

Mother-Daughter Relationship and the Daughters Search for an Intergreted Self: An Object Relation Relation Reading of Margret Atwood's *Lady Oracle*

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(Excerpt)

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Abstract

Lady Oracle is Margaret Atwood's third novel in my view, stands as a transitional work in her treatment of the issues of mother-daughter relationship and daughter as female artist. In Atwood's corpus, it is the first novel in which the daughter's growth as an artist is discerned from her childhood to early adulthood. What looms behind the daughter's creative process is her relationship with her mothers –her biological mother and her surrogate mother, from whom the novel's heroine, Joan Foster, learns the stereotypical image of female beauty and the constraints imposed upon women in the patriarchal society.

This thesis is particularly concerned with the mother-daughter relationship and its influence on the daughter's psychological development. Specifically, it examines not only Joan's battling with her mother over her body in the domestic field, but also her interpersonal relationships in her social arena and her creative process. Based on object relations theory, especially Margaret Mahler's concept of symbiosis, Melanie Klein's concepts of phantasy and paranoid-schizoid position, and D. W. Winnicott's idea of transitional phenomena, this thesis argues that Joan's development through self-splitting, enactment of multiple roles, to finally performing a ritual of death and re-birth denotes first the daughter's prolonged symbiotic relations with the mothers, escapes into fantasies, and then her gradual realization of the mothers' limitations and the stereotypes imposed on her. Moreover, it is through creative activities that a genuine understanding of the constraints both mother and daughter share is achieved, and Joan herself is empowered to reject some of the stereotypes.

In the introduction of the thesis, I first place *Lady Oracle* in the context of literary history of female writer's writings on mother-daughter relationship and then explain the reason why this novel is transitional in Atwood's corpus. Joan's paradoxical relationship with her biological mother and her difficulties in rejecting her mothers make this novel an interesting contrast to the preceding women's texts on mother-daughter plot. Published in 1976, *Lady Oracle* echoes the multiple voices

from mothers, daughters, and female artists since the second wave feminism and anticipates the growth of female artists in Atwood's later novels. The first chapter draws on Margaret Mahler's concept of symbiosis and Melanie Klein's concepts of phantasy and paranoid-schizoid position to explicate Joan's fight against her mother over the control of her body and her gradual separation from her mother. Joan's fight is interlaced with an unconscious desire to be fused with the mother, yet maternal and social rejection and her attachment to the surrogate mother later push Joan toward mother-daughter separation and split selves. The second chapter deals with Joan's adulthood, especially her relationships with men and her growth as an artist. During her adulthood, she is still haunted by her dead mother and her past. With the help of D. W. Winnicott's ideas of transitional phenomena and potential space, the second chapter argues that by engaging in creative activities, from fantasizing, role-playing to writing, Joan, on one hand, learns to maneuver her interpersonal relationships in accordance with patriarchal values, and on the other hand, moves from divided selves to an integrated self during the creative process, which not only empowers her to reject some stereotypes on women, but also leads to new understanding about her mother. Finally, in the conclusion, I explain how the development in object relations theory, from Klein to Winnicott, helps me structure the analysis of Joan's development. If Joan is able to reject stereotypes on women through the potential space she creates in writing, with the ambiguous ending of *Lady Oracle*, Atwood opens up another potential space for us readers.

Introduction

In one afternoon tea scene in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), 17-year-old Elizabeth leaves her tutor, Doris Kilman, in dismay, like a "dumb creature gallop[ing] in terror' (146). Wandering in London streets, Elizabeth muses upon her future. She does not want to grow up to be like Kilman, nor does she wish to lead a life like her mother's. Elizabeth thinks about being a doctor or a farmer – "in short, she would like to have a profession. She would become a doctor, a farmer, possibly go into Parliament if she found it necessary . . . ' (Woolf 150-151). It seems Elizabeth finds it difficult to identify with either of the two mother figures. The stereotypes of female identities embodied in her mother figures, such as a sociable and seemingly selfless housewife like Mrs. Dalloway or an unamiable single working woman like Kilman, no longer appeal to her.

