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Making a Home: the difficulty of dwelling
in Genesis and its intertexts

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Abstract

Using an inter-disciplinary range of research on the home-space, home-making practices and the concept of ‘dwelling’, I achieve a new understanding of a central thematic concern in Genesis: its characters’ struggle to build stable, lasting homes upon the earth. Genesis starts with a lost home-space named Eden, before progressing towards other temporary dwellings such as the ark Noah builds, and Abraham’s tents. The biblical ‘home’ is constructed from a mix of materials: the birth of children, divine instructions and journeys, dreams, homemaking acts and so on. Alongside social scientific criticism, this thesis uses literary and midrashic intertexts as a way into re-imagining the ‘unhomely’ experiences of certain characters, or drawing out tensions in acts such as home-unmaking or homecomings. The investigation of the concept of ‘home’ in Genesis contributes to the study of this space more widely, as well as reinterpreting familiar biblical themes such as identity, family and community.

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In the beginning

*There is a magic in that little world, home*¹

‘to face homeward is a turn toward the most primordial of places’²

The first book of the Hebrew Bible³ begins with the world as a ‘formless void’,⁴ ready for God’s inscription. In the first passage of Genesis, God shapes raw materials into ‘Earth and the cosmos we inhabit’.⁵ A habitable space has been crafted, upon which the Hebrew Bible’s mythical figures will trace their well-known histories in the book of Genesis and beyond. The first word, in the Hebrew, is ‘בְּרֵאשִׁית’; *bereshit*. This Hebrew phrase, translated as ‘in the beginning’, is also the book’s name in Jewish scriptures. With *bereshit*, as the Jewish writer Elie Wiesel identifies, ‘The Bible begins with the letter *bet* or ‘ב’ and in Hebrew, ‘*Bet* is a house’.⁶ Mimi Levy Lipis, a cultural studies researcher, has also noted that the letter’s acrophonic name means house in Hebrew; furthermore, she argues that its visual shape can be read as the ‘simplest depiction of the floor plan of a house [...] a square with an opening for the door’.⁷ For Lipis, the strong ‘base line’ of the letter *bet* symbolises the house’s ‘roots’ in its environment, and ‘rootedness’ is itself an important theme throughout Genesis,⁸ one I will return to in each chapter. In a similar vein, the Hebrew Bible scholar Aviva Gottlieb

¹ Robert Southey, English poet and writer.

² Forrest Clinger, ‘Homecoming and the Half-Remembered: Environmental Amnesia, the Uncanny and the Path Home’ in Daniel Boscaljon, ed. *Resisting the Place of Belonging: Uncanny Homecomings in Religion, Narrative and the Arts* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), pp.33-46, p.41.

³ Known as the ‘Tanakh’ to Jewish people and the ‘Old Testament’ to Christians, I will refer to it as the ‘Hebrew Bible’.

⁴ Genesis chapter one, verse two - *The Bible with Apocrypha: New Revised Standard Version* (Oxford: University Press, 1995). All following biblical references taken from the NRSV will be indicated in-text in brackets.

⁵ Anne Elvey, ‘Matter, Freedom and the Future: Reframing Feminist Theologies through an Ecological Materialist Lens’, *Feminist Theology* Vol 32, No. 2 (2015), pp.186-204, p.187.

⁶ Elie Wiesel, ‘Longing for Home’ in Rouner, Leroy S. *The Longing for Home* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996), pp.17-29, p.17.

⁷ Mimi Levi Lipis, *Symbolic Houses in Judaism: how objects and metaphors construct hybrid places of belonging* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), pp.119-21.

This reminds me of a line in Gaston Bachelard’s *The Poetics of Space*: ‘Words - I often imagine this - are little houses...’ (Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1992), p.147.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p.121.

Zornberg sees the story of man as ‘the story of the quest for *amidah*, for a solid reality on which to base his life.’⁹ The letter *bet* is our way into these questions.

*his habitable earth*¹⁰

The opening chapters of Genesis constitute the ‘description of a home - the world’, as Lipis phrases it, and it is only *after* their ‘dwelling place [is] completed’¹¹ that the first humans are made. The world is a house on a grand scale. As it is phrased in Isaiah: ‘He did not create it [the world] a waste [*tohu*]; but formed it for habitation’.¹² A theoretical discourse through we can understand the world as ‘home’ on a larger scale is that of ecofeminism. ‘As *oikos* (Greek for home) translates to the English prefix eco of ecology’, Kimberly Carfore argues, ‘it is important to extend our conception of home to include earth as home’.¹³ Karen J Warren, an eco-feminist philosopher, writes:

it is *here, on planet earth* that we build our houses, establish intentional communities [...] it is on the planet earth that we build our earthly homes. The earth truly *is* our home.¹⁴

When the sky is formed, in Robert Alter’s (1996) translation, it is a ‘vault’ which divides the water: ‘The Hebrew’, he notes, ‘suggests a hammered-out slab’ so ‘the English architectural term [is] appropriate.’¹⁵ This idea of the sky as a roof is present elsewhere, as the Bible scholar and rabbi Benno Jacob identified in his early twentieth century commentary on Genesis: ‘[i]n other biblical passages [the sky] which seems to arch over the earth is described

⁹ Aviva Gottlieb Zornberg, *The Beginning of Desire: Reflections on Genesis* (New York: Schocken Books, 1995), p.24.

¹⁰ Proverbs 8:30-31 (Soncino translation), quoted by Zornberg, pp.110-1.

¹¹ Lipis, pp.121-2.

¹² Isaiah 45:18, referenced by Zornberg, p.132.

¹³ Kimberly Carfore, ‘The Paradox of Homecoming: Home is Where the Haunt Is’, in Daniel Boscaljon, ed. *Resisting the Place of Belonging* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), pp.61-72, p.69.

¹⁴ Warren, p.228, her italics.

¹⁵ Robert Alter, *Genesis: Translation and Commentary* (London: W.W. Norton and Company, 1996), p.3 - I will use Alter’s translation throughout my thesis in addition to the NRSV, in order to compare word choices, and to make use of Alter’s valuable explanatory notes.

as [...] like the roof of a tent'.¹⁶ The sky/roof's placement is followed by land and sea (1:9-10): the 'dry land', of course, will be the 'habitation of men',¹⁷ and can be viewed within this world/house metaphor as the floor or 'foundation' of the earth/home. Plants and trees (1:11-2) follow, and after four days, in Jacob's words: 'the house of the world is ready for its inhabitants.'¹⁸ What began as a silent, empty wasteland has been shaped into an expectant dwelling-place.

