*. In addition, in 1983 there was a revision of Eugenic Protection Law in Japan, which encourages citizens to sustain the pure blood of the Japanese, as there were more and more international marriages being held, and more mixed ethnic children were being born. Furthermore, through this revision, women were nearly deprived of any choices regarding abortion, and this also enraged *Soshiren*. These negotiations between conservative opinions and liberal activists were fiercely debated around the mid-1980s, and this discussion should be taken into account in relation to the representation of “pure blood” in *Passover*.

The 1980s in Japan were a significant decade for its economic success, evident in Japan’s purchase of impressionist paintings and the construction of skyscrapers. It is most likely that Japan was focusing as a nation towards Euro-American culture and

economics, and Kometani herself admits that part of the reason that her novel won the prize was because of Japan's interest in "catching up with the west", not knowing that its economic success would not last long. In an interview, Kometani admits that her purpose was to 'reveal the "truth" of western culture'.¹⁷ By this, she may mean that the liberty and freedom that western democratic culture proposes are, in her experience, a sham. Despite running away from Japanese chauvinist culture, she again ran into different kinds of discriminations. Both in Japanese and Jewish culture, Kometani's text shows that the representation of "pure blood" plays an important role.

As such, Part One (Chapters One and Two) shows the way in which these two texts in British and Japanese culture both challenge the universal quality of "happiness" and "liberty" in relation to maternity, in the mode of neoliberalism. These optimistic terms are promoted and put into play in social discourse and policies to revalorise conventional values in family, gender and sexuality in the 1980s, but both Lessing and Kometani critically write of the fecklessness and ruthlessness behind "happiness" and "liberty", in Lessing through the close association between Ben the monstrous child and his mother, the disabled and the unemployed, and in Kometani through writing the

¹⁷ Kazuko Sugii, 'Kometani Funiko: Yudaya-kyō no "Kakutou" to "Jiyū" to [Fumiko Kometani: Struggle and Freedom in Judaism]' in *Kokubungaku: Kaishaku to Kanshō*, Tokushū: Gendai Sakka to Shūkyō, Kirisutokyō [*Japanese Literature: Interpretation and Appreciation*, Special Issue: Contemporary Writers and Religion, Christianity], 74.4 (2009), 144-150 (p. 146).

failure to pursue her own liberty because of her disabled child as not successfully recreating “pure blood”. Both novels depict the ways in which neoliberal systems, contrary to the myth of liberal choice they sell, exclude certain kinds of bodies that do not fit in and help the productivity and employability of the larger society. Happiness and liberty are the terms which help and encourage citizens to thrive, and yet these terms draw lines to include those who are more qualified to be happy and liberal, while disenfranchising others: the disabled, their families, and the unemployed.

Part Two: Beyond Bloody Maternity in the 1980s in Banana Yoshimoto’s *Kitchen* (1987) and Jeanette Winterson’s *Sexing the Cherry* (1989)

Both in Japan and Britain (and “globally”), the 1980s are the decade in which essentialist accounts of “maternity” are called into question. Part Two (Chapters Three and Four) deals with two short novels: *Kitchen* (1987) by Banana Yoshimoto and Jeanette Winterson’s *Sexing the Cherry* (1989). Both novels challenge the “happy family” portrait by writing an alternative (and eccentric) mother figure: a transgender mother Eriko in *Kitchen*, and a giant and physically grotesque mother Dog-Woman in

Sexing. I will investigate both novels by contextualising the social discourse on maternity of the 80s, looking at the representation of both non-normative mothers who “adopt” children who are not blood-related, and seeing the social change on conceiving maternity through literature in this time. Following Part 1, both texts in different cultures challenge the essentialist understanding of “mother nature” by describing alternative maternal figure such as a transgender mother (in Yoshimoto) and a monstrously giant mother (in Winterson).

Chapter Three: Every Happiness Has a Blood Lining: A Collusion between

Postfeminist Labour and Women’s Happiness in Banana Yoshimoto’s *Kitchen* (1987)

Kitchen is a short novel filled with deaths, and longing for intimacy. When the heroine Mikage’s grandmother dies, she has no blood relatives and suffers the pain of being an orphan. Since the death of her grandmother, Mikage can only sleep on the floor next to the refrigerator in her old kitchen. A sudden visitor Yuichi Tanabe, who is a friend from her university, strangely offers her to stay at his house with him and his mother for a while until she feels better. Through living with Yuichi and Eriko, who is a transgender

mother (previously Yuichi's father), Mikage starts her new life with this adopted familial relationship and overcomes solitude, forming "new" kinds of intimacy through eating at the same family table with them. In the process of recovery, Mikage starts working in a cooking school as an assistant for a famous chef. In *Full Moon (Kitchen 2)*, a stalker kills Eriko, and now Yuichi becomes an orphan. Yuichi and Mikage share their sorrow for Eriko's death, as they struggle with defining their relationship. Yuichi's depression leads him to travel alone to a hot spring in the suburbs, while Mikage is on her business trip not too far away from him by taxi. From fear of losing him, Mikage brings him some comfort food, *katsudon*, rice with tonkatsu (deep-fried pork). The novel ends with them confirming that they are "family".

Previous critics arguably embrace *Kitchen*, saying the text challenges blood-related family and describes new kinds of intimacy through the adoptive mother, Eriko, who is a transgender from male to female, and previously the father of Yuichi. However, through Chapter Three, I will argue that, contrary to the previous critics' affirmation of this text, *Kitchen* suggests the impossibility of imagining happiness without blood-lines. *Kitchen* tells numerous stories of happiness and its failure, especially in losing one's family. Happiness in *Kitchen* is something in opposition to

loneliness. In this chapter, first, I will survey the literary and cultural movements in Japan during the 1980s when *Kitchen* was published. This cultural context of the eighties will draw together the lines of the key issues in the text, such as girlhood, blood-lines, and family in Yoshimoto's works. I will then discuss the way in which losing the blood-related family is specifically denoted as being not normative in *Kitchen*, citing Ahmed's description of 'queer orientation'. Thirdly, I will counter the previous critics who positively embrace this novel as describing a new kind of family. I will start refuting these readings by investigating how significantly the concept of blood relations are valued in Japanese culture, by looking at the family registration system *koseki*, and how this system becomes a component of citizens' happiness in society. My discussion of *koseki* also explains the treatment of transgendered people in Japanese society, and develops the argument to read the role of Eriko in *Kitchen* as well as the necessity of her death in the plot, to explain the ambiguous relationship between Mikage and Yuichi in the following section. In opposition to the interpretations of other critics, I claim their relationship reinforces the status quo, heterosexism. Once again, contextualising *Kitchen* in the 80s, I will read the contradictions that arise between women's labour and domesticity in relation to women's happiness.

Chapter Four: The Troubled Monstrous Mother: Maternal Desire, Technology and

Happiness in Jeanette Winterson's *Sexing the Cherry* (1989)

Many of Winterson's works involve describing problematic mother figures similar to her own foster mother (as I discussed in the previous section of this introduction).

Sexing the Cherry (1989) conjointly portrays a monstrous and controversial mother,

Dog-Woman. She has an enormous and grotesque body (her nipples are as big as

walnuts, and her strength enables her to throw an elephant at a circus) and because of

this, she cannot have intercourse with any men. She adopts a child found in the river

Thames, and names him Jordan. *Sexing* is a novella set in England during the Civil War

and Restoration period. The narratives of Dog-Woman and Jordan are interwoven as

well as, at the end of the novel, paralleled with the narratives of their doubles (a female

scientist and a boy called Nicholas Jordan) in contemporary London. Dog-Woman

confronts Puritans, witnesses Charles I's execution and possibly causes the Great Fire

of London. Jordan's narrative deals with myth and fairy tale and he explores the world

as a royal gardener in search of exotic fruits (like the pineapple) and the youngest

princess of the twelve dancing princesses, and he explains the horticultural technology

of grafting to sex the cherry.

In Chapter Four, I read *Sexing* as a text describing the entangled relations between maternal desire and its narrativity in relation to happiness, and Winterson's text skilfully proposes an alternative vision for maternity and women's bonding through adoption.

First I will explain that the late 1980s is the time when assisted reproduction, such as In Vitro Fertilisation (IVF) and surrogacy, were being scrutinized by the media and the essentialist idea of "mother nature" was being called into question. Such contextualising of the text with technological innovations for reproduction will arguably provide us with an alternative reading of *Sexing* as a reassessment of the "narrative construction" of happiness, and its relation to maternity. Winterson rewrites the happy endings of fairy tales and myths (especially Orion and Artemis), and thus I will secondly argue how her usage of these "parodies" plays a significant role in reassessing the narrative of "happiness". I will reflect on the criticism (mainly in the 1990s) that recognises the effect of "parodies", in which parodied objects create difference from the "original", and develop from readings which regard Dog-Woman as a parody of maternity. What previous criticism misses is that no matter how badly Dog-Woman fails to imitate a conventional mother figure, she is drawn into the "collective story" that persistently

calls and tells her that happiness lies in becoming a mother. However, Dog-Woman finds happiness despite the unconventional family that she has, and so what we ultimately see here is a successful new model of maternity, not based on blood relations, but developing a new kind of intimacy.

In sum, the key research questions that are raised in this thesis are: how has neoliberalism changed people's, and in particular women's, attitude towards their lives? How are women's happiness and liberty in neoliberalism negotiated within the construction of (un)conventional families? How has women's writing responded and/or criticised neoliberalism, especially in regard to women's happiness and optimism.

Chapter One

Leaky Maternal Bodies:

Disability, the Disenfranchised and (Un)Happiness in Thatcher's Britain in

Doris Lessing's *The Fifth Child* (1988)¹

every happy person, is in infinite debt to a woman.

(D. W. Winnicott)²

Introduction

As seen in the thesis' Introduction, there are some rhetorical compatibilities between women's writing such as Winterson's early writing *Fit for the Future* and Thatcher's essay 'Reflection on Liberty'. This chapter will look in more detail at the relation between Thatcherite political administrations, such as Family Acts, and women's writing, specifically Doris Lessing's *The Fifth Child* (1988) (hereafter *Fifth*). In this chapter, I read *Fifth* as Lessing's criticism of Thatcher's utilitarian policies that reinforced conventional family values. Before moving on to discuss *Fifth*, I will first

¹ Parts of this chapter have been published as an article titled 'Grotesque Maternity: Reading "Happiness" and its Eugenics in Doris Lessing's *The Fifth Child* (1988)' in a peer-reviewed journal, *Gender and Sexuality*, 9 (2014), 5-30.

² D. W. Winnicott, *The Child, the Family and the Outside World* (London: Penguin, [1964] 1991), p. 10.

draw out the social discourse on technological innovations of reproduction in 1980s Britain, when the idea of “mother nature” was reassessed. Following the social and critical discourse on questioning motherhood, I will pay attention to the literary context on motherhood by looking at Marge Piercy’s *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976) and Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale* (1985).³ Placing *Fifth* in these cultural and social contexts, I subsequently analyse Lessing work in Thatcher’s Britain.

In this chapter, I read Doris Lessing’s *Fifth* in relation to giving birth to disabled children, and to the government’s role in controlling the maternal body. In this story, we see a happy and conservative family, with four children, whose happiness is disrupted by the birth of their fifth child, the monstrously deformed Ben. The treatment the doctors give their child, and the strain Ben causes for his mother both reveal society’s and the government’s attitude towards disability in 1980s Britain: on one hand, the government tries to exclude physical abnormality through family acts and through management of the maternal body; on the other hand, when the disabled child is born, its mother, not its father nor wider society nor government, is burdened with sole responsibility.

³ Marge Piercy, *Woman on the Edge of Time* (London: The Women’s Press, 1976); Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid’s Tale* (London: Virago, 1985). Subsequent citations will be in parentheses.

As such, *Fifth* can be read as an allegory and criticism towards utilitarian family policies by Thatcherism, through contextualising the story in Thatcher's Britain during the 1980s. Such reading can allow us to see how the blueprint of "happiness" through constructing the "normative family," promised by the government, has an underlying assumption that both the maternal and the child's bodies are healthy. After briefly summarising the story of *Fifth*, I will look at the various family policies administered by Thatcher's government. In these policies, "happiness" through forming a conventional family is promised and set up as an ideology. Secondly in my analysis of the novel, I will look at the Gothic description of the monstrous, leaky, maternal body in relation to the monstrous baby in Lessing's narratives: as we will see, the ambiguous boundary between mother and monstrous child becomes the site of horror, and leads the mother to be seen as monstrous. Finally, I will explore the politics of eugenics embedded in this ideological "happiness" through examination of Ben's association with vulnerable people, such as gangsters and the disabled, who are, though minor, significant characters in the story and community: disabled and non-normative bodies are described as the origins of difficulties in getting jobs, supporting families and, consequently, fitting in to the model of happiness that society endorses. When one cannot fit into the

model of happiness the government desires, Lessing shows in *Fifth* that no help is provided by the government, and the individual is left to take responsibility, and consequently is excluded from society. In the case of giving birth to a “monstrous” child, the responsibility is cast solely on the mother; her body is supposed to be the mediator of society’s happiness and, therefore, it becomes monstrous if she cannot provide a healthy child for the nation. Ultimately, we will see that this particular issue remains pertinent and pressing to this day, especially in contemporary Japan after the earthquake in Fukushima in 2011, as I will discuss at the end of this chapter.

1. Reproductive Technology in 1980s Britain and the Reassessment of “Motherhood”

The 1980s are the decade in which the body, the mother, and motherhood are radically called into question. Due to technological innovations in relation to reproduction, there was a fracture between the conventional figure of motherhood, “mother nature” and new technological reproductive possibilities. Historically, in western culture and philosophy, the meaning and the significance of womanhood has been easily and unreasonably reduced to the body in opposition to the subject. However, with prenatal

screening, IVF (In Vitro Fertilisation), and surrogacy, this “natural” link is debunked as socio-culturally constructed. Thus, feminist scholarship has invested its queries into essentialism and the biological condition of being “woman”. Among the reproductive technologies from this period, social discourses around surrogacy have gathered the most critical attention.

Ann Kaplan states, in her edited book titled *Playing Dolly: Technocultural Formations, Fantasies and Fictions of Assisted Reproduction* (1999), that there was a consummate anxiety that carrying out surrogacy entailed in the 1980s. However this anxiety, and the distress around surrogacy brought up by its controversy in the mid-1980s, decreased in the late 1990s. In 1985, surrogate mother Kim Cotton in the UK was paid 6,500 pounds (and more for publicity from the *Sunday News*) for being a surrogate mother. This caused a public assessment, which resulted in the Surrogacy Arrangement Act (1985). In the USA, there was also a dispute in 1986 with the Baby M case, in which the surrogate mother refused to give her child to the adoptive parents, contrary to their contract in advance. Kaplan also brings out the uncertain feeling among lawyers in the process of legalising surrogacy in the early 1990s. As Isobel Marcus acknowledged in Kaplan’s argument, reproductive technology is ‘every

lawyer's and social policy maker's nightmare because it polarizes profound issues. In a post-modern world, social issues compete with biology, and law tries to make coherence out of fragmented realities'.⁴ This legalisation can be seen as an effort to force control over a troubling and ambiguous issue, the question of how maternal identity is constructed and who has authority over a newborn baby.

The Mass Observation Archive at the University of Sussex records many public opinions on this debate in the UK, such as responses to the Baby Cotton headlines. A married man in Leicester put forward his opinion about surrogacy, which he called a legal 'brothel':

What a load of hoo-haa has arisen about this! It is, I think, grossly immoral: Why not end it, legally, by charging the mother as being a prostitute, (which she is) and her husband for "living in the immoral [partnership]"?
(Married, Male, Leicester, 25. January 1985)⁵

Other respondents are less moralistic about the exchange of money, but consider the effects of surrogacy on the children it gives birth to. For many, surrogacy was not a clear-cut issue, but as events like the Baby Cotton case show, a 'minefield' of potential issues and effects:

⁴ E. Ann Kaplan and Susan Squier, 'Introduction', in *Playing Dolly: Technocultural Formations, Fantasies and Fictions of Assisted Reproduction*, ed. by Kaplan (New York: Millennial Shifts, 1999), pp. 1-17 (pp. 2-3).

⁵ *Mass Observation Archive* (MOA), Special Reports GB181 Sx MOA2/2/1/47, Special Report Title: Surrogate Motherhood by Mass Observer H2022, no. 73.

Obviously there are all sorts of problems which are likely to arise and the one who suffers will most likely be the child. I believe there has already been a case in America where a mentally handicapped child was born to a surrogate mother. Personally, I find the whole thing repugnant [...] I suppose women vary in the degree of their maternal feelings but I believe there is a unique bond between a mother and baby. To hire out your womb, whether for money or not, is to my mind, to debase the miracle of birth. (Female. 1985)⁶

It seems to me that this presumably much wanted baby C is now [defined by] the love and close contact of those who will be her parents, early in her life when “bonding” is of vital importance to her security and development. I say let the parents have her. (Female. December 1984)⁷

Assisted reproduction indubitably brought up a reassessment of motherhood, or a new kind of bond between mother and child. In *Narrating Mothers: Theorizing Maternal Subjectivities* (1991), Brenda O. Daly and Maureen T. Reddy seek to redefine the concept of motherhood:

Rather than seeing motherhood as biologically predetermined and central to all women’s lives, we [...] see motherhood as a potential relationship rooted in female physicality; but we also see it as a choice essentially *separate* from biology, drawing a distinction here between the ability to give birth and the decision to care for children. Although giving birth is indeed a part of mothering, it is caregiving that *defines* the act of mothering, and caregiving is a choice open both to those who give birth and those who not. In this sense, Ruddick says, all mothers are adoptive mothers, meaning that one “adopts” the child – whether one has given birth to that child or not – when one choose to care for that child. We think this notion of “adoption” may serve as the foundation of a transformation of motherhood, as it is

⁶ MOA. Special Reports GB181 Sx MOA2/2/1/47, no. 80.

⁷ MOA. no. 127.

predicated upon the necessity of choice and thereby rejects essentialist views of women.⁸

Interestingly, their emphasis on the ‘choice’ by mothers to look after their children, whether they are biologically related or not, is a key to understanding the politics of the 1980s around surrogacy. Against the essentialist account of women’s bodies and their maternal abilities, the term ‘choice’ implies women’s self-directed action and their willingness to acquire access to motherhood through assisted reproduction.

Reproduction technologies allow infertile couples and non-heterosexuals, who could not engage in motherhood before, to be successful candidates to engage in child-bearing and rearing. Broadening accessibility to motherhood as a choice sets up routes of access to motherhood as happiness. In other words, having children is one standard to measure an individual’s self-fulfilment, and in a way this standard itself has been reinforced despite the controversy towards surrogacy.

2. The Literary Context of the 1980s and Motherhood

Kaplan points out that In Vitro Fertilisation and other high-tech form of fertilisation

⁸ Brenda O. Daly and Maureen T. Reddy, ‘Introduction’, in *Narrating Mothers: Theorizing Maternal Subjectivities*, ed. by Brenda O. Daly and Maureen T. Reddy (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1991), pp. 1-18 (pp. 4-5), emphasis in original.

raise issues of risk management. She contends that risk management works in order to set boundaries to define what is acceptable and what is not. In this way, risky (new) technologies can be incorporated, and the system and the status quo, namely the idea of motherhood as happiness continues unaffected. For instance, as some respondents mentioned in the Mass Observation Archive, surrogacy raises questions such as ‘what if the surrogate mother wants to keep the child?’ or ‘what if the child has mental or/and physical disabilities?’ As we see here, and as Kaplan convincingly asserts, the discourse of risk management proliferates. Indeed, as we saw in the thesis’ Introduction and as we will see below, issues of the child’s health, or lack of health, are central to ideas of normative happiness, socially sanctioned maternity, and even issues of monstrosity, all of which we will see are interconnected and explored in Lessing’s novel. However, what we must recognise here is that risk management is essentially a paranoid reading of risk. Eve Sedgwick claims ‘[t]hat paranoia is anticipatory’ and:

The first imperative of paranoia is *There must be no bad surprises*, and indeed, the aversion to surprise seems to be what cements the intimacy between paranoia and knowledge per se, including both epistemophilia and skepticism. D.A. Miller notes in *The Novel and the Police*, “Surprise... is precisely what the paranoid seeks to eliminate, but it is also what, in the event, he survives by reading as a frightening incentive: he can never be paranoid enough”.⁹

⁹ Eve Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2003), p. 130.

Risk management discourse implies the assumption that something bad will happen and we have to be prepared for the bad thing. This ‘something bad’ in relation to reproduction technologies is always related to health and what sort of body the foetus will have. In other words, the risk referred to here is the health and abled-bodiedness of the foetus or new-born baby, rather than that of the mother. Since it is the mother’s choice to undertake use of the technologies, maintenance and development of the health of their babies are reduced to the mother’s responsibility, even though participation in surrogacy and other assisted reproductions is not only by mothers, but also by their partners.¹⁰ Here is a presumption that if we can avoid the risk, the baby’s life will be of better quality: as I will discuss in detail below, through the health of the baby, the mother’s, and perhaps society’s, happiness can be promised.

For Kaplan, fiction is a space where, rather than risk being ‘managed’, deeper concerns than this can be explored. Kaplan points out:

Fiction speaks – testifies – to the risks that the expert risk-management discourses leave out because of the scientific, disciplinary bias that is built-in. Thus avant-garde fiction, perhaps ironically, becomes a crucial site of resistance to the enclosure movements paradigmatic of modernity, where we are talking about the enclosure of ideas in the process of disciplinary specialization; the enclosure of biological life-forms (gametes, embryos,

¹⁰ In the narrative of surrogacy, attention is paid more to mothers than to fathers and same-sex partners.

organs, transgenic animals) for the production of profit, by industry or biomedicine; or the attempts by commercial media to limit what stories can be told, what ideologies stories will manifest.¹¹

Scholars have much debated the function of contemporary fiction, especially of one of its genres: fantasy. Patricia Waugh argues how contemporary fiction performs in

Feminine Fictions: Revisiting the Postmodern (1989): postmodern fantasies by women

writers such as Marge Piercy, Margaret Atwood, Doris Lessing, Fay Weldon, Angela

Carter, Toni Morrison, and Alice Walker work ‘as a more positive articulation of the

possibility of connecting our desires to a potential world outside them.’¹² She

considers:

they [the women writers above] seek ways of material reality, of envisioning a society where, indeed difference would not be separation, but connection which does not threaten autonomy – a collectivism that preserves the individual self. Such writing constructs *a new subject*, one who is necessarily ‘dispersed’ but who is also an effective agent, neither the old liberal subject nor the contemporary post-structuralist site of the play of signification.¹³

Indeed, postmodern women writers challenge the dichotomy between the autonomous

male subject and the body that is assigned to women. Moreover, scholarship, especially

from the late 1980s to the early 1990s, has significantly contributed to interrogations of

¹¹ Kaplan and Squier, pp. 5-6.

¹² Patricia Waugh, *Feminine Fictions: Revisiting the Postmodern* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 168.

¹³ Waugh, *Feminine Fictions*, p. 169, my emphasis.

this binary. However, we must ask of the female body, which has been considered in opposition to the male subject: how does happiness depend on a woman's body?

The novels listed above all begin in various ways from their perspectives on this question of the female body, as we will see from some examples below. While the critical stream focusing on what contemporary women writers do – exploring to create a “new” subjectivity – is important, the significance of affect in these authors is essential, looking into what, with these new subjectivities, can make women happy. These and other women writers were exploring the new subject, not being the “other”, who does not rely on approval from the male subject. Simultaneously, as I will argue, these writers question the reinforced idea of women's happiness: the ideological affect and its strong association with women's bodies. How does women's happiness depend upon giving birth via assisted technologies and upon nurturing? In what conditions will women's happiness be promised? To keep the promise, what kinds of bodies should be reproduced, and what sort of intimacy between mother and child is accepted? The negotiations between the conventional norm of motherhood and new reproductive technologies can be seen in novels written in the 1980s, and historicising these contexts and texts in this decade will show the relations between forming new kinds of maternal

intimacy and the process of putting down fine lines – the tenuous boundaries between what is deemed to be the norm and what is rejected as monstrous.

To put the 80s in context, reproductive technologies have been discussed in Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976) and Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985). These two texts foreshadow the texts of the women writing in the 1980s I will discuss. *Woman* is a utopia in which the main Hispanic middle-aged protagonist, Connie Ramos, time-travels between reality in a mental hospital and a fantastic world called Mouth-of-Mattapoissett. She is sent to a mental hospital by a cruel pimp, Gerald, who is the boyfriend of Connie's niece, Dolly. He forces Dolly to work as a prostitute and physically and verbally abuses her. Dolly escapes to Connie's apartment and both Connie and Dolly are beaten unconscious. Due to her previous record of abusing her own child, Angelina, Connie is sent to the mental hospital, through Gerald's manipulation of the authorities. In the hospital, Connie acquires the ability to communicate with Luciente, who lives in Mattapoissett. This place is set in a future in which women have gained equality by emancipating reproduction and nurturing from maternal and familial relationships, and instead making them socially shared responsibilities. Men can breastfeed, and family units do not exist; identity

politics by race or sexual orientation have also been erased. This community, where reproduction is performed in a building called the ‘brooder’ is attacked by The Shapers, a group of scientists who believes in genetic experimentation to ‘improve’ the human species. Piercy’s fantastical novel successfully creates a utopian world in which physical differences between men and woman around reproduction have been eliminated.

Following Piercy’s experiments with writing sexual difference on reproduction, Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale* (1985), as Gina Wisker acknowledges, also engages ‘with concerns about women’s lives, gender roles and performativity, reproductive technologies and controls over women’s bodies through the experiences of an individual’.¹⁴ *Handmaid’s* is ‘a product of a specific period, the late 1980s’ which ‘represents and deals with some of the experience of feminism and the women’s movement (second wave feminists of the 1970s and 1980s)’, and it is also a more evident caricature of the politics around surrogacy in the 1980s.¹⁵ Written in 1985, the book is a dystopia, most of which is narrated by a woman called Offred (which comes from the name of the Commander she works for, Fred). Set in the late twentieth century

¹⁴ Gina Wisker, *Atwood’s Handmaid’s Tale* (London and New York: Continuum International, 2010), p. 12.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

in Massachusetts, USA, the country is now called the Republic of Gilead and is governed by a religious community named the Sons of Jacob. This is a regime in which the society's emphasis is put on reproduction, prohibiting all kinds of desires as sins. Before the novel begins, the narrator was arrested by the regime, because she and her husband tried to escape to Canada with fake passports. Their daughter was given to a childless couple in the regime, and the heroine was trained in a Red Cross Centre as a Handmaid. Handmaids provide elite childless couples with children, which is possible due to her rare fertility. Chapter 16 is a significant scene that describes Offred's sexual intercourse with the Commander and his wife. The hostile relationship between the wife and the narrator analogises one between surrogate and adoptive mothers. The revelation of confidential nights out with the Commander leads to the abrupt end of her first person narrative. If the narrator survived or not is kept unknown. The last part of the novel is a conference scene, in which the Handmaid's tale is presented as an item (not as a document) by the historian Professor Pieixoto.

Previous criticism has focused on the narrative fracture between Offred's first person narrative and the Historical Note at the end of the novel. One of the critics, Sarah Morrison, argues that Atwood uses the narrative of romance not as a mere parody but in

a more complicated way in *Handmaid*.¹⁶ According to Morrison, Atwood leaves readers unsatisfied with the abrupt ending of the story and this ending creates a huge distance from the reader and the ending. What the readers' dissatisfaction shows is the immense attachment the reader has with the happy ending of a romance.

Moreover, the scholars' unconcern with the questions that Offred's narrative places in the foreground challenges the reader's investment in the heroine and the romance plot. Exposed and likewise called into question is the crude tactic by which romantic fiction traditionally asserts the worth of the heroine – through her validation by a high-status male.¹⁷ Indeed, Offred is a heroine who appears to adhere to the conventional understanding of the hero showing his superiority and providing validation for the heroine, as she does not claim agency herself, but relies on the men around her. These patterns are evident when the Commander takes Offred for nights out and games of Scrabble. Morrison argues that the heroine's fantasy to try to prove that she is something more than a mere generic handmaid can be seen, and further Offred tries to understand the Commander's feeling towards her.¹⁸

Arguably, what Morrison misses in a romance plot is how little feeling Offred

¹⁶ Sarah Morrison, 'Mothering Desire: The Romance Plot in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* and Susan Fromberg Schaeffer's *The Madness of a Seduced Woman*', *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 19.2 (2000), 315-36.

¹⁷ Morrison, p. 320.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

herself has. Indeed, Offred tries to estimate if the Commander and/or Nick have special feelings towards her, not just as a handmaid, but as a ‘unique individual’ in Morrison’s term. However, I contend it is her lack of feeling, or affect, that is significant when we investigate this text within the context of 1980s politics.

In the regime of Gilead, all kinds of desires are considered as sins, and pre-Gilead times, when women wore their blouses half-unbuttoned, are described as a time when they had too many ‘choices’. When Offred visits a hospital to check her fertility, the medical doctor offers her a way to cheat the pregnancy, since it seemed that the Commander is infertile. She somehow fends off saying yes or no, since for her, ‘[i]t’s the choice that terrifies’ her (Atwood, p. 71). She describes her feeling as ‘blankness’ and narrates ‘[w]hat I feel is that I must not feel’ (Atwood, p. 43). When she happens to come across the Commander in her room, which he is not allowed to come into unless it is necessary, she describes her feeling as such:

I ought to feel hatred for this man [the Commander]. I know I ought to feel it, but it isn’t what I do feel. What I feel is more complicated than that. I don’t know what to call it. It isn’t love. (Atwood, p. 68)

Her inability to articulate her feeling itself shows, under the circumstance without choice, that Offred cannot find a way to understand intimacy: she can only define

feelings in negative terms. When she is on the way home from shopping with another handmaid Ofglen, they encounter stereotypically represented Japanese tourists with cameras:

‘He asks, are you happy,’ says the interpreter. I can imagine it, their curiosity: *Are they happy? How can they be happy?* I can feel their bright black eyes on us, the way they lean a little forward to catch our answers, the women especially, but the men too: we are secret, forbidden, we excite them. [/] Ofglen says nothing. There is a silence. But sometimes it’s as dangerous not to speak. [/] ‘Yes, we are very happy,’ I murmur. I have to say something. What else can I say? (Atwood, p. 39, emphasis in original)

Atwood tries to describe the way in which the protagonist explores the relation between the affect of happiness, choices for reproduction, and intimacy. Therefore, it can be said that this text serves as a background to the texts that I am going to discuss in this chapter. *Handmaid* provides a world in which women show no feeling on reproduction and surrogacy. However, my primary texts explore not only surrogacy, but other technologies, and the potential relationship between maternal intimacy, happiness and monstrosity.

3. Lessing’s *The Fifth Child*: Maternity and Traditional Family

As we will see, reproductive technologies underlie the works of Doris Lessing, and the rhetoric of prenatal screening sits behind *The Fifth Child* (1988). On the one hand, these technological innovations provide infertile and homosexual couples with the opportunity to construct a new kind of family as mentioned above. On the other hand, these same innovations alerted conservative people to the undermining of the “traditional family”. Through legislation on surrogacy, IVF and other child care policies, Thatcher’s Conservative Government controlled reproductive activities through the ideology of the conventional family. Thus, it is possible to read this negotiation between the concept of “mother nature” and its scientific alternative in these texts of the 1980s.

Lessing’s *The Fifth Child* insightfully exposes the utilitarian society that Thatcher’s Britain pursues, including a lack of childcare and services for mothers by the Tories in the 1980s when a mother has a troublesome or disabled child: as we will see below, the monstrous child makes the mother monstrous, and this process alienates the mother from society.¹⁹ This text examines the connection between maternal intimacy, technologies and what kinds of bodies are to be reproduced. As the new possibilities of

¹⁹ I will talk more about Lessing’s explicit attack on the lack of childcare in Thatcher’s Britain below, in the thesis’ conclusion. On the tensions in Conservative childcare policy and the governmental refusal to develop necessary childcare support, see, for example, Lorraine Fox Harding, ““Family Values” and Conservative Government Policy: 1979-97”, in *Changing Family Values*, ed. by Gill Jagger and Carole Wright (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 119-36 (*passim.*); Barbara Fawcett, Brid Featherstone and Jim Goddard, *Contemporary Child Care Policy and Practice* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2004), p. 35.

these technologies were explored, new boundaries were drawn that legitimise some forms of intimacy as happiness, and exile some as monstrous. Lessing tactically uses maternal monstrosity to challenge the oppressive ideology of normative happiness that built up around the reproductive technologies of the 1980s.

Despite the fact that her vast writing themes involve issues regarding women, mothers and children, Lessing keeps an ambivalent distance from feminism.²⁰ In an interview at the Edinburgh Book Festival in 2008, soon after her winning of the Nobel Prize, Lessing clearly acknowledged her distant relationship from feminism, saying ‘they [feminists] don’t love me. I don’t love them either’.²¹ This statement of indifference perhaps shows her scepticism towards second wave feminism and her refusal to be categorized as “a feminist writer”. This ambivalence in Lessing’s work towards feminism has been highlighted by a number of scholars. For instance, one Japanese scholar, Suzuko Mamoto (2008), argues that Lessing’s attitude towards her writing shows her pursuit is for ‘humanism beyond feminism’:

Lessing’s basic stance towards her works as a writer can be clearly seen in her writing style; she refutes the monolithic perspectives of “Ism” [ideology]. [...] [S]he tries to find the way for narratives of happiness from a universal

²⁰ As is well known, her early works, *The Grass is Singing* (1950) and *The Golden Notebook* (1962) deal with female protagonists’ mental breakdowns. The latter especially is frequently considered as a pioneering work for second wave feminism.

²¹ Hermione Lee, ‘A Conversation with Doris Lessing’, *Wasafiri*, 24.3 (2009), 18-25 (p. 22).

perspective regardless of age and sex. Lessing also tries to find the significance of being a “human being” before “woman,” “wife” and “mother.” What we can see in this attitude is her firm standpoint as a humanist. The pursuit of “humanism beyond feminism” is a prominent leitmotif throughout her writing, regardless of the setting of stories and of changes in her extensive themes.²²

Mamoto’s opinion on Lessing’s writing style suggests that Lessing’s works are beyond the scope of feminist discourse, which Mamoto reckons posits certain limitations.

Indeed, in *The Small Personal Voice* (1994), Lessing also implies that she is a humanist writer, not a feminist.²³ It may be that Lessing considered feminism as a discourse that only deals with women, and sought to explore a greater variety of social issues.

However, we need to question her assumption here, since humanism is also an ideology, just as feminism is. When we consider the supposed subject matter of humanism, the concept and definition of “human” must be interrogated. Mamoto seems to assume that humanism does not recognise differences between genders. However, what Mamoto does not note is that humanism may rely on the concept of “human being”, which differentiates and marginalises certain kinds of body as not fully “human”. Regarding

Lessing as humanist is perhaps a valid position. However, it does not provide a full

²² Suzuko Mamoto, ‘Resshingu to Feminizumu’ [Lessing and Feminism], *Eigoseinen*, 153.11 (2008), 663-665 (p. 664), my translation.