If Woolf leaves the daughter's social role open in *Mrs Dalloway*, in her 1927 novel, *To the Lighthouse*, she presents the daughter as artist, Lily Briscoe, who is unconventional in her avoidance of marriage, yet whose spiritual intimacy with her

mother figure, Mrs. Ramsay, a traditional housewife and perfect hostess, has empowered her as an artist. Lily's artistic creation is deeply influenced by her ambivalent relationship with Mrs. Ramsay – "Lily realizes that Mrs Ramsay's qualities of mothering are qualities she herself needs as an artist. She becomes the first of Woolf's daughter figures to inscribe herself into the symbolic without betraying the mother' (Ingman 7). Whether it is with identification with or rejection of the mother figures, Woolf's daughter figures in the two novels still think through their mothers. For the female artist, the influence of her connection with the mother on her art is especially intriguing. Why do female artists have to both seek independence from their mothers, and think through their relationships with the mothers? How does this process of "thinking through mother' change their artworks, which, in turn, change the artists' self-perception? Furthermore, how does such a creative process empower female artists to reject the stereotypes and conventional roles imposed upon women?

These are the questions I intend to answer by exploring the mother-daughter relationship and the artist-daughter's changing perceptions of her "selves' in Margaret Atwood's 1976 novel, *Lady Oracle*. Like Mrs. Dalloway, who devotes herself to giving the perfect party, the mother in *Lady Oracle* strives to be a fully capable housewife by giving dinner parties to her husband's colleagues and maintaining a spotless house. To her, the biggest failure of her identity as a successful housewife is having a rebellious daughter, whose obesity is a contradiction to the stereotypical image of feminine beauty, and thus a manifestation of the mother's failure to keep everything decent and within the confines of her control. Unlike Lily Briscoe, Joan, the daughter in *Lady Oracle*, rebels against her mother but then sways between the two positions of a housewife and an artist. Despite her rebellion against her mother, who acts as cultural agent to transmit stereotypes and the conventional roles of women to her daughter and "who transmits social mythology – fictional constructs into which the child [Joan] is expected to fit' (Rosowski 89), Joan gets assimilated in the patriarchal culture through her mother's influences as well as social/cultural activities as taking school education, reading/writing Costume Gothic romances, and watching Hollywood movies. Nevertheless, as an artist with abundant imaginative power, Joan is able to first survive social prejudices and then improve herself through fantasizing and creative writing, both of which help her work out psychologically and think through her relationships with her mother and eventually reject the stereotypes on women imposed on her as well as her mother. In other words, it takes a large part of her life and a lot more struggles on Joan's part to accomplish what Lily Briscoe does in one afternoon in *To the Lighthouse*: a spiritual quest for artistic independence

through the mother.

Therefore, to analyze the full impact of the mother-daughter relationship on the daughter, Joan, in *Lady Oracle*, this thesis examines not only the mother-daughter relationship in Joan's domestic household, but also her interpersonal relationships in her social arena and her creative process. By "mother" I mean both Joan's biological mother, Frances, and her surrogate mother, Aunt Lou. The biological is engaged in a battle over Joan's body in which Joan's phantasies about the maternal body are played out, whereas the surrogate mother inspires Joan to identify with the stereotypical portrait of female artists in Hollywood films. Both mothers, nonetheless, cause her existence as multiple and divided selves, and her escapes into fantasies. However, through her development of multiple selves and her formation of psychic phantasies and creative fantasies by turns, Joan as an artist learns to integrate her divided selves into a coherent one, release the "she" (mothers) she is obsessed with, and to reject stereotypes and conventions imposed on women.

Lady Oracle is Atwood's third novel, and in my view, stands as a transitional work in her treatment of the issues of mother-daughter relationship and daughter as female artist because, unlike the previous two, in this novel the daughter begins to understand the mother, and there is an emergence of a real artist. Among the diverse themes in Atwood's corpus, the issue of daughter as artist has always been Atwood's special concern. In her first novel, *The Edible Woman* (1969), motherhood, as embodied in her friend, Clara, is what Marian McAlpin dreads, and the "mothers" are just those nameless housewives Marian's market research company appeals to. In escape from stereotypical femininity, Marian ends up being an ambiguous cake-maker, using the cake in a woman's shape to either go on serving her man, or to keep her identity intact. In the second novel, *Surfacing* (1972), the nameless narrator is a childless mother and an illustrator by profession. If the aborted fetus obsesses her, it is, like her parents, a shadow from the past that she needs to come to terms with—not through her art but through "surfacing" from the past and another way of living. In contrast, in *Lady Oracle* (1976), her third novel, Atwood gives us a very self-determined and active mother, and a daughter whose life and writing are haunted by the mother. Moreover, it is through rewriting Costume Gothic conventions and telling her life story that Joan gains new awareness about her mother and her own identity.