What has occurred in this first chapter is the establishment of a setting, within which – ostensibly – the narrative events of the following chapters and biblical books occur. The creation of this peaceful, fertile environment is God's first act: the framework is put in place before it is storied, before 'everything [...] happens and lives',¹⁹ as Jacob puts it. In verse twenty-seven, the final inhabitants of the earth are created: man and woman. God is an 'architect' here, who 'builds man's house, furnishes it and places him at a well decked table'.²⁰ The world is His 'founding construction',²¹ to use Iris Marion Young's phrase.

One of the central concerns of the book of Genesis is thus contained within its very first letter, the *bet* of *bereshit*, which foregrounds the idea of a house, and stability. In the Bible, 'the home precedes everything else',²² to use Wiesel's words: this is true on both a typographical and thematic level. Furthermore, its presence is not limited to Genesis chapter one: 'In the tissue of words of Genesis,' the biblical critic Mieke Bal has written, 'the house is surely a motif of great importance'.²³ For a reader of the Hebrew, on a micro-level, each reoccurrence

¹⁶ Jacob gives the example of Isaiah 40:22 ('It is he... who stretches out the heavens like a curtain,| and spreads them like a tent to live in', NRSV) - Benno Jacob, *The First Book of the Bible: Genesis* Abridged, edited and translated by Jacob, Dr. Earnest I and Jacob, Walter (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1934), New edition 1974, p.5.

¹⁷ Ibid., p.6.

¹⁸ Ibid., p.8.

¹⁹ Ibid., p.3.

²⁰ Ibid., p.1.

²¹ Iris Marion Young, 'House and Home: feminist variations on a theme' in Young, *Intersecting Voices: Dilemmas of Gender, Political Philosophy, and Policy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp.134-64, p.153.

²² Wiesel, p.17.

²³ Mieke Bal, *Loving Yusuf: Conceptual Travels from Present to Past* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), p.36.

of the letter *bet* is a reminder of these ideas: '[t]hrough the alphabet', Lipis identifies, 'the house is constantly present in the canonical texts'.²⁴ Wiesel discusses the letter *bet* in an essay on the Jewish experience of 'longing for home',²⁵ whilst Lipis introduces these ideas in her extended study of 'the symbolic and metaphorical aspects of the house' in Judaism.²⁶ Wiesel's work could thus be described as 'historical', and Lipis' as 'material'; mine, however, will be largely 'textual'. In this thesis, I will argue that the search for a 'home', the marking out of living space, and the inhabitation of different structures and environments, is a core concern of the Hebrew Bible's first narratives. I intend to write a critical and imaginative account of the biblical home in Genesis using a collage of literary intertexts, midrash, biblical criticism, geography, anthropology and philosophy. Each chapter will be structured around a specific dwelling: the garden of Eden, Noah's ark and latterly, Abraham and Jacob's tents.

Wiesel and Lipis both come to see the biblical text as a pseudo-home, 'a shelter, a dwelling place'²⁷ for Jewish people. Specifically, for Lipis, this is due to the Hebrew Bible's movable nature. She quotes Heinrich Heine, who famously stated that 'the book is the portable homeland of the Jewish people'.²⁸ Throughout Lipis' study, particularly in reference to Jewish ritual houses such as the *sukkah* and *huppah*, portability proves to be a vital concern. Influenced by Lipis' ideas, I perceive the idea of a 'home' in Genesis to be mobile and changeable, continually re-negotiated and re-built. The houses of Genesis are of course portable themselves; Eden is soon lost and left behind, to be remembered as a mythical 'ideal' home; the ark is a temporary home unrooted to any earthly foundations, and the tents that Abraham's nomadic family later inhabit are moved often. Genesis hinges on the act of re-construction; new structures built in light of different events and experiences.

The search for a home, furthermore, lends a core thematic conflict to the text; a tension between, to use the feminist theorists Biddy Martin and Chandra T. Mohanty's phrase,

²⁴ Lipis, p.121.

²⁵ Wiesel, p.17.

²⁶ Lipis, p.1.

²⁷ Wiesel, p.17.

²⁸ Lipis, pp.66-7. - This of course has a theological aspect, our 'true' home being in God: 'For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.' (2 Corinthians 5:1).

‘being home and not being home’.²⁹ This takes on a different resonance in each of the early narratives of Genesis, as I will explore below. Here, however, I will contextualise the concepts of dwelling and ‘home’, before explaining the interdisciplinary methodology of this thesis in more detail.

*we shape our dwellings, and afterwards our dwellings shape us*³⁰

The psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud once wrote that ‘the first acts of civilisation were the use of tools, the gaining of control over fire and the construction of dwellings’.³¹ It is the third of these which I have argued occupies the biblical narrative first, and with which my thesis will be primarily concerned. Freud’s words remind us that on a basic level, the construction of a dwelling is an act of protection. Humans cannot survive long unsheltered in the world, and together with sustenance, this is a requirement for survival. Lipis points out that the first two letters of the Hebrew alphabet, ‘א’ and ‘ב’, reflect this: the *aleph* (an ox) and *bet* (a house) ‘cover the two most basic human needs, those of food and shelter’.³² But its role in our survival is only the first sense in which we must approach the dwelling, for its construction is also part of our identity: Vitruvius, a Roman architect, argued that ‘we become human only as we build’³³ and Martin Heidegger, a twentieth century philosopher, has since argued that ‘[o]nly if we are capable of dwelling [...] can we build’.³⁴ Thus the acts of dwelling and building, intricately related, make us human in more ways than one.

²⁹ Martin and Mohanty use this phrase in discussing Minnie Bruce Pratt’s autobiographical essay ‘Identity: Skin, Blood, Heart’ (1985): they suggest that Pratt’s writing is ‘constructed on the tension between two specific modalities: being home and not being home’ - Biddy Martin and Chandra T. Mohanty, “Feminist Politics: What’s Home Got to Do with It?” in Chandra T. Mohanty, *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* (London: Duke University Press, 2003), pp.85-105, p.90.

Martin and Mohanty ‘are interested in [...] the power and appeal of “home” as a concept and a desire,’ and ‘its occurrence as a metaphor in feminist writings’ - *Ibid.*, p.85.

³⁰ Winston Churchill, speaking in 1944 during the rebuilding of the bombed House of Commons, London.

³¹ Quoted in Elizabeth Bronfen, “The Body and It’s Discontents” in Avril Horner and Angela Keane, eds. *Body Matters: Feminism, Textuality, Corporeality* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p.109.

³² Lipis, p.122.

³³ T.J. Gorringer, *A Theology of the Built Environment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p.1.

³⁴ Martin Heidegger, ‘Building Dwelling Thinking’ from *Basic Writings* (1971), pp.344-363. First presented as a lecture, 1951. Accessed online 8/04/15: http://designtheory.fiu.edu/readings/heidegger_bdt.pdf, p.362.