²³ Lessing, *The Small Personal Voice* (London: Flamingo, 1994), ‘Once a writer has a feeling of responsibility, as a human being, for the other human beings he influences, it seems to me he must become a humanist, and must feel himself as an instrument of change for good or for bad’ (p. 10). Note the persistent use of ‘he’ as ‘a humanist’.

reading of what her texts actually offer. Though Lessing's account of herself as humanist does not appear to interrogate the term itself, her novel *Fifth*, as I will discuss below, apparently questions what it means to be human, and explores the lives of those who are excluded from this society in which "human beings" are required to be, and have, certain kinds of body.²⁴ Contrary to Mamoto's claim that Lessing finds 'the way for narratives of happiness from a universal perspective regardless of age and sex', what *Fifth* describes is not the pursuit, but the enforcement of happiness.²⁵ In this novel, the very concepts of the human being and happiness are called into questions.

Fifth is a short and allegorical novel that describes how a happy marriage and a blissful family construction are destroyed by the couple's brutal fifth son, Ben. Through his physical and psychological torture of his mother, of other relatives and of their pets, the plot of the happy family, applauded by British society especially in the eighties, is debunked and challenged. The narrative is set in London from the 1960s to the 1980s, till Ben becomes a teenager. In the 1960s, Harriet and David, both 'conservative' and

²⁴ This is the very issue that Mary Shelley takes up in *Frankenstein* (1818) in the monster's body.

²⁵ With regards to the differences between people, is there someone who is yet to be gendered soon after her/his birth? Mamoto seems to consider that there is such a subject, who exists "before" becoming a man or a woman in society. This discursive assumption, however, of setting up a human "before" gendering becomes problematic, as Judith Butler argues in her book, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York, London: Routledge, 1990). According to Butler, the subject 'who stands "before" the law, awaiting representation in or by the law [...] is constituted by the law as the fictive foundation of its own claim to legitimacy' (Butler, p. 5). In other words, assuming there is "a human before gendering" is discursively impossible, given Butler's account of gender performativity.

‘old-fashioned’ met at their company Christmas party. The narrator suggests that these two were ‘freaks and oddballs’ for their attitude to sex.²⁶ Living in the sixties, the decade of sexual liberation, Harriet was a virgin and David was reluctant to have a physical relationship with his previous girlfriend. Immediately, they fell in love, got engaged, and married the next spring. Soon after their marriage, they purchased a house in London with an abandoned garden, since it had enough space for bringing up ‘six children at least’ (*Fifth*, p. 14). Harriet has two other sisters, and her parents ‘[took] for granted that family life was the basis for a happy one’ (*Fifth*, p. 12). Her mother Dorothy is a widow and she looked after her grandchildren. On the other hand, David has ‘two sets of parents’ (*Fifth*, p. 12) due to his parents’ divorce. His father, James Lovatt is a successful boat builder who married for a second time to a woman called Jessica. Their wealth made it possible for David to manage his large family, to pay the living costs for their large house, and for his children to study at boarding schools. Molly, David’s mother, married her second husband Frederick Burke, a historian in Oxford. Dissatisfied with both parents’ households, David passionately desires a better future home, as his occupation as an architect suggests. He knew the kind of woman he needed for his house: a woman who knew ‘where happiness lay and how to keep it’,

²⁶ Lessing, *The Fifth Child* (London: Harper, 1988), pp. 7, 9. Subsequent citations will be in parentheses.

since ‘what he was working for was a home’ (*Fifth*, p. 13). With rapid pace, they had four children, Luke, Helen, Jane and Paul, who filled them with happiness and joy.

In the Lovatts’ household, happiness is dependent on the mother’s ability and capacity to provide the members of the family with comfort. When Harriet gives birth to Ben, she is blamed because she fails to provide the rest of the family with the comfort she is supposed to provide. Women’s happiness/duty in this society, this story shows, is dependent on giving birth to an able-bodied, healthy child. As we will see below, through reading the relationships among Ben, his mother and other disabled characters, *Fifth* articulates the close connection between happiness, the body and embodiment. Lessing’s text challenges the “universal” quality of maternal happiness, by showing how the family’s happiness is dependent on a woman’s body that reproduces the able-bodied child. In other words, in neoliberal societies, happiness is problematically gendered and equated with healthiness, which contributes to the productivity of the larger community.

4. The Socio-Political Context of the 1980s: The Return to “the Traditional Family”

Written in 1988, it is important to contextualise the plot of *Fifth* within Thatcher's policies in the 1980s. As Elizabeth Maslen (1994) describes, Lessing 'is always engaged with the world of Now, wrestling not only with those matters which are central debates of the moment at which she writes, but also with issues which ought to be debated, but which the society she writes for is not quite ready to face'.²⁷ Indeed, we will see that the Lovatts' attitudes towards family construction correspond with the family laws administered by the Conservative government in the 1980s. Susan Watkins argues that *Fifth* can be seen as 'family "romance"' where the gothic convention of the return of the repressed is deliberately deployed in order to generate a critique of 1980s Conservative Britain, its defensive focus on family values and fear of inner-city social unrest.²⁸ Watkins convincingly connects social policies of the 1980s with the text, in particular the 'abolition of ILEA (Inner London Education Authority) and the GLC (Greater London Council)', which exacerbated urban decline.²⁹ I would further suggest that changes in national law in this period are equally reflected in Lessing's text, and its critique of the conservative family model.

Gillian Douglas explains the importance of the family laws reformed by

²⁷ Elizabeth Maslen, *Doris Lessing* (Plymouth: Northcote, 1994), p. 1.

²⁸ Susan Watkins, *Doris Lessing* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010). p. 125.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

Thatcher's government in contrast to the ones issued by the previous Labour administration in the 1960s. During the 1980s, the Conservative government administered: The Matrimonial and Family Proceedings Act (1984); The Surrogacy Arrangement (1985); The Family Law Reform Act (1987); and The Children Act (1989). These Acts are often considered as policies to return to a model of "the traditional family".³⁰

In her memoir, Margaret Thatcher articulates her belief in re/forming conventional family values during her time in office. She became increasingly certain that 'though there were crucially important limits to what politicians can do in this area,' the Government 'could only get to the roots of crime and much else besides by concentrating on strengthening the traditional family'.³¹ The chairperson of the Conservative Party in her administration, Kenneth Baker, also claimed that illegitimacy and single-parent families were to blame for the rise in inner-city crime and unemployment.³² The increase of illegitimate births (27 per cent in 1989), high rate of young-homelessness, and the annual number of divorces (about 150,000) were

³⁰ Gillian Douglas, 'Family Law under the Thatcher Government', *Journal of Law and Society*, 17.4 (1990), 411-426 (pp. 412-413).

³¹ Donald Macintyre, 'Thatcher Lit the Torch for Family Values: Former PM's Legacy of Concern for Traditional Life is Alive', *The Independent*, 10 November 1993.

³² Cited in Douglas, p. 412. According to Douglas, it was said that female teenagers about 16-17 years old get pregnant so that they can leave home and be housed in council houses.

considered as at the root of crime and moral degeneracy, caused by the breakdown of the nuclear family and its values. The conventional family means, in Conservative terms, a nuclear family in which the married parents stay in a healthy relationship, with good control over their children. The Conservatives accused the Labour administration in the sixties of eroding these values. In encouraging the ideal of conventional family, 'respect for elders, hard work, thrift, chastity' were thought to be protected.³³ As Douglas explains, those Acts administered by Thatcher were a reflection of the governmental concern and, with these laws, divorces became more difficult, and engaging in surrogacy was prohibited. In so doing, parental responsibility for the child's moral as well as physical development was emphasised and rewarded.³⁴ These policies might have motivated citizens to engage in marriage, and construct families, and Lessing's text may be reflecting the scepticism towards these policies in *Fifth* through the conventional figures of Harriet and David. Their priority is always making their own traditional family, against the liberal atmosphere of the sixties.

Happiness. A happy family. The Lovatts were a happy family. It was what they had chosen and what they deserved. Often, when David and Harriet lay face to face, it seemed that doors in their breasts flew open, and what poured out was an intensity of relief, of thankfulness, that still astonished them both: patience for what seemed now such a very long time had not been easy, after all. It had been

³³ Douglas, p. 412.

³⁴ Cited in Douglas, p. 419.

hard preserving their belief in themselves when the spirit of the times, the greedy and selfish sixties, had been so ready to condemn them, to isolate, to diminish their best selves. And look, they had been right to insist on guarding that stubborn individuality of theirs which had chosen, and so obstinately, the best – this. (*Fifth*, pp. 28-29)

As we see here, *Fifth* exemplifies how Harriet and David strongly long for forming a conventional family and treat it as the location where happiness resides. However, “healthy parenting” is ironically revealed in this story as quite different from the idea of child-bearing and rearing equally shared by both mother and father: when the child is not “healthy,” it comes down to the responsibility of the mother.

5. Gothic Narrative and the Monstrous Maternal Body: Alienation from Society in *The*

Fifth Child

When their fifth child, Ben, is born, this happy family life turns into a nightmare. This subversive plot – the fall of the Lovatts’ house – has been discussed by a number of scholars as characteristic of Gothic fiction.³⁵ I will particularly pay attention to the way

³⁵ For Gothic narrative as a subversive device in *Fifth*, see: Isabel Gamallo, ‘Motherhood and the Fear of the Other: Magic, Fable and the Gothic in Doris Lessing’s *The Fifth Child*’, in *Theme Parks, Rainforests and Sprouting Wastelands: European Essays on Theory and Performance in Contemporary British Fiction*, ed. by Richard Todd and Luisa Flora (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), pp. 113-124; Ruth Robbins, ‘(No Such) Great Expectations: Unmasking Maternal Ideals in *The Fifth Child* and *We Need to Talk about Kevin*’, in *Doris Lessing: Border Crossings*, ed. by Susan Watkins and Alice Ridout (London: Continuum, 2009), pp. 92-106; Ellen Pifer, ‘New Versions of the Idyll: Lessing’s *The Fifth Child* and Kundera’s *Infantocracy*’, in *Demon or Doll: Images of the Child in Contemporary Writing and Culture* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000).

maternal desire turns into fear through the intimate physical relationship between mother and baby in this Gothic narrative. Famously, Rosemary Jackson argues that the fantastical narrative of the Gothic is historically a device to subvert the ideological order and the law of the Father, pushing it into illegitimacy and outside of the value system. In doing so, the mode of fantasy briefly uncovers the unseen and the unsaid in culture.³⁶

Following Jackson, more feminist reassessment of the Gothic has taken place. According to Susanne Becker, Gothic writing as a genre has always been about ‘rebellion and provocation against the order, control and the powers of restrictive ideologies’.³⁷ As such, the Gothic genre has long been seen to have a close relation with feminism and feminist issues, challenging the dominant patriarchal order. With its focus on monstrosity, both feminist and Gothic interpretations can converge in analysing *Fifth*, especially the figures of the monstrous mother and child. Indeed, whereas the traditional Gothic novels in the eighteenth century, as Halberstam asserts, are often characterised by horrifying landscapes, such as ‘the haunted castle or abbey’ (evident in seminal Gothic texts like Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* and Matthew Gregory Lewis’ *The Monk*), the locus of horror in modern or neo-Gothic

³⁶ Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (London and New York: Routledge, 1981), p. 4.

³⁷ Susanne Becker, *Gothic Forms of Feminine Fictions* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp. 4-5.

fiction is frequently not in landscapes: it is in ‘the fear embodied by monstrous bodies’.³⁸

The Neo-Gothic is a revival of the Gothic genre mainly by women writers using Gothic conventions. It is a new movement of gendered writing of quoting, rewriting, sampling, and mixing, as Becker claims. Running from the 1970s to the 1990s, female writers such as Angela Carter, Fay Weldon and Margaret Atwood interrogated gender binaries by writing grotesque physical representations. In the discourse of western culture, the body is considered in opposition to the mind, and is often taken as a natural grounding.³⁹ Moreover the terrain of the body is unreasonably assigned and reduced to one gender, that is, “woman”.⁴⁰ However, in the neo-Gothic mode, the dichotomy between the body and the mind is challenged and even subverted through writing the grotesque body, as we will see below. In other media, films such as *Alien* (1979) and *Rosemary’s Baby* (1968) exemplify the possibilities for horror in the birth of a monstrous child. In much the same way, Lessing’s *Fifth* can also be categorized as Neo-gothic writing, with its depiction of Harriet’s monstrous maternal body and Ben, the monster.

³⁸ Judith Halberstam, *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1995), p. 16. Halberstam gives Dracula, Frankenstein’s creature and Hyde as examples of this shift from landscapes to monsters in Gothic fiction.

³⁹ This binary can extend back to Aristotle.

⁴⁰ See Sherry B. Ortner, ‘Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?’ *Feminist Studies*, 1.2 (1972), 5-31.

In *Fifth*, the experience of fear within readers can especially be seen in the description of the ambiguous corporeal relationship between Ben and Harriet, specifically in the leaky inter-corporeality between mother and child. Margrit Shildrick discusses this ambiguous relationship through her notion of women's leaky bodies: 'Whatever the manifest outcome at birth, the pregnant female body itself is always a trope of immense power in that it speaks to an inherent capacity to problematise the boundaries of self and other'.⁴¹ For Shildrick, women have destabilised boundaries not only during pregnancy but also after giving birth: 'Women are out of control, uncontained, unpredictable, leaky'.⁴²

Harriet's physical and psychological fears in relation to her baby, during and after her pregnancy, play an important role in this novel. Harriet feels 'a tapping in her belly, demanding attention' (*Fifth*, p. 45) and when breast-feeding she suffers pain from being 'bruised black all around the nipples' (*Fifth*, p. 66). In this novel, I argue fear in the Gothic narrative becomes effective when the monstrosity of the child oozes through the boundary into the maternal body. In addition, the movement of evilness is not one-way from the monstrous baby to the maternal: monstrosity moves to-and-fro through the

⁴¹ Margrit Shildrick, *Embodying the Monster: Encounters with the Vulnerable Self* (London: Sage, 2002), p. 31.

⁴² *Ibid.*

boundary, and it is this permeability that provokes terror for the readers. Through this leaky boundary, Harriet also becomes a monster, as I will discuss now, and Lessing makes the mother into “the other” in the eyes of her society.

Leakiness in the physical relation between Harriet and Ben can be seen both literally during and figuratively after her pregnancy. For example, while Harriet ‘was sitting at the kitchen table, head in her hands, muttering’, and she observes that the ‘new foetus was *poisoning* her’ (*Fifth*, p. 41, emphasis added). This horrifying sickness comes from the unborn Ben as a seepage through the boundary between them, as if he were an illness inside her, infecting her through the boundary of the placenta, which both connects and individuates them. As a result of the permeability of this monstrosity, she becomes ‘frantic, exhausted... She was peevish; she lost her temper; she burst into tears...’ (*Ibid.*). To ease the pain and horror inside her body, she has to keep moving. Through this process, Harriet herself becomes a monster:

Then she took to driving a short way out of the town, where she walked along the country lanes, fast, sometimes running. People in passing cars would turn, amazed, to see this hurrying driven woman, white-faced, hair flying, open-mouthed, panting, arms clenched across her front. If they stopped to offer help, she shook her head and ran on. (*Fifth*, pp. 51-52)

The leaky physical connection between mother and monstrous foetus can still be seen

after her labour, as the newborn monstrous child breaks down the physical boundaries between them. When she breastfeeds, Ben drinks quickly and empties her breast of milk (*Fifth*, p. 63). Harriet feels that the monstrous child sucks her breasts so strongly that part of her body is swallowed into the baby:

Ben sucked so strongly that he emptied the first breast in less than a minute. Always, when a breast was nearly empty, he ground his gums together, and so she had to snatch him away before he could begin. It looked as if she were unkindly depriving him of the breast, and she heard David's breathing change. Ben roared with rage, fastened like a leech to the other nipple, and sucked so hard she felt that her whole breast was disappearing down his throat. (*Fifth*, p. 63)

This process of sucking her breasts and her body suggests the image of another Gothic monster, Dracula. The monstrous baby exploits and abuses the maternal body, and in turn, it is Harriet who becomes a monster. However extraordinary Ben is, the hospital always certifies that Ben is 'A normal healthy fine baby' (*Ibid.*), and the problem is not in Ben, but in Harriet (*Fifth*, pp. 124-125). What we can see from this scene, with what I call the leaky intimacy between the baby and mother, the porousness of their physical separation, is that the monstrosity of Ben is denied a social recognition (as the hospital literally refuses to see him as anything other than "normal"), and as such, Harriet is in turn deemed as the monstrous one. She is punished by society, as it were, since she fails

to give birth to a healthy child when society requires her to do so. She is forbidden to achieve happiness, because she fails to contribute to the happiness of other members of the family, the larger community and, ultimately, the nation.

The assumption underlying this text, then, is that, for happy family construction, one is required to produce a healthy child to fully contribute oneself to a larger community and, if one fails to do so, the responsibility for this failure is totally and unreasonably cast onto motherhood. Gamallo argues that the figure of Harriet who has Ben (the Other) within herself is similar to the figure of a nation within which there are Others such as immigrants.⁴³ Indeed, there is a figurative similarity between society/nation and the pregnant mother, as both of them have the Other embedded within. What Gamallo overlooks, however, is that the mother herself is also, what I term, “the Other who has the other within her”. Unlike the nation, which contains the Other, but is itself the norm, in the case of the mother pregnant with a monstrous child, the mother too is othered, marginalised, and excluded by the nation. Harriet is alienated from society and other members of her family because of her close relationship with Ben. As the difference between Harriet and Ben blurs, the distance between her and her society/family becomes apparent. This begins when Harriet is pregnant and Ben, the

⁴³ Gamallo, p. 117.

foetus, tortures her from within her womb. This physical struggle distances her from the other members of her family:

Appalled at the distance that had grown up between her and her husband, between her and the children, her mother, [...] she was willing them to leave her alone and to reach the baby, the foetus – this creature with whom she was locked in a struggle to survive. [/] Oh, how eager everyone was to welcome her back into the family, normal, herself: they ignored, because she wanted them to, her tenseness, her tiredness. (*Fifth*, pp. 52-53)

David claims that Ben is not his child (*Fifth*, p. 90), blaming solely Harriet. Medical doctors, who represent institutional power, never acknowledge that Ben is abnormal, saying ‘It is not abnormal to take a dislike to a child’ (*Fifth*, p. 67), thus trivialising the matter. Together, they dissociate themselves from the problem caused by Ben, and problematise Harriet, the mother. However, when Ben is finally recognized as abnormal and institutionalised, Harriet saves Ben from the institution in which young ‘monsters’ are hospitalised:

Every bed or cot held an infant or small child in whom the human template had been wrenched out of pattern, sometimes horribly, sometimes slightly. A baby like a comma, great lolling head on a stalk of a body... then something like a stick insect, enormous bulging eyes among stiff fragilities that were limbs. [...] Rows of freaks, nearly all asleep, and all silent. (*Fifth*, p. 98)

Harriet feels that, perhaps internalising society’s requirement, it is her “responsibility”

to rescue him from this institution, where the staff tell her he will eventually be killed by overmedication if left. However, her “responsible” action as a parent brings her to a conundrum, as, soon after bringing Ben back from there, she is asked to choose ‘him or us’ (*Fifth*, p. 90) by her husband. She feels as if she is ‘a criminal’ (*Fifth*, p. 94) and ‘a scapegoat [...] the destroyer of her family’ (*Fifth*, p. 141).

It is indeed Ben who is a monster, who turns the Lovatts’ happiness upside down. However, since the boundary between the monster and the mother becomes ambiguous, Harriet is considered as fundamentally the origin and cause of this corruption and pollution of home/nation/society. What the monstrous child-mother relationship within society reveals is the demand to produce healthy and able-bodied children. Simultaneously, since it is her “choice” to commit herself to reproduction and nurturing Ben (in fact, David also chooses the happy family life, but when it turns out their baby is a monster, the responsibility of the choice is reduced to Harriet), the responsibility of nurturing is reduced to the mother’s.

Happiness is implicitly here, then, the profit of the community, including giving birth to a healthy child who will be able to work, and being a healthy adult who can contribute to the economy, and as such, as Ahmed argued (see above in the

Introduction), happiness is a shared asset between the collective and the individual.

When it is not achieved, the mother becomes responsible for the failure of pursuing the mutual happiness between the collective and the individual. Harriet thinks that Ben is her punishment for wanting happiness, but the story makes it apparent that she is not to blame. In the story, society does not supply enough safety-nets for Harriet. Therefore, this process of scapegoating Harriet, the mother, ought to be understood as the effect, not the cause, of this operation of ideology. The process here of setting up the close relation between mother and child, and then alienating them as anomalous from society, is arbitrarily performed. This reducing of the responsibility to the individual is precisely the ideology of Thatcher's conventional family policies; it is the dark side of neoliberal individualism, as I will argue in the next section: the choice of having children is reduced solely to the responsibility of the mother, and her happiness is made dependent on what sort of body she gives birth to.

6. Ben's Body, his Associates and Eugenics as National Happiness: Deformity,

Disability and Down Syndrome

In *Fifth*, Ben, the monstrous child, and his body are described as having numerous anomalous features. He is described as ‘a real little wrestler [...], a troll, or a goblin’ (*Fifth*, p. 61), an ‘alien’ (*Fifth*, p. 62), ‘Neanderthal’ (*Fifth*, p. 65), ‘the fighting creature’ (*Fifth*, p. 66) and ‘a freak’ (*Fifth*, p. 74). He is not ‘a real baby, a real little child’ (*Fifth*, p. 62) and totally different from Harriet’s other four children. Lessing herself states that Ben is ‘a throwback to little people’.⁴⁴ His primitiveness is indicated especially through his description just after his birth, which suggests his backwardness, and how he does not fit into modern society:

He was not a pretty baby. He did not look like a baby at all. He had a heavy-shouldered hunched look, as if he were crouching there as he lay. His forehead sloped from his eyes to his crown. His hair grew in an unusual pattern from the double crown where started a wedge or triangle that came low on the forehead, the hair lying forward in a thick yellowish stubble, while the side and back hair grew downwards. His hands were thick and heavy, with pads of muscle in the palms. He opened his eyes and looked straight up into his mother’s face. They were focused greeny-yellow eyes, like lumps of soapstone. (*Fifth*, p. 60)

The description of Ben’s body shows his uniqueness and unusualness, and critics read Ben’s representation in various ways; he is the monster who represents others in society; he is the other within the mother, as discussed above. Ellen Pifer argues that

⁴⁴ Gail R. Shapiro and Doris Lessing, *A Conversation with Doris Lessing* (Wayland MA: 1997) <<http://www.gailshapiro.com/Pages/Writing/Interviews/lessing.php>> [accessed 31 August 2012].

Ben cannot be interpreted as the other, but the human being, when he hangs around with gangsters, and blends into the mass at the end of the novel.⁴⁵ However, I contend that Ben cannot be seen as a “human being,” since what Ben reveals through his monstrous appearance is the boundary between those who are approved as human and those who are not. Halberstam defines the figure of the monster in relation to communities as follows:

The monster itself is an economic form in that it condenses various racial and sexual threats to nation, capitalism, and the bourgeoisies in one body. If the Gothic novel produces an easy answer to the question of what threatens national security and prosperity (the monster), the Gothic monster represents many answers to the question of who must be removed from the community at large.⁴⁶

Halberstam’s explanation can be applied to the monstrous figure of Ben due to his association with the unemployed and gangsters. The Lovatts ask the unemployed John to do the gardening for them. John ends up being a babysitter for Ben, he picks Ben up with his motorbike and takes Ben to see his other unemployed friends. Later in the novel, a group of gangsters called ‘Ben Lovatt’s gang’ (*Fifth*, p. 146) occupy the Lovatts’ house in 1986, committing robberies and rape. In other words, he represents a range of kinds of “the other” who must be removed from a society. Based upon

⁴⁵ Pifer, p. 146.

⁴⁶ Halberstam, p. 3.

Halberstam's definition, Ben, the Gothic monster, opens up a reading of *Fifth* as about an assemblage of socio-political threats to a nation. Through the characterisation of Ben, Lessing questions social norms that name certain human beings as appropriate for reproduction, implicitly exposing the failings of Thatcher's policies that reinforced the "conventional and healthy" family unit as a source of happiness. As we saw above, Thatcher was a vocal supporter of the conventional family unit, and yet her government's policies did little to support families that struggled to support themselves, and provided very little in terms of child-care services. As we will see below (in the thesis' Conclusion), Lessing speaks openly about the importance of state-supported child care in her journalism, as well as implicitly in her novels through representations of families such as that of the Lovatts.

Still, the figure of Ben is extremely ambiguous. The text itself repeatedly questions 'What is he?' (*Fifth*, p. 66), 'Was he, in fact? What was he?' (*Fifth*, p. 81), and yet no easy answer is provided. Rather than summarising Ben as the monstrous other who is marginalised in society as we have seen in the previous section, reading Ben in relation to the minor characters in *Fifth* who have disabled bodies provides further insights into social issues that the text raises. This reading of the text in the

context of disability studies accommodates Lessing's insights into the way that family happiness relies on a kind of eugenics. In this novel, family unhappiness, such as suffering and burdens, is described as being due to disability. Lessing's text provides the scope and space to question who is human and who is not, and what kinds of bodies are considered appropriate to be reproduced.

Before Ben's birth, Harriet and David experience bliss in having children: 'Happiness. A happy family. The Lovatts were a happy family. It was what they had chosen and what they deserved' (*Fifth*, p. 28) as I quoted above. While they are feeling joyful to have a happy family, Harriet's sister, Sarah, suffers from an unhappy relationship with her husband William in contrast:

There was a cloud, though. Sarah and her husband, William, were unhappily married and quarrelled, and made up, but she was pregnant with her fourth, and a divorce was not possible. [...] The cloud on family happiness that was Sarah and William's discord disappeared, for it was absorbed in worse.
(*Fifth*, p. 28)

William had left Sarah twice (*Fifth*, p. 32) and he is labelled by his family as an 'unsatisfactory husband' (*Fifth*, p. 34). His physical disability is an obstacle to getting a decent job, although Lessing leaves it ambiguous precisely why this is or how he is disabled: 'he was distressed by physical disability, and his new daughter, the Down's

syndrome baby, appalled him' (*Fifth*, p. 32). Harriet and David talk behind Sarah's back about William's unemployment and their Down syndrome niece, Amy:

Sarah's husband was out of work. Sarah joked dolefully that she and William attracted all the ill luck in the clan.

Harriet said to David, privately, that she did not believe it was bad luck, *Sarah and William's unhappiness*, their quarrelling, *had probably attracted the mongol child* – yes, yes, of course she knew one shouldn't call them mongol. But the little girl did look a bit like Genghis Khan, didn't she? A baby Genghis Khan with her squashed little face and her slitty eyes? (*Fifth*, p. 29, my emphasis)

Harriet evidently associates her sister's downbeat relationship with their child's disability. With William's physical disability that disrupts his employability, Harriet, having internalised the ideology of neoliberal societies, makes a clear connection between happiness and being able-bodied: she thinks that William's limited access to jobs from the market is not about 'luck', suggesting that it is a fate he deserves, and she claims that Sarah and William's 'unhappiness', or 'quarrelling', causes the birth of the Down syndrome child. Later in the novel, Ben is born and his physical appearance is significantly different from "normal" children, and moreover his destructive behaviour diminishes their happiness. In short, in their household, happiness/unhappiness is directly related to their physical "normality" and "defects," and in this sense, family happiness is embedded in the concept of eugenics, as we have seen argued by

Garland-Thomson in the thesis' Introduction.

Lessing's text insightfully articulates this unwelcoming attitude and system for the less able, and for unusual bodies, and shows its relation to the politics of happiness. After Ben's birth, Harriet and David experience hardship, burdens and suffering. They cannot cope with Ben and it ends up with the collapse of the Lovatts. Similarly, William's disability and his unemployment, and Amy's Down syndrome are key examples in the novel of unhappiness in relation to disabled bodies.

Conclusion

Marriage is exceedingly physical in *Fifth*. As indicated by numerous scenes of Easter and Christmas, House is always filled with children and family, and thus Harriet gives birth of five children. They pursue normative happiness, and yet the result of their family construction seems not much welcomed by the nation (in other words, sufficient child care by the state), because Ben, the fifth child, is a monster. Furthermore, through an intimate physical relationship with Ben, his mother Harriet becomes monstrous.

What Lessing's novel makes clear is that happiness is closely bound up with physicality

and with physical activities. Simultaneously, the body that is reproduced through such physical activities has to be normative. The normative body to be reproduced in the family unit has to be reproductive, and employable, namely, the able body that directly serves the nation's wealth accumulation. The strong relationship of happiness to the body becomes visible through the description of monstrous bodies in this novel. These monstrous bodies indicate who and what kinds of ability one needs to have to be approved of as a human being in wider society.

Fifth can be read as an allegory of conventional family policies during the 80s in Britain. As we saw in the Introduction, Patricia Waugh explains that Britain in the 1960s 'witnessed enormous transformations in attitudes to authority, sexuality, censorship, and civil liberties'.⁴⁷ The "return" to the conventional family and its value is precisely the backlash to the liberal atmosphere of the 60s. The policies described above helped to set up the concept of the conventional family as happiness. In this neoliberal mode, happiness is not a universal attribute, but precisely a matter of economy (the financial ability to feed the family) and also a matter of "matter", the physical issues of maternity to produce healthy bodies. *Fifth*'s narrative also starts in the

⁴⁷ Patricia Waugh, *Harvest of the Sixties: English Literature and its Background 1960 to 1990* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 5.

sixties when the sexuality is “liberated” (Harriet and David could not fit into this liberal atmosphere of sexuality in the sixties: Harriet was a virgin and David was reluctant with sex, *Fifth*, p. 9), and by the eighties they construct a huge conventional family. By describing the collapse of their happiness, *Fifth* articulates how the neoliberal concept of happiness assumed in the conventional family laws ignores the necessity of a support system if the citizen does not have a healthy body. However, Lessing’s writing ends up only articulating the unwelcoming attitudes and failing systems of the government. In this sense, *Fifth* is a complete dystopia.

Interestingly, there are two rewritings of this dystopian novel. Lessing wrote the sequel of *Fifth*, *Ben in the World*, in the 2000s. Contrary to the monstrous representation of Ben in the first series, here he is described as a victim of society. This victimised figure suggests the significance of reading Ben in association with those excluded from society – such as disabled characters in the family. Three years after *Ben in the World*, Lionel Shriver published *We Need to Talk about Kevin* (2003). This novel deals with the disturbing relationship between mother and child, their disconnection, and violence by the child. These three publications show strong historical parallels between the 1980s and the 2000s. Lessing perhaps expresses her concern here with the

governmental emphasis on the revival of conventional family values, and describes its effect twenty years after the publication of *Fifth*.

In these ways, reading Lessing's work continues to make us question the way in which power operates on maternal responsibility in the case of disability. It is clear that even now, maternal bodies are mediators of social happiness, and yet, when they cannot (re)produce healthy children to be productive for their societies, there is not enough protection for them. It becomes their sole responsibility to care for their disabled child, pushing them to the margins of, and making them appear monstrous to, their society.

Chapter Two

The Battle for Bloody Freedom:

The Representation of “Good Blood” for “Freedom” in

Foumiko Kometani’s *Passover* (1985)

Maternity is women’s innate disposition and ability to bring up *good* off-spring.¹

Introduction

In Chapter One, we saw how Lessing’s *The Fifth Child* criticises eugenicist rhetoric, which implies that happiness of family construction is ultimately in giving birth to an able-bodied baby. This idea derives from and alludes to the conservative politics at that time. In this chapter, to compare the reading of *Fifth* with a Japanese text, I will look at Foumiko Kometani’s *Passover* (1985). I will especially closely examine the rhetoric of “liberty” in this text and look at its relation to disability and the representation of “blood”. Before moving on to the textual analysis, I will first explain the social discourses of the 1980s in Japan, where there was a focus on preventing disability and

¹ *The Protection of Maternity*, ed. by Taisei Yokusankai Bunka Kouseibu [Imperial Rule Assistance Association, Department of Culture and Welfare] (Tokyo: Kokumin-Tosho-Kankoukai [National Book Publisher], 1944), p.1, my emphasis and translation.

reproducing “good blood”. This discourse exemplifies national desires for reproducing “healthy” children as both family’s and women’s happiness. In this decade there were some debates on disability in Japan, starting from an article titled ‘In Order Not to Give Birth to Unfortunate Children’ (1972), by Dr Kiyoshi Nakajima, executive board member of the Shizuoka Association of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, published in regarding giving birth to children with haemophilia, and Watanabe Shōichi’s provocative article titled ‘The Sacred Obligation’.² Following this argument, there was discussion on the revision of the Eugenics Protection Law in 1982, which aimed to restrict women’s liberty with regards to abortion. This revision in the National Diet in Japan triggered women’s activism by a group called ‘Soshiren’, as I discuss below. The social discourse and arguments around reproduction in the 1980s show the complicated relation between women’s choice (namely their endorsement of liberty) and reproduction.

Based upon this social discourse, I will read a short novel *Passover* (1985) by Fumiko Kometani that negotiates the difficulties between women’s liberty, its cruel

² Kentarō Kitamura, ‘Ketsuyūbyōsha-kara-mita-“Shinsei-na-Gimu” Mondai’ [The “Shinsei-na-Gimu” [Sacred Obligation] Issue from the Perspective of Haemophiliacs], *Core Ethics*, 3 (2003), 105-120

optimism and disability.³ In this section, first I will introduce Kometani's background and the plot of *Passover*, and then explain and criticise how previous research on the text focused upon the term "liberty" in this novel. After pointing out the protagonist's problematic attitude towards ethnicities and cultural differences, I aim to shed light on the representation of blood in relation to Exodus, quoted in the epigraph to the novel. Finally, I will connect this representation of blood with the heroine Michi's "good life" at the end of the novel.

1. Social Discourses around Health, Maternity and Happiness in the 1980s

The social discourse of the 1980s in Japan evidently shows that carrying what were considered to be "genetic defects", such as haemophilia, is associated with the unhappiness of patients and their parents.⁴ In other words, disability of this kind is directly considered to cause an unhappy life. In this section, I will introduce Kentaro Kitamura's explanation on the rhetorical association between unhappiness and disability

³ Fumiko Kometani, *Passover* (New York: Carroll and Graf, 1989). The Japanese edition, *Sugikoshi-no-Matsuri* [Passover], was published in 1985, and the English version was published in 1989, translated by Kometani herself. My quotations are from the English translation of the text. Subsequent citations will be in parentheses.

⁴ The term "genetic defects" is from the social discourse of the period as we will see in the quotations below.

from the mid-1960s to the mid-70s: how genetic disorders were considered as a cause of unhappiness in families and couples, and therefore how they should be eliminated before birth, through reproductive technologies such as prenatal screening.