In several of Atwood's novels after *Lady Oracle*, the artist (or story-teller) identities of Atwood's female protagonists become even more to the texts' concerns, while their art works serve not only to construct feminist identities and/or community, but also to

embody their novels' self-reflexivity. In *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), Offred as a childless mother and a rebellious handmaid continues the storytelling tradition, and the cassette tapes she makes become the chapters of the book in which her integrity is both maintained and contained. In *Cat's Eye* (1988), Elaine Riskey, a successful 50-year-old artist, tells her life story in parallel to the themes of her paintings to exorcize the past that haunts her, just as Joan tries to ward off the past through writing. The past Elaine must exorcize, however, is her childhood tormentor, Cordelia, while Joan must think through and beyond her mothers in her fantasy and writings. In Atwood's Booker Prize Winner, *The Blind Assassin* (2000), moreover, we have Iris Chase as a daughter, grandmother and writer, who retells the stories of her "mothers" in order to suggest near the end of her long letter to her granddaughter possibilities for a new identity.

The multiple voices of mothers and daughters in Atwood's corpus, especially her concern about female artists, can be placed in the context of English literature written by women since the nineteenth century, which, according to Marianne Hirsch, is characterized respectively as that of absent and silenced mothers in the nineteenth century, of the daughters' ambivalent but passionate dis/connections with the mother in the first part of the twentieth century, to, since the post-war era till now, an ongoing search for the pre-oedipal mother and gradual emergence of mothers' diverse voices. Hirsch's linear representation of literature about daughters and maternal figures from the nineteenth century to the 1970s, must have its blindness and omission, not to mention my attempt to place Atwood in this historical context. However, a brief survey of how mother-daughter relationships are treated in some English novels from the nineteenth century to the 1970s will help to tease out some of the issues regarding female identities both these female writers and Atwood are concerned with.

One common concern between some nineteenth-century women's realist novels and *Lady Oracle* is: the growth of a daughter, which is enabled and set into motion by maternal suppression. The absence of the mother from these realist plots, in a way, serves to allow the daughter to develop in the plots of socialization, "participating in the dynamics of ambition, authority, and legitimacy" (57). In the nineteenth-century female family romance, therefore, "the fantasy that controls the female family romance is the desire for the heroine's singularity based on a disidentification from the fate of other women, especially mothers" (10). In novels by Jane Austen, Mary Shelley, the Brontes, and George Eliot, and Kate Chopin, mothers are often "absent, silent, or devalued" (14)¹. Just as marriage is part of the plot in Joan's romance, in most nineteenth-century female family romance, the daughter's quest ends in conforming to

the conventional roles in marriage. Take *Jane Eyre* (1847) for example: Jane's move towards Rochester takes place after the good mother figure, Miss Temple, is made absent from the plot. Despite her search for autonomy, Jane's triumph still resides in becoming Rochester's wife.

Motherlessness, as Hirsch rightly points out, means "freedom not only from constraint but also from the power that a knowing connection to the past might offer, whether that past is powerful or powerless" (68). In the case of the nineteenth century female writers, the lack of the mother is compensated by what Adrienne Rich calls "the fantasy of 'the-man-who-would-understand,'" or the fraternal plot. In Joan's case, as we will see later, it is to develop another plot of extra-marital affair, before a knowing connection can be made with the mothers.

Joan, however, is "motherless" only in the second half of the novel, which makes *Lady Oracle* significantly different from the nineteenth-century women's realist novels while closer to Virginia Woolf's novels. Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse* stand at an interesting transitional point in the modernist mother-daughter plot, because the mothers emerge as central figures in the artist-daughter texts, while the daughter figures begin to think through their mothers. Mrs. Dalloway and Mrs. Ramsay, no longer silent, see the preparations of their parties as creative activities. The daughter's portrayals of mothers are also contradictory in that mothers are both missed, celebrated and rejected. In Woolf's "A Sketch of the Past", she talks about her obsession with her mother, and it is the process of writing *To the Lighthouse* that frees her from the obsession. Anna Wickham's "The Angry Woman" (1916) offers another counter-example of the silenced mother. In an angry voice, this poem asserts a diverse motherhood and demands equal relationship between man and wife in marriage.