In his essay 'Building Dwelling Thinking' (1971), Heidegger begins by asking, 'What is it to dwell?' and secondly, 'How does building belong to dwelling?'³⁵ '[B]uilding is not merely a means and a way toward dwelling', he suggests: 'to build is in itself already to dwell.'³⁶ Connecting the German word *bauen* 'to build' to the older word *buan* - 'to dwell' - and then to *it bin*, 'I am', Heidegger writes:

ich bin, du bist mean I dwell, you dwell. The way in which [...] we humans *are* on the earth, is *buan*, dwelling. To be a human being means [...] to dwell.³⁷

Thus, 'dwelling' is an integral part of human life, of 'being on the earth'³⁸ to use Heidegger's phrase. Furthermore, for Heidegger, 'dwelling' is comprised of two aspects. Pointing out that the 'old word *bauen* [...] *also* means at the same time [...] to preserve and care for, specifically to till the soil',³⁹ Heidegger sets up a contrast between 'cultivating' and 'constructing':

'Building in the sense of preserving and nurturing is not making anything. Ship-building and temple-building, on the other hand, do in a certain way make their own works. Here building, in contrast with cultivating, is a constructing. Both modes of building [...] are comprised within genuine building, that is, dwelling.'⁴⁰

For the feminist philosopher Iris Marion Young, Heidegger's 'distinction between constructing and preserving, as two aspects of building and dwelling, is implicitly gendered',⁴¹ with the former a male task and the latter a woman's. 'On the whole', Young identifies, 'women do not build',⁴² even in the modern era. Furthermore, if 'building' is 'the world-founding of an active subject' as Heidegger suggests, then it would appear 'that only

³⁵ Ibid., p.347.

³⁶ Ibid., p.348. Furthermore, 'Only if we are capable of dwelling, only then can we build' - Heidegger, p. 362.

³⁷ Ibid., pp.348-9.

³⁸ Ibid., p.349; 'Dwelling [...] is *the basic character* of Being' - Ibid., p.362.

³⁹ Ibid., his italics.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p.349.

⁴¹ Young, p.134.

⁴² Ibid., p.137.

men are subjects.⁴³ For Young, this has a direct effect on men and women's experiences of inhabitation, which are consequently very different. She writes:

Those who build dwell in the world in a different way from those who occupy the structures already built, and from those who preserve what is constructed. If building establishes a world, then it is still very much a man's world.⁴⁴

Furthermore, women's efforts at dwelling are compounded by, as Hobbs puts it, the 'strong symbolic relationship between the house and the body of the woman'.⁴⁵ As Plummer puts it, 'the house can be read as both a representative of traditional male norms and as the female body'.⁴⁶ This is found within the very letter we started with, the Hebrew *bet*, which - as Lipis explains - has 'associations of dwelling *and* women', symbolising an 'interior' and 'habitation'.⁴⁷ The symbolic relationship between the home and the woman, of course, has throughout history worked in conjunction with women's largely home-based role. It also gives rise to two factors I will return to in my first chapter; namely that the woman's body, specifically the womb, is seen as the first home a person has, and in a wider sense '[t]he house is frequently in literature a metonymic symbol of woman'.⁴⁸ Noting this symbolic equations, Young writes: 'If house and home mean the confinement of women [...] then feminists have good reason to reject home as a value. But [...] We often look forward to going home [...]'; 'House and home', she concludes, 'are deeply ambivalent values.'⁴⁹ Arguing 'that home carries a core positive meaning as the material anchor for a sense of agency and [identity]', Young concludes that 'the proper response is not to reject home, but to extend its positive values to everyone.'⁵⁰ Similarly, the social scientist Bronwen Walter identifies that whilst home 'can be a source of containment and fixity, rendering women invisible, and linking

⁴³ Ibid., pp.137-8.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p.137.

⁴⁵ Hobbs, p.14.

⁴⁶ Plummer, p.70.

⁴⁷ Lipis, pp.122-3, my italics.

⁴⁸ Cheryl J. Exum, *Fragmented Women: Feminist (Sub)versions of Biblical Narrative* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993) p. 47.

⁴⁹ Young, p.134.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p.159.

them to the mundane and routine [...] it can also be the basis for challenging dominant cultures'.⁵¹

For Young, 'preservation', the 'aspect of dwelling which Heidegger devalues', 'provides a turning point for revaluing home.'⁵² This aspect, 'the activities of homemaking',⁵³ is the part, Young suggests, women have predominantly played: 'more often responsible for the cultivation and preservation of home through their domestic work', she writes, '[women's] importance in facilitating dwelling - and thus enabling building - is overshadowed'.⁵⁴ Gaston Bachelard writes:

A house that shines from the care it receives appears to have been rebuilt from the inside; it is as though it were new inside. In the intimate harmony of walls and furniture, it may be said that we become conscious of a house that is built by women, since men only know how to build a house from the outside...⁵⁵

Though women's work 'leave[s] no lasting monuments',⁵⁶ unlike the male-built towers and altars strewn across the biblical landscape, Young argues that preservation 'has crucial human value.'⁵⁷ Furthermore, she suggests, 'it can be either conservative or reinterpretive',⁵⁸ an idea we should keep in mind when reading stories such as Rachel's, in Genesis chapter thirty-one. Significantly 'preservation', in contrast to 'building', is the only way in which both men *and* women are able to dwell in the first home of Genesis.

⁵¹ quoted by Blunt and Dowling, p.214, my italics.

⁵² Young, p.135.

⁵³ Young, p.152.

⁵⁴ Blunt and Dowling, p.4 - Cieraad also sees 'homemaking [as] a supremely female task' - Irene Cieraad, *At Home: An Anthropology of Domestic Space* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1999, p.10.

Furthermore, Harker notes a similar division of homemaking labour in recent ethnographic work - Christopher Harker, "Spacing Palestine through the Home." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 34:3 (2009), pp.320-32, p.325.

⁵⁵ Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1992), p.68.

⁵⁶ Young, p.152.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p.135.

⁵⁸ Young, p.154.

A brief exploration of Heidegger and Young's writing thus uncovers the fundamental importance of the act of dwelling, as well as its divisions into different activities and processes. These ideas will form the theoretical basis of this thesis, which aims to interrogate 'the difficulties of dwelling',⁵⁹ to borrow Blunt and Dowling's phrase, in Genesis.

*Home is where one starts from*⁶⁰

The idea of a home

What Heidegger's subject constructs and preserves is the dwelling-place, the 'home'. Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling, in their extended study *Home* (2006), develop a critical geography of this space, and argue that it is both a 'material and an imaginative site'.⁶¹ Home 'is a *place*, a site in which we live' but secondly, and 'more than this', 'home is also an idea and an imaginary that is imbued with feelings'.⁶² I will examine each of these in turn.