From 1966 to 1974 there was an “awareness campaign” policy that Hyōgo Prefecture administered, named ‘The Campaign Not to Give Birth to Unfortunate Children’.⁵ Supported by medical doctors, prenatal tests such as Amniocentesis were promoted in order to help avoid giving birth to disabled children with Down syndrome, haemophilia, and other health problems. In the Kansai region (west Japan), an activist group called *Aoi-Shiba-no-Kai* [Blue Grass Association] opposed the policy, and the prefecture ended up abolishing the campaign. This campaign was greatly discussed from perspectives such as its relation to eugenics, and issues of the choices that pregnant women have when it comes to abortion. Onoue Kōji, a current executive officer of the ‘Japan National Assembly of Disabled People’s International’ (DPI) explains a historical source in which the Hyōgo prefecture council described what they meant by an ‘unfortunate child’ in the 1970s:

1. A child whom nobody is wishing to be born (unborn foetus by abortion).
2. A child whose birth is wished for, but who unfortunately dies during the perinatal stage (miscarriage, still-birth, neo-natal death, infant death).

⁵ In Japanese, ‘Fukō-na-Kodomo-no-Umarenai-Undō’.

3. A child burdened with an unfortunate condition (a child with a genetic disorder, a child with a mental disability, a child with a physical disability).
4. A child who is socially disadvantaged (a child lacking [sufficient] childcare).⁶

As seen here, disability, as well as what is considered to be an insufficient environment for the child, are associated with poor fortune. In the 1980s in particular, these issues were often raised in a debate over children with haemophilia. Haemophilia is a congenital disease of sex-linked inheritance. Human DNA consists of 23 chromosomes, made up of 22 pairs of autosomes, in other words 44 autosomes, and one pair of sex chromosomes (XX or XY). The X chromosome carries the VIII and IX coagulation factors, which code haemophilic inheritance. Men have only one X chromosome, and as such haemophilia is a disease that specifically affects them, rather than women, who have two X chromosomes.

Kentarō Kitamura critically observes this rhetorical association between haemophilia and unhappiness (or unfortunateness) in his close reading of articles in *Zenyū*, the journal of the Japan Hemophilia Fraternal Association. Kitamura's introduction notes the usage of the terms 'unfortunate child' and 'unhappy parents' in

⁶ The Record of the 20th the meeting for Pro-Reform for the Policy for Persons with Disability, held on 27th of September 2010: Cabinet Office, Government of Japan, Policy for Cohesive Society. Retrieved from <http://www8.cao.go.jp/shougai/suishin/kaikaku/s_kaigi/k_20/pdf/o1.pdf>, [accessed 11th January 2015], my translation.

Nakajima's article 'In Order Not to Give Birth to Unfortunate Children'. Nakajima explains the new technologies of prenatal diagnosis at that time (1972) by amniocentesis:

Recently, it has become possible to know the various conditions of the foetus by examining the amnion liquid surrounding it. We can identify sex and chromosome abnormalities as well as any metabolic disorders. This does not necessarily lead to saving unfortunate children, but it might be helpful to save unfortunate parents.⁷

Kitamura points out Nakajima's usage of the phrase 'unfortunate child' and 'unfortunate parents', explaining 'he [Nakajima] does not write that "the patients/child with haemophilia are unfortunate/unhappy"'. However, we can read so in its entirety. Of course, being a haemophiliac and bringing up haemophiliac children has difficulties. However, how one feels and accepts the disease itself can be various, depending on the patients and their families'.⁸ As Kitamura observes, affect or emotions cannot be assumed on the part of other people, and are not necessarily determined by health, but even so, the assumption that health can determine affect is often made, including by medical doctors.

Following the controversial relation between disability and "fortunate", Kitamura

⁷ Kitamura, p. 106, my translation.

⁸ Kitamura, p. 107, my translation.

also illustrates an article called ‘The Sacred Obligation’ that appeared in 1980.

Professor Shōichi Watanabe of Sophia University, a Catholic university in Tokyo,

published an essay ‘Shinsei-na-Gimu’ [The Sacred Obligation] in the weekly magazine

Shūkan Bunshun [Weekly Bunshun].⁹ Watanabe criticized a writer Kyojin Ōnishi

whose two sons are haemophiliac, and asserts that Ōnishi should have avoided having a

second child, since he knew the child’s possible genetic disorder. Watanabe writes:

To have a haemophiliac child is very unfortunate. So far, I hear that it is not curable. If you understand that haemophilia is genetic, giving up on having a second child is a path that many people choose. Mr. Ōnishi daringly chose to have a second child. It is reported that the child also has haemophilia and epilepsy. Using 15,000,000 yen from tax for the child, who is already born, is honourable to show the extent of Japanese wealth and civilisation. It is my view towards life to consider that a life *already* born is divine providence, and its dignity of life is equivalent to an ordinary person. However, it is a sacred obligation towards society, as a reasonable citizen, to avoid what can be avoided *in advance*. I believe attempts such as giving birth to children with incurable genetic defects [*sic*] should be refrained from, and such attempts are fitting to the dignity of life.¹⁰

To some extent, Watanabe’s claim is about the huge expense for the welfare of the child,

and the financial expense on the state by haemophiliacs. However, most importantly,

here Watanabe explicitly encourages “Voluntary Eugenics”, the term a French biologist,

surgeon and Nobel Prize winner in Physiology, Alexis Carrel introduced in his work

⁹ *Shūkan Bunshun* [Weekly Bunshun], 2 October 1980, cited in Kitamura, p.107, my translation.

¹⁰ Cited in Kitamura, pp. 107-108, emphasis by Kitamura, my translation.

Man: The Unknown (1935). Carrel's book became a best-seller at the time, asserting and promoting eugenicist principles to eliminate criminality and lunacy, which he believed to be hereditary. Indeed, Watanabe translated Carrel's book into Japanese in the same year that he wrote 'The Sacred Obligation'.¹¹ Carrel explains Voluntary Eugenics in chapter 8, section 7 of his book as follows:

Eugenics may exercise a great influence upon the destiny of the civilized races. Of course, the reproduction of human beings cannot be regulated as in animals. The propagation of the insane and the feeble-minded, nevertheless, must be prevented. A medical examination should perhaps be imposed on people about to marry, as for admission into the army or the navy, or for employees in hotels, hospitals, and department stores. However, the security given by medical examination is not at all positive. The contradictory statements made by experts before the courts of justice demonstrate that these examinations often lack any value. It seems that eugenics, to be useful, should be voluntary. By an appropriate education, each one could be made to realize what *wretchedness* is in store for those who marry into families contaminated by syphilis, cancer, tuberculosis, insanity, or feeble-mindedness. Such families should be considered by young people at least as undesirable as those which are poor. In truth, they are more dangerous than gangsters and murderers. No criminal causes so much *misery* in a human group as the tendency to insanity.

Voluntary eugenics is not impossible. Indeed, love is supposed to flow as freely as the wind. But the belief in this peculiarity of love is shaken by the fact that many young men fall in love only with rich girls, and vice versa. If love is capable of listening to money, it may also submit to a consideration as practical as that of health. None should marry a human

¹¹ Alexis Carrel, *Man: The Unknown* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1935). Watanabe's Japanese translation of Carrel's book was published in 1980: Alexis Carrel, *Ningen—Kono-Michi-naru-mono* [Man: The Unknown], trans. by Shōichi Watanabe (Tokyo: Mikasa-shobō, 1980). On this publication, Watanabe asserts that he agrees with Carrel's idea on voluntary eugenics, but not Hitler's. However, Kitamura points to Watanabe's controversial standpoint here, since Carrel not only strongly advocated voluntary eugenics, but in fact praised the Nazi regime of enforced eugenics.

being suffering from hidden hereditary defects [*sic*]. Most of man's *misfortunes* are due to his organic and mental constitution and, in a large measure, to his heredity. Obviously, those who are afflicted with a heavy ancestral burden of insanity, feeble-mindedness, or cancer should not marry. *No human being has the right to bring misery to another human being. Still less, that of procreating children destined to misery.* Thus, eugenics asks for the sacrifice of many individuals. This necessity, with which we meet for the second time, seems to be the expression of a natural law. Many living beings are sacrificed at every instant by nature to other living beings. We know the social and individual importance of renunciation. Nations have always paid the highest honors to those who gave up their lives to save their country. The concept of sacrifice, of its absolute social necessity, must be introduced into the mind of modern man.¹²

Carrel draws an explicit connection here between physical/mental health and affect, such as, in his words, 'love', 'misery', 'wretchedness' and 'misfortune'. He believes that 'hereditary defects' are the cause of one's misery in life, and discourages even marriage with 'a human being suffering from hidden hereditary defects', such as 'syphilis, cancer, tuberculosis, insanity, or feeble-mindedness', since these "defects" will 'bring misery to another human being. Still less, that of procreating children destined to misery.' As such, Carrel claims that one needs to work voluntarily to eliminate disability and maintain "good" genes through marriage choices.

In his idea of 'sacred obligation', Watanabe certainly inherits Carrel's direct and

¹² Alexis Carrel, 'The Remaking of Man' in *Man: The Unknown* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1935), pp. 300-301, my emphasis. Kitamura also quotes the first paragraph given here, pp. 108-109.

problematic connection between disability, (un)happiness and the idea of voluntary eugenics. In particular, marriage and childbirth are considered as social obligations, and he believes they can only be entered into by healthy people. Therefore, people with genetic disorders should voluntarily sacrifice their own happiness in order not to bring ‘misery’ to society. Following from and admiring Carrel, Watanabe also asserts that it is the ‘sacred obligation’ of people with genetic disorders not to reproduce, since they and their offspring are a burden on society.¹³

Watanabe’s problematic article provoked rage and responses from the writer Kyojin Ōnishi, the novelist Akiyuki Nosaka, *Aoi-Shiba-no-Kai* (as I mentioned above) and others, discussing disability in Japan.¹⁴ Ōnishi responded to Watanabe in *Shakai-Hyōron* [Social Criticism] as follows: ‘Watanabe the rascal, [...] criticised and accused me [and my body] for not eliminating the birth of my second son Nonohito *in advance*, when he was *already* born’.¹⁵

Such an argument on eugenics and disability draws attention to the social interest

¹³ There were various and outraged responses to Watanabe’s argument. Ōnishi, who was a father of two sons with haemophilia, criticizes Watanabe, asserting that his argument is a ‘promotion of cutting the weak with vile selection and vile eugenics’ in a society that is based on the ‘ability of self-management’. Cited in Kitamura, p. 109. This idea of self-management is one of main characteristics of a neoliberal individualist society.

¹⁴ Nosaka Akiyuki writes on issues on disability and reproduction in his short story titled *Saredo-Uruwashi-no-Hibi* [Yet, Beautiful Days] collected in his book *Dōjyo-Nyūsui* [Little Girl Who Killed Herself by Drowning] (Tokyo: Iwanami, 2008). This short story is on Minamata disease, which was caused by pollution in Minamata-City, Japan. I will discuss this further in Chapter Four, when looking at Winterson writing on water pollution in *Sexing the Cherry*.

¹⁵ Cited in Kitamura, p. 108, emphasis by Kitamura, my translation.

in representations of blood and disabilities around it. Problematically, the “quality” of blood is a key interest in social discourses in Japan in the 1980s. Another example of social interest in reproducing “good blood” in 1980s Japan is in the revision of the Eugenics Protection Law in 1982. This revision enraged feminist activists, pushing them to question women’s liberty to control their own bodies, especially their choices for abortion.

Alongside these arguments on hereditary disorders, there was discussion around revision of the Eugenics Protection Law (EPL), which tightened restrictions for women’s reproductive rights in 1982. This law was originally administered in 1948 to prevent the birth of children with genetic disorders and also protect mothers’ lives and health, approving abortion up to 22 weeks into pregnancy. It meant the end of foeticide, and of arresting women who had illegal abortions. In a budgetary committee meeting in March 1982, a politician in the Liberal Democrat Party in Japan, Masakuni Murakami claimed that one of the reasons to approve abortion – ‘financial reasons’ – should be omitted from chapter 3, article 14 of the law. He considered that this description of ‘financial reasons’ in EPL was often misused and therefore allowed for abortions that were the equivalent to foeticide.

Triggered by this conservative statement in the committee, a feminist activist group, Soshiren, started publishing monthly leaflets titled *Onna-(Watashi)-no-Karada-kara* [*From Women's (my) Body*] in 1982.¹⁶ They asserted that the revision of the EPL was nothing but regression, and it is women's own "choice" to decide about abortion. Emphasis on individual choice and anti-discrimination towards disabled bodies have been the characteristics of Soshiren's activism. For example, they actively opposed a problematic article titled, 'Wanting to Sustain "Good" Blood: Common Sense before You Marry', in a women's fashion magazine, *25ans* [*Vingt-cinq ans*], published in January 1984. Edited by medical doctors, the article emphasises finding a good partner, to inherit "good" genes, in order to reproduce intelligent children. The article encourages the readers to avoid marriage between close relatives, and to get pregnant before 35 years old, so that they can prevent an 'abnormal pregnancy', such as 'deformed children' and Down syndrome. Soshiren, Aoi-Shiba-no-Kai Osaka branch, The Liaison Council for the Guaranteed Livelihood of Disabled People and other associations protested against the article, as it represents discrimination against women and the disabled with inaccurate information. The

¹⁶ The name 'Soshiren' is an abbreviation of '82 Yūsei-Hogo-hō-Kaiaku-Soshi-Renraku-Kai' [Association and Liaison for Preventing the Change for the Worse of the Eugenics Protection Law in [19]82]. <<http://www.soshiren.org/index.html>> [accessed 11 January 2015].

publisher Fujin-Gahō-sha acknowledged the issue and apologised in five major newspapers for the article being, as Soshiren described it, a ‘reinforcement of eugenicist thought that denies the right to life of the disabled’.¹⁷ As such, we can see that there was a huge anxiety about giving birth to disabled children in the social discourse of the 1980s.

To some extent, enlightening and encouraging teenagers to plan their marriage and reproduction before their 30s to avoid the ‘risk of late pregnancy’ can be seen as promoting voluntary eugenics, and surprisingly, as we have seen in the Introduction, the issue raised in the governmental taskforce on *The Notebook for Women and Life*, the issue of women’s reproductive rights and voluntary eugenics, have recurred. Thus, the social discourse and arguments actively held in the 1980s in Japan shows that issues such as disability, voluntary eugenics, and women’s choice for reproduction are complicatedly entangled, and yet also they shared interest in reproducing ‘good blood’. Much women’s writing from the 1980s in Japan concerns itself with the discourse of ‘good blood’, and Fumiko Kometani’s literary work reveals the difficult negotiation between being the mother of a disabled child, and women’s choice and liberty,

¹⁷ Onna-(Watashi)-no-Karada-kara [From Women’s (my) Body]: Soshiren News, 2, 23 May 1984, p. 6, my translation.

characteristics of neoliberalism in relation to women's lives.

As we have seen in the introduction to this chapter, the social discourse and arguments actively held in the 1980s in Japan show that disability, voluntary eugenics and women's choices for reproduction are complexly connected around ideas of genetics and blood. I will argue that Kometani's literary work *Passover* also reveals the difficult negotiation between women's choice and liberty through looking at the rhetoric and thoughts around 'good blood' in *Passover*. In her novel, the concept of 'good blood' is problematically entangled with various narratives, such as the "purity" of Jewish blood lines, written in Exodus in the Old Testament, not having 'good blood' by being an East Asian in North America, and having a disabled body. In addition, not having 'good blood' is closely related to the impossibility of optimistically seeking happiness, such as freedom and the pursuit of one's dream.

Kometani is a Japanese painter, a translator and a writer from Osaka, west Japan. Born in 1930, she moved to the USA in 1960 after she received a scholarship to study fine art in New Hampshire. She married a Jewish American playwright, Josh Greenfeld and had two children, Karl and Noah. Noah has brain damage; her experience of an international marriage, and of being a mother of a disabled child, motivated her to write

a novel. One of her short novels, *A Guest from Afar* (*Torai no Kyaku*) was awarded a new-writer prize in *Bungakkai*, and a month later, her other short novel *Passover* (Japanese title: *Sugikoshi-no-Matsuri*) won the 94th Akutagawa Prize, a prominent literary prize in Japan, and a new-writer prize in *Shincho* in 1985. Written as first-person narratives, both works vividly reflect her own experiences as an East Asian woman who came to America with her own ambition for art, and running away from a misogynistic Japanese culture that she found intolerable.

Passover is a novel based upon Kometani's own experience. The main character, Michi, a Japanese woman, married a Jewish American called Al. They come to New York from Los Angeles for a week's vacation with their eldest son, Jon. Their disabled son, Ken, has now been sent to an institution for disabled children to be looked after by professionals. Exhausted from 13 years of childcare (*Passover*, p. 5), Michi planned to visit familiar places in New York with old friends. However, her plan to refresh herself and recover from exhaustion is ruined by Al's sudden proposal to attend his Jewish family ceremony, the Seder. Both Michi and Jon are reluctant, but agree to attend. Throughout the ceremony, Michi recalls her struggles through cultural difference and cultural insensitivities, both from Al's family and her own, and her difficulties in

bringing up a disabled child. She came to America with a dream for art, running away from the misogynistic Japanese culture, but in America, she only faced different kinds of difficulties, from which she also runs away. Jewish culture is, for her, something she cannot fully adjust and get used to, and her life with her disabled child makes more visible the distance between the life she dreamed of and the one she has. She stands up from the table to go to the bathroom during the ceremony, and is astonished to see her appearance in a mirror, on which is reflected her exhausted face. She decides to leave the house, that Jewish family, and her old life.

2. “Liberty” in *Passover* and Its Cruelty

There is little secondary criticism on Kometani’s *Passover*, and most of its critics consider that the key term to read this text is ‘自由’ [jiyū] – ‘liberty’ and ‘freedom’. As Kazuko Sugii acknowledges, most referees of the Akutagawa prize in 1985 paid attention to Kometani’s representation of ‘liberty’. For instance, Yoshiichi Furui points out, in his comment for the nomination, that this short novel shows ‘the irony of liberty’ – Michi’s freedom from Japanese conventions to be a painter by coming to the US; and

her giving up on these dreams after becoming involved with her husband's conventional Jewish family, their culture, and her disabled son.¹⁸ Indeed, Michi recalls her ambition to come over to the US in the middle of the ceremony, in *Passover*:

“Rabon Gamliel hayaw omer. Kol shehlo omar shihlosa divorim...”
Heshie read in Hebrew. Al leaned over and pointed out the place to me. But I was busy looking at the opposite page, hurriedly reading the English meaning of the Hebrew. For over three thousand years the ancestors of these people have been looking for freedom. Freedom! Liberation! Right on! For me too! I had come to America looking for freedom. My Pharaoh was the conformity of Japanese society, its utter conventionalism, its complete male chauvinism. I came to America fully expecting to find the freedom to paint.
(*Passover*, pp. 46-47)

The critics account for the ‘liberty’ in this novel as something to be achieved through struggle, in analogy to the liberty that the Jews obtained from the Pharaoh, as described in Exodus. Minoru Oda, in his comment on a new edition of Kometani's text, explains that Michi came to America, the country of Liberty, but the America she dreamed of is actually that of Jewish Americans, which tries to break down her own heterogeneity of being a foreigner in the community. He explains further:

These various kinds of ‘America’ are marginalised by ‘America of the Whites’ as alien and heterogeneous [ethnic] groups. The Jewish Americans are not exceptions, but what makes them stand out is that they appraise their own heterogeneity as a strong foundation, regarding themselves as

¹⁸ Following Furui, other referees such as Junnosuke Yoshiyuki, and Tsutomu Minakami also commented on Kometani's usage of the term ‘liberty’.

‘chosen’.¹⁹

However, Oda claims that this Jewish America ironically tries to crush the ethnic heterogeneity of Michi and this is where these two – Jewish culture and Michi – come into collision around the pursuit of liberty.

Sugii also reads this novel from the perspective of ‘liberty’, from the Old Testament. She argues that the reason the referees for the Akutagawa prize saw in this novel a new mode of expression, is Kometani’s indubitable will for life with the heroine’s struggle:

Where does the energy come from? When we think of that, indeed ironically we see that it comes from Kometani’s own Jewishness, namely it is her regeneration by incorporating the style to struggle.²⁰

She asserts that while Michi’s escape, at the end of the novel, is a new hope coming true which is not outside the structure of Jewish culture: her act of running away, emancipation from her life, is over-layered by the Jews’ emancipation in Exodus.²¹

Kometani herself asserts in an interview, that she reflected onto Michi her own dream and desire to run away from her life with a Jewish family and disabled child in the

¹⁹ Minoru Oda, ‘Kaisetsu: Shuraba-no-Iwakuiigatashi-wo-Kaku [Interpretation: Writing Something Hard to Articulate at the Sight of Conflict]’, in *Sugikoshi no Matsuri [Passover]* (Tokyo: Iwanami, 1985), pp. 181-191 (p. 189).

²⁰ Kazuko Sugii, ‘Kometani Funiko: Yudaya-kyō no “Kakutou” to “Jiyū”to’ [Fumiko Kometani: Struggle and Freedom in Judaism], in *Kokubungaku: Kaishaku to Kanshō*, Tokushū: Gendai Sakka to Shūkyō, Kirisutokyō [*Japanese Literature: Interpretation and Appreciation*, Special Issue: Contemporary Writers and Religion, Christianity], 74.4 (2009), 144-150 (p. 150).

²¹ Sugii, p. 150.

middle of a Passover ceremony. Her interviewer, Yoshiji Hirose, points out that there is a great irony around freedom in the novel: for the Jewish, the Seder is the ceremony to celebrate their freedom from the Egypt but, for Michi, it is a sheer restraint.²²

Kometani and critics regard this novel as autobiographical and therefore consider the author as closely reflected in the main protagonist Michi. It is indeed insightful to read the emancipation that Michi gains from the Seder as analogous to the Jews' Exodus.

Critics and the author, without any doubt, believe that Michi is freed at the end of the novel. However, as I will argue, it is the quality of 'liberty', namely the cruelty of its optimism, that this text assesses. Michi's dream to paint, and be free from Japanese conventions, did not come true. However, when Michi decides to leave the ceremony and her family, critics and the author suddenly believe again in the possibility of her dream and freedom to come true. At the end of the novel, all of a sudden, critics choose to believe that the term "freedom" is trustworthy. What I read from the ending of this novel is not a new belief in freedom, but one's desire to follow and value dreams and freedom. This desire to pursue one's dream and freedom is a collective story into which

²² Cited in Sugii, p. 146.

these critics are always already drawn.²³ As such, critics and the author of *Passover* do not see the collective narrative that encourages citizens to pursue the optimism to have “a good life”, or at least “a better life”.

Moreover, most criticism is about Michi’s liberty and its relation to Judaism, and none of the critics discuss Michi’s disabled child in relation to her liberty. How does this child impact on Michi’s pursuit of freedom in America? What sort of significance does Michi’s maternal experience with her disabled child have? How does her maternal experience interrelate with the recitation from Exodus? As we will see, it is the representation of blood that connects Michi’s maternal experience with her disabled child and the Jews’ commemoration of their freedom. In this novel, a certain kind of ‘good blood’ works significantly to protect a particular kind of tribe, ethnicity and body.

The ceremony of Passover in this novel is introduced as something always associated with optimism, such as happiness and joy in remembering the Jews’ freedom. This optimism is also to confirm the bonds of kinship. At the beginning of the novel, Michi’s husband Al explains what Passover is:

When Al saw the two of us [Michi and Jon] were not about to give in so easily, he thrust out his square jaw and tried another approach. “Passover is

²³ I will discuss this idea of happiness as a collective story in more detail in Chapter Four: in *Sexing the Cherry*, even as Dog-Woman fails repeatedly to follow the conventional narrative of heterosexual intimacy, she does not question the narrative itself.

more than just a religious holiday. It is a celebration of freedom for the Israeli slaves who were emancipated from the Egyptian Pharaoh three thousand years ago. And it is also a festival of spring, happy and joyous.” *Happy and joyous, with Sylvia there?* But although I was in the same position as Jon, reluctant to have anything to do with religion, a curious impulse to observe Uncle Irving and his daughter’s family came over me. (*Passover*, p. 26, emphasis in original)

After Al’s explanation of the ceremony, Michi immediately shows her loathing towards her sister-in-law, Sylvia, who had bullied her in New York before they moved to LA.²⁴

It is clear that the optimistic attributes of the ceremony, such as joy and happiness to celebrate freedom, are immediately betrayed because of the family connection. In this way, the narrative of Michi’s freedom and the narrative of Jewish freedom are interwoven in the novel. Sylvia’s grotesque appearance and mental instability, described by Michi, are said to foretell the coming birth of Michi’s disabled child, to be a clue to a genetic predisposition to mental health problems in her husband’s family line. As such, blood relations and the blood sacrifice of Exodus are brought together:

When I first met Sylvia, shortly after I came to America, I was not only shocked, I was disgusted. Out of all the people in this vast country, why did

²⁴ Kometani’s bold emotional expression of the discord between a wife and mother-in-law, and her pent-up resentment are harshly criticised by some critics, such as Hiroko Odagiri and one of the referees, Mitsuo Nakamura. However, simply criticising *Passover* as a complaint by Kometani about her own experiences reduces the entangled issues that this text raises to misogynistic judgment of the author. Indeed, Kometani’s political position and statements are problematic, as I will discuss below. However, the text still provides a significant trace of the discourses of the 80s, especially concerning anxiety towards bringing up a disabled child, and the concept of ‘good blood’. For Odagiri’s criticism, see her article, ‘Kometani-Fumiko-ron’, in *Kokubungaku: Kaishaku-to-Kanshō*, Bessatsu: Jyosei Sakka no Shiryū? [Japanese Literature: Interpretation and Appreciation, Additional Volume: Women Writers and their New Stream], ed. by Izumi Hasegawa (Tokyo: Shibundō, 1991), pp. 138-146.

I have to end up with a grotesque sister-in-law of such Amazon proportions? Why her? And with that face? She wore so much makeup around her huge eyes and on her greasy nose that she resembled Oiwa, the disfigured ghost famous in Japanese legend. In addition, she had all the insensitivities of the West and was as fixed and rigid as the stone walls of old New York buildings. I did not know that she represented but the tip of the iceberg of Western ugliness. I only knew that I was upset, that I wanted to be out of her sight and for her to be out of my sight immediately. Why I did not depart, just vanish and disappear then and there, I would later never quite understand. Unless I was so deeply in love with the man sitting next to me...? Still should not the strangeness that exuded from Sylvia have hinted of the possibility of *a Ken*? And if I had simply run away and fled, Ken would never have been born. (*Passover*, p. 46, my italics)

This recollection by Michi is highly problematic, since the description of Sylvia's hysteria, her physical ugliness and 'strangeness' is claimed to be a kind of warning sign for the disabled child who is later born into this family, Ken. Here the grammatical description 'a Ken', the combination of the indefinite article with a proper noun, shows the meaning of 'Ken' as a type, who can be defined by his disability. In this sense, Sylvia's appearance and hysteria, in other words, her monstrosity, is considered as the same kinds of "category" as Ken's disability.

As seen from this Kometani's description of the Jewish woman's appearance as monstrous, and its association with Michi's disabled child, her text is provocative in political ways. When *Passover* was published, Kometani was astonished to receive

harsh criticism, saying that her novel is anti-Semitic. She clarifies that anti-Semitism was not her intention or purpose in writing the novel. Her purpose in writing it was to debunk “the real” figure of America and “the West”. However, we of course cannot place the author’s intention above the material content of her text, and in this novel, her opinionated attitude towards politics seems to provoke problematic readings of her protagonist’s beliefs about, representations of, and understanding of “Judaism”, “America”, and “the West”. Here is a key example of her questionable political positioning in *Passover*:

The people at the Seder table were probably wondering why I had not converted to Judaism, like Marilyn Monroe and Elizabeth Taylor. For them, no other religion could have any possible validity. This exclusivity, this clannish conviction that they alone were the sole repositories of the ultimate truth, is something found not only in Judaism but also in Christianity and in Islam, and in the end they often killed each other because of it. In the West, ideologies and theologies traditionally proselytized; unable to leave foreign cultures alone; resulting inevitably in imperialism, evangelism, and even in Nazism. (*Passover*, p. 78)

Although this monologue is held by Michi, the protagonist, not the author herself, it is possible for people to read it as an anti-Semitic statement, and through the many similarities between Michi and Kometani, a number of readers linked these sentiments back to the author. In particular, Michi’s monolithic understanding here of

‘the West’ in relation to religions dismisses the variety of different cultures within ‘the West’ and is hugely generalised. Worst of all, the statement appears to put Judaism and Nazism on the same level, a comparison that most Jewish people would find highly offensive, in light of Hitler’s eugenic politics.

However, this controversy on the understanding of the politics of Judaism and Nazism ironically highlights the significance of the representation of blood in this novel, although in an extreme way. Risking a provocative theme, Kometani deals with the tricky business of the exclusiveness of Jewish culture that she experienced in her own life in America. She lets Sylvia speak in her novel for how the idea of being ‘chosen’ excludes other racial others as ‘unchosen’:

“We are chosen, Al,” Sylvia was saying, exhaling the smoke of her cigarette through her elephant-tusk-like nostrils. “We are the chosen people of Jehovah. That is why we are superior to all other tribes.” Her fat, jowly cheeks trembled, as if she had become Moses himself, fatigued by the descent from the mountaintop.

There were only three people in the room. The “we” obviously referred to two of them, Sylvia and Al. Just as obviously, the “we” did not refer to the third person, me. I was not “chosen.” In other words, I was “unchosen.”
(*Passover*, pp. 78-79)

This quotation highlights that, as an East Asian woman in America, the exclusion that Kometani felt from her Jewish family-in-law, who are also racial others, builds layers of

exclusion into the narrative. Not only as an “oriental” subject, but also as a mother whose child has a mental disorder, the “failure” to sustain a pure bloodline is the central factor to read the continuous exclusions in this novel, through the idea of sustaining “purity”. This series of contaminations to Jewish blood, through interracial marriage and giving birth to a disabled child, implies that, for Michi, commemorating freedom is not joyous, and it is juxtaposed sharply with her ‘un’happiness.

3. “Good Blood” and “Good Life” in *Passover*

Kometani’s *Passover* starts with a quotation from the Old Testament about Passover, and it can reveal how the representation of blood plays a significant role in this novel. However, the quotation from the Old Testament on Passover varies between the Japanese source text and the English translation. In her original Japanese version, the quotation is from Exodus 12; on the other hand, the English version, translated by the author herself, starts with a short quotation from Deuteronomy 16. Even though the reason for this change of quotation from the Old Testament is not clear, the description of Passover is more detailed in the Japanese edition. What is significant in the quotation

from Exodus chapter 12 in the Japanese edition is that the Jews are protected from

God's killing because of the mark of the lamb's blood on their house and their

doorframes. The Japanese edition of Kometani's *Passover* quotes chapter 12 from line 3

to line 14, as follows:

3 Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house:

4 And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb.

6 And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening.

7 And they shall take of the *blood*, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it.

8 And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it.

9 Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof.

10 And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire.

11 And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the Lord's passover.

12 For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the Lord.

13 And *the blood* shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see *the blood*, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt.

14 And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an

ordinance for ever. (Exodus 12.3-14, my italics)

In lines 7 and 13, it is explained that the blood of the lamb on the ‘two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses’ will be ‘a token’ and mark for God, to recognise that subjugated Jews are in that house. Here, ‘I’ means ‘God’, and thus in this narrative, God is directly talking to the Israelites, and the sight of the blood will allow God to ‘pass over’ them. However, in the quotation in her Japanese version, Kometani omits line 5 of

Exodus chapter 12:

Your lamb shall be *without blemish*, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats (Exodus 12.5, my italics)

This omission is particularly important as the idea of “blemished” blood is key to the novel. The *Oxford English Dictionary* records the noun ‘blemish’ as a ‘[p]hysical defect or disfigurement; a stain’, or a ‘defect, imperfection, flaw, in any object, matter, condition, or work’. Here, the blood ‘without blemish’ denotes the significance of the purity of the sheep or goat’s blood. Their pure blood protects Jewish lives; it protects their children, namely their bloodline. The omission of this line evokes the significance of the purity or perfection of blood, which protects Jewish lives. At another level, the need for the ‘un’-blemished blood resonates with Michi’s disabled son. Here again, we see the problematic close association between the purity of Jewish blood in contrast to

the impurity of others, such as racial others and the disabled.

The need for un-blemished blood is also always closely associated with happiness and joy for a “better life” in Exodus; in other words, for freedom, one needs blood.

Paralleled with Exodus for the Jews, Michi also dreams of freedom when she recalls her suffering and pain while she was looking after her disabled son, Ken.

In her recollections during the ceremony, she remembers an accident that happened in the bathroom, a month before Ken was sent to the group residential institution. Michi was trying to wash Ken’s hand, but, all of sudden, Ken had ‘a fit’ (*Passover*, p. 47) and started pulling her hair with his large hands. Michi ‘was afraid that he would actually pull my scalp off. [She] wondered if prisoners received this kind of treatment’ (*ibid.*). Furthermore, Ken suddenly ‘sank his teeth into [Michi’s] scalp’ (*ibid.*), and she became breathless, unable to pull him off. She asked Ken let her go, but he kept pulling and twisting her hair, which doubles her pain, and forces her to twist her neck, nearly choking her. Michi describes the event:

I was frightened [...] but still I would try to loosen his grip without betraying my panic. Until finally, after a long struggle that left me gasping for my breath and *my arms completely bloodied and scratched by his fingernails, I would be freed. But under my sleeves, there were always scars; they would not fade away so easily.* (*Passover*, pp. 47-48, my emphasis)

Michi recalls this bitter and painful experience of looking after her disabled son in the middle of the Passover ceremony, when her family-in-law is celebrating their history of freedom. In these interwoven narratives, Michi's emphasis on being 'freed' loosely associates her with the Jews in Exodus, but for her a life of freedom appears to mean a life without her disabled child. In this analogy between Michi and the Jews in Exodus, as the Jews were enslaved by the Pharaoh, Michi is violently enslaved by her disabled son. Both freedoms require a blood sacrifice: Michi must shed blood to be free of him in the above quotation, and she further frees herself by abandoning her own bloodline, leaving her son at the end of the novel to pursue her own freedom to paint. For the Jews, the blood sacrifice is held by killing the Egyptians' first-born sons, and protecting their own children by killing pure-blood lambs. It is important to recognise that the freedom Moses achieves is through the sacrifice of Egyptian children. The pure blood of the Jews, which is substituted by the pure blood of the lamb, is protected through terminating that of the Egyptians. The progressive, linear and perpetual temporality of Jewish kinship is preserved through terminating that of the Egyptians.