If Joan's views of her mother are as contradictory as her modernist predecessors are, Atwood's treatments of the mothers are not. In other words, like many contemporary feminist writers, Atwood addresses and locates mothers' and daughters' problems in a variety of socially and historically specific situations². The mothers' voices in women's post-war literature become more audible and diverse, and this is especially the case after the 1960s and under the influence of the second-wave feminism. Although the second-wave feminism started with a refusal of motherhood, as well as the familial constraints imposed on women by mothers, it discloses all kinds of inequality women suffer from in domestic and public spheres, those of mothers' included³. The mothers in the North American literature by contemporary female

writers, therefore, are diversified – mothers from different social, economic and ethnic backgrounds become central figures. In Tillie Olsen's 'I Stand Here Ironing' (1961), for instance, the working-class mother is stressed by the oppressing circumstances that "deform the mothering task: poverty, lack of support, the treatises on feeding to schedule, [and] the interference by outside agencies' (Ingman 12). In Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976), a Hispanic American mother, Connie, is placed in a low social and economic class in New York: she is exploited both by her father and by her second husband, and, later, after her violent resistance against similar exploitation of her niece, she is institutionalized like "human garbage carried to the dump"(32)[4](#).

One specific historical location of the mothers in Atwood's novels is the war and their positions as war brides in Canadian society. The mother in *Lady Oracle*, Liliana in *The Blind Assassin*, and Roz's mother in *The Robber Bride* are all war brides. During the Second World War, women's labor is called in to fulfill the shortage of male labor, yet as soon as men come back from the war fields, women are sent back home. These women who are once powerful in the workforce are now expected to become docile housewives. It is estimated that in 1947, one-quarter of Canadian women over the age of fifteen were in the paid labor force. Since the 1950s, however, there was a radical reduction of women in Canadian work force because the messages from magazines, political rhetoric, school textbooks, and doctor's medical advice increasingly urge and push women to "be appropriately feminine, docile, and supportive of men [and to serve as] auxiliaries to middle-class white men' (Silverman 174). The daughters of war brides – Joan in *Lady Oracle*, Roz in *The Robber Bride*, and Iris and Laurain *The Blind Assassin* – see their mothers active and capable at the labor force first and then later retreating into domesticity to support their husbands. The unhappy and raging mother in *Lady Oracle* is keen in transforming her appearance and the appearance of her house into the ones advocated in magazines, and her unhappiness, often recalled by Joan, bespeaks the war bride's maladjustment after losing her war-time power and having to succumb to domesticity.

If it is difficult for a woman to be a mother in the midst of gender inequality and socio-economic exploitation, it is even more difficult for a woman to be an artist/writer. As women's voices get diversified after the 1960s, one of the most active voices is that of female writer's. In the female writers' treatments of mother-daughter relationships, moreover, diversification means a gradual shift of focus from the writings from the daughters' perspectives to those of the mother's (e.g. *Beloved*) or of both(e.g. *Joy Luck Club*); it also means adding to white daughters' writings (e.g.

Housekeeping) those of minority women's (e.g. *Disappearing Moon Cafe*). In such a context, *Lady Oracle* is transitional because, instead of allowing the mother, or women of the other racial backgrounds, to speak, it focuses on the white daughter, Joan Foster, who emerges at the end of the novel as a true artist and begins to understand the mother through creative writing. Writing, as it is for the female writers before her, is difficult for Joan, not, however, in the sense of getting published or becoming famous, but in the sense of finding her own voice and rejecting patriarchal ideologies and the stereotypes of femininity her mothers try to install in her.

The difficulties Joan the artist has in rejecting her mothers and the social stereotypes of femininity, then, make *Lady Oracle* an interesting contrast to the preceding women's texts (in the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century), in which the mothers are either rejected, missed, or celebrated. Not only is Joan preoccupied with the mothers and phantastic projections on them, she seems to take on various social stereotypes imposed on her easily and happily. But why? Why can't Joan, like Jane Eyre, easily dismiss from her mind her mothers as mad, dead or unimportant? Why can't she, on the other hand, resolutely reject the social stereotypes of femininity she is familiar with like Elizabeth, Mrs. Dalloway's daughter?