It is important to pay attention to specific structures because, as Blunt and Dowling argue, 'imaginaries of home are influenced by the physical forms of dwelling'.⁶³ As a 'place', then, home is a building, a 'house'; 'a domicile or residence'.⁶⁴ "House", as the architectural historian Joseph Rykwert words it, 'means shelter, and implies edges, walls, doors, and roofs - and the whole repertory of the fabric'.⁶⁵ As a built-form, the house is perhaps the most ubiquitous of those 'structures of the world through which we reproduce ourselves',⁶⁶ to use the theologian Tim J. Gorringer's phrase. It has many variations, as Rykwert notes, 'whether it is the Mongol yurts of skin and embroidered felt stretched over a wooden frame, or Eskimo igloos built up of blocks of ice [...] or even the leaf shelters of pygmies in Central Africa'.⁶⁷ This, for Blunt and Dowling, is '[o]ne of the important elements of home': 'that it is a house

⁵⁹ Blunt and Dowling, p.187; I will echo this phrase throughout my thesis.

⁶⁰ Joseph Rykwert, 'House and Home' *Social Research*, Vol. 58, No. 1 (Spring, 1991), pp. 51-62.

⁶¹ Blunt and Dowling, p.146.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p.2.

⁶³ Blunt and Dowling p.22.

⁶⁴ Warren, p.217.

⁶⁵ Rykwert, p.54.

⁶⁶ Gorringer, p.1.

⁶⁷ Rykwert, p.56.

or shelter; a structure in which we are housed, whether that be a tent, caravan, house [...] or any other assemblage of building materials on a particular site.’⁶⁸ A house can be made almost anywhere, with just about any physical materials, as those living in emergency situations are often forced to find out. Simply put, a dwelling is an architectural statement made through objects and materials, with the basic aim of shelter.

As the architect Edward Hollis writes, ‘[t]he houses of our ancestors, which were contingent responses to their ever-shifting needs, have perished.’⁶⁹ The houses of Genesis exist only in the biblical narrative, readers’ imaginations, and the speculations of archaeologists. T.R Hobbs, a biblical scholar, has however written about ‘Israelite house[s] of the First Testament period’, and suggests that the ‘traditional house [...] had a centre (the courtyard and rooms), walls (boundaries) and an entrance’: ‘In the courtyard’, he suggests, ‘household chores were done, especially [...] the cooking of food, including the baking of bread’.⁷⁰ Though the dwellings of Genesis’ first stories are somewhat less traditional - a garden, an ark - Hobbs’ suggestions are a starting point. The importance of activities such as the preparation of meals, as well as domestic entrances and boundaries, will each prove relevant in the early home-based narratives of Genesis.

Furthermore, whilst the term ‘house’, as Rykwert notes, applies to ‘a rather more inert notion’,⁷¹ in Genesis, as I have stated above, it is a more flexible construction. The home, Douglas writes, ‘is located in space, but it is not necessarily a fixed space. It does not need bricks and mortar, it can be a wagon, a caravan, a boat, or a tent.’⁷² In Genesis chapters six and seven a boat becomes a temporary home for Noah’s family, and in the later chapters tents are employed as nomadic homes. In connection to the question of ‘rootedness’ in the biblical text (see above), this creates a thematic tension in the text between movement and stasis. We find this tension in the sheltering, water-tight ark as well as the tentatively pitched tents of Abraham and his descendants. ‘The house,’ the urban studies researcher Richard Ronald

⁶⁸ Blunt and Dowling, p.6.

⁶⁹ Edward Hollis, *The Secret Lives of Buildings* (London: Penguin, 2009), p.6.

⁷⁰ Hobbs, pp.13-4.

⁷¹ Rykwert, p.54 - Rykwert writes of two words which Latin ‘provides [for] the house: as a thing built, *aedes*, and as a place of rest - which home so emphatically is - *mansio*, from *maneo*, I remain or abide’ - Ibid., p.52.

⁷² Douglas, p.289.

writes, '[is] best conceived as a kind of relationship between people and their environment',⁷³ and as their environment changes, the characters of Genesis adapt their houses accordingly.

A further point to make is that a 'distinction' between the words 'house' and 'home' 'persists in most languages',⁷⁴ as Rykwert identifies. A house is not always a 'home'. As Blunt and Dowling write: 'Home is undeniably connected to a built form such as a house, but [...] one can live in a house and yet not feel 'at home'.'⁷⁵ This links back to Young's argument that different experiences of dwelling can occur within the same structure; the idea that one inhabitant could feel 'at home' and another 'not at home'. 'A house environment may be oppressive and alienating', Blunt and Dowling suggest, due to factors such as 'domestic violence', 'house arrest'⁷⁶ and so on. These factors tend to affect women more than men, as I will examine below. Indeed Warren goes so far as to suggest that '*within patriarchy* there may be no such thing as a totally healthy or "functional" home.'⁷⁷ Yet the aim of inhabitation, as Rykwert argues, *is* to have a house in which you can make some kind of home.⁷⁸ If this is achieved, the moment of change isn't always clear: 'When does a house turn into a home?' Wiesel asks, 'When we move in? When we furnish it, sleep in it, eat in it?'⁷⁹

Families, as the novelist Michèle Roberts writes, 'are supposed to have homes',⁸⁰ and vice versa. For the literary scholar Daniel Boscaljon, 'a house exists as an object when it is constructed as an anonymous shelter [...] It becomes a thing when it gathers a person or

⁷³ Ronald is here referring to Kimberly Dovey's ideas - Richard Ronald, *The Ideology of Home Ownership: Homeowner Societies and the Role of Housing* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p.11.

⁷⁴ Rykwert, p.54.

⁷⁵ Blunt and Dowling, p.10.

⁷⁶ Ibid. - I will return to the former in the context of Hagar's story (Genesis 16), and the latter certainly finds application in the Noah narratives, where I will discuss the possibility of reading the ark as a home/prison.

⁷⁷ Karen J. Warren, 'Ecofeminism and the Longing for Home' in Rouner, Leroy S. (1996) *The Longing for Home* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996), pp.217-229, p.224.

⁷⁸ Rykwert, p.59-60.

⁷⁹ Wiesel, p.17.