The idea of "pure blood", which protects the Jews, collides with Michi's idea of "good blood": from the perspective of the Jewish blood line, Michi's blood is

something that contaminates their pure blood. Kometani's husband commented in an interview that their 'marriage is biologically doomed', since it was an interracial marriage in the 1960s.²⁵ In the same interview, it is revealed that his mother's friend misunderstood that he was marrying an Afro-American woman. At that time, "problematic" interracial relationships were only thought about in terms of white and black relationships, and a Jewish-East Asian relationship was beyond expectation. Furthermore, Kometani was not only East Asian, but also gave birth to the disabled child Noah, leading to 'layers of discrimination'.²⁶ However, in contrast to this Western perspective on the interracial relationship, in the novel, Michi identifies her disabled son as the result of her sister-in-law's hysteria. Here, she fights against the idea of Jewish pure blood, but in doing so reproduces the very same ideology of purity. Michi's desire to be free by coming to America did not come true, but giving birth to a disabled child also ruined her freedom, and her optimism. Her dreamed-of happiness could have been achieved only if she had given birth to an able-bodied child. Thus, producing "good" blood determines women's happiness in this novel.

Critics, including Kometani herself, believe that Michi finds freedom at the end of

²⁵ Masatake Endō, 'Gendai-no-Shōzō: Ikari-koso-Enerugī: Sakka-Kometani-Fumiko' [Anger as Energy, Fumiko Kometani, Writer], *Aera*, 15.22 (2002), 68-73 (p. 72).

²⁶ *Ibid.*

the novel. However, what this text implies is the cruelty of this optimism. When Michi decides to leave the house in which the Seder is held, she thinks about her future:

I would go to Elaine's apartment in Greenwich Village, I decided. No man lived there; I need not strain my nerves. And tomorrow, I would think about my future.

I felt a generation younger as I hurried toward the taxi. The door man, waiting with his gloved hand on the opened taxi door, smiled and said, "Have a *good* night, Madam." I gave him a dollar, and the door closed behind me. (*Passover*, pp. 85-86, my emphasis)

Here, the quality of 'good' is assessed. The door man's greeting 'Have a good night' raises the question, as the novel does throughout, of what it means to have a 'good' life. Through issues of 'good blood', ideas of racial purity and disability are closely associated with pursuing a "good life", and freedom. Through reading criticism and interviews about the author and text, we have seen that we are brought into the collective narrative to believe that we can pursue and gain freedom and achieve our dreams, despite constant failures to do so. Michi failed to achieve happiness and freedom, since she could not preserve the pure Jewish bloodline and give a child 'without blemish'. This woman's life and her happiness are dependent not on what she wants to do, but on what kind of body she bears.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I took up Fumiko Kometani's *Passover* and read the text's relation to the rhetoric of maternal "liberty" and Michi's disabled son, through the representation of 'good blood'. I have explained the Japanese social discourses of the 1980s, when society's interest was in averting disability and in reproducing 'good blood'. I have also demonstrated that (un)happiness and disability are directly connected in discussions of haemophilia in the 1980s, as well as in the revision of the EPL in 1982. As such, the 1980s are the decade in Japan when issues around maternal choice gave rise to numerous controversies.

In my textual analysis of *Passover*, we saw complicated relations between women's choice and the cruelty of aspirational terms such as 'liberty' and 'dream' in *Passover*, since the maternal experience is closely related to the son's disability. Kometani reflects on her own experiences with her child in her novel, and lets her protagonist Michi free at the end of the novel. I refuted previous criticism whose focus was on nothing but the term 'liberty' in *Passover*. Although there are some politically problematic attitudes in *Passover*, the representation of "blood" in the text as well as in Exodus plays a

significant role and should not be dismissed. Through this reading, the text calls into question the very quality of a “good life” for the protagonist. As such, women’s freedom and maternity are in a problematic relationship in this text and in the social discourses of 1980s Japan.

Chapter Three

In Pursuit of Bloody Happiness:

Every Happiness Has a Blood Lining: A Collusion between Postfeminist Labour and

Women's Happiness in Banana Yoshimoto's *Kitchen* (1987)

Those women lived their lives happily.

They had been taught, probably by caring parents, not to exceed the boundaries of their happiness.

(Yoshimoto, *Kitchen*, p. 59)

Introduction

In Chapter Three we saw how the representation of blood played significant roles in

both the social discourses of the 1980s and Kometani's text in relation to gaining

freedom. This following chapter shares an interest in blood with the previous one,

especially with its relation to family: bloodlines, and happiness. Two years after

Kometani winning the Akutagawa Prize, it can be said that Banana Yoshimoto became

one of the most famous women writers in the Japanese literary field. Her first novel,

Moon Light Shadow, which was her dissertation for Nihon University College of Art,

received the Dean's award of the year. In the same year, her two short novels under the

title *Kitchen* won the sixth new writer's award of the established literary magazine *Kaien* and she became a professional writer. Like Winterson in the UK, winning awards and the success of her works in the industry led to her becoming an iconic literary figure of Japanese literature in the 1980s. Published in 1987, *Kitchen*, not limited to its domestic success, was translated into various languages, such as Italian, Spanish and English, which facilitated access for non-Japanese readers to this text. Furthermore, it has multicultural and transnational film adaptations: Yoshimitsu Morita directed a film version of the text in 1989, and a Chinese production company released its own adaptation in 1997 (directed by Ho Yim). Thus, this "global" appreciation of her work can be an example of Japanese contemporary literature going into the global market of the publishing industry in the late 1980s, synchronised with the legendary Japanese economic prosperity of this time.

In July 1993, two years after the collapse of the Japanese economic bubble, Japan hosted the G-7 summit, the meeting of the leaders of seven developed countries, in Tokyo. During this summit, the Foreign Ministry spokesman Mr Amano sought to "explain" Japan to people around the world, and added the English translated version of Yoshimoto's *Kitchen* to the welcome pack for the foreign press. Mr Amano believed

that '[t]here should be some element in the book that can be shared, not only by the Japanese, but by the younger generation all over the world'.¹ However, when he was asked by the reporters to explain exactly what element he meant, he could only answer, 'I don't know'.² Mr Amano's positive impression towards this text might be reflected in the industrial success of *Kitchen*, and literary criticism that embraces the author as a newcomer of Japanese literature: why does this text raise such optimism towards the Japanese literary field and among readers?³ It might be possible to disentangle this 'Banana Phenomenon', as it was known, by contextualising *Kitchen* in the discourse of the 1980s, when the text was published.⁴

Kitchen starts when the main character Mikage becomes an orphan with the death of her grandmother, who brought her up. Feeling solitary and depressed, she finds she can only sleep well when she is next to the refrigerator in the kitchen in her old house, in which she spent all her time with her only family member, her grandmother. She suddenly has a visitor from her neighbourhood, Yuichi Tanabe, who is a friend from her

¹ Cited in John W. Treat, 'Yoshimoto Banana's *Kitchen*, or the Cultural Logic of Japanese Consumerism', in *Women, Media and Consumption in Japan*, ed. by Brian Moeran & Lise Skov (Richmond: Curzon, 1995), pp. 274-299 (p. 275).

² *Ibid.*

³ For an example of her critical popularity, *Nihon-Josei-Bungaku-Daijiten* [Encyclopaedia of Japanese Woman Writing] explains that 'Yoshimoto's writing style, which is deviant from existing grammar and frameworks of expression, is radical and her style was valid to transcribe the sensitivity of the period. (p. 335, my translation). *Nihon-Josei-Bungaku-Daijiten* [Encyclopaedia of Japanese Woman Writing] (Tokyo: Nihon Tosho Centre, 2006), pp. 334-335.

⁴ *Kitchen* and *Good Bye Tsugumi* became bestsellers as soon as they were published and their popularity is named as a 'Banana Phenomenon' by *Mainichi Shinbun* [Daily Newspaper]. *Ibid.*

university. He asks her to live with him and his mother until she settles down, after her grandmother's funeral. After this strange invitation, Mikage starts living with Yuichi and Yuichi's mother, Eriko. Even in this household, she prefers to sleep on their sofa next to the kitchen. Mikage starts a quasi-familial relationship with this mother and child. Blood-related maternal relations are challenged with this text, as Mikage is an orphan.⁵ The adoptive mother, Eriko, is an eccentric figure: she is a mother who used to be a man, and was the father of Yuichi.⁶ Eriko's transition from man to woman, from father to mother, was made soon after his wife died, as I will discuss in more detail below. Mikage spends time with Eriko and Yuichi and eats food together with them, recovering from the mourning of her grandmother's death. In the sequel to *Kitchen*, titled *Full Moon*, this transgender mother Eriko is killed by her admirer, and Yuichi becomes an orphan as well.⁷ Sharing their mourning for Eriko, the relationship between Yuichi and Mikage becomes closer but ambiguous; when Yuichi falls apart and travels to heal his broken heart, Mikage goes on a business trip half a mile away from where he is staying. To cheer him up and through fear of losing him, Mikage brings *katsudon*, a typical Japanese comfort food consisting of a ball of rice with tonkatsu (fried pork) on it,

⁵ The representation of orphans in *Kitchen* resembles the situation in *Sexing the Cherry*, which will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

⁶ Again, the figure of the eccentric mother is similar to Dog-Woman, the adoptive mother in *Sexing*.

⁷ From here on I will read *Kitchen* and *Full Moon* as parts of the same novel. These two works are sequels and published so as a book, combined with 'Moonlight Shadow'.

to him by taxi, and the novel ends with them affirming that they are “family”, and not two isolated orphans.⁸

In the following sections, I will firstly map out the literary and cultural movement in 1980s Japan, and how Yoshimoto and her early works of that time are located in the literary field. From the literary and cultural context of the 80s, I will draw out some key themes that are valuable to examine the close relations between girlhood, bloodlines and family in Yoshimoto’s works. Secondly, I will argue that in *Kitchen* the loss of bloodline is presented as being out of the norm, and recovering from the trauma of being an orphan plays an important role. For the third section, I will challenge the criticism that reads and in a way embraces this novel as a portrait of a new kind of family. In particular, I will explain the way in which blood relations do matter for Japanese culture, through the family registration system called *koseki*, and how this system relates to the happiness of citizens in a community. This section also examines the role of the transgender mother Eriko. In the following section, I will argue the necessity of her death in relation to the ambiguous relationship between Mikage and Yuichi. Contrary to the readings of other critics, I contend that the relationship between the two can be read as a reinforcement of heterosexism: this is where happiness works

⁸ How to interpret their relationship as “family” varies among critics, as I will discuss in detail below.

as a norm and circulates the idea that happiness is in reproducing the blood-related family. Finally, contextualising *Kitchen* in the social discourse of the 80s, I will discuss the contradictory relation between a women's workforce and domesticity in relation to their happiness. Mikage's pursuit of happiness always already lies in how she can be proximate to the idea of kinship, and this demonstrates the limitation of this novel to imagine woman's happiness outside of bloodlines. Thus through this chapter, I will write against the previous criticism that embraces the novel as a portrait of a "new kind of family" through the queer mother figure. Happiness in this novel works as a border-making system, which excludes those who are not grounded in (heteronormative) bloodlines.

Contextualising this text in 1980s Japan, when the Japanese economic bubble reached its peak, and neo-conservatism was on the rise, provides a thread with which to undo the complicated process of gaining happiness in girlhood: in the process of her growth into a woman, the girl is willing to participate in the neoliberal market to be proximate to the normative sense of happiness. This "happiness" is described as something cultivated through the good care of (heterosexual) parents. Paying attention to the Japanese socio-political context of the 1980s provides us with an understanding

of the process by which issues of gender, sex and sexuality – namely sexed life – are complicatedly intertwined in the blueprint of happiness that the neoliberal state proposes. The process, in this text, is precisely that of the girl maturing and entering the market as part of its labour force. In this process, the girl is encouraged to fulfil the utmost of her ability with the newfound liberation of women to work, but at the same time, the “ultimate” happiness is still believed to be contained in the kitchen, inside the conventional family unit.

1. Death Casts Its Shadow: The Pineapple Plant Pot, an Object of Hope in the Shadow of Optimism

One of the common themes in Yoshimoto’s writing is death, and the novel *Kitchen* is also a story filled with family deaths. As mentioned above, Mikage’s parents died when she was little, her grandfather who brought her up died when she was a teenager, and finally her grandmother passed away, leaving Mikage with no family.⁹ The numerous deaths in her family are depicted as causing her unhappiness, leaving her in the shadow

⁹ She published her oeuvre of her early works 4 volumes titled *Collected Works of Yoshimoto Banana: and Author’s Selection* in 2001 sorted by themes that she chose. The third volume is collected under the theme of ‘Death’, including ‘Kitchen’ and ‘Full Moon’. The other themes are ‘Occult’, ‘Love’ and ‘Life’. Unless otherwise stated, all citations from *Kitchen* will be from the English translation; all quotations from the Japanese source text will be cited as *Kicchin* (the romanised spelling of the Japanese title).

of happiness, as her name, Mikage, suggests. Through the whole novel, her name is written in hiragana as ‘みかげ’ [Mikage]. However, in kanji (Chinese characters), it is possible to write it as ‘御影’ [Mikage]. According to *Kojien*, the most established Japanese dictionary, ‘御影’ is a polite term for the appearance or portrait of dead people. Alternatively, it can be written as ‘御陰’ [Mikage], a place in the shadows where sunlight is avoided. Indeed, mourning, loneliness and death are poetically associated with shadows and darkness in this novel, and on the other hand, life is related to light in *Kitchen*.

Eriko the transgender mother plays a role like a Fool in a Shakespeare play, telling surprising truths and philosophising on life. One night when Eriko comes back from the bar where she works, she wakes up Mikage and tells her the story of her/his wife’s passing away from cancer, which leads Mikage to a revelation about the state of her life. His/her wife tells Yuji (the name before s/he transitioned to Eriko) that she would love to have some ‘[l]iving things, [...] connected to the sun [...], a plant’ in her hospital room (*Kitchen*, p. 80). Yuji joyfully bought a pineapple plant with a little fruit in a huge pot to cheer her up and his wife was pleased with it (*ibid.*). Three days before she went into a coma, she begs Yuji in tears to take the pineapple home. Despite his

insistence on keeping the pineapple there, she told him to ‘take it home, this sunny plant from a southern place, before it became infused with death’ (*Kitchen*, p. 81). Yuji left the hospital carrying the big pineapple plant pot, crying:

That night the freezing wind whistled through the apartment. [...] I trembled, holding the pineapple tight against my chest. The sharp leaves stuck my cheeks [*sic*]. In this world, tonight, only the pineapple and I understand each other—that thought came straight from my heart. Closing my eyes, as if against the cold wind, I felt we were the only two living things sharing that loneliness. My wife, who understood me better than anyone, was by now—more than I, more than the pineapple—on intimate terms with death. (*Kitchen*, p. 81)

In *Kitchen*, for Yuji and his wife, the pineapple plant pot was an object of hope, coming from the south, a place associated with sunshine, growth and life; detaching from it is to accept the shadow of death and to give up on life.¹⁰ After the death of his wife, the pineapple withered in a corner of the garden, because of overwatering. Eriko reflects on this, talking to Mikage:

[A]lthough I [Eriko] couldn’t have put it into words, I came to understand something. If I try to say what it is now, it’s very simple: I realized that *the world did not exist for my benefit*. It followed that the ratio of pleasant and unpleasant things around me would not change. It wasn’t up to me. It was clear that the best thing to do was to adopt a sort of muddled cheerfulness. So I became a woman, and here I am.”

I [Mikage] understood what she was trying to say, and I remember

¹⁰ In Winterson’s *Sexing the Cherry*, the image of the pineapple also plays an important role in the narrative: “discovered” by Tradescant the royal gardener, the pineapple was an object of exoticness and foreignness from his long voyage.

thinking, listlessly, *is this what it mean to be happy?* But now I feel it in my gut. *Why is it we have so little choice?* We live like the lowliest worms. Always defeated—defeated we make dinner, we eat, we sleep. Everyone we love is dying. Still, to cease living is unacceptable.

Tonight, again, I felt the darkness hindering my breathing. (*Kitchen*, pp. 81-82, my emphasis)

In this quotation, happiness is placed in opposition to loneliness. To be a widow or an orphan is to be left in the ‘darkness’, where it is hard to breathe, tough to live, in the shadow of happiness. The quotation also implies that Eriko and Mikage point to the dark side of neo-liberalism, the places where a “politics of choice” faces issues where one actually cannot choose: in particular, death. To live as well as possible, to find “happiness” and “benefit” are something that they have to be actively willing to seek and grasp with ‘muddled cheerfulness’, as Eriko describes. Optimism is indeed muddling in this novel, moving from the total despair of loneliness to breathing deeply and soundly, since, for Mikage, surviving is to form a family once again without a bloodline. In a way, with Eriko the transgender mother and Yuichi, they conduct a parody of conventional domestic and family values, through eating and cooking in the kitchen. In this manner, Yoshimoto destabilises the concept of the blood-linked family.

As the title of the novel suggests, the kitchen is a place where the concept of blood-related family life is challenged. In this novel, the kitchen is regarded as a well of comfort, where we can see a strong connection between the female and domesticity: a place where happiness lies. The peculiar monologue at the opening of the novel (below) demonstrates that home, and specifically the kitchen, is the space that provides Mikage with comfort, space to sleep, and a place for peace:

The place I like best in this world is the kitchen. No matter where it is, no matter what kind, if it's a kitchen, if it's a place where they make food, it's fine with me. [...] I love even incredibly dirty kitchens to distraction—vegetable droppings all over the floor, so dirty your slippers turn black on the bottom. (*Kitchen*, p. 3)

Wall Street Journal wrote in its review that this is Mikage's 'kitchen fetish'.¹¹ Indeed, for Mikage, the kitchen is the only place she could sleep when she loses all her family, and she even wants it to be the place for her own death: 'When I'm dead and worn out, in a reverie, I often think that when it comes time to die, I want to breathe my last in a kitchen' (*Kitchen*, p. 4). Critics in Japan point out that Yoshimoto carefully positions the use of the term 'kitchen'.¹² In the Japanese language, there are two ways of

¹¹ John Bussey and Michael Williams, cited in Treat, p. 275.

¹² For the use of different terms for "kitchen", see: Satoshi Kimata, *Yoshimoto Banana Ierō-Pēji* [Yoshimoto Banana Yellow Page] (Tokyo: Arechi, 1997), pp. 42-47; Chiaki Ishihara, 'Seibetsu-no-arubasho' [The Place where Sexuality is Located] in *Jyoseisakka-no-Shinryū* [New Stream of Women's Writing] (Tokyo: Shibundo, 1991), pp. 291-302.

denoting the term, kitchen: *kicchin* [キッチン] in katakana (loan word), and *daidokoro* [台所] in kanji.¹³ In the original text in Japanese, *kicchin* in katakana is used only once at the very end of the novel, and in other parts of the novel, including the quotation above, it is in kanji. According to Satoshi Kimata, this notational transition from *daidokoro* to *kicchin* implies a move from traditional images of family to a new kind of family portrait.¹⁴ *Kicchin* connotes a new systematised kitchen, combined with a dining room, which is westernised and has brand new equipment for cooking. This new-ness in the term synchronises with the image of new kinds of family, such as the non-normative familial relationship with Eriko the transgender mother and her son Yuichi. Most critics argue that a new kind of family is a common theme in Yoshimoto's early writing, and provide positive readings of it, as I will discuss below. The kitchen itself is figured as a place of new possibilities:

Dream kitchens.

I will have countless ones, in my heart or in reality. Or in my travels. Alone, with a crowd of people, with one other person – in all the many places I will live. I know that there will be so many more. (*Kitchen*, p. 43)

In the English translation, as far as I can see, the difference between *daidokoro* at the beginning of the novel and katakana *kicchin* at the end is not reflected, and it is difficult

¹³ The edition of *Kitchen* published by Faber uses this kanji on its front cover.

¹⁴ Also Kimata explains the term 'step-family' in his column in the same chapter. Kimata, pp. 42-47.

to recognise the significance of this change and what each term connotes. Perhaps the translator, also being aware of the author's use of the term, tried to imply the 'newness' of *kicchin* by writing '[d]ream kitchens' in the plural. This suggests a sense of plurality to 'the portrait of family', as critics point out, especially through the construction of a 'pseudo-family' with a transgender mother.¹⁵

Kimata, furthermore, explains the historical difference between *daidokoro* and *kicchin*. From the term *kicchin*, the image of modern and shiny stainless cooking areas is brought to mind, while, on the other hand, *daidokoro* connotes both the cooking and the eating area.¹⁶ At the beginning of the twentieth century, the kitchen was located at the north of a household, next to the bathroom, as both needed flowing water. At this time, food was served in the kitchen and taken to the separate dining area. However, as technology developed, it was possible to put the kitchen in the south part of the house and connect it to the dining area. During the 1910s and 20s, the installation of gas, electricity and water systems enabled this change, and furthermore, in the 1950s, with the rise of the nuclear family, housing complexes were mass built with joint kitchen-diners, which exemplified the privacy of the modern nuclear family.¹⁷ It is

¹⁵ Tōji Kamata, *Oi-to-Shi-no-Fōkuroa* [Folklores of Ageing and Death] (Tokyo: Sinyosha, 1988), pp. 395-402.

¹⁶ Kimata, p. 44.

¹⁷ Kimata, pp. 45-46.

interesting to note that the Japanese term ‘dining kitchen’ for these rooms also uses katakana, *dainingu-kicchin* [ダイニング・キッチン], just as Mikage uses katakana to name the kitchen at the end of the novel. In both cases, what is emphasised is the kitchen as a familial and social space. As mentioned above, the kitchen in this novel is considered as a space where Mikage intimately connects with her adopted family. Eating together is an act that forges their bond as a family, not with blood, but with food.

Indeed, Chizuko Ueno, an internationally renowned Japanese feminist scholar, explains that Yoshimoto’s *Kitchen* is a story that explores intimacy by eating together, sitting at the table. She describes the Tanabe family as ‘shokuen-kazoku’ [食縁家族], a family that is related through eating, not by blood: ‘it is an eternal issue, how to deal with the sexuality of “family”. However, it seems that Banana Yoshimoto just tries to avoid [answering] this question’.¹⁸ Agreeing on her point about forming new family through eating, Alessandro Giovanni Gerevini argues that the kitchen is the space in which eating replaces sexuality, and as a consequence there is no reproduction.¹⁹ It is

¹⁸ ‘ketsuen-kazoku’ [血縁家族] is usually used to describe a family with blood relations. Here Ueno uses a pun on this term to explore the new kind of family. Chizuko Ueno, *Midnight Call* (Tokyo: Asahi Shinbunsha, 1990), pp. 29-32. My translation.

¹⁹ Alessandro Giovanni Gerevini is the Italian translator of Yoshimoto’s work. The first chapter of his doctoral thesis at the University of Tokyo is dedicated to Yoshimoto’s *Kitchen*. Alessandro Giovanni Gerevini, ‘80-nendai-Jyoseisakka-ni-okeru-Shintai-no-Shomondai: Yoshimoto-Banana, Matsuura-Rieko, Ogawa-Yoko-no-Shōsetsu-wo-Megutte’ [Issues on Bodies in Women’s Writing in the 1980s: The Novels

indeed accurate to say that the Tanabes challenge the normative blood-related family through adoption and the transgendered mother: Tōji Kamata states that ‘here [in *Kitchen*], there is no such thing that we can call “family”; constraints such as blood, history and daily lives are completely wiped off’.²⁰ However, such critics seem to largely focus on the “new” and “radical” portrait of family and they dismiss the possibility that blood relations are still tightly knotted to the concept of happiness in this novel. Contrary to these critics, my reading of this text will argue for the impossibility within it of imagining happiness without a blood line: *Kitchen* is about a girl’s development into a woman, seeking happiness by approximating the blood-related family and entering the work place through the domestic sphere. As I will discuss below, *Kitchen* predicted the ambiguous relationship between women and their possibility as part of the workforce: the postfeminist rhetoric of “liberating” women into the business field conceals their domestic labour, while still, simultaneously, domesticity is set up as the place where happiness must be produced and retained. Ultimately, as we will see, the novel does not question or subvert the gender division of labour in the domestic sphere, despite Mikage’s occupation.

of Banana Yoshimoto, Rieko Matsuura, Yōko Ogawa] (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Tokyo, 2001).

²⁰ Kamata, p. 395.

2. The 1980s and Yoshimoto: The End of the Left and the Renegotiation of Girlhood

According to Kōichi Katō, the 1980s in Japan can be summarised as ‘bubble economics and the decade of running to the destruction of the Left’.²¹ As I have mentioned above, the 1980s were the time of Japanese economic success, and Katō explains that with this economic momentum, ‘people and companies of Japan bought historical and famous paintings, bought skyscrapers in New York, and purchased film companies’.²² This economic success was strongly correlated with Japanese right-wing politics led by the Liberal Democrat Party, as well as the strong relationship between Prime Minister Nakasone and President Ronald Reagan. This economic success effectively undercut belief in and the foundations for left-wing activities and discourses in Japan, and because of the “failures” of the left wing, as Katō notes, ‘it was a great embarrassment to express the feelings of the Left directly’.²³ In this social atmosphere, Katō states that authors started to create significantly twisted narratives for an economically successful

²¹ Kōichi Katō, ‘1980-Nendai-to-Yoshimoto-Banana’ [The 1980s and Banana Yoshimoto], *Kōkai: Rekishi Bungaku Shisō* [Voyages into History, Literature and Thought], 68 (2008), 166-173 (p. 166).

²² *Ibid.*

²³ The left wing’s popularity was also in decline because its internal politics became so extreme that it led to a series of violent murders, known as ‘Uchi-Geba’ [an abbreviation for ‘internal violence’], in the 1970s.

society, by using numerous parodies and pastiches.²⁴ Katō gives some examples of twisted narratives, teasing and criticism from the left, including Yasuo Tanaka's *Nantonaku Kurisutaru* [Somehow Crystal]. Published in 1980, the novel satirises a woman who is wholly absorbed in the high consumption of the time of the economic bubble, and in a way the novel is a twisted criticism towards late capitalism. *Goodbye Gangsters* was published in 1981 by Gennichiro Takahashi, who was a former student activist in the 1970s and was arrested in relation to his activism.²⁵ Two years later, Masahiko Shimada wrote *Yasashii-Sayoku-no-tame-no-Kiyukyoku* [*Divertimento for Gentle Leftists*] and in it, Shimada 'traces the infertile ground for political or social rebellion faced by youth in 1980s Japan. *Divertimento* depicts radical student politics transformed into a kind of after-school club. Ideology has been replaced by "gentleness", radical political activity reduced to the level of a fashion statement.'²⁶ As Katō describes, the pivotal novel to emblematised this literary movement in which the loss of the Left is explored is Haruki Murakami's *Norwegian Wood* (1987), set in the 1970s, when student riots exploded relating to the revision of the Security Treaty between Japan and the USA. These novels of the 80s seem, for Katō, the remains of the Left,

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ English translation available, Genichiro Takahashi, *Goodbye Gangsters* (New York: Vertical, 2008)

²⁶ Joshua Mostow (ed.), *The Columbia Companion to Modern Japanese Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), p. 253.

nostalgically narrated in the heightened mode of neo-conservatism.

Norwegian Wood sold four million copies in the domestic market alone and Yoshimoto's *Kitchen* sold hundreds of thousands. The popularity of both was phenomenal for their publishing companies. Even Yoshimoto reflects on the time she was successful in the 80s:

There was a period between the peak of the “bubble” economy and its collapse when money was the only topic that interested people in Japan. Even when I was being interviewed about my themes as an author, the questions would end up being about how much money I made in royalties, what I was investing in, things like that.²⁷

However, Kazuo Kuroko asserts that Yoshimoto's works cannot be valued on the same level as Murakami's works, because Murakami's works deal with the experience of loss in the political season, whilst 'Yoshimoto only sketches contemporary girls' sense and sensitivities, and [the readers] cannot read “something” [more valuable/political] from her works. Perhaps what we can really read from her works is a vivid sense of the contemporary'.²⁸ Kuroko's opinion presumes that men writing about themselves is political whilst women writing about womanhood and girlhood is domestic and trivial.

It is indeed true that Yoshimoto focuses on girlhood, 'depicting girls' own thought and

²⁷ Noriko Maniwa and Banana Yoshimoto, 'Kitchen Confidential', *Skywards*, March 2013, p. 26.

²⁸ Kazuo Kuroko, *Murakami-Haruki-to-Dōjidai-no-Bungaku* [Haruki Murakami and His Contemporaries] (Tokyo: Kawai, 1990), p. 279.

action’ as Eiri Takahara describes.²⁹ However, I would strongly contend that this does not diminish the value of her work; rather, Yoshimoto’s text tells us something essential about the state of girlhood in the 1980s, which has ongoing relevance and importance to this day.

Girlhood is undoubtedly a significant axis in my argument, in light of various works of criticism on Yoshimoto’s work as well as the social discourse around the late 1980s. Takahara argues that the 80s are the decade when narratives on girlhood exploded in Japan. He groups the narratives into two broad categories: on one hand, a number of grown-up male authors describe attractive girls who are symbols of liberty; on the other hand, many female writers explore the thoughts and actions of the girls themselves, which will lead the readers to Yoshimoto’s series of early works.³⁰

Just seven months after *Kitchen*’s publication in 1988, the general public in Japan was shocked with the news of the ‘Tokyo/Saitama Serial Kidnapping and Murder of Little Girls’ (In the media of English-speaking countries, he was called the *Otaku* Killer). Tsutomu Miyazaki, who is the murderer of four little girls, kidnapped and molested them, leading to widespread social fear and panic towards the moral state of

²⁹ Takahara, ‘80-nendai-Nihon-Bungaku-no-Genie-tachi’ [Mirages of Japanese Literature of the Eighties], *Kōkai: Rekishi Bungaku Shisō* [Voyages into History, Literature and Thought], 68 (2008), 174-181 (p. 179).

³⁰ Takahara gives an example of the book, titled *Oshare-Dorobō* [Fashionable Thief]. The Japanese title is a parody of that of the film *How to Steal a Million*.

Japan, agitated by the media. As a five-year-old girl at that time, I still remember the repetitive broadcasting about the series of murders, the process of his trial, which ended with the death penalty, and my mother's caution not to play outside by myself. I also have a painful memory from my childhood: in the late afternoon, just before sunset in a local park, playing in a sandpit alone in a local playground, being asked by a boy most likely in his late teens to touch something in his hand, sitting in a wide slide around 30 meters away. I thought he was carrying a chick, but it was in fact his penis in his hand, and suddenly realising, I ran home, sweating, calling my mother. Writing about the social circumstances of the 80s has led me to remember this childhood trauma, which had been submerged in my memory until now.

Including from my own experience, the cases of Tsutomu Miyazaki seems to have been a threat to girls across Japan at this time, and these serial murders caused moral panic, which had the effect of reinforcing the idea of girlhood as the site of innocence, something to be protected. Simultaneously, Takahara states that the concept of girlhood came to be renegotiated in literature and culture in the eighties.³¹ Thus, Takahara's categorisation on the two types of narratives on the girlhood is convincing. However, regarding the relation between Yoshimoto's work and the writing of girls' acts and

³¹ Takahara, p. 179.

thoughts, the girls in her work are still depicted as if they should be protected: on one hand, their innocence is preserved, but on the other hand, their process of maturing is also represented. This process of maturing is depicted in *Kitchen* as recovering from the mourning of the death of her family, and ultimately, to develop herself is to form a new family for herself.

3. From Mourning to Healing: Adoption as a Path to the Bright Side

As mentioned in the previous section, the process of Mikage's maturing is achieved through overcoming her mourning and orphanhood. The death of the family is a common motif in Yoshimoto's work, and *Kitchen* is not an exception. Mikage describes her feelings of becoming an orphan as followings:

My parents [...] both died when they were young. After that my grandparents brought me up. I was going into junior high when my grandfather died. From then on, it was just my grandmother and me.

When my grandmother died the other day, I was taken by surprise. My family had steadily decreased one by one as the years went by, but when it suddenly dawned on me that I was all alone, everything before my eyes seemed false. The fact that time continued to pass in the usual way in this apartment where I grew up, even though now I was here all alone, amazed me. It was total science fiction. The blackness of the cosmos. (*Kitchen*, p. 4)

Losing her blood-related family one by one is, for Mikage, the ‘blackness of the cosmos’, and the dark time of her loneliness is unbearable, not allowing her to sleep unless she lies down near the refrigerator. Looking back at the death of her grandmother, Mikage recalls how she felt when she lost all her relatives: ‘Right after my grandmother died, [...] I remember thinking to myself, my grandmother is dead. I’ve lost my last blood relation, and things can’t get any worse’ (*Kitchen*, p. 55). In terms of the quotation above, the literal translation from the Japanese for ‘things can’t get any worse’ would be ‘[a]fter the death of my grandmother, I thought I was “below the average”, “useless” or “not valuable”’ [rokudemonai]. In Japanese, the collocation ‘rokudemonai’ is difficult to translate into English: ‘roku’ [陸 or 禄] means ‘horizontal or flat’, ‘righteous’, or ‘abundant, sufficient’; ‘demonai’ is a way to construct a negative. Thus, after losing all of her blood-related family, she feels that she is ‘not valuable’, ‘not enough’. This collocation suggests that, being alone and an orphan, she is not on the “horizontal” line. Sara Ahmed describes this experience of being out of line with others as part of her idea of a queer phenomenology:

Queer orientations might be those that don’t line up, which by seeing the world “slantwise” allow other objects to come into view. A queer orientation might be one that does not overcome what is “off line,” and

hence *acts out of line with others*.³²

In a similar way, Mikage feels she is missing out, or more like, out of line, because of the loss of her blood family. This line, as I will argue, implies the bloodline, and also the line that delineates the norm from which she is excluded. Being an orphan is, in a way for Mikage, to be excluded or left out from the normative family line, and this trauma of hers is healed by being adopted by the Tanabes, a family in which intimacy is constructed not via bloodlines, but by the transgender mother.

4. A New Portrait of Family? The *Koseki* System and Eriko the Transgender Mother

As we saw in the previous section, Mikage considers herself as *rokudemonai*, ‘below average’, because she lost all of her blood-related family, being an orphan. Being average, perhaps, can be phrased as being normal or normative, and that is to have a blood-related family, according to Mikage’s emotional monologue. Her trauma of being alone gradually heals through (re-)forming a non-blood related family, and this is why critics consider that *Kitchen* is radical in describing a new form of family. Countering these readings, my analysis will discuss how this pair of novels demonstrates a

³² Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology* (London: Duke University Press, 2010), p. 107, Ahmed’s emphasis.

limitation in imagining happiness without blood relations. In order to do this reading, it is important to explain why blood relations matter so much in Japanese culture. Below in this section, I will look at the household system in Japan called *koseki*, a modern form of family in Japan, and demonstrate that the concept of family in Japanese culture is strongly rooted in the idea of sharing blood, and specifically the blood of Japanese people.