These questions, for me, can best be answered with the help of the object-relations theories of Melanie Klein and D.W. Winnicott. Object relations theory is especially applicable to analyze the mother-daughter cathexis in *Lady Oracle* because it emphasizes that the subject's interaction with his/her mother in childhood, or the lack of it, has profound impact which can last into the person's adulthood. Specifically, Melanie Klein's theory of infantile projection and introjection, for me, can help explain Joan's prolonged process of battling with and attachment to her mother. If Joan rejects the mother's attempt to trim her by binge eating, interestingly, through eating as well as through her infantile gaze, Joan identifies with the mother, both her good and bad sides. Winnicott's theory of transitional object and potential space, in turn, will be used to explain why Joan fantasizes and "plays" different stereotypical roles in both her life and her work, and how such playful but creative activities in the potential space serve for her to try out some stereotypical relationships so as to finally grow beyond the stereotypes as well as the plots of patriarchal romance.

In this thesis, therefore, I will argue that Joan's development through self-splitting, enactment of multiple roles, to finally performing a ritual of death and re-birth denotes first the daughter's prolonged symbiotic relations with the mothers, escapes into fantasies, and then her gradual realization of the mothers' limitations and the

stereotypes imposed on her.? To think through the mothers, however, does not mean to reject and move beyond the mothers as persons; rather, it means for Joan a genuine understanding of the mothers', and the daughters', problems. Moreover, it is through creative activities that such genuine understanding is achieved and Joan herself is empowered to reject some of the stereotypes. Indeed, Joan at the end may not be able to be free from all the gender stereotypes, but at least in her last novel she successfully rejects some of them.

I will explore mother-daughter symbiosis and Joan's delayed separation in the first chapter, and, in the second, Joan's engagement in the patriarchal society and her growth as an artist, which leads to gradual independence from phallogocentric ideologies. In the first chapter, first I borrow Margaret Mahler's concept of symbiosis to discern the mother-daughter relationship. The mother and Joan's battle over the territory of Joan's body is the only way they can attach to each other and through such attachment, a peculiar symbiotic relationship is formed. Due to Joan's problematic usage of food to achieve a paradoxical purpose – to defy and to attach to her mother, Joan is ensnared in a prolonged symbiotic relationship. Joan's failure of normal separation-individuation is further explicated with Melanie Klein's concepts of phantasy, the defense mechanism of splitting, and paranoid-schizoid position, all of which I will further explain and discuss in the first section of Chapter One. Phantasy, to put it simply, refers to the unconscious imaginative representations of bodily instincts, including oral, urethral, and anal phantasies and desires (St. Clair 48). While Klein's phantasy initially emphasizes the child's phantasy of the mother's breasts – splitting the breasts into a good and a bad breast – the word, breast, is used metaphorically, and phantasy can also be used to refer to unconscious fantasy of everyday life. In Kleinian terms, Joan is in a paranoid-schizoid position with her desire to expel the threatening bad mother from her psyche and to disentangle herself from the symbiotic bonding. In Joan's unconsciousness, she experiences fits of anxieties because of the projection of a phantasy bad breast onto the biological mother that threatens to reduce her body, and in contrast, the sense of nourishment and security is attained by projecting the good breast onto binge eating and her surrogate mother, Aunt Lou.

Besides splitting her self into the bad and good breasts and project her mother as the bad one, Joan experiences another kind of self-splitting in the process of her socialization. On the one hand, to survive in the social arena, she consciously divides herself into a kind auntie figure in school and a monster underneath. On the other hand, the surrogate mother Joan turns to, Aunt Lou, provides her with illusive escapes

into fantasies; that is, romantic ideologies and the stereotype of female artists in Hollywood movies. Besides her ideological legacy, Aunt Lou literally provides Joan with a means to reject her mother: using the 'physical trimming' as a term of getting the aunt's inheritance. The biological mother-daughter symbiotic relationship is thus severed apparently, with the daughter Joan's running away to a self-constructed world of patriarchal fantasies and maternal shadows.