⁸⁰ Roberts (1978), p.180.

family within it'.⁸¹ The family, or 'household', is the group of individuals that inhabits the house/home. Again, the idea of construction is vital. As Rykwert writes: 'Where we use "house" the Romans said *domus* [...] The Romans got their *domus* from the Old Indo-European root *dem*, family; while the Greeks derived it from exactly the same-sounding root, meaning to build.'⁸² In Genesis, the biblical scholar David L. Peterson (2005) argues, 'the notion of family is used innovatively [...] as a way of *building* humans into the *structure* of the universe.'⁸³ This grouping, like the 'house', is '[continually] recreated in each generation',⁸⁴ the Hebrew bible scholar Jon L. Berquist writes. In 'ancient Israel,' Berquist identifies, 'the household was the basic social unit',⁸⁵ and a patriarchal structure.⁸⁶ Yet, like the houses themselves, the families of Genesis are changeable; as Berquist identifies, 'households are always permeable, never quite stable'.⁸⁷ The family in Genesis, Peterson notes, is 'different in each generation'.⁸⁸ Each one, however, is linked by its attempt to achieve rootedness. Peterson talks of a phrase 'used within the Jewish community [...] *šālôm bayît*, which one might translate literally, "peace at home", and 'suggest[s] that the ancestral narratives in Genesis depict [...] families striving to reach such peace'.⁸⁹

*Home is an idea*⁹⁰

⁸¹ Daniel Boscaljon, 'Dwelling Beyond Poetry: The Uncanny Houses of Hawthorne and Poe', Ch. 4 of *Resisting the Place of Belonging*, pp.47-59, p.48.

⁸² Rykwert, p.52.

⁸³ David L. Petersen, 'Genesis and Family Values', *Journal of Biblical Literature* Vol. 124, No. 1 (Spring, 2005), pp. 5-23, p.11, my italics.

⁸⁴ Jon L. Berquist, *Controlling Corporeality: the Body and the Household in Ancient Israel* (London: Rutgers University Press, 2002), p.76 and p.97, respectively; my italics.

⁸⁵ Berquist, p.71 and 76, respectively.

⁸⁶ Men were the 'heads of households' - Berquist, p.95.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p.106.

⁸⁸ Petersen, p.14.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p.23.

⁹⁰ Janet Zandy, quoted by Blunt and Dowling, p.50.

We can now consider ‘home’ from Blunt and Dowling’s second angle, as an ‘imaginative site’.⁹¹ As the philosopher Alain de Botton reminds us,

we seek two things of our buildings. We want them to shelter us. And we want them to *speak* to us [...] of whatever we find important and need to be reminded of.⁹²

The symbolic properties of home, then, the ‘feelings and meanings’⁹³ it summons and gives shape to, are just as important as its physical materials. Blunt and Dowling have discussed, specifically, the ‘feelings of belonging’⁹⁴ it fosters. This is key to what the geographer David Harvey describes as ‘the psychological pull and push of the idea of “home”’.⁹⁵ As literary critic Janet Zandy writes,

finding a place in the world where one can be *at home* is crucial. Home is literal: a place where you struggle together to survive; or a dream: ‘a real home,’ something just out of one’s grasp; [or] a place to escape in order to survive as an individual. Home is an idea: an inner geography [...] where is no sense of ‘otherness,’ where there is [...] community.⁹⁶

The idea of a ‘home’ is thus multi-faceted. The geographers Douglas J. Porteous and Sandra E. Smith talk of ‘home as centre - a place of refuge, freedom, possession, shelter and security’, and ‘home as identity - with themes of family, friends and community, attachment, rootedness, memory and nostalgia’.⁹⁷ It is a complex spatial node, with weighty associations. Together, the physical structure of a ‘house’, and the symbolic qualities of ‘home’ constitute the act of dwelling. As Gaston Bachelard writes, we should consider ‘inhabiting’ as ‘an

⁹¹ Blunt and Dowling, p.146.

⁹² de Botton is paraphrasing John Ruskin’s ideas, p.61.

⁹³ Richard Baxter, and Katherine Brickell, ‘For Home *Unmaking*’ *Home Cultures* Vol. 11, Issue 2 (2014), pp.133-44, p.137 - ‘The very word “home”’, Wright notes, ‘is unique to the English language [...] albeit with potent similarities to the German *Heim*, offering protection and familiarity’ - Wright, p.215.

⁹⁴ Blunt and Dowling, p.22.

⁹⁵ Harvey (1996) quoted in Flanagan, p.30.

⁹⁶ Janet Zandy, quoted by Blunt and Dowling, p.50.

⁹⁷ Porteous and Smith, p.12.

imaginary response to the function of constructing.⁹⁸ With these ideas in mind, I will now explain the methodology behind this thesis before investigating the role of ‘home’ in the first chapters of Genesis.

⁹⁸ Bachelard, p.18.

Methodology

*the makings of a house*⁹⁹

Ten years ago, Alison Blunt and Ann Varley took note of ‘the growing, diverse and interdisciplinary study of home across the humanities and social sciences’,¹⁰⁰ and my writing claims a place in this still growing body of work. Just as the biblical home is materially and symbolically mobile, my thesis is ‘nomadic’ in that it has no home in one academic discipline. The feminist philosopher Rosi Braidotti explores nomadism as a ‘theoretical option’ in her work *Nomadic Subjects* (1994).¹⁰¹ For Braidotti, the idea of the ‘nomadic subject [...] allows [her] to think through and move across established categories and levels of experiences...’: ‘nomadism’, she reminds us, ‘consists not so much in being homeless, as in being capable of recreating your home anywhere.’¹⁰² This is, incidentally, what the characters of Genesis must learn to do, as their attempts to build stable, lasting homes upon the earth are repeatedly denied. ‘Methodologically’, Braidotti writes, this theoretical style

comes close to the “bricolage” defended by the structuralists and especially Lévi-Strauss; it also constitutes a practice of “theft,” or extensive borrowing of notions and concepts that, as Cixous puts it, are deliberately used out of context [...] Delouse calls this technique “deterritorialization” or the becoming-nomad of ideas.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ Marilynne Robinson, *Housekeeping* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p.155.

¹⁰⁰ Alison Blunt and Ann Varley, “Introduction: Geographies of Home.” *Cultural Geographies* Vol. 11, Issue 1 (2004), pp.3–6, p.3. - Interdisciplinary studies on the ‘home’ include Daniel Boscaljon’s (ed.) *Resisting the Place of Belonging* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2013).

This includes Theology and Religious Studies - in 1999, James W. Flanagan predicted that ‘a shift towards space and critical spatial studies within biblical studies could be anticipated’, and has since been proved right. - James W. Flanagan, ‘Ancient Perceptions of Space/Perceptions of Ancient Space’ in Stephen L. Cook and Ronald A. Simkins, guest eds. *Semeia*, Issue 87 (1999), pp.15-43, p.15.