Secondary criticism of the text shows that many read *Kitchen* as a new portrait of family in which members are not blood related. The reason for this cliché, pointing out the “newness” of a bloodless family through the transgender mother in *Kitchen*, is that in Japanese culture, blood relations are highly valued for families. Masataka Endō argues that this strong “belief” in valuing blood relations for families originates from the *koseki*, the household registration system. The *koseki* is a system that asks citizens to voluntarily register, and it manages individuals from the cradle to the grave. David Chapman and Karl Jakob Krogness (2014) describe the *koseki* system:

The underlying role of the *koseki* is to identify, categorize and define the population of Japan. It is fundamentally a civil registration system that records and documents individual civil status by household unit and is the definitive state mechanism for determining an individual’s legal identity as Japanese (*nihonjin*). However, unlike the birth certificate, which is used in many countries as a form of individual identification, the *koseki* situates the

individual within a family and within familial relationships. The *koseki* applies a principle based on the ‘ko’. The ‘ko’ is the administrative household unit that the *koseki* system organizes the registered within. This unit changes over time (for example through the ancient, Edo, prewar and postwar periods). Furthermore, it is dynamic and changes as the circumstances of family members registered on it change. Births, deaths, marriages, divorces are all recorded. The *koseki* also records the permanent register (*honseki*) and the resident registry (*juminhyō*) records any change of address.³³

For example, if we imagine a family called the Suzukis, the father is considered as the chief of the family and, with his wife and children, the whole family are registered as one unit. Unlike the Chinese system, where the registration of the citizen is based upon the individual, the Japanese *koseki* system is unique and, as a result, being in the same family and sharing the same surname are highly valued.³⁴ This significance of sharing a surname is that it indicates sharing the same blood, which a person has directly inherited from his/her ancestors.

Endō claims that Japan, as a nation, has a tendency to sustain its unity by preserving its citizens’ “pure blood” to the utmost extent. As he describes it, Japan as an island had closed borders from the rule of the Tokugawa Shōgun (1600) onwards, for

³³ David Chapman and Karl Jakob Krogness, ‘The *koseki*’, in *Japan's Household Registration System and Citizenship: Koseki, Identification and Documentation*, ed. by David Chapman and Karl Jakob Krogness (Tokyo: Routledge, 2014), pp. 1-18 (p. 2).

³⁴ On the other hand, this *koseki* system is significantly problematic because of its exclusiveness. For example, in most cases, it is the woman who moves her registration from the family unit she was born into, to the family she marries into. In the current administration (2015), married women are still not allow to register their maiden name as their official names. Divorces will be registered in *koseki*.

200 years. Historically, compared to China and Euro-America, cultural interactions were discouraged in Japan, and thus, it was relatively easy to maintain the belief of a single, unmixed type of blood existing in Japan. This strong belief in “pure” blood encouraged a sense of unity in the nation, through which a blood relation with a Japanese person exclusively proved one’s nationality.³⁵

The Japanese Family Registration Act (*Koseki-hō*) has held a principle called *jus sanguinis*, meaning ‘right of blood’ in Latin, since the Meiji era, when modernisation started. In order to prove that one holds Japanese nationality, one needs to prove the inheritance of Japanese blood. *Jus soli* (‘right of soil’ in Latin) is the opposite way of proving nationalities. The USA and Canada take this principle. The Japanese Family Registration Act administered paternal *jus sanguinis* since 1950, which caused issues for the children of Japanese mothers and fathers who are foreigners: they could not register in *koseki*, and were not able to hold a Japanese nationality (*mukokuseki*). However, in 1985 this family registration system was revised to shift from paternal to both paternal and maternal – that is, parental – *jus sanguinis* due to the increase of intercultural marriage. From the history of *koseki*, Vera Mackie specifies that what it

³⁵ Masataka Endō, *Koseki-to-Kokuseki-no-Kingendaishi* [Modern and Contemporary History of Koseki and Nationalities] (Tokyo: Akashi, 2013), p. 22.

manifests is the nation's expectation of the family to be a 'heterosexual couple of Japanese nationality who produce children by biological reproduction of children genetically related to two parents'.³⁶ *Koseki*'s systematic and cultural emphasis on the household demonstrates the fictionality of 'the pure blood' of the Japanese as a nation, family and individual within it.³⁷ In other words, *koseki* is a device to produce a model of the normative citizen: having a family, heterosexual, reproductive and "purely" Japanese.

Koseki promises the happiness of the normative citizens through its registration: in return, it provides citizens with the services of the state. In modern society in general, through the process of transforming from a 'nightwatchman' state to a welfare state in the eighteenth century, it became necessary for the nation to provide its citizens with public welfare and to guarantee an individual's life security with methods such as worker protection and social security, with the industrial revolution, the development of capitalism, and the rise of social issues.³⁸ With this expansion of the role of the welfare state, providing individual rights in society such as social security, the right to vote and

³⁶ Vera Mackie, 'Birth Registration and the Right to Have Right: the Changing Family and the Unchanging Koseki', in *Japan's Household Registration System and Citizenship: Koseki, Identification and Documentation*, ed. by David Chapman and Karl Jakob Krogness (Tokyo: Routledge, 2014), pp. 203-220 (p. 204).

³⁷ Endō, pp. 297-306.

³⁸ Endō, p. 10.

school attendance, it became necessary to conduct civil registration as well as the census survey (Endō, p. 10). Through registering in *koseki*, citizens benefit from the government, being ensured civil rights and social welfare. Endo describes this function of *koseki* as a benevolent device, meaning *koseki* is not limited to its function as a tool for controlling citizens, but by this regulation, the ‘happiness of the society’ can be guaranteed through the government’s obligation to ensure civil rights to those that register. However, those who can benefit from this social “happiness” are limited: foreigners are not permitted to register on *koseki*, and through this, the many Koreans in Japan are segregated. Thus, *koseki* plays a role not only for registry, but it also works to produce a hierarchical value system.³⁹

This device, in a way, creates the borderline between who is a “real” Japanese person and who is not, and so simultaneously creates exclusion, as Chapman describes:

[T]his narrow framework within which all Japanese are positioned does not reflect the everyday lived practices of family interactions and relationships in contemporary Japanese society. This results in disparity that disrupts many lives and can lead to enduring forms of marginalization and exclusion.⁴⁰

In other words, individuals who are sexual minorities, orphans, illegitimate children,

³⁹ Endō, p. 13.

⁴⁰ Chapman and Krogness, p. 5.

single mothers and foreigners do not theoretically match the criteria that *koseki* proposes. This grouping of excluded people implies that *koseki* can only provide a benefit to those who “fit” its categorisation. Thus, the system can only promise happiness exclusively to “normative” citizens, who have Japanese blood. It is perhaps not a coincidence that two books have been published on *koseki* in the last year, by Chapman and Endō in both English and Japanese. As I explained in the Introduction to the thesis, since the earthquake on 11th of March 2011, Japan has made a sharp turn to the right in the name of the *fukko*, the ‘reconstruction’ of the Tohoku region that was hugely damaged by the disaster of the earthquake and consequent tsunami. A nationalistic discourse to “recover” has been produced and even agitated, not only by the earthquake, but also through hawkish diplomacy towards China and Korea, especially over the Prime Minister’s visit to the controversial Yasukuni Shrine. This shrine ‘honours about 2.5 million Japanese who have died in wars since the late 19th century, including several wartime leaders convicted as class-A war criminals by the allied tribunal’.⁴¹ Furthermore, his aggressive attitude towards the Senkaku island dispute has enraged China and Taiwan, and other countries internationally. As a result,

⁴¹ Justin McCurry, ‘Japan’s Shinzo Abe Angers Neighbours and US by Visiting War Dead Shrine China and South Korea Protest After Abe Visits Controversial Yasukuni Shrine in Reversal of his Policy during First Term of Office’, *Guardian*, 26 December, 2013.
 <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/26/japan-shinzo-abe-tension-neighbours-shrine>> [accessed 12 January 2015].

hate speech towards *Zainichi*, a term that refers to Koreans living in Japan, has become increasingly visible, and an ultra-right wing group called *Zaitokukai* (*Zainichi-Tokken-wo-Yurusanai-kai*, meaning ‘Citizens against the Special Privileges of the Zainichi’) has risen up. This hate speech, and these problematic discourses can only be possible in Japan due to belief in the “pure-blood” of the Japanese.

In addition to familial and marital statuses, sexual transitions must also be recorded in the *koseki*, and can cause problematic cases regarding family construction. Since 2004, it has been possible to change one’s sex in *koseki*, and also to marry after a sex transition. However, if a transgender woman marries, the record of her sex change will be transcribed onto her new *koseki* record. Endō points out that this act of transcribing shows that even after the transition, the individual is set under the power of governmental management. There are further issues raised in relation to transgender marriage. In 2012, a man who had conducted the transition FtM married in Osaka and had a child with his partner thanks to IVF treatment.⁴² They applied for birth registration, but when the council traced his sex-transition in *koseki*, they argued that they cannot approve the child as “legitimate”, leaving a blank for the “father” under its authority. Responding to this decision by the council, the father turned down this birth

⁴² I will discuss the relation of IVF to potentially new kinds of family in detail in the following chapter.

registration, so that the child was not registered in *koseki*. This case was brought to the Tokyo Court of Domestic Relations, on the grounds that it is unreasonable discrimination to regard a married couple's child as "illegitimate", and that this violates Constitution 14, which secures 'equality before the law'. However, the court concluded that the couple should register the child as illegitimate, because there is no biological relation between the FtM father and the child.

I have argued through this thesis that the 2010s are the harvest of the 1980s, and this is evident seeing the social discourse in 2012 around the transgender father and his child. To some extent, his pursuit of happiness to transit to the sex he wants to become is now possible. However, in Japan, it is still not possible to have his own family registered in *koseki*, with the "reason" that there is no biological relationship between the father and child. It seems that to pursue an individual's happiness, to be "as one wants to be", is limited with regards to making one's own family. Endō's criticism on how *koseki* pushes one to assimilate the standardised citizen and form of the family is convincing, and he goes on to discuss how this relates to gender identities. It is, in a way, accepted in Japan for individuals to pursue their own gender identities, but it is still not accepted for families. As discussed in the Euro-American academic field by

theorists like Lisa Duggan, this Japanese trans-gender family can possibly be seen as a kind of homonormativity, that they are trying to be as close as possible to a heteronormative family, but there is a clear difference from the western version of homonormativity, since this approximation to the heterosexual model is often legitimised by the state in the UK or the USA. In Japan, however, the legitimacy of the family is considered to lie in the bloodline of the Japanese, and this legitimacy is decided by governmental powers.⁴³

In light of these difficulties, *Kitchen* is a story about the pursuit of happiness of the transgender mother, Eriko. Seeing this discourse around transgender in the 2010s in Japan might let us think that writing the happiness of this queer mother in 1989 is to some extent radical, but her plot also reveals the limitation of its radicalness, because of her death at the very beginning of the sequel *Full Moon: Kitchen 2*. Why does she have to die? I contend that the plot after her death is the significant part. In the next section, I

⁴³ On October 2015, Shibuya City in Tokyo administrated the Same-Sex Partnership Certificate, which provides the approval of same-sex couples as family within the district. This certificate is followed by a policy to enhance equality among the sexes and promote diversity, administrated in March. The certificate allows couples to be considered as equivalent to a married couple, and it enables them to rent council houses as a family, as well as grant them space as family in the hospital, and so on. Although this is not exactly equivalent to the marriage system through *koseki*, this is significant progress for same-sex couples in this area. This policy is limited to the Shibuya district and does not have a legal effect across Japan. 'A Policy for Enhancing Equality among Men and Women, and Promoting Diversity', Shibuya City Council, <<https://www.city.shibuya.tokyo.jp/kusei/jorei/jorei/lgbt.html>> [accessed 27 January 2016]. It is also worth noting that the Supreme Court of Japan had a final decision to prohibit married couples from having separate family names: they considered that this is not against the constitution for equality before the law, in December 2015. *Koseki* is the system that prevents citizens from considering alternatives from the "conventional" family, such as women keeping their maiden names after marriages, or people being in same-sex partnerships.

will read what sort of role she plays in relation to the orphan Mikage, and how we can read the plot after Eriko's death.

Tracing this cultural and historical background to *koseki* provides us to some extent with convincing explanations to read *Kitchen* as a radical family portrait, especially through the representation of the transgender mother, Eriko. Changing sex from male to female, critics often read Eriko as a character who abandoned the convention of the father's role in modern society. Indeed, critics, as I discussed in previous sections, point out that *Kitchen* and its second part, *Full Moon*, depict a new form of family, particularly in its representation of non-blood-related family through adoption. However, I contend that these critics dismiss other clues to read this text, and in particular, Mikage's questioning of the idea of happiness. Reading this text only through the aspect of the "new-ness" of the queer family does not fully demonstrate the complicated relationship between heterosexism and desire. "Happiness" and "family" are tightly knotted together, and while critics focus on family, we will see that Mikage is most often interested in the idea of happiness.

5. The Transgender Mother as a New Figure of Family? : Pedagogy of Happiness

Contrary to other critics who embrace writing the queer, and therefore new, in my reading it seems that *Kitchen* fails to write the complicated relation between family and the desire for happiness, and instead reinforces heterosexism through the death of the transgender mother. After her death, Mikage and Yuichi, who are trying to find a way to define their relationship, end up reinforcing heterosexual couplism. Before reaching this reading, it is worth investigating the role of the transgender mother in the novel: why is she considered a radical figure? In this section, I will investigate the previous critics' reasoning to read Eriko as radical figure, standing against blood-orientated family, and I will develop a reading of this novel to show the limitations of reading her as radical figure, given her own adherence to an idea of a conventional mothering figure.

As discussed in the previous section, blood relations are strongly valued in Japanese culture historically. In *Kitchen* and *Full Moon*, the representation of the transgender mother as a foster mother to an orphan is a relationship that betrays the expectations of the conventional and blood-orientated family. Satoshi Kimata expounds on what may have happened had Eriko been biologically female:

If Eriko were a real woman, what sort of things would happen? If we imagine a little, we can see that, firstly, a [psychological] tension would be

caused between the mother and the young female Mikage whom her son brought. By making Eriko a perfectly feminised man, the erotic struggle, which might have been caused between [these two] women, is skilfully avoided.

In addition, the schema, such as ex-father = surrogate mother, avoids the Oedipal struggle which likely happens in mother-and-child relationship in the absence of the father. The “natural” family with blood relations is maintained by suppressing the eros between parents-and-child and siblings, namely incest, so the form of Eriko’s being [as transgender], which will invalidate the erotic relation with Yuichi, naturally, does not provide Yuichi with an Oedipal struggle. However, simultaneously, it will also invalidate the unity of the family, which is maintained by balancing eros and taboo.⁴⁴

Kimata’s argument concludes that, in *Kitchen*, individual will is prioritised over the

logic of bloodlines, so that Eriko and Yuichi have disentangled from the

blood-orientated relationship and formed a new kind of familial relation.⁴⁵ Kimata’s

explanation of Eriko the transgender mother as a ‘perfectly feminised man’ is an overly

simplified account of Eriko’s gender identity and sexual orientation.⁴⁶ In addition,

critics including Kimata embrace the “new” form of family with the queer figure of the

transgender mother. However, despite her “queerness”, the role that Eriko plays in

relation to Mikage is still that of a highly conventional mother: a figure of nurturing and

⁴⁴ Kimata, pp. 49-50, my translation.

⁴⁵ Kimata, p. 50.

⁴⁶ For a detailed explanation of the complexity of Eriko’s sexuality and her performativity of gender, see Yutaka Okada, ‘Yoshimoto-Banana-*Kicchin-Mangetsu-eno-Ichi-Shiten*: Tayō-na-Sei, Yuragu-Kankei’ [A Perspective on Yoshimoto Banana’s *Kitchen* and *Full Moon*: Diverse Sexuality and Fragile Relations], *Komazawa Kokubun*, 42 (2005), 71-90.

domesticity. Simply focusing on reading Eriko as a new familial figure (because of her queerness) disregards the strong, tenacious relationship between family and happiness in the text. Eriko is, in my analysis, a significant figure for “teaching” happiness to Mikage, and thus a figure of nurturing. In this sense, happiness is something that one can develop, and learn how to feel, in this novel.

Happiness is indeed an important theme in this novel, and it is something that one can learn to attain, through an education from this transgender mother, Eriko. In particular, Mikage, through both *Kitchen* and its second part, *Full Moon*, starts considering what happiness is for her and “learns” to gain it through spending time with her pseudo-family, in which the transgender mother looks after her. At the beginning of *Kitchen*, in despair from her grandmother’s death and from being an orphan, Mikage does not know what happiness is for her. When she comes to the Tanabes for the first time to be part of their family, she loves a sofa in the living room next to their kitchen:

I loved the Tanabes’ sofa as much as I love their kitchen. I came to crave sleeping on it. Listening to the quiet breathing of the plants, sensing the night view through the curtains, I slept like a baby. There wasn’t anything more I wanted. I was happy. (*Kitchen*, p. 22)

In the English version, the last line above is translated as ‘[t]here wasn’t anything more

I wanted’. However, perhaps a more literal translation would be: ‘I could not come up with anything I wanted more than that [to sleep comfortably] now, so I was happy’.⁴⁷

My translation implies that, after the death of all her blood relatives, Mikage totally lacks the imagination required to think what happiness is for her. Her happiness in this scene is very basic: to sleep, to live.⁴⁸ In the previous section, shortly before this passage, Mikage also describes how nervous and unstable the feeling of living with her elderly grandmother was:

To live alone with an old person is terribly nerve-racking, and the healthier he or she is, the more one worries. Actually, when I lived with my grandmother this didn’t actually occur to me; I enjoyed it. But looking back, I can’t help thinking that deep down I was always, at all times, afraid: “Grandma’s going to die” (*Kitchen*, p. 20)

It appears that living with her grandmother was to live in constant fear, expecting a day when her grandmother dies and leaves her alone. This constant fear of anticipated solitude is not the site of comfort or joyfulness. Mikage feels temporarily “happy” when she comes to the Tanabes and is finally able to sleep comfortably. Through her experience in this household, Mikage learns “to be happy” from the transgender mother.

In this novel, Eriko leads and teaches Mikage how to go through and get out of despair,

⁴⁷ ‘それよりほしいものは、今、思いつかないので私は幸福だった。’ in Japanese (*Kicchin*, p. 35).

⁴⁸ In the interview in *Skywards* mentioned above, Yoshimoto tells us that the protagonists in *Kitchen* are ones who are on the very edge of their lives: they have no energy to have sex, and their drives are very low, as they are people who are nearly killing themselves just to survive, p. 26.

towards happiness or, at least, comfort. Eriko has also experienced despair from his/her wife's death, before s/he turned from a man into a woman, as we have seen above. The transgender mother gives the orphan Mikage comfort and leads her to think about happiness.

Eriko is a figure in *Kitchen* who shares the psychological crisis of the main character, who is in deep despair because of her loneliness, and they work through the crisis together.⁴⁹ From that, Eriko plays a leading role in supporting this pseudo-family as a teacher of life and hope to Mikage. When Mikage meets Eriko for the first time at their house, Mikage thinks Eriko is 'an incredibly beautiful woman' (*Kitchen*, p. 11), and she 'couldn't take [her] eyes off her. Hair that rustled like silk to her shoulders; the deep sparkle of her long, narrow eyes; well-formed lips, a nose with a high, straight bridge—the whole of her gave off a marvellous light that seemed to vibrate with life force. She didn't look human. I had never seen anyone like her' (*Kitchen*, p. 11).

Eriko openly talks about the difficult times in her life and teaches her 'philosophy of life' to Mikage. She emphasises that one needs to nurture something, such as plants or children, to be independent, to come back from the brink of despair:

Because I have a lot faith in you, I suddenly feel I ought to tell you something. I

⁴⁹ Kimata, p. 49.

learned it raising Yuichi. There were many, many difficult times, god knows. If a person wants to stand on her own two feet, I recommend undertaking the care and feeding of something. It could be children or it could be house plants, you know? By doing that you come to understand your own limitations. That's where it starts." As if chanting a liturgy, she related to me her philosophy of life. (p. 41)

Despite being a "radical" figure as a transgender mother, in the description of other critics, Eriko adheres to the conventional idea of a nurturing and caring motherhood. To be independent and to get through a psychological crisis, one needs to undertake the care or feeding of something, in her opinion. She is a figure who chose to become a mother and a woman. Her transformation, this contradictory process of becoming a mother and becoming independent, shadows Mikage's process of developing from girlhood and becoming a woman herself. This is the paradox of woman's independence in the 1980s (as I will discuss further below).

The 80s were the decade when Japan encouraged women to work in the public sphere through the implementation of new policies, and it was the time when the myth of "mother nature" was radically reassessed by academia. For example, *Kokubungaku: Kaishaku to Kanshou* [*National Literature: Interpretation and Appreciation*] published a special issue on the 'Destruction of the Myth of "Mother Nature"' in 1980. Although this questioning of motherhood and "mother nature" by literary critics happened in the

early 80s, what Yoshimoto's queer mother suggests is the impossibility or difficulty of taking one's distance from ideas of conventional motherhood. In other words, the tales of this transgender mother imply the difficulties of creating new kinds of narratives about/around family. Indeed, Eriko's narrative on independence and motherhood is highly conventional. In this sense, it is difficult to conclude that Eriko is a radical figure only because of her/his sex change.

Moreover, Eriko is a figure associated with optimism – her 'muddled cheerfulness' discussed above – and brings Mikage closer to the bright side of life through telling of her process of becoming a woman and a mother. She tries writing her will in 'men's language' (*Kitchen*, p. 52) in Japanese in vain, and she feels that now she is 'body and soul a woman' (*ibid.*) because of her inability to write in a masculine style in Japanese. This performativity of gender by which Eriko establishes her identity through the repetition of certain "feminine" words, language constructions and gestures, demonstrates the process of creating her sexual identity as a woman. Indeed, in this sense, she is a queer figure. However, when she talks about maternity and motherhood in relation to happiness, we are obliged to witness her innocent perception towards maternity as happiness:

Just this once, I wanted to write using men's language, and I've really tried. But it's funny—I get embarrassed and the pen won't go. I guess I thought that even though I've lived all these years as a woman, somewhere inside me was my male self, that I've been playing a role all these years. But I find that I'm body and soul a woman. A mother in name and in fact. I have to laugh.

I have loved my life. My years as a man, my years married to your mother, and after she died, becoming and living as a woman, watching you grow up, living together so happily, and—oh! taking Mikage in!! That was the most fun of all, wasn't it? She, too, is a very precious child of mine.
(*Kitchen*, p. 52)

Eriko's repetitive use of female language makes her 'body and soul' woman, and to become a woman and mother was, for her, the ultimate happiness. Eriko told Mikage that 'it's not easy being a woman' (*Kitchen*, p. 41) and teaches Mikage how to be happy, how to be, in other words, a woman.⁵⁰ With a teacher who has gone through a similar psychological crisis, learning how to get through the crisis to be happy is, for Mikage, also learning 'how to become a woman' in some ways. Eriko decides to become a woman, to have fun, and tells Mikage: 'Yes. But if a person hasn't ever experienced true despair, she grows old never knowing how to evaluate where she is in life; never understanding what joy really is. I'm grateful for it' (*Kitchen*, p. 41). Eriko decides to become a woman to pursue "joy" in her life. For Mikage, to be happy is, in a similar

⁵⁰ Perhaps a more accurate translation would be, 'it's hard work to become a woman' in the Japanese *Kicchin*, p. 67, my translation.

way, to become a woman, but for her, it is a shift and “growth” from girlhood to womanhood through entering the workforce. In both cases, to be a woman is to become close to the portrait of a conventional family, or more specifically to be proximate to the happy picture of a comfortable house in which comfort is maintained by the mother. Moreover, if Eriko is indeed an emblematically queer mother, a reading that other critics embrace, why does she have to be murdered at the very beginning of the second part of the novel, *Full Moon*? Eriko is killed by her enthusiastic fan, whom Mikage called ‘a crazy man’ (*Kitchen*, p. 44) who spent all of his time at her gay bar. As I will argue below, I contend that her abrupt death is rather suggestive: she has to be cast out from the plot to sustain the status quo.

6. The Ambiguous Relationship between Mikage and Yuichi

Critics investigate how radical and new *Kitchen* is in writing the transgender mother, and how the family depicted here challenges the modern normative family, upon which a great moral value is considered to lie. However, rather than embracing the queerness of the novel, more careful investigation shows the limitation of this happy queer family:

when we read *Kitchen* and *Full Moon: Kitchen 2*, as a series, we have to ask why Eriko has to be killed, and, out of the story, if she is the key to hold together the happy family portrait. After Eriko's death, Mikage and Yuichi struggle to define their relationship. They 'really were orphans' (*Kitchen*, p. 54), and Yuichi is reluctant to tell Mikage the fact that Eriko has been killed, because he would have to behave as the oldest son and deal with the funeral and murder. When Mikage is told that Eriko was murdered, she visits her house, where she used to spend time as a part of the family. Yuichi offers to replace the sofa she slept on with 'a double bed', so that Mikage can live there with him (*Kitchen*, p. 65). Mikage asks him if it would be as his lover or as his friend and he answers: 'Right now I can't think. What do you [Mikage] mean in my life? How am I myself changing? How will my life be different from before? I don't have a clue about any of that' (*ibid.*).

This ambiguous relationship between Mikage and Yuichi after Eriko's death, not yet romantic but much closer than friendship, is discussed by a number of critics and how to interpret their relationship varies. Yoshimoto herself articulates that she is not interested in the romance genre at all, and also considers that this lack of interest is one of the characteristics of her writing. In fact, all the characters in *Kitchen* are not in the

state of being involved in romance: they are mentally unstable, and close to being unable to keep living: ‘They don’t have any energy, neither for shopping, nor sex: the only thing they can do is to eat a little bit and share time together’.⁵¹ Famously, Chizuko Ueno argues that the bed-scene is replaced by the scene of food: ‘how to deal with sexuality is the eternal issue of “family”, but it seems that Banana Yoshimoto avoids [talking about] it’.⁵² Indeed, there is no sex scene between the two, and this sexlessness or, more accurately, asexuality is the reason why critics say the relationship is “something different” from a normal heterosexual relationship. However, I contend that it is nonetheless problematic to innocently associate eating, the family and the kitchen:

Truly happy memories always live on, shining. Over time, one by one, they come back to life. The meals we ate together, numberless afternoons and evenings.

When was it that Yuichi said to me, “Why is it that everything I eat when I’m with you is so delicious?” I laughed. “Could it be that you’re satisfying hunger and lust at the same time?” “No way, no way, no way!” he said, laughing, “It must be because we’re family” (*Kitchen*, p. 100)

Domesticity is still closely related to Mikage, both from her occupation and in her

⁵¹ In interview with Alessandro Jovannni, *Italian Banana* [Italian Banana], quoted in Morio Yoshida, ‘Ren-ai, Iyashi, Kekkō: Yoshimoto-Banana-to-Ekuni-Kaori’ [Romance, Healing and Marriage: Banana Yoshimoto and Kaori Ekuni], *Kokubungaku-Kaishaku-to-Kanshō-Bessatsu: Jyosei-Sakka “Genzai”* [National Literature: Interpretation and Appreciation: Special Issue, Women Writers “Now”] (2004), 131-140 (p. 133).

⁵² Chizuko Ueno, ‘Shokuen-Kazoku’ in *Midnight Call* (Tokyo: Asahi Shinbunsha, 1990), p. 32, my translation.

relationship with Yuichi, and still domesticity is considered as the source of happiness, a well of comfort. Thus, it may be that this series of novels challenges the normative form of modern family; however, it does not shake up the system of the sexual divisions itself, and does nothing to change the gendered division of labour in Japanese culture, both through the representation of Mikage and, as discussed above, through Eriko.

7. Domestic Labour and Women's Happiness in Japan, 1985

As we have seen, Mikage learns how to be “happy” from the transgender mother Eriko, and her pedagogy of happiness is to “choose” to be an independent woman. Eriko teaches a new agenda of women's happiness in this neoliberal society, namely, a postfeminist agenda: even though, to some extent, she teaches a conventional happiness, such as the importance of nurturing and feeding, the goal is not to please someone else, but to achieve self-fulfilment. This can be seen as a postfeminist agenda, and this may be the reason why it had to be a “queer” mother, who “chose” to be woman, who teaches it, as it would have been less plausible to have a conventional mother figure trumpet this new agenda to Mikage.

This final section will again contextualise *Kitchen* in relation to women's labour in Japan, which changed significantly in 1985. In so doing, this section provides a thread with which to undo the complicated process of gaining happiness in girlhood: in the process of her growth into a woman, the girl is willing to participate in the neoliberal market to be proximate to the normative sense of happiness. This "happiness" is described as something cultivated through the good care of (heterosexual) parents.

Paying attention to the Japanese socio-political context of the 1980s provides us with an understanding of the process by which issues of gender, sex and sexuality – namely sexed life – are complicatedly intertwined in the blueprint of happiness that the neoliberal state proposes. The process, in this text, is precisely that of the girl maturing and entering the market as part of its labour force. In this process, the girl is encouraged to fulfil the utmost of her ability with the newfound liberation of women to work, but, at the same time, the "ultimate" happiness is still believed to be contained in the kitchen, inside the conventional family unit. It is indeed interesting that so many critics focus on how radical it is to write the transgender mother, and from there see *Kitchen* as writing a new form of family; consequently, the significant relationship between Mikage and her occupation is dismissed. As we will see below, her choice of occupation synchronises

with contemporary issues on women's labour as well as on women's happiness.

7.1. The 1980s: Privatisation, (Neo)Liberalism and Women's Labour

As we saw in the thesis Introduction, during Prime Minister Nakasone's administration, he radically privatised the public sector, including the telephone company, Japanese railway and the Japanese monopoly corporation (salt, tobacco). Following these acts of privatisation, as with Thatcherism in 1980s Britain, the government tried to create a radical shift from the welfare state to a neoliberal state. Through this process, the flexibility of labour in the market was enhanced: shorter job contracts became possible and more common. However, this promotion of flexible labour threatened the conventional family unit, because that family unit is based upon (the husband's) guaranteed life employment, which secured the household income. In other words, the end of the welfare state also destroyed the conventional family unit. In response to this, at the level of policy, the conservative governments in both England and Japan, pushed to encourage conventional family values. For example, Nakasone appealed to the country to maintain the traditional family unit for an extended family of three

generations, in a party political broadcast in which he visited a local rice farm household, in the prime time of his administration.⁵³

On one hand, it can be said that the 80s in Japan were a time when women gained equal opportunities for employment. The feminist movement was launched during the 1970s and the Equal Employment Opportunity Act for Men and Women was finally established in 1985 in the National Diet in Japan. Through the administration of this policy, it became possible for Japanese women to participate in the job market. At first glance, this policy seems to reach towards the feminist goal for equality. However, this achievement was ironically possible only because it served the “higher” neoliberal principle of increasing the nation’s labour power, through women. On the other hand, this emancipation did not mean that all women became free from the domestic sphere, from the kitchen. Women were not at the same time emancipated from the domestic workforce, and still (women’s, and the family’s) happiness was considered as something preserved in the nuclear household. These two contradictory agendas, the new opportunity for women to labour in the public sphere and the requirement to stay at home to reproduce, nurture and look after the members of their family, caused a huge

⁵³ Sandra Buckley, ‘Sexing the Kitchen: *Okoge* and Other Tales of Contemporary Japan’, in *Queer Diasporas*, ed. by Cindy Patton and Benigno Sánchez-Eppler (Durham, Duke University Press, 2000), pp. 215-244 (p. 241).

tension in neoliberal lives. Happiness is the affective glue that holds together and smoothes over this tension between women's self-fulfilment in the public sphere and in the domestic sphere. To be happy, after all, women were told (and are still told) they needed to be proximate to the conventional family unit.

Certainly this policy administration has led to better equal opportunities for woman. However it has also caused issues such as a disparity between women at work and at home, as a downfall. On one hand, women are considered as a new labour force in a new market as "individuals" (as we saw in the emphasis on individualism in the thesis Introduction), and their possibility to be successful in the public sphere has opened up. On the other hand, this fulfilment for women in neoliberalism in Japan is significantly complicated: at the end of the welfare state, becoming a housewife, having a comfortable life with a sufficient and stable income provided by one's married partner *can* be considered as one path towards fulfilment for women, and often still is. Fewer and fewer men can afford to support a family on their own (given the flexibility of labour and the dearth of benefits for dependents). Moreover, even though some women can be successful at their work, there remains a great social tension that separates the desires for fulfilment between being a "good" mother, and being successful at her career.

The equal opportunity law was administrated in 1985, and yet at the end of April in 2014, *Asahi Shinbun* reported that the number of women at executive level in major corporations in Japan is still only 1% (the UK and USA, for example, are just below 15%). What does this extremely low percentage of ‘successful women’ suggest after 30 years of “equal opportunity” and how should we understand and interpret this phenomenon in literary culture? One key point to note is that the administration of this law was not followed up by a structural change to support women in balancing working, reproduction and nurturing: thus, it is probable that what these numbers demonstrate is that, even though the policy changed, still the fantasy that women’s happiness lies in mothering performs as a powerful norm, and it is likely that this norm is taught to women when they are girls.

7.2. The Boundaries of Happiness in the Kitchen: Who is Excluded and Who Included

Written in 1987, two years after the administration of the equal opportunity act, *Kitchen* is suggestive about the relationship between women’s happiness and their career choices, and specifically about their associations with domesticity. Mikage and her

choice for her career demonstrate that becoming a housewife and possibly becoming a mother still work as a desire to follow the norm of happiness. Mikage is always in the shadow of this happiness, never able to gain it, but she desires to be “proximate” to this happiness through her work.

Being educated in how to be an independent woman by Eriko, Mikage finds her fulfilment in cooking. She dedicates her entire summer to learning how to cook in the Tanabes’ kitchen, learning the foundations, theory and practice (*Kitchen*, p. 57). She spends all the earnings from her part-time job on it and practices cooking until she gets it right. Her enthusiasm – ‘angry, fretful, or cheery’ – and this self-learning lead her to become a professional, as an assistant to a ‘rather famous’ cooking teacher in a cookery school. In her monologue, she describes her passion for cooking:

[T]hat one summer of bliss. In that kitchen.

I was not afraid of burns or scars. I didn’t suffer from sleepless nights. Every day I was thrilled with pleasure at the challenges tomorrow would bring. Memorizing the recipe, I would make carrot cakes that included a bit of my soul. At the supermarket I would stare at a bright red tomato, loving it for dear life. Having known such joy, there was no going back.

No matter what, I want to continue living with the awareness that I will die. Without that, I am not alive. That is what makes the life I have now possible.

Inching one’s way along a steep cliff in the dark: on reaching the highway, one breathes a sign of relief. Just when one can’t take any more, one sees the moonlight. Beauty that seems to infuse itself into the heart: I know about that. (*Kitchen*, pp. 59-60)

Here, she accepts being on the dark side of normative happiness, or as she puts it, the ‘steep cliff in the dark’. This cliff contrasts with the bright lights and ordered lanes of the highway, which could be read as the normative path, designed to speed people to their destination or goals quickly and safely. For Mikage, her bliss is not running to the destination as others do, but in the sensory pleasure of cooking professionally. For her, pleasure is in looking at the redness of a tomato, and feeling the vibrancy of its life. For her, the burns and scars of professional cooking are a trivial price to pay for this pleasure. Mitsuko Egusa, a pioneering feminist scholar in Japanese literature, finds value in that Yoshimoto transfers the kitchen from its association with femininity and domesticity into professional life.⁵⁴ Contrary to her reading, I would argue that it is highly ironic that Mikage enters the professional sphere in as domestic a manner as possible.