Examining Joan's engagement with fantasy, the second chapter develops the idea of fantasy and writing as transitional phenomena. While the fantasies discussed near the end of the first chapter only provide illusive escapes, fantasies, as well as writings, discussed in the second chapter take on the quality of transitional phenomenon and underlie the beginning of Joan's integration of her divided selves. The Winnicottian approach to art and creativity emphasizes 'the creative *process* rather than the art *product*' (Glover), which underlies my approach in Chapter Two to Joan's development, that is, to analyze the process of Joan's creative activities as an on-going process of individuation and self-realization. Inherent in D. W. Winnicott's concepts of potential space and transitional phenomena are paradoxes that the subject needs to learn to negotiate. Moreover, it is through transitional object or phenomenon that anxiety is relieved and the differences between fantasy and reality are recognized, negotiated or accepted. In her adulthood, however, Joan falsely believes she can segregate fantasy from reality; for instance, she wants to draw a definite line between her affair with the Royal Porcupine and her marriage to Arthur, and such false belief induces her to be schizophrenic.

Yet, Joan's construction of fantasies has positive values. The second chapter argues that through participating in transitional phenomena – role-playing, constructing fantasies, and writing – and realizing the impossibility of living in fantasies, Joan learns to integrate her multiple, yet divided selves and act meaningfully on them. The divided selves result from both her self-splitting to reject the mother and her attempts to socialize and attract the men around her. Joan does not passively repeat stereotypes of female artists and fantasies in Costume Gothics and popular culture. She actively constructs her own fantasy, that of the Fat Lady, and becomes more active in her engagement in the objective reality during her writing process, which I will analyze based on her poem, 'Lady Oracle', and the final product of her novel, *Stalked By Love*, which rejects Gothic conventions and is a truly original work. Along with the writing process, Joan also gains new insight into her relationship with her mother.

Finally, in my conclusion, besides summarizing my discussion in the two chapters, I

will interpret the ending of *Lady Oracle* from a Winnicottian perspective. Like many of Atwood's novels, the ending of *Lady Oracle* remains ambiguous and resists closure. It is not clear whether Joan will take more responsibility in the objective reality or escape again into another fantasy. However, if writing opens a potential space for Joan so she can first project and then reject stereotypes, Atwood also opens a potential space for us readers. If Joan's wavering between fantasy and reality is an endless cycle, the potential space Atwood opens with the ending of *Lady Oracle* continues to invite the readers' participation and to inspect the stereotypes women face today.

Note

1. In some rare occasions, the mother's social predicament opposing her personal desire is explored. For instance, In Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* (1899), Edna Pontellier finds little contentment in motherhood. Yet, Edna's determination to fulfill her sexual desire and to pursue a personal identity is thwarted by an oppressive society which thrusts her into suicide.

2. For instance, the nineteenth century world of industrial capitalism, the two World Wars and contemporary world of multinational capitalism in *The Blind Assassin*, the post-war eras of conservatism and sexual liberation in *The Edible Woman*, and in *The Robber Bride* and *The Handmaid's Tale*, a connection of such history to a backlash of conservatism.

3. The second-wave feminism in the U.S. is a period of passionate consciousness-raising, but not heart-wrenching debate. Although it is impossible for me to detail its developments and theories, I'd still like to list some contributions which are influential to the discourses on mother-daughter relationship since the 60's: those devoted to discovering the writers' "literary mothers" such as Ellen Moer's *Literary Women* (1976) and Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979) and Elaine Showalter's *A Literature of Their Own* (1977). More importantly, Adrienne Rich's *Of Women Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (1976) further distinguishes motherhood experienced personally and motherhood as a social institution designed to keep women under control, which initiates more positive descriptions of motherhood. Certainly, there are further developments of the discourses on maternity in French feminism, postmodern feminisms as well as in contemporary postmodern and science-fiction texts, but they are beyond the scope of this thesis.

4. Through Connie's visit to the future community of Mattapoisett in the year of 2137,

Piercy gives us an alternative view of mothering. In Mattapoisett, women no longer bear children; reproduction takes place artificially through a brooding machine, and every child is assigned three co-mothers, who can be male or female, as the idea of gender does not matter at all in the future.