¹⁰¹ Rosi Braidotti, ‘Introduction’ *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), pp.1-39, p.1.

Heather Walton discusses ‘hybrid’ and ‘nomadic [...] feminist identities’ in *Imagining Theology* (2007, p. 23) and also argues that theology can be seen as ‘a transient and homeless discourse’, quoting Charles E. Winquist’s description of it as ‘a nomad discipline wandering, wondering and erring’ - Walton, p.54.

¹⁰² Braidotti ‘Introduction’, p.4 and p.16 respectively.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, pp.36-7.

The ‘home’ itself, of course, is a nomadic concept:¹⁰⁴ its transhistorical nature, and ubiquitous presence across various disciplines and genres, allows me to pull examples from a myriad of textual sources, in constructing a bricolage of the biblical home. I have begun with biblical criticism and philosophy, but my intention is also to consider the ways in which the idea of ‘home’ is being critically examined across disciplines such as sociology and geography,¹⁰⁵ and to consider their findings within a new, intertextual reading of Genesis and its literary intertexts. In light of Blunt and Dowling’s ideas, I will trace the material and imaginative geography of this space, with a methodology that is both creative and critical. Ilana Pardes has written of ‘the poetic and political implications of the stitching together of diverse documents dating from different periods’,¹⁰⁶ and that is what I hope to achieve. The inclusion of both fiction and non-fiction allows me ‘to mix the theoretical with the poetic or lyrical mode’, as Braidotti herself does.¹⁰⁷ In sum, I have attempted to exploit the ‘interpretative techniques and possibilities’,¹⁰⁸ to use the Jewish writer Jerry Rabow’s phrase, of investigating the ‘home’ in Genesis.

My methodology is thus interdisciplinary and intertextual. The philosopher and literary critic Julia Kristeva, who coined the term intertextuality in the late twentieth century,¹⁰⁹ argued that the ‘*intersection of textual surfaces* rather than a *point* (a fixed meaning)’¹¹⁰ was of critical interest. As George Aichele and Gary A. Phillips noted in their introduction to a journal volume on the theme of ‘Intertextuality and the Bible’ (1995), intertextuality designates ‘an

¹⁰⁴ Isabelle Stengers has written about “nomadic concepts” - Braidotti ‘Introduction’, p.23.

¹⁰⁵ The spatial study of the Hebrew Bible is not new. In the introduction to his text *A Theology of the Built Environment*, Gorringer asks ‘What happens when we bring together the Bible and the writings of town planners, urban theorists and architects...’ - (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p.25. In terms of spatial studies and biblical criticism, Christopher Meredith is in the process of writing a book titled *The Bible and Spatial Theory* (Commissioned, London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark), to be published in 2016.

¹⁰⁶ Pardes, p.22.

¹⁰⁷ Braidotti ‘Introduction’, p.37.

¹⁰⁸ Jerry Rabow, *The Lost Matriarch: Finding Leah in the Bible and Midrash* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, The Jewish Publication Society, 2014), p.xiv.

¹⁰⁹ For a summary of the concept see George Aichele, and Gary A. Phillips, ‘Introduction: Exegesis, Eisegesis, Intergesis’ in Aichele and Phillips, eds. *Semeia* ‘Intertextuality and the Bible’ 69/70 (1995), pp. 7-18, p.8.

¹¹⁰ Kristeva, quoted in Aichele and Phillips, p.9, her italics.

allusion or interconnection between texts'.¹¹¹ With intertextuality, they add, '[t]here is little closure and fixing of textual boundaries'.¹¹² It therefore goes hand in hand with interdisciplinary work: '[as] a concept intertextuality cuts across different methodological and theoretical borders [...] as well as widely varying disciplinary fields [...]'.¹¹³ A 'nomad' intertextual methodology is thus able to conduct a synchronic reading of the Hebrew Bible with literary and midrashic texts as well as socio-cultural ethnography and geographical criticism, drawing these discourses into a productive dialogue. Whilst Braidotti's use of nomadism is largely 'figurative',¹¹⁴ nomadism is a key form of dwelling in Genesis; my methodology thus reflects my subject matter.

Three points on my treatment of the Hebrew Bible are worth briefly making. Firstly, my reading is chronological: I move from Eden to Noah's ark and so on in order to study the development of the idea of 'home' in Genesis; secondly, I will seek to resist 'Christian delimitation[s]' of the text,¹¹⁵ as Pardes puts it, bringing in midrash and Jewish writers such as Zornberg. Lastly, my reading of the biblical text is literary, one 'that presupposes that the stories are imaginative tales rather than historical accounts.'¹¹⁶ I wish to examine what the fields of material culture, feminist theory, philosophy and so on have to offer a literary analysis of Genesis. The new reading which results from this, drawing together multi-disciplinary thoughts on the 'home', is premised on my argument that the difficulty of dwelling is a key experience which links each of the early biblical characters.

'Feminist research', Blunt and Dowling note, 'has [shown] that home places and imaginaries are not exclusively private, familial or feminine',¹¹⁷ and my thesis is poststructuralist in the sense that it emphasises the ambiguity within binaries such as 'private | public' or 'inside |

¹¹¹ Aichele and Phillips, p.7.

¹¹² Ibid., p.11.

¹¹³ Ibid., p.7.

¹¹⁴ Braidotti 'Introduction', p.8.

¹¹⁵ Pardes, p.41.

¹¹⁶ Goldingay, p.57.

¹¹⁷ Blunt and Dowling, p.16.

outside' in the study of the biblical home.¹¹⁸ Braidotti's 'nomadic epistemology'¹¹⁹ is also a feminist one. She writes of 'the extent to which the nomadic state has the potential for positive renaming, for opening new possibilities of life and thought, especially for women'.¹²⁰ Many of the biblical passages I read in this thesis remind us of the unhomeliness of 'home' for women, and if 'intertextuality [...] is a matter of transformation'¹²¹ as Aichele and Phillips contend, this becomes possible in midrashic¹²² and literary texts.

I have drawn from a range of 'postmodern feminist novel[s]',¹²³ as Patricia Plummer terms them, including those of writers such as Toni Morrison and Marilynne Robinson. As Boscaljon puts it, 'art reveals the tension at the heart of home',¹²⁴ and I have used texts that do just this, whilst connecting them to the biblical narrative through themes such as 'exile from home' or 'homecoming'. In line with Braidotti's 'possibilities' and Aichele and Phillips' 'transformation' (see above),¹²⁵ I understand literature as a space where women can critique patriarchal households and traditional dwellings, as well as imagine new homes.¹²⁶ Indeed, the re-writing of the home has become an emancipatory project of sorts;¹²⁷ as Boscaljon words it, 'we rediscover possibilities of home through the imaginative structures provided by

¹¹⁸ Baxter and Brickell also note that '[t]he public/private divide has been thoroughly critiqued in feminist literature on the domestic' - Baxter and Brickell, p.136.