Mikage feels ‘incredible’ (*Kitchen*, p. 58) getting the job, as the application process was highly competitive. Mikage wonders why she got it, but soon after she starts working at the cooking school, she understands the reason why she was chosen. Her attitude was different from that of other female students in the school:

⁵⁴ Mitsuko Egusa, ‘Daidokoro (Kicchin)-to-Bungaku-Kenkyū-to’, *Nihon-Kindai-Bungaku*, 38 (1988), 113-117 (p. 114).

Those women lived their lives happily. *They had been taught, probably by caring parents, not to exceed the boundaries of their happiness* regardless of what they were doing. But therefore they could never know real joy. [One cannot choose w]hich is better [...] Everyone lives the way she knows best. What I mean by “their happiness” is living a life untouched as much as possible by the knowledge that we are really, all of us, alone. That’s not a bad thing. Dressed in their aprons, their smiling faces like flowers, learning to cook, absorbed in their little troubles, and perplexities, they fall in love and marry. I think that’s great. I wouldn’t mind that kind of life. Me, when I’m utterly exhausted by it all, when my skin breaks out, on those lonely evenings when I call my friends again and again and nobody’s home, then I despise my own life—my birth, my upbringing, everything. I feel only regret for the whole thing. (*Kitchen*, p. 59, my emphasis)

This scene is significant, as Mikage gains insight into two issues: firstly, that happiness is something that includes/excludes girls, and secondly, the disparity between herself and female students in the school is caused by their education from ‘caring’ (*ibid.*) (heterosexual) parents about happiness. Mikage too had a caring parent in Eriko, but as they are not blood related, Mikage sees their circumstances as fundamentally different. To those girls who come to the cooking school, cooking is a process of preparation to be certified as a bride, marry and perhaps become a mother.

Mikage is nevertheless envious of other girls’ lives, even though they do not know the experience that Mikage calls being ‘thrilled with pleasure’ (*Kitchen*, p. 59), which for her is being engaged in professional cooking, and the self-fulfilment she finds there.

In the English translation, ‘I wouldn’t mind that kind of life’ misses the subtle nuances of the original Japanese. Rather than not ‘mind’ing their choices, Mikage’s statement has more of a subtle favour/jealousy towards the other girls’ choices for their happiness. A closer translation would be ‘I also wish I had that kind of life’ or ‘I think it’s kind of nice’ (*Kicchin*, p. 93). Mikage wishes that she could be happy in “that” way, but she does not have the choice. This subtle wish of Mikage’s is significant, as even though Mikage is successful in her job, she wishes she had the choice not to work. Cooking is her passion, and her love towards the kitchen, despite her inability to gain or be included in their conventional “happiness”, seems to be her subtle desire to be proximate to that normative happiness. Not having any blood relatives, she could not receive the pedagogy of happiness from heterosexual parenting. However, working in the kitchen, not as a chef, but as an assistant to the teacher, being close to the girls who never exceed normative happiness, she is constantly in the shadow of happiness, but as close as she can be. Her occupation is, in a way, engaging in the reproduction of normative happiness for other girls, and in this way, she compensates for her lack of a conventional pedagogy of happiness, lacking blood-related parents.

This subtle wish of Mikage towards being included within the ‘boundaries’

(*Kitchen*, p. 59) of happiness implies the difficulty of imagining a happy life without a bloodline. Because this happiness is possible only by pedagogy from heterosexual parenting, even though she desires it, she is always in its shadow, trying to be as close to it as she can.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have investigated the monolithic interpretations of *Kitchen*, which embrace its new and radical descriptions of family. Such criticism dismisses the significance of the representation of “happiness” in this novel and how “happiness” is complicatedly entangled with the nature of parental pedagogy and women’s choices for reproduction and their careers: in other words, happiness as family construction, to keep spinning the threads of the bloodline. For this reason, my reading, rather than embracing the unusualness of queer family, shows how Mikage is haunted by this idea of happiness in family construction, always lying in the shadow of this normative blueprint of happiness. In the first section of this chapter, I presented the social, economic and cultural context in Japan of the 1980s, in which *Kitchen* was produced. In the mode of

economic abundance, the representation of girlhood was sexualised and attracted attention. This representation of girlhood plays a significant role in the novel, as happiness is taught through nurturing from the (heterosexual) parent. In the third part, to investigate why previous critics focus on the radicalness of non-blood-related family construction, such as the transgender mother Eriko, I explained the history of the Japanese household registration system, *koseki*. However, I cast doubt on these readings, asking why Eriko the transgender mother has to be murdered. After her death, her son Yuichi and Mikage reach to the moment at which they must define their relationship, and rather than interpreting their relationship as ambiguously asexual, I read the relation between them as a reinforcement of heterosexism (Section 5). In the final section, I explained the important yet controversial policy administration, the Equal Employment Opportunity for Men and Women Act in 1985, and how it relates to women's happiness. Pointing out the subtle nuances missed in the English translation, I have read the disparity among women because of their available life choices. Not having the choice to gain happiness in a certain way, Mikage chooses her occupation to be an assistant in a cooking school, which is very much associated with domesticity and "femininity". From this interpretation, I read *Kitchen* as a novel that demonstrates the impossibility of

imagining happiness without reproducing bloodlines. The idea of happiness haunts the protagonist's mind throughout the novel, and its lack still makes her desire to be proximate to it. We can conclude that the representation of women's choices and their happiness depicted as in the 1980s is still reflected in the 2010s, as we can see in the continuing low percentage of women at the top level in business, and in the refusal to register a child born of a transgender father in the *koseki* system, and this suggests to readers the difficulty of imagining/creating happiness without recreating bloodlines in Japan.

Chapter Four

The Troubled Monstrous Mother:

Maternal Desire, Technology and Happiness in

Jeanette Winterson's *Sexing the Cherry* (1989)

There is something to be said for this childless quiet life.

(Winterson, *Sexing the Cherry*, p. 156)

Introduction

In Chapter Three, we observed how blood-relations are valued in Japanese culture, looking at the *koseki* household system. Through reading the social discourse in the 1980s about sexual identity and *koseki*, as well as Yoshimoto's *Kitchen*, I examined the exclusive quality of "happiness" in the protagonists' circumstances; being an orphan for Mikage and Yuichi and being a widower for Yuji (later Eriko) are both experiences that are "out of line" with normative happiness. My reading of *Kitchen* also showed the difficulty of imagining new kinds of happiness, especially from the death of the queer and eccentric transgender mother, Eriko. This final chapter will also scrutinise an

unusual mother figure, Dog-Woman in Winterson's fourth novel *Sexing the Cherry* (1989). Dog-Woman is an ambiguous and complex figure, especially regarding her relation with maternal desire, her excessively huge body and her happiness. I will argue through this chapter that Winterson's *Sexing* explores the way in which maternal desires are still powerfully and perpetually produced in social discourse, by looking at how heterosexism creates such continuous narrativity. Through the character of Dog-Woman and the representation of grafting, Winterson disentangles how women's desire for maternity is dependent on a certain kind of embodiment. In this way, maternal desire is still inseparable from happiness for women and for society. Furthermore, with complicatedly interwoven narratives, *Sexing* challenges the social encouragement of individualism, and in this sense, *Sexing* can be read as a critique of the individualism encouraged by a neoliberal state. As we will see, Winterson seeks an alternative solidarity between women in dialogues and parallels between Dog-Woman in the seventeenth century and the female scientist in 1989, as well as in the metaphorical representation of paper dolls.

Throughout Winterson's oeuvre, representations of problematic mothers and detachment from these mothers are conveyed. *Sexing* is not an exception, with a figure

of a problematic, and monstrous mother. This mother, who does not know her name, and calls herself Dog-Woman, adopts a child she calls Jordan. The story is set during the English Civil War and Restoration. Dog-Woman's narrative is a kind of historiographic metafiction, as readers see her personal involvement in historical events: she confronts Puritans, sees Charles I being executed, and her story ends with the great fire of London. Jordan's parts of the narrative, in contrast, involve a fantasy world of myth and fairy tale, including the twelve dancing princesses and the story of Artemis, as he is on a quest to find exotic fruit for the British Empire, and to find Fortunata, the youngest of the dancing princesses. At the end, the novel moves to modern day, and a boy called Nicholas Jordan and an ecologist remember their past lives as Jordan and Dog-Woman. Winterson challenges linear narrative, as these past and present characters meet each other, and identity is suggested to cross over boundaries of space and time. The novel is structured by these four narrators, and each of their sections begins with an image of a fruit: Jordan is represented by a pineapple, Dog-Woman by a banana, Nicholas Jordan by a split pineapple and the female ecologist by a split banana. As well as these fruit images, the sexing of the cherry is a key image in the novel.

In the following sections, first I will briefly review how closely Winterson and her

works relate to neoliberalism, expanding on the discussion of Winterson in the thesis'

Introduction. Secondly, I will demonstrate that *Sexing*'s interest is indeed in

"happiness", especially by rewriting the "happy endings" of fairy tales (the twelve

dancing princesses) and mythology (Artemis), and this analysis leads in to a focus on

the narrativity of heterosexism. The third section examines the controversial and

monstrous mother figure of Dog-Woman by introducing other criticism on the effect of

parodies. However, I will argue that this criticism does not pay sufficient attention to

Dog-Woman's desire for maternal experience and its complicated relation with her

happiness. By describing a monstrous (infertile) mother and her encounter with the new

(reproductive) technology of "grafting" for the cherry, Winterson denaturalises the

intimate relationship between the female body, maternity and women's happiness.

Finally, I will contextualise the depiction of the grafting and the interwoven narratives

of Dog-Woman and the female scientist into 1980s' activism, and discuss their gentle

connection towards social change.

1. Thatcher, Neoliberalism in the 1980s and Winterson's Critiques of Them

As we saw in the Introduction of this thesis, Winterson began her profession as a

writer in the 1980s. In various ways, Winterson is a prominent figure in the eighties: a feminist writer who has inherited rewriting mythology and fairy tales from earlier writers (such as Angela Carter and Margaret Atwood); a new rising “lesbian” writer who breaks ground with new paradigms of female sexuality; a “postmodern” writer whose works explore the boundaries of various fields. Not only the numbers of labels attached to her as a writer, many of which she is most likely unwilling to embrace, but her “success” as a writer, mark her out as a key figure of the 1980s.

Thatcherism plays an important role in Winterson’s life. In 1979, soon after she got her place at the University of Oxford, Winterson voted for Margaret Thatcher, empowered by her class mobility. Winterson thought, ‘If a grocer’s daughter could be prime minister, then a girl like me could write a book that would be on the shelves of English Literature in Prose A – Z’ (*Why*, p. 138). However, later in her life in her memoir, Winterson recognises what were the consequences of Thatcher’s policies: ‘I did not know that Thatcherism would fund its economic miracle by selling off all our nationalised assets and industries. [/] I did not realise the consequences of privatising society’ (*Why*, p. 140). We can see the tensions of neoliberalism and Thatcherism in Winterson’s novels in the 1980s, in particular in relation to maternity and happiness.

2. Rewriting “Happy Endings” in Fairy Tales and Mythology

One of the key issues in Winterson’s works is her challenge towards the inseparable relationship between normative happiness, the female body and the female experience of intimacy, through her rewritings of fairy tales and ancient Greek mythology.

Winterson focuses on rewriting and debunking phallocentric plots with gender politics.¹

In this section, we will see Winterson’s skepticism about happiness, especially the “happy ending” in her rewritings of fairy tales and mythology. Happy endings are reversed, twisted, and redeployed in this novel. Namely, the happy ending is, for her, the very start of story-(re)telling.

In *Sexing*, the variety of Winterson’s critical insights into happy endings can be seen in her retellings of the myth of Artemis and the fairy tale of the twelve dancing princesses. As Jan Rosemergy notes, there are three versions of the original story of Artemis: Orion and Artemis have a discus-throwing game; Orion tries to rape one of Artemis’s servant and Artemis kills him; or Orion tries to rape Artemis and he is killed

¹ Other women writer such as Angela Carter also rewrite fairy tales, as in *The Bloody Chamber* (1979).

by a giant scorpion. In the original, Artemis is punished 'for usurping masculine ways'.²

Winterson rewrites rebelliously against this masculinist ending. In her story, Artemis asked Zeus, her father, to give her a bow, arrows and an island on which she could be free from any interference. During her journey, she finds her persona as a woman, a child, a queen, and a hunter who does not believe that happiness lies in marriage and children (*Sexing*, p. 150). However, during her time hunting on the island, Orion approaches, and rapes her. Artemis performs a 'swift and simple' revenge on him with a scorpion (*Sexing*, p. 152). Rosemergy asserts that this rewriting, mixing together two versions of the original story, shows Artemis's ability to transcend victimisation through getting revenge for herself.³

Another example of skepticism about happiness in *Sexing* is seen in the story of the twelve dancing princesses. After Jordan meets Fortunata, the youngest princess of the twelve, he starts travelling across time and space in search of her. When he arrives at a well underneath which eleven princesses live, the oldest tells Jordan stories of her sisters and herself:

You know that eventually a clever prince caught us flying from the window.
We had given him a sleeping draught but he only pretended to drink it. He

² Makinen, p. 104.

³ Jan Rosemergy, 'Navigating the Interior Journey: The Fiction of Jeanette Winterson', in *British Women Writing Fiction*, ed. by Abby Werlock (London: University of Alabama Press, 2000), pp. 248-69.

had eleven brothers and we were all given in marriage, one to each brother, and as it says lived happily ever after. We did, but not with our husbands. (*Sexing*, p. 48)

The eldest princess ran away from her husband with her mermaid girlfriend; the husband of the second princess loved boys; the fourth princess married her ‘handsome and clever’ husband, saying ‘I wanted to love him: I was determined to be happy with him. I had not been happy before’ (*Sexing*, p. 51). However, she found out he only loves women who are ‘inmates in a lunatic asylum’ (*ibid.*). The fifth one was a witch who lived with Rapunzel in a castle. They used Rapunzel’s hair to climb up to the castle instead of a ladder because ‘they were in love’ (*Sexing*, p. 52). The tenth princess killed her husband by turning into a falcon, as her husband had treated her as one; the eleventh princess found out that her husband was in love with another woman, and yet he said he still loved the princess too. When the eleventh princess asked him to leave home, the prince patiently answered that ‘he couldn’t be expected to make himself homeless because he was in love’ with another woman (*Sexing*, p. 59). The princess answered:

‘Medea did,’ I said, ‘and Romeo and Juliet and Cressida, and Ruth in the Bible.’
 He asked me to shut up. He wasn’t a hero.
 ‘Then why should I be a heroine?’
 He didn’t answer, he plucked at the blanket.
 I considered my choices.
 I could stay and be unhappy and humiliated.

I could leave and be unhappy and dignified.
 I could beg him to touch me again.
 I could live in hope and die of bitterness.
 I took some things and left. It wasn't easy, it was my home too.
 (*Sexing*, p. 59)

The eleventh princess criticises her husband for not rescuing her (like Prince Charming normally does), and she also rejects being a heroine ('Why should I be a heroine?'). As such, the stories of the eleven princesses (the last princess is missing) question the quality of happiness in their relationships with princes, endorsing their freedom to choose their own lives for happiness. Artemis also takes initiatives for her own life: she envied men because she 'knew about heroes and the home-makers, the great division that made life possible' (*Sexing*, p. 150). Neither the princesses nor Artemis the queen are given their happiness by heroes (prince/husband) as the usual stories go.⁴ In addition, it is interesting that none of their happiness in relation to intimacy involves reproduction, or normative heterosexual relationships. Therefore, it can be said these rewritings of fairy tales and mythology show a skepticism toward happiness, which is considered in the text as a norm for women; the happy endings of the stories tell of the

⁴ It is worth noting that in the 2010s there are various rewritings of fairy tales and princess stories in major production, such as Disney's *Frozen* (2013) in which "true love's kiss" to free a princess from a curse comes from her sister, not Prince Charming. *Maleficent* (2013) is also a retelling of *Sleeping Beauty* from the perspective of the villainess. Another example can be seen in the TV show *Once Upon a Time*, which started in 2011, and shows fairy-tale characters in a modern American setting. In 2014, the musical *Into the Woods* has been made into a film, also by Disney, and also twists fairy-tale stories. The original musical was produced in 1987. I have argued that the culture we see in the 2010s is the harvest of the 1980s, and it might be accurate to say that women's experimental rewritings of fairy tales in the 1980s have finally become incorporated into major media in the 2010s.

gender division of labour in society, and the princesses and Artemis make their “choices” not to follow the happy endings that the usual story leads to. In fact, contrary to these princesses and Artemis, Dog-Woman is a character who is totally unaware of how happiness calls one to follow it, and she still tries to follow normative happiness, as I will demonstrate in the section below.

3. The Controversy of Dog-Woman: Her Monstrous Body and the Effects of Parodies

Dog-Woman is significantly different from other protagonists, such as the princesses and Artemis in the novel, because of her anomalous body, and her obsession with social norms, especially normativity in sexuality and social order. For these reasons, Dog-Woman is centrally a complex and controversial figure, yet through this complexity we will see how perpetually heteronormativity comes to one’s life as a story. Previous critics have focused on interpreting Dog-Woman through the lens of the effect of parodies. Through the depiction of her fierce body and her paradoxical character, Winterson tries to denaturalise the inseparable relationship between the female body, maternity and happiness through the various parodies she cites. In doing so, we can see

Winterson's experiment to find an alternative sphere of happiness.

Dog-Woman's exceptional body and her attitude toward her world are indeed elements that make her as radically controversial figure. In contrast to the twelve flying princesses' weightlessness, Dog-Woman is heavier than an elephant at a circus and as huge as a mountain (*Sexing*, p. 20). Her clitoris is the size of an orange and her nipples are as big as walnuts (*Sexing*, p. 121). She thinks Jordan was proud of her 'because no other child had a mother who could hold a dozen oranges in her mouth at once' (*Sexing*, p. 21). She self-consciously reflects on her physical appearance:

How hideous am I?

My nose is flat, my eyebrows are heavy. I have only a few teeth and those are a poor show, being black and broken. (*Sexing*, p. 19)

Winterson, in her memoir, acknowledges that Dog-Woman is one reading of her own foster mother, whom she had a problematic relationship with because of her sexuality and her mother's devotional belief in Christianity, and as such, key issues of maternity are highlighted in the figure of Dog-Woman (*Why*, p. 36). Similar to Winterson's own foster mother, Dog-Woman is enormous and eccentric, and her eccentricity can be seen through the novel: she is an independent woman who earns money from dog-fighting in the 1600s; she killed her father when he tried to sell her; during the Restoration, she

easily kills Puritan men; she has such power that she catapults Samson the elephant into the sky at the circus. She is feared by Puritan men, who have the privilege to judge what and who is considered desirable at that time, and who label her as monstrous and deviant. Equally, she has strong bonds with other women (mostly prostitutes) and her adopted son, Jordan.

What makes Dog-Woman's representations more perplexing is her conservatism. She is a Royalist, against the Puritan's Revolution, and her son is a Royal gardener. Moreover, when she finds homosexual intercourse between Preacher Scroggs and Firebrace the Puritan, playing 'Caesar and Brutus' in her friends' whore house, she articulates her disgust, describing it as an 'ungodly pair' (*Sexing*, pp. 96-98), and she kills them in revenge for the executed King Charles I. Her hostility towards same-sex intimacy implies that she has firmly internalised normative heterosexuality.⁵

Dog-Woman's outrageous body and her eccentric attitudes towards the world encourage feminist critics to provide various interpretations of her: a parody of Bakhtin's carnivalesque body, a feminist heroine, a womanly hero, and, closest to my own interpretation, a parody of maternity. On the other hand, it is dubious to simply

⁵ That is to say, in a novel that challenges the boundaries of sexualities in many of its characters and events, Dog-Woman appears to firmly believe in the "naturalness" of heterosexual relationships and the "unnaturalness" of other kinds of relationships.

embrace her as an emancipating figure that subverts gender binaries and roles. We see her conservatism through her attitude as a Royalist and therefore an upholder of patriarchy, her antipathy for homosexuality, and particularly in her desire to have intimacy with men. As such, Winterson's conservative twist on Dog-Woman's character causes controversy in reading the figure, especially when we look at the effects of the parodies she performs.

Tracing a number of critics on *Sexing* and contemporary critical and queer theories, we will see that the central issues in reading Dog-Woman are to read her as a kind of parody of male-dominated representations, which debunks the ideology of the traditional female grotesque. Linda Hutcheon, in the same year *Sexing* was published, asserts that an effect of parody is to call the value of the original into question. What calls our attention in postmodern parodies is their politics of representation, such as 'ironic feminizations of traditional or canonic male representations of the so-called generic human—"Man."'⁶ Hutcheon writes:

through a double process of installing and ironizing, parody signals how present representations come from past ones and what ideological consequences derive from both continuity and difference [...] With parody—as with any form of reproduction—the notion of the original as rare, single, and valuable (in aesthetic or commercial terms) is called into question.

⁶ Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism* 2nd edn. (London, New York: Routledge, 1989), p. 94.

This does not mean that art has lost its meaning and purpose, but that it will inevitably have a new and different significance.⁷

Parody is indeed an effective way to politicise the difference from the ‘original’ signifier that has gained value through the male-dominated language system. However, Hutcheon assumes that the canonic representation is the ‘original’, despite her consciousness of its ideological value. Rather, what is to be called into question is the very concept of the ‘original’, and the heart of the issue is to investigate *how* the original becomes the original, in other words, *how* male-orientated discourses have been naturalised.

Judith Butler famously argues that a putative ‘original’ is naturalised through repetition, citation and recirculation. She asserts the possibility of parody as a valid tactic to destabilise the illusion of gender identity:

Parody by itself is not subversive, and there must be a way to understand what makes certain kinds of parodic repetitions effectively disruptive, truly troubling, and which repetitions become domesticated and recirculated as instruments of cultural hegemony.⁸

Butler explains that gender is performative and all gender identities are volatile, and parody has the potential to re-create meaning by destabilising compulsory heterosexism.

In this sense, the parodies that Dog-Woman performs, as proposed by feminist criticism,

⁷ Hutcheon, p. 101.

⁸ Butler, p. 189.

function as signifiers that disrupt the norm and heterosexuality. Dog-Woman is interpreted as a feminist heroine, or a womanly hero, who politicises how the signifier she represents is gendered, and stabilises its meaning. One of the parodies by which feminist critics interprets Dog-Woman is as a parody of Bakhtin's carnivalesque grotesque.

Originally, the concept of the grotesque body in the carnivalesque mode is explained by Mikhail Bakhtin in his book *Rabelais and His World* (1965). He analyses the carnivalesque mode mainly in Rabelais' literary works in medieval Europe and he summarises three essentials of the grotesque style: excessiveness, hyperbolism and earthliness, which come together as the 'pregnant hag'.⁹ This pregnant grotesque body indicates the circulation of life and death: Bakhtin argues that, through giving birth from the mother's body, the boundaries between the maternal body and the world become ambiguous. This aberrant body is always in the process of generating and creating itself and at the same time, it is produced and created by the world: the body swallows the world and the world swallows the body, in the Bakhtin's carnivalesque mode.

From a feminist viewpoint, Bakhtin's argument about the grotesque female body is

⁹ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* [1965], trans. by Helen Iswolsky (Massachusetts: M.I.T. Press, 1973), p. 269.

problematic. Re-consideration, development, and redeployment of this grotesque theory of the carnivalesque has been adapted into feminism and cultural studies; a number of literary critics argue that this mode is extremely effective in destabilising normative gender categories and sexual politics in postmodern women's writing.¹⁰ Mary Russo is one of the critics who argues for the significance of female grotesque embodiment in the carnivalesque mode.¹¹ Russo observes that the carnivalesque body raises questions of materiality and women's unreasonable assignment to the body in opposition to the male subject. Parody of the 'pregnant hag' in a carnivalesque mode enables the destabilisation and disturbance of normative gender roles and categorisation, and this parody works in the representation of Dog-Woman.

Sonya Andermahr is one of the critics who discusses Dog-Woman's grotesque embodiment and her hybridity, her name mixing up animal and woman, in a carnivalesque manner. In this way, her grotesque physicality has drawn attention to her

¹⁰ For example, see Mary Russo, *Female Grotesque: Risk, Excess, and Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Christina Britzolakis, 'Angela Carter's Fetishism', in *The Infernal Desires of Angela Carter: Fiction, Femininity, Feminism*, ed. by Joseph Bristow and Trev Lynn Broughton (London, Longman Publishing Group: 1997), pp. 43-59; Linden Peach, *Angela Carter* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998); Paulina Palmer, 'From "Coded Mannequin" to "Bird Woman": Angela Carter's Magic Flight', in *Women Reading Women's Writing*, ed. by Sue Roe (Brighton: Harvester, 1987), pp. 179-205; Waugh, *Harvest of the Sixties*, pp.192-195. Each work deals with arguments on the carnivalesque effects of the monstrous giantess.

¹¹ She explains that there are two kinds of grotesque: carnival and the uncanny. Quoting from Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes, she introduces a conceptual shift in the grotesque in the nineteenth century, from the vague and mysterious adjectival category of "experience", into horror of the interior of human beings. Mary Russo, *Female Grotesque: Risk, Excess, and Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 6.

excessive femaleness.¹² According to Andermahr, Winterson deploys this narrative in *Sexing* as a strategy to subvert and destabilise Dog-Woman's gender category, not only to demonstrate Bakhtin's examples of 'abjection', but to transform it into 'an image of power'.¹³ In other words, in Winterson's carnivalesque narrative in *Sexing*, Bakhtin's pregnant hag turns into a hag who is proactive in beating up normative men with her giant body. Therefore, for Andermahr, Dog-Woman is a feminist heroine, with her aggressive behaviour toward men, such as biting off a stranger's penis when asked to perform fellatio to pleasure him (*Sexing*, p. 40), and swallowing a man into her vagina when she tries to have sex (*Sexing*, p. 120). This swallowing scene indeed analogises Bakhtin's pregnant hag who swallows the world and vice versa. Bakhtin claims that the grotesque body blurs the boundary between its skin and the rest of the world. Andermahr proclaims that these instances of Dog-Woman's behaviour represent 'a transgression of normative gender roles' such that 'no man can suppress' her.¹⁴

Interpreting Dog-Woman as a proactive and transgressive woman is indeed a reversal, but not a subversion, of the conventional gender role. Moreover, Andermahr's interpretation of Dog-Woman's transgression only considers her gender behaviour, and

¹² Russo, p. 68.

¹³ Sonya Andermahr, 'Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit, *The Passion* and *Sexing the Cherry*', in her *Jeanette Winterson* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 49-75 (pp. 71-72).

¹⁴ Andermahr, pp. 73 -75.

does not fully consider the account in the text of her sexuality and desire for reproduction. Andermahr dismisses the central issue that Dog-Woman is unable to reproduce in a carnivalesque manner, despite inheriting the excessive female body of Bakhtin's pregnant hag, who is always reproducing, generating, and continuously expanding. It is important to find the connection between her inability to reproduce and her outrageous and mountainous body (*Sexing*, p. 20), along with her transgressive gender behaviour.

Contrary to Andermahr's reading, Lynne Pearce rejects the notion of Dog-Woman as a feminist heroine. Pearce considers Dog-Woman as an upholder of the patriarchy because she fights for the counter-revolutionists and royal family during the Civil War.¹⁵ Her conservatism is associated with a preservation of the constitutional status quo. For Pearce, if Dog-Woman were a feminist heroine, it would not make sense for her to fight for the patriarchy.

Pointing out the aspect of Dog-Woman's as the womanly hero, Lucie Armitt challenges Pearce's argument in her work 'The Grotesque Utopia' in *Contemporary Women's Fiction and the Fantastic* (2000). Against Pearce, Armitt argues that

¹⁵ Cited in Lucie Armitt, 'The Grotesque Utopia', in *Contemporary Women's Fiction and the Fantastic* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), p. 19.

Dog-Woman is a feminist heroine but parodies a hero, namely, she is a womanly hero:

Yes, Dog-Woman fights for the King against the puritans, yes, she is outrageous, dangerous, volatile and excessive, but she is a woman fully aware of being a woman, [...] Dog-Woman, though purportedly fighting for the King, actually fights for herself, and for those readers sympathetic to her she seems to be fighting for us too. Bearing in mind that the enemy is patriarchy.¹⁶

Armitt accurately compares Jordan's heroism with that of Dog-Woman. Nicholas

Jordan in 1989 (in the parallel narrative of Jordan's, in contemporary times) describes

heroism by looking at *The Boys' Book of Heroes* in which William the Conqueror,

Christopher Columbus, Francis Drake, and Lord Nelson's historical achievements are

described (*Sexing*, pp. 131-132). This is his favourite boyhood book and Winterson

seems to critically represent the gendered assignment of heroism to men and parodies

'masculinist-wish-fulfilment narratives', just as we have seen in the retelling of Artemis

and the princesses.¹⁷ Jordan in the twentieth century narrates:

If you're a hero you can be an idiot, behave badly, ruin your personal life, have any number of mistresses and talk about yourself all the time, and nobody minds. Heroes are immune. They have wide shoulders and plenty of hair and wherever they go a crowd gathers. Mostly they enjoy the company of other men, although attractive women are part of their reward. (*Sexing*, p. 133)

¹⁶ Armitt, p. 20.

¹⁷ Armitt, p. 20.

Armitt also points out that Dog-Woman is a womanly hero, not a feminist 'heroine'. 'If you are a heroine such behavior is not heroic but monstrous, heroism not being the domain of the heroine. Her role is to be passively *desired* and *adored*, in other words, *perfected*: dead even when saved'.¹⁸ Thus Dog-Woman's action-packed fighting scene with the Puritans indeed provides a parody of heroism, but because Dog-Woman is a woman, she is a monster. The various arguments by Andermahr, Pearce and Armitt that surround Dog-Woman's parodies are all accompanied by discussion of her transgression of gender roles and her giant embodiment. However, no attempt by the critics above was made to investigate the association between Dog-Woman's infertile body and maternity. In contrast, Elizabeth Langland's account of Dog-Woman's parody and her failures to perform maternity is close to my own:

The Dog-Woman's performance of gendered traits of tenderness, charity, and the maternal reveals the extent to which those things seen as inherent to woman and to femininity are produced within a cultural context that scripts behavioral norms out of relative body size, mass, and strength. Put another way, the anatomically huge physical body that readily cites gender norms of tenderness or charity or maternality while threatening or performing mayhem destabilizes the conventional meanings of those terms and exposes their cultural construction.¹⁹

She uses Butler's argument on performativity to consider the disparity between the

¹⁸ Armitt, p. 18, Armitt's emphasis.

¹⁹ Elizabeth Langland, 'Sexing the Text: Narrative Drag as Feminist Poetics and Politics in Jeanette Winterson's *Sexing the Cherry*', *Narrative*, 5.1 (1997), 99-107 (p. 102).

gender identity Dog-Woman tries to perform and the one her giant body actually produces. Langland, however, does not engage with the close relationship between the anomalous female body and Dog-Woman's *desire* for maternal intimacy. In other words, I will argue, not only Dog-Women's gender behaviour and identity, but also the issues of her sexuality need to be accounted for to consider how "happiness" calls her to follow the norm for intimacy. It is imperative to consider the significance of Dog-Woman's aspiration and her failure to pursue normative happiness, specifically maternal desire. In this sense, the monstrosity she represents with her excessive body repeats the essentialist account of the intimate relationship between maternal desire and the female body; simultaneously, her physical monstrosity produces a disparity between her (maternal) desire and her inability to reproduce.

To fully understand Dog-Woman's maternal desire, readers need to pay attention to seemingly small details, such as the representation of the medallion that she gave Jordan, her adopted son. When Dog-Woman first finds Jordan on the riverbank of the Thames, she gives him a medallion on which the quotation 'remember the rock from whence ye are hewn and the pit from whence ye are digged' (*Sexing*, p. 3) is engraved. Later in this novel, Jordan gives this medallion to his fantastical lover, Fortunata

(*Sexing*, p. 112). This puzzling engraving on the medallion shows Dog-Woman's parody of maternity, and it indicates Dog-Woman's desire to follow "the right way" to produce descendants. Winterson is quoting here from the Old Testament, Isaiah:

*Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord:
look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye
are digged.
Look unto Abraham your father and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called
him alone, and blessed him and increased him.*²⁰

Winterson quotes Abraham's story in relation to the transformation from his childless life into the numerous creation of his descendants with his wife Sarah, at the age of a hundred years old. In a similar manner to Dog-Woman, their (old) bodies make reproduction unlikely, but they are given the happiness of a child as a miracle by God.²¹ The descriptions of pit and rock in the quote can be read metaphorically: the hole/pit as a vagina and a birth canal, and the rock as a mother's body. From this description, reproduction through the vagina and birth canal is the way of 'righteousness' that people should 'hear/hearken' and 'follow'. Winterson here twists this biblical story: Dog-Woman is also one who desires to hear and follow this calling of happiness through reproduction, like Abraham and Sarah. However, she did/could

²⁰ Isaiah 51:1-2, my emphasis.

²¹ In her first novel, *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, Winterson writes that Jeanette's mother said 'this child is mine from the Lord' (*Oranges*, p. 10). The image of the child as a miracle from God strongly relates these two novels.

not give birth to Jordan, due to her inability to have normative intercourse with her monstrous body. As such, giving the medallion to Jordan marks both her maternal desire and her inability to engage with normative reproduction.

Despite her inability, Dog-Woman aspires to a physical maternal bond and kinship. She tells us:

When a woman gives birth her waters break and she pours out the child and the child runs free. I would have liked to pour out a child from my body but you have to have a man for that and there's no man who's a match for me.
(*Sexing*, pp. 3-4)

Her unique embodiment, which disconnects her from procreation, prevents her from having “normal” intercourse. When she tries to mate, she swallows a gentleman who could ‘not find the sides of [her] cunt and felt like a tadpole in a pot’ (*Sexing*, p. 120), with him saying ‘You’re too big, madam’ (*Sexing*, p. 121). Dog-Woman is a figure whose grotesque embodiment disconnects her from the ability to reproduce.

Nonetheless, Dog-Woman seems to be incorporated into the ideology of heterosexism, aspiring to bear a blood-related child. In this sense, she cannot achieve normative maternal happiness by reproducing through her actual body. Dog-Woman giving the medallion to her adopted son can be seen, then, to indicate her detachment from the female body and reproduction. Through Dog-Woman’s parodic effort at maternity and

its failures, Winterson destabilises the entangled connection between the female body and reproduction, which is in place in order to achieve “normative” maternal happiness, through Dog-Woman’s monstrosity. In other words, a normative female body is a component of achieving maternal happiness: to achieve her maternal desire, Dog-Woman needs to have a normative body – reproductive, with the ability to have “standard” heterosexual sex – and Winterson challenges this entanglement of desire and the body in the text through the representation of grafting.