¹¹⁹ Braidotti 'Introduction', p.5.

¹²⁰ Ibid., p.8.

¹²¹ Aichele and Phillips, p.11

¹²² 'Reading Midrash', Rabow writes, 'calls for honouring what has been called the principle of "indeterminacy" - accepting multiple interpretations, even inconsistent interpretations [...]' - Rabow, p.xii.

¹²³ Patricia Plummer, 'Re-Writing the House of Fiction: Michèle Roberts's *Daughters of the House*' in Beate Neumeier, ed. *Engendering Realism and Postmodernism: Contemporary Women Writers in Britain* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001) pp. 63-85, p.64.

¹²⁴ Boscaljon, 'Introduction' p.3

¹²⁵ Theorists, such as Kristeva, and novelists like Michèle Roberts 'share the belief that literature is transformative' - see Parker, p.171.

¹²⁶ This is influenced by Komar, who suggests that the literary text is 'a powerful re-visionary site within which women can create new relational models of culture and society' - Komar, p.103.

¹²⁷ 'The home continues to be an important site in contemporary fiction, particularly by women': Catherine Wiley and Fiona Barnes have argued that 'Women write in order to negotiate the tensions between definitions of home as a material space and home as an ideal place' - quoted in Blunt and Dowling, p.50. See Catherine Wiley and Fiona R. Barnes, eds. *Homemaking: Women Writers and the Politics and Poetics of Home* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1996).

narratives.’¹²⁸ Having appraised the concepts of ‘dwelling’ and ‘home’, as well as my nomadic methodology, I will now examine the first home of Genesis; the garden of Eden.

¹²⁸ Boscaljon, p.3.

Eden

A lost home

‘a particularly central instance of one way that we use the word “home” in modern English is to mean “a place of origin returned to.”’¹²⁹

How have the homes ‘we have left [...] shaped us’?¹³⁰

Having formed the world, in chapter two God creates a smaller living space, a garden called Eden. Genesis thus contracts in scale from the earth to a smaller site on its surface. Here, like a primordial city-planner, God places the first man and woman. The story of Eden constitutes our way into the study of human dwelling in Genesis. Significantly, it quickly becomes a ‘lost home’, from which the first man and woman are exiled before they have even settled in. I will first revisit Eden, and the moment at which it is lost, before reading the narrative alongside Toni Morrison’s novel *Paradise* (1998) in order to interrogate thematic threads such as the idea of ‘longing for home’, which persist throughout Genesis.

Trees fill the garden of Eden, from which a river also ‘flows out’ (2:10).¹³¹ It is here, in this space with its carefully placed trees and godly governing body, that the first man and woman are to make a home. Within Heidegger’s thought, Eden is the ‘prior ground that sustains and nurtures’, for ‘man’s building [...] occurs on the foundation of already dwelling’, on already having *been at home* in nature’.¹³² Whereas Genesis one was concerned with divine ‘construction’, chapter two inaugurates Heidegger’s second component of dwelling, ‘cultivation’¹³³, for the earthlings’ inhabitation of Eden comes with the injunction that they ‘till it and keep it’ (2:15). This divine injunction echoes the eco-feminist claim that ‘we are

¹²⁹ John Hollander, ‘It All Depends’ *Social Research* Vol. 58, No. 1 (Spring 1991), pp. 31-49, p.34.

¹³⁰ Magdalene Ang-Lygate, ‘Everywhere to go but Home: On (Re) (Dis) (Un)location’ *Journal of Gender Studies* 5.3 (1996), pp.375-388, p.378.

¹³¹ The river’s four out-flowing branches are named and briefly traced, but their key purpose is to reinforce Eden’s central narrative and geographical position.

¹³² Iris Marion Young, ‘House and Home: Feminist Variations On A Theme’ in *Intersecting Voices: Dilemmas of Gender, Political Philosophy, and Policy* (Chichester: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 134-64, p.138, my italics.

¹³³ Martin Heidegger, ‘Building Dwelling Thinking’ from *Basic Writings* (1971), pp.344-363, p.349.

[...] interrelated with (and responsible to) the place or places we inhabit',¹³⁴ as the materialist theologian Anne Elvey words it. If earth is 'our ultimate dwelling place', it is 'a home which must be [...] nurtured and respected, protected from unwarranted exploitation and destruction.'¹³⁵ The first biblical depiction of dwelling, then, reminds the reader to 'respect the value of earth as our home and our responsibility to preserve and protect it'.¹³⁶

Eden is a plentiful, peaceful home, with only one rule: the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is forbidden (2:16-7).¹³⁷ Yet this rule is broken by the gardens' inhabitants almost immediately (3:6),¹³⁸ bringing to a premature halt their inhabitation of the earthly paradise. Consuming the contraband, the woman engages in a forbidden interaction with her environment, in a moment that reflects the corporeal and architectural themes of her creation.¹³⁹ This is, in the Christian reading, her 'fall'. 'A person who falls,' the literary critic Didier Maleuvre has written, 'is caught in the thingness of her body and surroundings':¹⁴⁰ in eating the apple, the woman is using her newly acquired senses (body) and interacting with her environment (surroundings). If 'autonomy or control over one's personal space is essential for creation and maintenance of one's identity',¹⁴¹ then Eve's act is a natural part of inhabitation. Ultimately, however, it proves the wrong thing to do in her circumstances.

¹³⁴ Anne Elvey, 'Matter, Freedom and the Future: Reframing Feminist Theologies through an Ecological Materialist Lens', *Feminist Theology* Vol 32:2 (2015), pp.186-204, p.192.

¹³⁵ Karen J. Warren, 'Ecofeminism and the Longing for Home' in Leroy S. Rouner, *The Longing for Home* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996), pp.217-229, p.227.

¹³⁶ Warren, p.226.

¹³⁷ Trees will later 'provide [...] food, fuel, fodder [and] products for the home' (Warren, p.223), but in the Bible's first dwelling space, they have a somewhat different role.

¹³⁸ Indeed, there is no narrative space in which the couple first live peacefully in Eden.

¹³⁹ In the second account of the creation of humans (Genesis, chapter two), God puts an earthling into a deep sleep and 'buil[ds]' one of its ribs 'into a woman' (Robert Alter, *Genesis: Translation and Commentary* (London: W.W. Norton and Company, 1996), p.9). If the woman is 'built', she is identified – even as she is being made – with the process of construction itself (See Mieke Bal, *Lethal Love: Feminist Literary Readings of Biblical Love Stories* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), p.115 or Phyllis Trible, 'Depatriarchalizing in Biblical Interpretation', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* Vol. 41, No. 1 (March, 1973) pp.30-48, p.37).