4. Denaturalising: Grafting and IVF as New Maternal Possibilities

Winterson challenges heterosexism by providing an alternative way for reproduction and maternity, with the representation of the grafting. In grafting, another kind of life is created by combining different kinds of the same species. Jordan, Dog-Woman’s adopted son, is working for a Royal herbalist Tradescant in Wimbledon, and he explains to his mother how grafting works for reproduction:

Grafting is the means whereby a plant, perhaps tender or uncertain, is fused into a hardier member of its strain, and so the two take advantage of each other and produce a third kind, without seed or parent. In this way fruits have been made resistant to disease and certain plants have learned to grow where previously they could not. (*Sexing*, p. 84)

Description of the technique of grafting can be read as Winterson's strategic criticism and avoidance of reproduction through heterosexual intercourse. Jordan tells his mother about a grafted cherry and at the end of this conversation, Jordan tells his mother, '[b]ut the cherry grew, and we have sexed it and it is female' (*Sexing*, p. 85), although it 'had not been born from a seed after grafting' (*ibid.*).

While Laura Doan does not talk about reproduction, her analysis of the grafting accompanies my argument on reproduction. Doan considers *Sexing* as the most successful 'lesbian postmodern text' among Winterson's works, and believes the image of the grafting is exceptionally valuable as a lesbian strategy. Procreation through heterosexuality is confronted with this image of the grafting. Although the validity of the strategy to defeat heterosexualism is limited, the image victoriously questions the norm and attenuates the conceptual foundation of heteronormativity. Doan cites Jordan's cross-dressing to analogue Butler's argument on drag. She writes:

Winterson's project then, encapsulated in the act of grafting the cherry, envisions the contours and logic of a lesbian postmodern that collapses binarisms and creates a space not just for lesbians but for productive, dynamic, and fluid gender pluralities and sexual positionings.²²

²² Laura Doan, 'Jeanette Winterson's *Sexing the Postmodern*', in *The Lesbian Postmodern*, ed. by Doan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), pp. 137-156 (p. 153).

However, as well as seeing the grafting as a lesbian strategy for a new alternative to binary thinking of identities, I contend the image of grafting should be read in relation to Dog-Woman's deviant body and her desire to engage in a maternal bond.

Dog-Woman's reaction towards the grafting, when Jordan shows it to her, exposes the complexity and dilemma of heterosexism. In the conversation with Jordan, Dog-Woman feels discomfort with the idea of the grafting and does not hesitate to show her conservatism:

‘Thou mayest as well try to make a union between thyself and me by sewing us at the hip,’ and then, ‘Of what sex is that monster you are making?’

I tried to explain to her that the tree would be female although it had not been from seed, but she said such things had no gender and were confusion to themselves.

‘*Let the world mate of its own accord,*’ she said, ‘*or not at all.*’ (*Sexing*, p. 85, my emphasis)

Dog-Woman considers grafting as unnatural and monstrous; she asks what kind of gender the cherry would be with grafting and at the end she says to let the world follow its own rules (*Sexing*, p. 85). Her utterance shows that Dog-Woman is actually drawn into the call of [hetero]sexism, having no doubt in believing that heterosexuality and reproduction through heterosexual intercourse are “universal” facts.²³

²³ [Hetero]sexism is Kazuko Takemura's term, used to emphasise the interconnectedness of heterosexist issues to sexist issues. Kazuko Takemura, *Ai-ni-tsuite* [On Love] (Tokyo: Iwanami, 2002), pp. 3-4.

Kazuko Takemura rephrases this “universalism” of compulsory heterosexuality as ‘a collective story’. She explains that it is indeed a shivering and shocking experience when one faces the volatility of what one has believed to be ‘normal’.²⁴ The collective story arises as ‘a story’ *in nowhere but everywhere* through individual stories. In other words, it appears as if there are expected experiences that we need to experience, just because everyone else does. For example, happy marriage could be one of these collective stories; marriage is happiness and after marriage, couples consider that they want to have children because they (think they) make you happy. However, there are always fractures between a collective story and individual stories. Namely, the moment when one finds disagreements between individual experiences/stories and the collective story, it can be the very moment that one recognises that the collective story is always already and merely fictional and metaphorical. Moreover, as Ahmed asserts, as discussed in the Introduction, often people who encounter the inability to achieve the norms of happiness, nonetheless continue to believe in them: ‘The demand for happiness is increasingly articulated as a demand to return to social ideals, as if what explains the crisis of happiness [namely, the failure to find happiness through the means

²⁴ Takemura, p. 3.

one expects to] is not the failure of these ideals, but our failure to follow them.’²⁵ As we will see, Dog-Woman is indeed one who fails to achieve normative happiness, and yet continues to believe in the ideals that uphold it. Through the process of narrating the collective story, what is believed as universal is revealed to only be constructed as ‘fact’, ‘truth’, and ‘embodiment’.²⁶ For example, the idea of women as “naturally” maternal (“mother nature”) is merely metaphorical, but the idea works as the collective story that one is encouraged to have.

Dog-Woman’s reference to the grafting as a ‘monster’ demonstrates how she misrecognises the conspiracy of heterosexism as “natural”. In other words, although she repeatedly experiences disagreements between her individual story and collective stories about marriage and intimate relationships (*Sexing*, p. 32), she is still brought into the collective story/ heterosexism. Despite Dog-Woman’s experience of being treated as ugly and ‘hideous’ (*Sexing*, p. 19) and although Dog-Woman is conscious of her transgressive embodiment, behaviour, and gender role, she still persists in her belief in the normative heterosexual coupling and reproduction that the collective story requires her to follow. The scene that Dog-Woman encounters in the grafting is indeed for her

²⁵ Ahmed, p. 7.

²⁶ Takemura, p. 3.

shivering and shocking, since this is the very moment that her longing for reproduction through her own body is no longer necessary, and its fictionality is revealed.

Thus, the representation of grafting in relation to Dog-Woman's anomalous body is Winterson's experiment to detach women's physical experience from the desire for maternal intimacy. In other words, the new technology of grafting challenges old models of maternity, and as I will demonstrate, this negotiation is reflected by the social discourse of new reproductive technologies in the 1980s.

Doan concludes her argument on the grafting by saying that Winterson's project demonstrates what lesbian theory and cultural practice offer postmodernism:

Winterson's writing is a tactical use of parody, as Judith Butler develops the term in *Gender Trouble*. I contend that Doan's conclusion can fruitfully be expanded by considering the historical context of the 1980s. The socio-political context of the 80s includes the signs of a detachment between the female body and reproduction, and, moreover, the representation of grafting can be read as a reflection on the new technology of reproduction: In Vitro Fertilisation.

The representation of the detachment of the female body from reproduction in *Sexing*, as well as the description of grafting, allude to the controversy surrounding this

new reproductive technology in the 1980s, in a similar manner to debates around surrogacy, as I discussed in the introduction to Chapter One on Lessing. In IVF, eggs are taken from a woman's body and fertilised by sperm outside of the woman's body. IVF began as a treatment for infertility when a couple fails to get pregnant by "natural" methods. When the eggs are fertilised, they are put in the mother's uterus and pregnancy continues as "normal". Research on IVF started in the early 1950s; however, the first successful practice of IVF happened in 1978. Robert G. Edwards, a physiologist in the UK, developed this treatment, and successfully produced the first "test tube baby". Twelve more babies were born in Monash University in 1981; this indicates that the 1980s are indeed a new era of reproduction. While there were a number of controversies surrounding IVF from an ethical viewpoint, such as the commercialisation of reproductive technologies and the risk of genetic disorders, this technology has broadened the possibility of having babies to women who have already had their menopause and to homosexual citizens. This use of IVF, in relation to the grafting in *Sexing*, opens up a possibility for queer parenthood and broadens access to the "normative" happiness of maternity. Technologies like IVF have shaken the patriarchal image of "mother nature", but simultaneously reinforce the idea of

parenthood as happiness. This is the dawn of what Lisa Duggan calls ‘homonormativity’, an assimilation by homosexuals towards the heterosexual marital and family system.²⁷ This neoliberal attitude to encourage an individual to achieve their own happiness is an effort to expand the candidates for happiness, which works as a certain norm.²⁸ I would suggest that Edwards’ winning of the Nobel Prize for Physiology or Medicine in 2010 is the positive response from neoliberal societies to this reproductive technology, in a similar manner to surrogacy as discussed above.

The 1980s are also the decade when more “equal” labour opportunities were encouraged in business and the public sphere. This can be correlated to a tendency towards later marriage and/or non-married couples, which causes fewer children to be born.²⁹ However, this “equal” involvement of women in the public sphere does not necessarily mean their liberation from expectations of reproduction and marriage. In other words, marriage and reproduction are still considered as valid criteria for happiness. In this historical context, IVF could have been considered a positive and useful tool to enhance reproductive options. Winterson’s attempt to separate the female

²⁷ Lisa Duggan, *The Twilight of Equality?: Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack On Democracy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2003), p. 50.

²⁸ This idea of homonormativity can connect to the discussion of gay marriage in the thesis Introduction.

²⁹ See, for example, Naomi Finch ‘Welfare Policy and Employment in the Context of Family Change’. <<https://www.york.ac.uk/inst/spru/research/nordic/ukdemo.PDF>> [accessed 18 January 2016]. The graph on page 21 indicates the marked increase in the mean age of first-time mothers across all social classes. The information on page 4 also shows the increase in mean age of women marrying.

body from maternity reveals how, in a neoliberal society, happiness in women is still fundamentally about their ability to reproduce.

5. The Female Scientist and Her Activism for Social Change

As we have seen in the dialogue with Jordan about grafting and in Dog-Woman's desire for maternity and her failures, there is a faultline between Dog-Woman's conservatism and the alternative method of reproduction without heterosexual intercourse that the grafting represents. This faultline implies the way in which social change can take place. Winterson not only describes these contradictory negotiations and explores intimacy beyond the gene and kinship, but also looks into female intimacy beyond time and space, with the interwoven narratives between Dog-Woman and a female scientist in 1989.³⁰ Through these two narratives of feisty women, Winterson demonstrates the possibility of female collectivity across time and space.

The unnamed woman is a scientist who researches mercury levels in a river. To protest against this pollution, she starts camping right next to the river. She

³⁰ Indeed, Winterson gave a talk at an academic event titled 'Beyond the Gene: New Perspectives on Inheritance', at The Linnaean Society, London, 12 September 2012, discussing her adoption and childhood.

acknowledges her desire to have children, but her devotion to world peace and the fight against pollution do not allow her to have them (*Sexing*, p. 127). Mercury pollution can be the cause of disability in babies, and this depiction of mercury pollution recalls a severe instance of mercury pollution in Minamata, Japan, which caused many disabled babies to be born. While the first disabled baby's birth was in 1945, it was only proven in 1982 that their disability was caused by mercury waste from an industrial company called Chisso, and so industrial pollution, mercury poisoning and genetic disorders from birth were a topical issue in the 1980s. Although we do not know if Winterson was aware of the issue in Minamata, at the least in *Sexing*, the female scientist's concern with mercury pollution can also be seen as a concern for the health and potential disability of unborn children.

Here we can see the dialogue between maternal desire and activism in the 1980s in Winterson's writing. The representation of the female scientist in *Sexing* resonates with the activist group against nuclear armament in Britain called Greenham Common Peace Camp. In 1982, a group of women were motivated by the horror of American Cruise missiles coming to Britain. With their babies, female activists walked one hundred and twenty miles from Cardiff to Greenham. They went through three winters camping just

next to the Greenham base to protest against the armament. When they arrived at the US Air force base, they delivered a letter, stating: ‘Some of us have brought our babies with us this entire distance [...] We fear for the future of all our children, and for the future of the living world which is the basis of all life’.³¹ They signed their name on the letter as ‘Women for Life on Earth’. As the letter shows, their action in Greenham is aimed to protect unborn future children from nuclear threat. In the same manner, the scientist in the novel, who is the twentieth-century incarnation of Dog-Woman, fights to protect future children from mercury pollution.

Her representation is a parody of the mad scientist, but also the hero. Nicholas Jordan, who is paralleled with Jordan in the seventeenth century, visits her camp and describes her as a hero. He thanks ‘her for trying to save us, for trying to save me’, and they burn the factory down:

I wanted to thank her for trying to save us, for trying to save me, because it felt that personal, though I don’t know why. But when I tried to speak my throat was clogged with feelings that resist words. There’s a painting I love called *The Sower*, by Van Gogh. A peasant walks home at evening with a huge yellow moon behind him. The land is strong and certain, made of thick colours laid on with a palette knife. It comforts me because it makes me think that the world will always be here, strong and certain, at the end of a day, at the end of a journey.
Brown fields and a yellow moon.

³¹ *The Greenham Common: Women at the Wire*, ed. by Barbara Hartford and Sarah Hopkins (London: Women’s Press, 1984), p.16.

‘Let’s burn it’, she said. ‘Let’s burn down the factory.’ (*Sexing*, pp. 164-165)

Winterson uses Nicholas Jordan’s narrative to associate the mother, nature, and soil. He describes soil as comfort, in a manner essentialising maternity. Both the narratives by Nicholas Jordan and the activists in Greenham Common Peace Camp resonate and demonstrate the linkage between earth, soil and “mother nature”. This is a problematic connection of the feminine and the natural that has historically been used to subjugate both to male authority. Simone de Beauvoir points out the link between ‘Nature and Woman’, and its issues, in *The Second Sex*:

man remains her master, just as he is master of the fertile earth; she is destined to be subordinated, possessed and exploited; as is also Nature, whose magic fertility she incarnates. The prestige she enjoys in the eyes of men comes from them; they kneel before the Other, they worship the Goddess Mother. But as powerful as she may appear, she is defined through notions created by the male consciousness.³²

Despite these problematic associations between ‘Nature and Woman’, both the activism in *Sexing* and Greenham have the potential to provide social change through female solidarity. Indeed, new discourses can only be created through existing discourses, and even though this association is theoretically problematic, this connection became their motivation to create a collectivity and to achieve social change.

³² Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (London; Vintage, [1949] 2010), p. 84.

What is essential here is women's collective power and their motivation through maternity to fight for the environment and future children. Interestingly, Soshiren, the women's activist group in Japan mentioned in Chapter Two, sent a banner to express their solidarity to Greenham Common, when they were camping in peaceful protest against NATO coordination exercises in September 1984, suggesting that the female solidarity created by this group crossed international borders.³³ The collectiveness we see here in Greenham Peace Camp can also be seen between the two characters in *Sexing*. When the scientist recalls her memory of her solitary girlhood, she suddenly dreams of the River Thames. Seemingly she time-trips to the seventeenth century: she feels that she has to go to Blackfriars, because 'there is someone waiting for me', and she keeps asking 'Who? Who?' (*Sexing*, p. 128). This scene implies the subtle connection beyond time and space between Dog-Woman in the seventeenth century and the contemporary scientist. Here, the water of the river works as a medium to resonate their two voices in different eras. Winterson writes this connection beyond time and space as a metaphor of paper dolls:

The inward life tells us that we are multiple not single, and that our one existence is really countless existences holding hands like those cut-out paper dolls, but unlike the dolls never coming to an end. When we say, 'I

³³ Onna(Watashi)-no-Karada-kara [From Women's and My Body]: Soshiren News, 6, p. 11.

have been here before,' perhaps we mean, 'I am here now,' but in another life, another time, doing something else. Our lives could be stacked together like plates on a waiter's hand. Only the top is showing, but the rest are there and by mistake we discover them. (*Sexing*, p. 90)

Indeed, Greenham Common Peace Camp has provided a long-term female collectivity, considering this camp lasted until the year 2000. Likewise, Winterson perhaps explores female connections and intimacy on a more abstract level, aiming at a revolution in thought. As seen in the image of the paper dolls, as well as the parallel relation between Dog-Woman and the female scientist, *Sexing* imagines subtle female intimacy beyond time and space, and this is perhaps a kind of women's solidarity able to change the future. In this way, *Sexing* provides us a vision of a 'long revolution' for women, by writing the subtle connections between women and, through depicting Dog-Woman's monstrous body, it deconstruct the firm connection between maternity, desire, and women's bodies.³⁴

Conclusion

³⁴ I borrow the phrase 'the long revolution' from the Raymond Williams book of that title. Williams explains that the long revolution gives us a 'sense of process', movement with a sense of direction: 'The nature of the process indicates a perhaps unusual revolutionary activity: open discussion, extending relationships, the practical shaping of institutions. But it indicates also a necessary strength: against arbitrary power whether of arms or of money, against all conscious confusion and weakening of this long and difficult human effort, and for and with the people who in many different ways are keeping the revolution going.' Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (Toronto: Broadway Views, [1961] 2001), p. 383.

The representation of grafting in relation to Dog-Woman's desire for reproduction, her giant infertile body, and her subtle connection with the female scientist reflect the contemporary critical stream of the 1980s: the negotiation between maternal anxiety and maternal happiness, and a dialogue between essentialism and anti-essentialism. This essentialism is reflected in activism, whereas anti-essentialism is characterised by new thoughts in critical theory.³⁵ Historically, the category of woman has been assigned as the lower sphere, the body in opposition to the male subject. This dualism between women and men and the unequal assignments to body (female) and to soul/subject (male) are challenged.³⁶ Depicted in the 1980s, Dog-Woman the monstrous mother can be read as one of the responses to the drastically changing sexual politics and turmoil caused by the controversy of IVF. Against both heterosexism and sexism, Dog-Woman's image shows not only the limitations of identity politics in being "woman", but also paradoxically the queer endeavour to invalidate the foundation of "woman".³⁷ In this sense, this depiction of a monstrous giantess is part of the dawn of queer theories and studies.³⁸ Critics have argued that the monstrous giantess is a reverse

³⁵ See for example, de Beauvoir in my Introduction above, Butler in this chapter; see also Toril Moi's *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* (London: Routledge, 1985).

³⁶ On this, see Ortner, as mentioned in Chapter One.

³⁷ Takemura, *Feminizumu* [Feminism] (Tokyo: Iwanami, 2000), pp. iii-x (vii).

³⁸ Angela Carter's *Fevvers at the Circus* (1984) is another key example of a monstrous giantess.

representation of some gender categories, such as the feminist heroine in Bakhtin's carnivalesque, the womanly hero, and canonic images through parodies. However, as shown in my argument, framing these discussions only within the sphere of "gender" is inadequate.

Showing Dog-Woman's fracture between her desire and what she can achieve, with the representation of grafting, Winterson successfully provides the reader an alternative sphere to imagine different kinds of happiness. Early in the novel, Dog-Woman ponders about her own happiness:

Singing is my pleasure, but not in church, for the parson said the gargoyles must remain on the outside, not seek room in the choir stalls. So I sing inside the mountain of my flesh, and my voice is as slender as a reed and my voice has no lard in it. When I sing the dogs sit quiet and people who pass in the night stop their jabbering and discontent and think of other times, when they were happy. And I sing of other times, when I was happy, though I know that these are figments of my mind and nowhere I have been. But does it matter if the place cannot be mapped as long as I can still describe it?
(*Sexing*, p. 8)

This pleasure in singing relates back to the Isaiah passage from which the medallion's engraving comes, which continues:

For the Lord shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; *joy and gladness* shall be found therein, thanks giving, and *voice of*

melody.³⁹

This quotation suggests the joy, gladness, and happiness that the Church/Lord offers from the Bible. Dog-Woman desires, but is excluded, from this feeling. She wants to sing in the church but she is refused entry because of her gargoyle-like appearance.

Dog-Woman's obsession with normative maternal happiness and her failures work as parodies, and through her many failures, as through the stories of the dancing princesses and Artemis, it is revealed to the reader (although Dog-Woman does not notice it herself) that there is no essence to happiness, nor to the ideological performance of happiness as a norm. Furthermore, her failures in achieving normative happiness demonstrate that to gain happiness, one needs to have and be a normative body, which is desirable by other sexual subjects, which is reproducible, and which has the ability to have normative intercourse. In other words, to achieve happiness in a society, happiness cannot be separated from a normative female body. Winterson's writing denaturalises the seemingly inseparable relation between happiness and the female body through the controversial representation of Dog-Woman in relation to the grafting of the cherry.

Dog-Woman finds unconventional maternal happiness, becoming separate from the norm, loved by her adopted son not despite, but because of her giant body:

³⁹ Isaiah 51.3, my emphasis.

He was always happy. We were happy together, and if he noticed that I'm bigger than most he never mentioned it. He was proud of me because no other child had a mother who could hold a dozen oranges in her mouth at once. (*Sexing*, p. 21)

Dog-Woman begins with a conservative character, but through the centuries, her voice resonates with that of the female scientist, who becomes an activist for social change.

The female scientist and Jordan do not have a genetic connection with Dog-Woman.

However their subtle connections, as a solidarity for social change, imply Winterson's challenge to individualism: there is no need to have an actual material maternal bond, to share their happiness. In this sense, Winterson's writing evolves from *Fit for the Future*, exploring interpersonal connections for social change, rather than enhancing individualism. Monstrosity has been a key issue in this thesis, as I discussed in my Introduction and, in *Sexing*, Dog-Woman's body, specifically its monstrosity (huge, ugly and unable to procreate) has significant possibility in changing the conceptual entanglement of maternal desire, women's body and happiness. In this sense, monstrosity is embraced in Winterson's Dog-Woman as a liberating force for conceptual change.

Conclusion

The “Global” Interest in “Happiness” in Neoliberalism in Japan and Britain

Because I’m happy—
Clap along if you know what happiness is to you
Because I’m happy—
Clap along if you feel like that’s what you wanna do

(‘Happy’ by Pharrell Williams)

In 2013 Pharrell Williams’s popular song ‘Happy’ was released as the theme song for the Pixar Animation Studios’ *Despicable Me 2*, which gained huge success with sales in the millions. In his interview with Oprah Winfrey, Williams states that “[there was] zero air-play and nothing. And the next thing you know is that we put up the video on November 21st and all of sudden, boom. When I say boom, [I] mean BOOM.”¹ This huge success of Williams’ song became a public phenomenon, with numerous people making videos and singing covers of the song: elementary pupils, students and people across generations sang along altogether, clapping their hands and singing their version of ‘Happy’ in numerous countries and cities around the world. They titled their video clips on Youtube as ‘Happy: we are from: [High Tatra in Slovakia; Mumbai; Tatooine in Tunisia; Berlin; Taipei; Paris; London; Jakarta; Beijing; Teheran; Tokyo; and more]’.

¹ Pharrell Williams, “‘Happy’ Makes Pharrell Williams Cry”, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IYFKnXu623s>> [accessed 20 November 2014].

The Japanese especially made regional contributions, with music videos to promote their cities.² We can indeed see the so-called snowball effect in the audience response to the lyrics of this song, and as a researcher interested in happiness in neoliberalism, I find this phenomenon evocative as people sing the catchy phrases about their happiness. At the least, it suggests that there is a global interest in happiness, people want to hear and listen to music about it, and sing along with it.

The lyrics of Williams's 'Happy' never tell us exactly what happiness is, and the song assumes that one already "knows" what happiness is for oneself. Furthermore, the song invites us to 'clap along' with its chorus, singing 'Happy' together. The lyrics and the whole phenomenon of the song imply the way in which happiness is indeed reciprocal: people hear the song 'Happy' and respond towards the calling to clap along, turning up the volume on this song. The recipients do not have to know what exactly happiness is, but they follow because they 'feel like that's what [they] wanna do'. This song also shows that happiness in the song does not have a centre: we hear, we listen not knowing what exactly it is, and without noticing we are always already embedded and involved in ideas and stories about "happiness" through the lyrics. In this sense,

² See the following URL for the examples of these music videos,
 <<http://matome.naver.jp/odai/2139995127293997901>> [accessed 20 November 2014].

happiness perhaps is a story that emerges from nowhere but it is everywhere.³ Sara Ahmed, in her monograph *The Promise of Happiness* (2010), explains the way in which happiness is indeed ‘the language of reciprocity’:

Happiness is not just how subjects speak of their own desires but also what they want to give and receive from others. Happiness involves reciprocal forms of aspiration (I am happy for you, I want you to be happy, I am happy if you are happy) and also forms of coercion that are exercised and concealed by the very language of reciprocity, such that one person’s happiness is made conditional not only on another person’s happiness but on that person’s willingness to be made happy by the same things.⁴

Ahmed’s explanation of happiness as a potential constraint because of its reciprocity helps us to interrogate the quality of happiness as “universal”: it is not merely about one’s desire to be happy, but it is something to be shared between people (reciprocal) and it encourages one to be happy not just for oneself, but also for the others (aspirational). In such ways, the phenomenon of happiness in recent years appear to be concerned with a kind of emotional coercion.

In this thesis, I have used happiness as a social and critical trend to discuss the discourse and rhetoric on lives in neoliberal states such as Britain and Japan. As we will see in this conclusion, the cultures and discourses seen in the 2010s are the harvest of

³ I will argue and explain in detail about how the narrativity of happiness works as collective story in Chapter Four, where I focus on Jeanette Winterson’s *Sexing the Cherry* (1989), which is closely related to this phenomenon in Williams’s song.

⁴ Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness* (London and Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), p. 91.

the 1980s, the decade considered as an ending of the welfare state and as the start of neoliberalism. The political and social events witnessed in the 2010s, such as issues in higher education, the return to conservative leadership, and gay marriage show the effect of political discussion and struggles over 30 years. In this section, I will put forward some examples of social and political events that happened in the 2010s in order to illustrate that these events are the effects of the unequal system of neoliberalism.

1. Higher Education in Danger: The Riots and the Crisis of the Humanities

In August 2011, riots spread throughout the United Kingdom, including London, Bradford, Bristol and other places. The riots started from the murder of a Black British man Mark Duggun by the police in Tottenham and the protest against his death caused by the “misconduct” of the London Metropolitan police, which they expanded through the suburbs of London and across the country. Around the same time, since 2010, students waged a long battle to protest against the rise of tuition fees (to £9000 each year) in higher education, conducted by the Conservatives

(rejecting Gordon Brown's survey that suggested removing the charge of £3240 tuition fees per year). The fundamental issues of these riots lie in the citizens' dissatisfaction with the effect of the economic and class divide that the UK faces. The unemployment rate has kept rising and the places most affected by the riots were those where the economic divide was most visible.

Correspondingly, although there were no similar student riots in Japan, there is certainly a shared affinity with British cases in terms of broadening the disparity between the poor and the rich, as well as their differing access to the education system. *Asahi Shinbun* (one of the major Japanese newspaper) reports that tuition fees for both private and state universities have kept increasing since 1975. In addition, 52.5 per cent of the Japanese students who are in full-time four-year degrees are receiving an educational "scholarship", of which 90 per cent is an educational loan.⁵ In another article, the newspaper reports that 20 per cent of the students who dropped out from university do so because of their financial circumstances.⁶ In this respect,

⁵ Satomi Sugihara, Nasuka Yamamoto, Shinichi Kawarada, 'Datsu-Hinkon-no-tame-no-Shingaku-ga... Jyugyōryō-kōtō, Omoi Shōgakukin-Hensai' [Education for Getting Out of Poverty Turns Out to Suffer from Paying Back Educational Scholarship Loans], 25 November 2014, *Asahi Shinbun*. <http://digital.asahi.com/articles/ASGCS64WPGCSUTIL01V.html?iref=comkiji_txt_end_s_kjid_ASGC_S64WPGCSUTIL01V> [accessed 25th November 2014].

⁶ Yukihiro Takahama, 'Daigaku-Chūtai, Niwari-ga-Keizaiteki-Riyū: Monkashō-ga-Hachimannin- Chōsa' [Dropping out from University, 20% are because of financial difficulties, Ministry of Education Investigated 80,000 Students' Cases], 25 September 2014, *Asahi Shinbun*. <<http://www.asahi.com/articles/ASG9Q6R9MG9QUTIL042.html>> [accessed 26 November 2014].

the small government systems in Britain and Japan share similarities in regard to privatising education: universities and their degrees are now commodities, and only wealthy families can afford a university degree for their children. Alternatively, students can gain a degree if they are willing to face the huge debt it incurs when then graduate.

Furthermore, Japanese higher education has issues “within”, in the current neoliberal mode. Since 2004, Japanese State universities have been privatised after 5 years of discussion, and in 2014, the Japanese Society for the Promotion of Science (similar to the British Academy) launched its ‘Top Global University Project’ to ‘force through “university reform” and “globalisation”: to support universities that aim to strengthen international accessibility and an infrastructure of competitiveness to set up an educational environment’.⁷ At first glance, this project for enhancing globalisation appears glamorous, yet what this actually entails is a significant threat to the disciplines of the Humanities, for Japanese universities are encouraged by governmental institution to strengthen English “language” education rather than general education in the Humanities. Traditionally, liberal arts seminars have been

⁷ My translation from the website of the Japanese Society for the Promotion of Science <<http://www.jsps.go.jp/j-sgu/gaiyou.html>> [accessed 22 November 2014].

part of the curriculum for general education taught by Humanities and Arts researchers. Now, the encouragement of this English Language Education focuses more on language acquisition than education in the humanities, as English acquisition is more likely to improve employability.⁸ What is at stake here, at least in Japan and Britain, is that both small government systems consider university as a place to enhance employability in the name of globalisation and neo-liberalisation. Degrees (especially in the Arts and Humanities) in higher education do not promise the acquisition of life-long employment with a stable income (as was promised by welfare states), a path in life closely related to happiness in the neoliberal agenda.⁹ In this respect, Japan and the UK share a crisis of higher education in relation to their privatisation: universities are considered as a place to create a direct “impact” on society, suffused with utilitarian ideals, and it is a place to prepare to become professionals, rather than a place that values “knowledge” or “investigation”. This shift in the roles of higher education in neoliberalism leads to the decline of critical thinking (since it encourages utilitarianism) and I contend that university in this way

⁸ For example, some state universities are keen to outsource English Language seminars to British Council tutors who are PhD holders.

⁹ Japan also suffers from a high unemployment rate and this causes a huge gap between the rich and the poor. In May 2012, the Japanese newspaper *Yomiuri Shinbun* reported the highest suicide rate in youths who suffer from not being able to find jobs soon after their graduation. I will explain this relation between employability and happiness below in this introduction.

risks becoming an accomplice to the rising power of right-wing politics and its discourse. Thus, I claim this project finds significance in looking at right-wing politics, social discourse and the way in which its rhetoric justifies its policy administration, which encourages, in particular, “liberty” and “happiness”.

2 The Earthquake, Nationalism and the Rhetoric of “Restoration” in Japan

While university reformations appear to commit themselves to the rise of the right wing, the earthquake and following tsunami that happened in the North East region of Japan on the 11th of March in 2011 also triggered a turn towards right-wing politics and the spread of its discourse. The enormous earthquake registered a magnitude of 9 on the Richter scale, and it was the one of the largest quakes ever recorded around the area of Japan. A tsunami with a height of over 40 meters engulfed houses and people in the area, and the National Police Agency reported that 15,889 residents died, 2594 citizens were missing and 127,531 houses were completely destroyed.¹⁰ In addition, this tsunami devastated the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Plant and caused a hydrogen

¹⁰ National Police Agency [of Japan], ‘Damage Situation and Police Countermeasures Associated with 2011 Tohoku district-off the Pacific Ocean Earthquake’
<http://www.npa.go.jp/archive/keibi/biki/higaijokyo_e.pdf> [accessed 20th December 2014].

explosion that led to a high percentage of radiation leaking. As a result, the twenty kilometres around the plant were set up as a cautionary area, 70,000 citizens were evacuated and civilians have still not been allowed to step into the area.¹¹ The cabinet office of the time (Minshu-tō: the Democrat Party of Japan) claimed the necessity of continuing operation of the nuclear plant, aiming to stop its operation in 2030. This conduct led to the nation's distrust, and after only three and half years of leadership by the Democrats, the Cabinet office was restored to the Liberal Democratic Party of Japan (Jiyū-Minshu-tō: LDP), who has dominated the National Diet since World War II.¹²

This Japanese national crisis fuelled its nationalism: slogans such as 'Gambarō, Nippon!' [Hang in there, Japan!] and 'Kizuna' [bonds] are still repeatedly broadcast on news and television programmes to encourage the nation to 'break through the crisis', which the LDP cabinet incorporated into their task forces. It is worth noting that when Japanese politics discusses the restoration from the earthquake and

¹¹ BBC News Asia Pacific, 'Japan Quake: Radiation Rises at Fukushima Nuclear Plant' <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-12740843>> [accessed 21 December 2014].

¹² There have been long discussions and even activism regarding the risk and safety of atomic power stations in Japan since the Cold War. Tetsuo Arima explains that there are America's political pressure to build the plants in Fukushima in *Genpatsu, Shōriki, CIA — Kimitsubunsho-de-Yomu-Shōwa-Urajijyō* [Nuclear Plantation, Shōriki and CIA: Background Stories of Shōwa Period by Reading Confidential Documents] (Tokyo: Shinshōsha, 2008). Despite the activism against the construction of the plant, this earthquake revealed that it was indeed a "myth" to reassure people of its safety. It is worth noting that the nuclear plant were constructed under governance by the LDP.

emphasises the “strength” of the nation, it refers to Margaret Thatcher’s speeches; it may be that she is seen as an iconic figure, representing a “strong nation” through the rise of nationalism. In the Lower House election on the 16th of December 2012, The Liberal Democrat Party of Japan took up its old position as the dominant party, in a coalition with the Kōmeitō Party, gaining more than half of the seats (326) in the House (480 seats in total). Shinzō Abe was elected Prime Minister of Japan from the LDP soon after this election. In his Policy Speech to the 183rd Session of the Diet on the 28th of February 2013, he emphasised the necessity of (re)establishing ‘A Strong Japan’, finding ‘[n]ational independence through personal independence’, an idea that echoes Thatcher’s speech in which she asserts that ‘There is no such thing as society’, a speech that calls for individualism and moves away from the safety networks of the welfare state. Abe also articulated the increase of ‘defence-related expenditures’, keeping Senkaku Island’s dispute with China and Taiwan in mind, and Abe directly quoted Thatcher’s speech:

Japan’s national interest lies eternally in keeping the seas, which are the foundation of Japan’s very existence, unequivocally open, free, and peaceful.

“We tried to defend a principle of basic importance for the entire world, namely the principle that above all, international law should prevail over the use of force.” These are the words of former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher as she looked back on the Falklands War.

“The rule of law at sea.” I would like to appeal to the international community that in modern times, changes to the status quo through the use of coercion or intimidation will not legitimise anything.¹³

His speech clearly shows his hawkish diplomatic attitude towards the neighbouring countries around Japan. Just as Thatcherism pursued against the Falkland Islands, and LDP’s campaign pledge, ‘Restoring Japan’, not only articulates the nation’s desire to revive and rebuild the nation to just as it was ‘before the earthquake’, but also it echoes its desire, as I will argue, to return to the right-wing politics and the peak of the Japanese economy in the 1980s. As Margaret Thatcher’s death in 2013 emblematises, this nostalgic rhetoric towards the “good glorious 80s” remains strong and constitutes a discourse around keeping and sustaining conventional family and moral values in neoliberal Japan (I will discuss these values in British policies and Family Acts in Chapter Two). Thus, investigating the social discourse as well as women’s writing in the 1980s helps to understand the issues that Japan is currently facing, especially the restoration of “maternity” that the Japanese government emphasises as needed for reinvigorating the growth of the economy. In other words, while neoliberalism rhetorically stresses liberty and freedom of choice, at the same

¹³ Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, ‘Policy Speech by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to the 183rd Session of the Diet’ first delivered on February 28, 2013’
 <http://japan.kantei.go.jp/96_abe/statement/201302/28siseuhousin_e.html> [accessed 21 December 2014].

time, it privileges certain choices, such as maternity, that it believes will benefit society. In this sense, Britain and Japan both share a complicated relation between neoliberalism and maternity.

3. The Restoration of Maternity? Creating ‘A Country in which Women Shine’

In leading his Cabinet as a Prime Minister in 2012, Abe emphasises the significance of economic reformation, later named “Abenomics”, composed of “three arrows”: a massive fiscal stimulus, more aggressive monetary easing from the Bank of Japan, and structural reforms to boost Japan’s competitiveness.¹⁴ Above all, he clarified that a vital constituent of Abenomics is “Womenomics”, unleashing the potential of which is ‘an absolute must if Japan’s growth is to continue’.¹⁵ The term “Womenomics” first appeared in 1999, coined by Kathy Matsui and others in Goldman Sachs, claiming that the Japanese economy ‘could increase its gross domestic product by as much as 15% simply by tapping further its most underutilized

¹⁴ ‘Definition of Abenomics’ in *Financial Times* <<http://lexicon.ft.com/Term?term=abenomics>> [accessed 22 December 2014].

¹⁵ Shinzō Abe, ‘Unleashing the Power of “Womenomics”: Our Goal in Japan is to Boost Women in the Workforce Significantly by 2020 and Reduce Pay Disparity’, *Wall Street Journal*, 25 September 2013 <<http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052702303759604579091680931293404>> [accessed 22 December 2014].

resource — Japanese women’.¹⁶ Abe claims that expanding women’s employment ultimately increases the birth rate, and that Womenomics is the key to developing Japan: ‘a country that hires and promotes more women grows economically, and no less important, demographically as well.’¹⁷

In the same speech discussed above, Abe proposes his intention to ‘create a Japan in which women shine’ and acknowledges the difficulties for families to balance work and child-nurturing:

It is a fact that mothers and fathers working hard to raise their children are pressed to choose between either raising their children or having a job. [...]

In addition, there are also people who raise children or render nursing care while dedicating themselves exclusively to the household. Their hard efforts are invaluable and unable to be measured by economic indicators alone. I believe that the activities of these people in society will give rise to *a new vitality in Japan* [...].

We will advance our efforts to create a country in which both women playing active roles in the workforce and women dedicating themselves exclusively to household affairs, and indeed all women, can shine, with confidence and pride in the lives they are leading. My fellow honourable members of the Diet, let us together create a Japan in which women shine.¹⁸

Abe’s speech sheds light on the significance of domestic labour such as nurturing

¹⁶ Kathy Matsui, ‘Womenomics 4.0: Time to Walk the Talk’ <<http://www.goldmansachs.com/our-thinking/outlook/womenomics4-folder/womenomics4-time-to-walk-the-talk.pdf>> [accessed 22 December 2014].

¹⁷ Abe, ‘Unleashing the Power of “Womenomics”’.

¹⁸ Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet. ‘Policy Speech by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to the 183rd Session of the Diet’. My emphasis.

children and nursing the elderly, considering those works as fundamental to the ‘vitality’ of the nation. The part of the speech titled ‘A country in which women shine’ raises issues such as the need for increasing the number of nurseries and care services for children and the elderly. To some extent, valuing the domestic work associated with women’s issues and aiming to set up governmental support is indeed a significant social improvement. However, we cannot dismiss the close connection that his rhetoric creates between domestic labour and the right-wing notion of ‘a Strong Japan’. Domestic work such as nurturing and care are associated with and presumed to be women’s work, in relation to maternity, and so Abe seems to be aiming to revive the Japanese economy through maximising women’s labour, in both the domestic and public spheres. In other words, the assumption in the rhetoric of their policies is that in order to create a ‘Strong Japan’, maternity, including good care for babies and the elderly, is a necessary source for a ‘new vitality’, and holds the key to reviving the Japanese economy.

As one of the examples for the new governmental support to help for balancing nurturing and paid work, Abe developed a plan for ‘Three year maternity leave’. However, this policy is much criticised, as it is likely to discourage companies from

hiring women, since three years of maternity leave will cost an enormous amount of money for companies, and so the aim of ‘having a balance between work and nurturing’ cannot be achieved. This policy, as a result, pushes women to stay at home solely for nurturing, not having a balance between work and nurturing. Rather than letting women have a balance, we can interpret such policies as suggesting that the government thinks that women focusing on maternity itself is the key to revive the Japanese economy.

Furthermore, Prime Minister Abe emphasised working to fight the decline in birth rate in Japan, and set up a task force to improve the situation. Masako Mori, Minister of State for the Declining Birth Rate (also the Minister in charge of Support for Women's Empowerment and Child-Rearing, and Minister of State for Gender Equality) in 2012 organised a committee to improve the situation of the decreased birth rate.¹⁹ The task force described their purpose as follows:

We [the Japanese government] hold a Task Force to break through the crisis of the decline of the birth rate in order to encourage younger generations to form the family, and to realize and experience *pleasure* with child raising. Simultaneously, we aim to solve issues about marriage, pregnancy, reproduction and child-rearing to achieve a better society for children as well. In addition, placing family as a centre of the community,

¹⁹ Abe's cabinet I am referring has ended in September 2014, and reshuffled ministers and reformed the cabinet from October. It is worth noting that MP Haruko Arimura who took over those ministerial work from Mori is anti-abortion.

we carry out investigation for promoting effort to support the child-rearing by the whole local communities.²⁰

The term “pleasure” in this outline puts forward the premise that child-nurturing is supposed not to be a burden, and should be associated more with optimism: it affirms child-raising as a kind of happiness (‘pleasure’). It also suggest family as a centre of communities and child-raising through family/communities are promised through reproduction, child rearing, namely, *through* maternity.²¹ The happiness that the task force proposes is exclusively a maternal happiness, despite the fact that child-rearing is not only about women.

On the 7th of May 2013, *Nihon Keizai Shimbun* [The Nikkei] reported that the meeting of the task force led by Masako Mori discussed plans to publish *A Notebook for Life and Women* (its tentative title; it was later called *Women’s Diary* by the media) for teenage women to educate them on the workings of the (female) body and enlighten them regarding future (family) planning. The aim of this notebook was to stop late marriage and late pregnancy through claiming that, from a medical perspective, there is a desirable time to be pregnant and engage in reproduction,

²⁰ < <http://www8.cao.go.jp/shoushi/shoushika/meeting/taskforce/index.html> > [accessed 21 December 2014]. My translation and my emphasis.

²¹ This resembles Thatcher’s emphasis on conventional family values (neo-conservatism). I will discuss this in detail in Chapter Two.

ideally by one's early 30s, since egg cells start to "deteriorate" and this makes assisted reproduction less likely to succeed. However, the plan to publish this notebook was discontinued after significant criticism by the media.²²

In Japan, the *Maternal and Child Health Handbook* is provided once women are pregnant. However, Minister Mori at that time claimed that, prior to the *Maternal and Child Health Handbook*, women should be well-informed about life-planning in regard to marriage, their body and the dangers of late pregnancy, and clarified that providing *A Notebook for Life and Women* was only one of the ideas raised in the task-force meeting. This government's plan for educating teenage girls give rise to much argument in the media, on the internet and in the Diet itself.²³ Through such plans as the handbook, Womenomics, and the encouragement of a "pleasant" maternal experience, the Cabinet foregrounded the idea that maternal experience is a very prominent experience in woman's lives, relegating to the side lines non-heteronormative relations and other life choices, such as not having children, or choosing not to marry. Even though the decline of the birth rate is a structural issue that Japan is facing, the responsibility of the decreased rate of reproduction is simply

²² Later Mori claimed that the idea of the Women's Diary was misunderstood by an ill-informed media.

²³ MP Murata Renhō (Democrat Party of Japan) interrogated if the taskforce meeting is planning to publish the notebook on 7th of May 2013 in the Cabinet Committee of the House of Councillors. See <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XMIzCrOuu8s>>

reduced by such political efforts to the choices of individual women.

This ideological promotion of earlier marriage and earlier pregnancy, by planning reproduction in advance, suggests the nation's anxiety towards giving birth to disabled children, due to late pregnancy. Part of the aims of *A Notebook for Life and Women* was to encourage young women to realise the 'risks of late pregnancy', such as the birth of Down syndrome babies, and pre-eclampsia during pregnancy.

New pre-natal screening has started in Japan since April 2013 and, by examining maternal blood, chromosomal defects can be found more accurately than in previous tests. Beating the estimate of researchers in Shōwa hospital in Tokyo, 411 women have already experienced this screening, due to their concern with 'late pregnancy'.

In this nation, radiation is leaking at high rate, anxiety towards 'late pregnancy' and its possibility of birth of child with generic defects are at stake since the earthquake happened. To establish the roots for these issues in the 2010s, it is now necessary to consider how maternity was presented in the social discourse of the 1980s, especially in anxiety towards giving birth to disabled children. Such concerns with birth and disability will be the focus of Part 1 of my thesis, looking at their treatment in the social discourse of the 1980s as well as in the works of Doris Lessing and Fumiko

Kometani.

4. Gay Marriage: Sexuality, Family and Liberty

Conservatism in the UK has expressed its interest in the nature of family values in recent years. On the 6th of February 2013, the House of Commons passed a bill on gay marriage, and the United Kingdom and Anglican churches validated same-sex marriage. David Cameron stated, on supporting same-sex marriage:

Conservatives believe in the ties that bind us. Society is stronger when we make vows to each other and we support each other. I don't support gay marriage in spite of being a conservative. I support gay marriage because I am a conservative.²⁴

His speech stirs up controversies on who is welcomed to be included and/or excluded as citizens in the British community. In Japan, although same sex marriage is not legally approved, two lesbian celebrities declared that they plan to have their wedding.²⁵ It must be noted that this validation of same-sex marriage and in a way

²⁴ John Cassidy, 'A Politician Shows Real Courage on Gay Marriage', *The New Yorker*, 14 May 2012, <<http://www.newyorker.com/news/john-cassidy/a-politician-shows-real-courage-on-gay-marriage>> [accessed 27 November 2014].

²⁵ 'Dōseikon: Ichinose-Ayaka-san-to-Sugiura-Akane-san-Raishun-Kekkonshiki' [Same Sex Marriage: Ayaka Ichinose and Akane Sugiura will Have their Wedding Next Spring], 21 December 2014, *Mainichi Shimbun* <<http://mainichi.jp/select/news/20141222k0000m040023000c.html>> [accessed 22 December 2014].

“inclusion” of same-sex coupling is the result of the activism of ACT-UP and OUTRAGE during the AIDS panic and in resistance of Section 28 in the UK, in the 1980s. Whilst it is commendable that homosexual relationships are legally approved for marriage, this social change still generates controversy: after all, is marriage the exclusive criteria to prove one’s happiness? Isn’t this approval of same-sex marriage assimilation towards, and complicit in reinforcing heteronormativity, couplism and institutional marriage? Will it be possible to safely live while remaining single? This bill also raises the question of what conservatism means in a neoliberal society, how sexuality and validation of intimacy relate to and are entangled in one’s happiness.

Through this project I examine the dialogue and negotiation between conservatism and their usage of optimistic terms and rhetoric such as “liberty” and “happiness” in relation to gender, sexuality and intimacy in Britain and Japan. In addition, I will investigate how this optimism promotes the conventional family model, within which it is considered that happiness is produced, raised and looked after through reproduction, child-birth and child-rearing.

The social and political events explained above have their roots in the socio-politics of the 1980s. There are, of course, some differences between the

political situations of Japan and the UK in this period: Japan reached its peak with the economic bubble of the 1980s, while the UK was called the ‘Sick man of Europe’ from the 1970s onwards, due to its higher unemployed rate and need of escaping social stagnation.²⁶ However, both cultures, in the mode of neo-liberalism, share a dialogue and negotiation between conservatism and liberalism, combating socialism from the end of the Cold War. Looking at this radical time of change from the welfare state to neoliberalism, I examine the similarities in socio-political context in both countries, especially in regard to happiness and liberty, which is encouraged by neo-liberal states. In the following section, I will define what optimism (happiness and liberty) is in the neo-liberal mode by looking at Thatcher’s writing and at recent critical studies on affect. In this decade, gender and sexuality are tightly knotted with right-wing discourse; the feminist goals are used in its rhetoric, within which sexism is often systematically embedded.

I looked at the historical and political environment, especially how optimism, happiness and liberty are considered as complementary to each another from Thatcher’s essay ‘Reflections on Liberty’ as well as the recent critical reassessment

²⁶ Graeme A. Hodge, ‘Introduction’ in *Privatisation and Market Development: Global Movements in Public Policy Ideas*, ed. by Graeme A. Hodge (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2006), p. 9.

by Sara Ahmed and Lauren Berlant. Based upon these analyses of happiness and liberty, I explicated the title of this project ‘monstrous happiness’, the idea of happiness as involved in boundary-making, including some citizens and excluding others, happiness as a power structure that arises from social discourses within neoliberalism. I took up Cultural Materialism as a key methodology for this research, and aimed to find the faultlines in the discourse of the 1980s, especially on women’s life-choices and maternal happiness. In Part Two of the Introduction, I analysed Winterson’s early writing in the 1980s in relation to Thatcher’s agenda for neoliberalism as well as Ahmed’s ‘Unhappy Queers’. From this analysis, I explained that happiness is something closely connected to familial and maternal relationships.

5. Women’s Writing on “Happiness” in the 1980s

Through reading Japanese and English women’s writing in the 1980s, *Monstrous Happiness* set forth the following questions: how have women’s lives and attitudes changed by the rise and development of neoliberalism? How have happiness and liberty in women’s lives in been neoliberalism negotiated with the construction of

(un)conventional families? How did female writers respond to, criticise and explore the happiness that neoliberal society proposes?

In Part One of the thesis, I argued for the relation between maternity, happiness and eugenics in the 1980s. Both novels, Doris Lessing's *The Fifth Child* (1988) and Fumiko Kometani's *Passover* (1985) participated in questioning the maternal experience as "happiness". They pushed against the idea of happiness as having a universal quality, by considering the controversial relation between happiness and its exclusiveness for disabled bodies.

In Chapter One, I interpreted Doris Lessing's *The Fifth Child* as a criticism of Thatcherite social reforms, specifically its Family Acts in 1980s Britain. The chapter above all focused on the representation of ableism and utilitarianism that could be seen to underlie the British government's campaign to invigorate conventional family values. Lessing's short novel related Ben's monstrous body to those of minor protagonists in the text with disabilities, in order to demonstrate that the "happiness" that such a society proposes is closely related to health and abled-bodiedness, to enhance the productivity, employability and reproduction of the nation. In addition, gothic narrative plays a significant role in *The Fifth Child* to describe the intimate maternal relationship with her

child (Harriet's leaky maternal body). Through this novel, "happiness" is considered to come from family, a stable income, home purchasing, and a kind of morality for "healthy" reproduction and nurturing, yet this happiness is destroyed through the monster Ben, whose monstrosity makes the boundary between mother and child ambiguous, turning him and his mother into monsters in the eyes of their society.

In Chapter Two, I read Kometani's autobiographical novel *Passover* [*Sugikoshi no Matsuri*] in relation to the representation of "good blood" for freedom. Michi, the protagonist, came to America to be an artist, married an American Jewish man, and ran away from her family and her disabled child Ken during the Jewish ceremony, the Seder. I brought forward ideas of blood in the Japanese social discourse of the time from a popular women's magazine's article on "good blood" and the activism against it in the 80s, as well as looking closely at the idea of purity in the text of Exodus. Through this chapter, the novel exposed the ways in which ideals such as "freedom", "liberty" or the "better" lives that the western democracy promises fails. Kometani also claimed that such democratic discourse in the west seeks to conceal a eugenicist rhetoric for sustaining "good blood".

In reading *Passover* in the context of the 1980s as well as neoliberalism, I called

attention to previous research that prominently discussed “liberty” (Jiyū), and how it is re-appropriated from the Jewish understanding of Exodus, which contains the story of the Passover: the Jews are emancipated from slavery by the Egyptians. However, I argued that such criticism fails to notice the depiction of wanting “pure blood”, both in Exodus and in Kometani’s novel. These descriptions of longing for pure bloods in Exodus and *Passover* are indeed problematic, yet the social discourse of the 1980s in Japan, as seen in an article in a fashion magazine and the revision of the Eugenic Protection Law, suggested that there is substantial drive to justify the concept that “maternal happiness” is based in giving birth to “healthy” children.

Part Two of the thesis was dedicated to looking at women’s experimental writing that challenged the normative and happy family portraits, and essentialist accounts of maternity, by reading Banana Yoshimoto’s *Kitchen* and Jeanette Winterson’s *Sexing the Cherry*. Both novels describe an eccentric mother figure, namely as the transgender mother Eriko in *Kitchen* and the grotesque giantess Dog-Woman in *Sexing*, and the representation of adoption plays an important role in both novels.

In Chapter Three, I looked at *Kitchen*, a short novel in which there are many family deaths. Being an orphan, Mikage could only sleep peacefully in her kitchen. She is soon

adopted by the Tanabes, a family in which the father became the mother, Eriko, who is killed by her admirer in the beginning of the novel's sequel, *Full Moon (Kitchen 2)*. I challenged previous criticism that read this pair of novellas as a radical assessment of conventional and blood-related family. Instead, I read it as describing the impossibility of envisioning happiness without blood-lines. I refuted such readings by examining the ways in which Japanese culture values the concept of blood relations: I explained the family registration system *koseki*, and how the system becomes a fundamental element of citizen's happiness in this society. In addition, the argument around *koseki* pointed to the exclusion of transgender as well as LGBTQ people in Japanese society. At the end of this chapter, I reassessed the relationship between Yuichi and Mikage as in fact a reinforcement of heterosexism, and a conventional way of imagining the family as happiness, finding a clue to read their relationship from her choice of profession, and the relation between women's happiness and domesticity from the context of the eighties. Thus, *Kitchen*'s attempt to depict the new portrait of family is ultimately unsuccessful, because of the authorial decision to kill off the transgender mother, and the final reproduction and reinforcement of heterosexism.

Chapter Four dealt with depicting the troubled monstrous mother figure

Dog-Woman in *Sexing the Cherry*. Her incredible, giant body is unable her to have sexual intercourse, and this leads her to adopt a child, Jordan, whom she finds in the river Thames. In this chapter, I positively recognise Winterson's attempt to describe the complicated relations between the desire to become a mother, and its narrativity in relation to women's happiness and its alternatives. To begin with, I put the representation of grafting in *Sexing* into the context of technological innovation in reproduction, such as assisted reproduction, IVF and surrogacy in the 1980s. Such developments in this decade led to controversies in the idea of "mother nature" and surrounding issues on nurturing children. Secondly, I focused on assessing *Sexing* as a text that challenges the narrative construction of happiness and motherhood by its numerous (re)uses and (re)appropriations of fairy tales and myths, by writing parodies of them. Such focus on the narrative construction of "happiness" tells the reader that the happy ending, or simply "happiness", that society proposes and citizens long for, is "a collective story". In Dog-Woman's case, in spite of her repeated failures to become a mother, she is tenaciously drawn to the story that tells her that happiness lies in becoming a mother. Dog-Woman is a self-sufficient mother, finding non-blood related intimacy: she fails and fails to achieve the happiness that the collective story tells her to

follow, and yet she gains her own happiness, in and because of her failures.

6. Women Writing in the 1980s and Their Relation to Feminism(s)

While Part One and Part Two of this thesis both connect together one Japanese and one British text, it is worth considering the lines of connection that can be drawn between the two Japanese texts, and between the two British texts. Kometani and Yoshimoto's works are both interested in maternal and familial happiness and liberty in relation to the representation of blood. In *Passover*, Kometani writes on the parallels between Jewish emancipation from the Egyptians in Exodus, and a mother's liberation from a Jewish family and care for her disabled child. For *Kitchen*, Yoshimoto writes of happiness through adoption, a non-blood-related family. Both novels explore the manner in which blood relations are closely woven into the blueprint of happiness, yet they also expose its exclusive nature. *Passover* shows an east-Asian woman excluded from a Jewish familial community, and in *Kitchen* I investigated the ways in which being an orphan was to be out of the normative line of happiness. Moreover, I discussed how transgendered people in Japan are systematically excluded from this familial happiness through the *koseki* system. In my reading, *Kitchen* questions the

exclusiveness of familial happiness, yet its celebration of diversity in sexuality fails because of the death of Eriko and because the “happy ending” of Yuichi and Mikage reinforces the status quo. *Passover* shows Michi’s emancipation from an exclusive Jewish community, but the freedom that Michi gains is limited to the individual level, and we do not see any sense or possibility of wider social change.

With regards to the two British texts, we can see indirect communication around feminist issues taking place between the two authors. In 2001, there was a dialogue on feminism between Lessing and Winterson in *The Guardian*. Lessing asserts her disappointment with the achievements of feminism: ‘We now have pretty much equality at least on the pay and opportunities front, though almost nothing has been done on child care, the real liberation.’²⁷ The very next day, Winterson attacked Lessing in an article titled ‘What Planet is Doris on?’

Lessing says we’ve got equal pay and equal opportunity: is that why only 3% of university professors are women? Is that why the highest-paid journalists and TV presenters are men? Why are there still so few women in government and at the top table in the boardroom? Women are catching up, but we don’t run the world.²⁸

²⁷ Doris Lessing, ‘Lay off Men, Lessing Tells Feminists’, *The Guardian*, 14 August 2001.

²⁸ Jeanette Winterson, ‘What Planet is Doris on?’, *The Guardian*, 15 August 2001.

Interestingly, both writers' attitudes toward feminism synchronises with their writing in the 1980s. As we have seen, *The Fifth Child* is a dystopia showing the nightmare of the lack of childcare, and it does not provide any alternatives for mothers of "difficult" children. Reading Ben alongside unemployed and disabled characters, Lessing exposes happiness as dependent on producing a "healthy" child. In failing this, Harriet is alienated from society and her own family, due to the lack of child care.

In contrast, *Sexing the Cherry* experimentally pursues new forms of kinship. Dog-Woman is a working woman in the 17th Century who looks after her adopted son Jordan. She does not give up her career while raising Jordan. Dog-Woman can be connected to the grafting of the cherry: while she thinks it is monstrous, the cherry can represent the technology that is liberatory in disconnecting women's bodies and reproduction. Winterson shows the subtle connection between Dog-Woman and a female scientist in the 1980s and, in doing so, connects Dog-Woman's desire for maternity with contemporary maternally-motivated activism. For Lessing, monstrous motherhood is a disaster, and yet, for Winterson, monstrosity is the possibility of change.

7. Women's Happiness? Motherhood, Careers and Postfeminism in Neoliberal States

Optimism, happiness and liberty are key complementary terms in neoliberalism to inspire citizens and encourage them to thrive, as seen in Thatcher's 'Reflections on Liberty' and recent critical affect studies by Berlant and Ahmed, as discussed above.

Based upon these current critical streams as well as political policies, I have argued that the rhetoric of optimism (happiness and liberty) in neoliberalism endeavours to fill the fractures and faultlines in contemporary women's lives and their individual life choices, especially in relation to their experiences in regard to maternity and employment. It can be said to some extent that neoliberalism brought the "received" gender equality between men and women that Second Wave Feminism aimed for: women were considered as a new labour force in the liberalisation of the market, and for women it has become possible to work in the professional sphere as men do, under the terms and conditions of "if they want to". For instance, the Japanese National Diet enacted the Equal Employment law in 1985 (as I explained in Chapter Three) and since then theoretically women can work and should be given opportunities equal to those of men.

However, this “liberalisation” for women’s work situation did not and has not necessarily reached complete equality, as women have not been completely emancipated from their conventional gender roles, and in particular their strong association with domesticity and maternal roles. In other words, neoliberalism has provided women with choices to pursue their careers or to become mothers, or have it all. However, the small government system that neoliberal states implement does not provide enough infrastructure, such as nurseries and labour conditions, to support the balance between work and mothering. How can we understand the contradictions this system creates between mothering and the pursuit of a career, the laws created and the reality of the situation? The answer for this question is in the twisted relation between postfeminist individualism and the negation of solidarity between women.

The definition of “postfeminism” is hugely contested and scholars have not reached agreement on it.²⁹ Shelley Budgeon explains some of the characteristics of postfeminism as follows:

Postfeminism [...] relies upon a fundamental contradiction – feminism is both incorporated but simultaneously reviled. By asserting that equality has been achieved postfeminist discourse focuses on female achievement, encouraging women to embark on projects of individualized self-definition and privatized self-expression exemplified in the celebration of lifestyle and

²⁹ For various understanding of postfeminism, see Rosalind Gill, ‘Postfeminist Media Culture: Elements of Sensibility’, *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 10.2 (2007), 147-166.

consumption choices.³⁰

Miura Reiichi defines postfeminism as a ‘culture’ that neoliberalism produced, it ‘praises individualism, putting great value on accomplishment in the market, and postfeminism has been hugely accepted with setting its goal not in political reformation, but in self-fulfilment.’³¹ Such a ‘fundamental contradiction’, claiming that Second Wave feminism has ended and that there is no such possibility to assume the putative and monolithic subject of ‘woman’ for feminism, leads to the escalation of individualism (which partly we have seen in Winterson’s *Fit for the Future* in the Introduction).

This escalation of individualism, discarding solidarity, connects to the fracture between women’s career and their maternal experience. Now, becoming a mother is one “choice” for their lifestyle and this opportunity is closely related to consumerism. On one hand, technological innovations such as IVF and prenatal screening broadened the candidacy for who could be parent(s) or mothers, and more choices as such create controversies around giving birth to “healthier” children (which I focused on in Chapter One on *The Fifth Child*). On the other hand, although women have the opportunity to

³⁰ Budgeon, p. 281.

³¹ Miura, p. 66, my translation.

proceed in their careers as well as becoming mothers, the social infrastructure of neo-liberal states, such as nurseries, to support a balance between women's careers and child-rearing, cannot be considered as sufficient. In this sense, although gaining the liberty to "choose" their life-style is actually a political and social action, women are encouraged to "think" about their happiness as individuals, to marry, and to have children, if those are what they want. Although it is women's right to choose the life they want, the liberty of choice itself enters us into a blind passage, as the structural problem itself has not been redressed. Women's happiness and liberty, in this sense, are always already reduced to the politics of personal choice, supported by postfeminist individualism.

The sociologist Gøsta Esping-Andersen, in his monograph *The Incomplete Revolution: Adapting to Women's New Roles*, positively values women's social progress into the public sphere, calling it a 'women's revolution', but also addresses the issue that 'one of the greatest tensions in modern society has to do with the reconciliation of careers and motherhood'.³² He also points out the widening economic inequality among women through their education: the more educated a woman is, the

³² Gøsta Esping-Andersen, *The Incomplete Revolution: Adapting to Women's New Roles* (Cambridge and Massachusetts: Polity, 2009), p. 54.

more likely she is to advance her career and be promoted in the public sphere. He then proposes that the welfare state and its support are the answer to further advance this women's revolution; otherwise, it will 'produce adverse consequences for family life as well as for society at large'.³³ However, Esping-Andersen's conclusion, justifying the necessity of the welfare state, is not intended to integrate a feminist agenda into society; rather, it is for the economic efficiency of society: the aim is to operate women's employment more efficiently, as well as to provide equality.³⁴ Responding to him, Reiichi Miura contests Esping-Andersen's conclusion in its focus on economic efficiency, castigating his argument for being embedded within a postfeminist discourse. Although Esping-Andersen's conclusion is a valid criticism of neoliberal states and call for the potential benefits of a welfare state, his conclusion reveals a central conceptual flaw in his argument. As Miura observes:

Esping-Andersen's conclusion exposes the heart of the problem of 'reproduction' in a broad sense, namely, a 'woman' becomes privileged as neoliberal labour, yet, simultaneously, she as labour is easily discarded in any situation where she causes a detriment because of her 'being woman'. Furthermore, the issue is that this contradiction cannot be raised properly, because of the destruction of [women's] solidarity by postfeminist individualism.³⁵

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Esping-Andersen, p. 174.

³⁵ Miura, p. 74, my translation. This idea of being 'discarded' as labour can relate to the government's proposition for three-year maternity leave, as discussed above in the Introduction.

Contrary to Esping-Andersen, Miura asserts that a new kind of feminism is necessary.

Esping-Andersen is right to point out that the cause of class division between women, widening wealth disparity, and rigidifying social inequalities, is indeed the social structure of neoliberalistic market fundamentalism. However, he does not see that a central reason for the spread of these disparities is the negation of women's solidarity, namely the gradual death of Second Wave feminism (as social activism), of women united because they are women, and becoming a collective voice.³⁶

Miura's explanation of the problematic and twisted relation between women's labour, reproduction and postfeminism (and its discourse) sheds light on my project on thinking about women's happiness and the politics of (life) choice in neoliberalism. Women are encouraged to work as well as reproduce, and individuals are "given" the freedom to choose either of them, or have them both. In other words, female individuals are asked to think about what their own happiness is, and that process of thinking about themselves works to fulfil their own liberty, based upon individualism. Of course, having a choice is better than not having a choice. However, what at least can be said is that there are indeed discursive fractures around these issues, and the reproduction and

³⁶ Miura, p. 74, my translation.

career choices that neoliberal society offers, and most importantly, these discursive gaps are filled by the ambiguous term “happiness”, which seeks to magically reduce the responsibility of women’s choices to themselves, vindicated by postfeminist individualism (even though the issues are in the structural systems of market fundamentalism). Sara Ahmed offers ‘an approach to thinking through affect as “sticky.” Affect is what sticks, or what sustains or preserves the connection between ideas, values, and objects’, and ‘happiness functions as a promise that directs us toward certain objects, which then circulate as social goods. Such objects accumulate positive affective value as they are passed around.’³⁷ Thus, happiness works as an affective glue to make neoliberal lives sustainable. From this point of view, I examined how women’s writing in the 1980s responds to and exposes this contradiction in women’s choices, and either explores new possibilities for connection between women for social change, or sees their narratives reduced to postfeminist discourses of individual responsibility. As we saw in *Kitchen* in particular, the path to individualism often risks dissolving the solidarity between women, with Eriko’s death opening the way for Mikage’s heteronormative relationship with Yuichi. In *Sexing*, in contrast, the loose bonds that connect Dog-Woman to the female scientist, and the image of paper dolls both suggest

³⁷ Ahmed, ‘Happy Objects’, in *The Affect Theory Reader*, pp. 29-52 (pp. 29, 31).

kinds of women's solidarity that do not essentialise women, a revolution in thought on the relation between the body, desire and maternity.

In considering blood, reproductive technologies, disabled children and adoption, Kometani, Lessing, Yoshimoto and Winterson all sought to challenge the limits of normative family happiness through monstrous bodies and monstrosity in their writing in the 1980s. 'Monstrous Happiness' exemplifies the idea that happiness in relation to womanhood and motherhood is not a universal quality, but creates boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, and is conditioned by the political and social rhetoric of neoliberalism.

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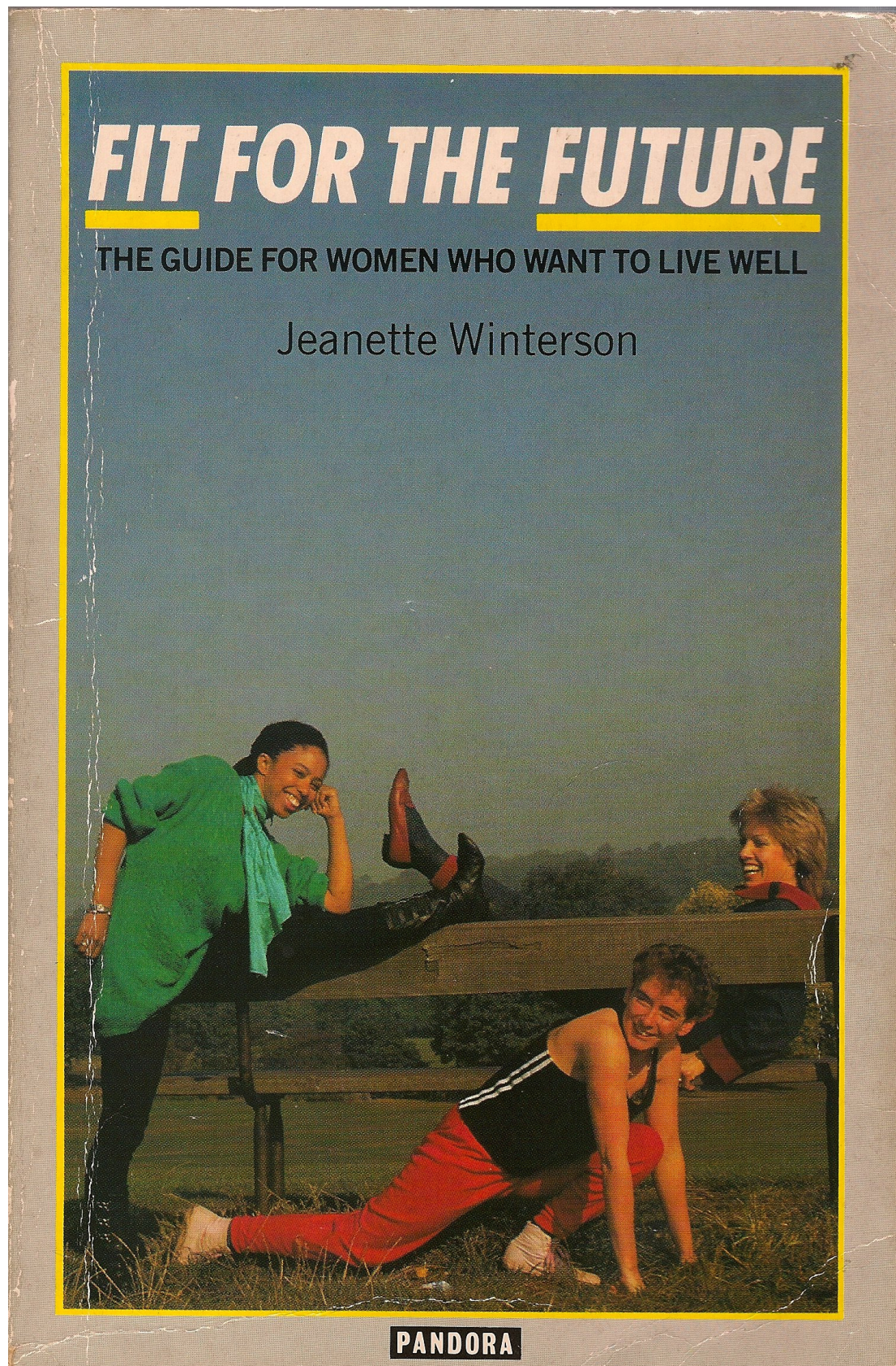
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APPENDIX

FIGURE: BOOK COVER OF *FIT FOR THE FUTURE* (1987)

Winterson seems to wear her Addidas' sport top.