¹⁴⁰ Quoted by Mieke Bal, *Loving Yusuf: Conceptual Travels from Past to Present* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), p.23.

¹⁴¹ Allison Weir, 'Home and Identity: In Memory of Iris Marion Young' *Hypatia*, Vol. 23, No. 3, (Summer, 2008), pp. 4-21, p.9.

Furthermore, Nur and Abdel Wahab Elmessiri's suggestion that a tree 'symbolises rootedness, though not necessarily permanence [...]'¹⁴² suggests that we should read Eden's tree as an early warning that dwelling will prove persistently difficult in Genesis.

Creative power may be a draw for the woman, as she reaches out for the fruit: Rashi, as Zornberg discusses, saw "world making" [as] the chief enticement of the serpent in the garden',¹⁴³ and this takes us back to Young's assertion that women have been excluded from the building project. Zornberg argues that 'the world is [...] open to the doing, *the making of man*',¹⁴⁴ and that here the woman misguidedly tries to claim a part in that process.

Paradoxically, of course, the act succeeds: the woman and man *are* thrown from the garden into a new world; the punishment, however consists in its inherent hostility to womankind.

*Into marriage, into exile*¹⁴⁵

God states he will increase the woman's pain in childbirth (3:16),¹⁴⁶ but also maps out a new construction of the social order, adding that '[her] desire shall be for [her] husband, | and he shall rule over [her].' (3:16). Before Eve's act, Tribble argues, '[t]he sexes are interrelated *and interdependent*',¹⁴⁷ and several feminist critics suggest that woman's subjection to the man is an adjustment following her transgressive act, a 'condemnation of [the] very pattern' it describes.¹⁴⁸ Whereas the garden of Eden was an open space, unsheltered from the elements, '[i]n the built environment social relations are inscribed concretely in space'.¹⁴⁹ The act of

¹⁴² Nur and Abdel Elmessiri and Elmessiri make this remark whilst discussing the persistence of 'the image of the tree' throughout a collection of Palestinian short stories - Nur Elmessiri, and Abdel Wahab, eds. 'Introduction', *A Land of Stone and Thyme* (London: Quartet Books Ltd, 1996) pp.1-29, p.18.

¹⁴³ Aviva Gottlieb, Zornberg, *The Beginning of Desire: Reflections on Genesis* (New York: Schocken Books, 1995), p.28.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.32, my italics.

¹⁴⁵ Angela Carter, *The Bloody Chamber* First published, 1979 (London: Vintage, 2006), p.7.

¹⁴⁶ Rather than pain in childbirth, the Talmud states that this phrase 'refers to the pain of bringing up children' (Zornberg, p.20), a reminder of the difficulties of family life that preoccupy post-Eden Genesis.

¹⁴⁷ Tribble, p.37, my italics.

¹⁴⁸ Tribble, p.41 - Both Bal and Tribble 'see 3:16 as the first point in which a sexist ideology is inscribed in the text' (Ilana Pardes, *Countertraditions in the Bible: a feminist approach* (London: Harvard University Press, 1992), p.31), as does Pardes herself - Pardes, p.50.

¹⁴⁹ T.J. Gorringer, *A Theology of the Built Environment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 27.

building gives physical shape to our social formations, as Ronald has argued,¹⁵⁰ and in Genesis, the social structure is mapped out alongside its first buildings, i.e. dwellings.¹⁵¹ The egalitarian space of Eden will prove difficult to retrieve for Eve and her female descendants, as man takes control of the construction process. From this point onwards, as John Goldingay argues, man and woman seem ‘drawn into a relationship that has built into it the inevitability of misunderstanding.’¹⁵²

The most significant aspect of the couple’s punishment, however, is their banishment from Eden. Displaced into the outer world, they ‘[become] restless wanderer[s] on the earth’.¹⁵³ ‘The main question facing man from now on’, Zornberg suggests, ‘will be [a] quest for a *foundation* of being’:¹⁵⁴ in other words, a home, this time of their own making. It is here, at the point of the first humans’ departure from Eden, that I can bring in my first intertext; Toni Morrison’s *Paradise* (1998). Set in late twentieth-century America, *Paradise* rests upon the conflict between a town named Ruby and a nearby mansion which a group of women have made their home. Founded by former slaves, and built as a safe retreat from the world, the town of Ruby is itself an Edenic space: the mansion on its outskirts, with its thriving, fecund garden, is another. Like Genesis, *Paradise* begins with an un-homing, enacted by the inhabitants of the first Edenic space against those of the latter.

¹⁵⁰ ‘housing is far more than shelter, and how it is organised in any society has fundamental impacts on other areas of social life and elements of the social structure’ - Richard Ronald, *The Ideology of Home Ownership* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p.11.

¹⁵¹ The Hebrew word ‘to build’, ‘בָּנָה’ is closely related to the noun ‘house’, ‘בַּיִת’.

¹⁵² John Goldingay, ‘Postmodernizing Eve and Adam (Can I have my Apricot as well as Eating it?)’ in David J.A. Clines, and Philip R. Davies, eds. *The World of Genesis: Persons, Places, Perspectives* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), pp.50-59, p.53.

¹⁵³ Zornberg is quoting midrash, p.25.

¹⁵⁴ Zornberg, p.26, my italics.

*Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce*¹⁵⁵

The mansion in *Paradise* has a complex history: built by a wealthy man¹⁵⁶ who was soon arrested for fraudulence, the house was then used as a Catholic nun's convent for much of its history, before being left in the hands of a woman named Connie, who transforms the building and its garden into a 'refuge'¹⁵⁷ for women from Ruby and elsewhere. For Ruby's men, this 'house full of women'¹⁵⁸ is dangerous and unacceptable. The women who live in it 'don't need men and they don't need God', and in this double refusal of male authority, they become - in the men's eyes - 'like witches.'¹⁵⁹ The women's dwelling, 'not a convent but a coven',¹⁶⁰ must be dismantled, and as the animosity between Ruby's men and the women in the mansion intensifies, it becomes inevitable that a violent un-homing will occur. Armed with guns and their own sordid suspicions, a posse of men from Ruby enter the mansion to evict the 'Bodacious black Eves'¹⁶¹ living there.

Ironically, as the literary critic Cynthia Dobbs points out, the men's action 'repeat[s] the very violent "disallowing" that generated [their] community's diasporic quest for home-as-haven in the first place'.¹⁶² One of the men who invades the house, creeping quietly through the mansion's rooms, marvels that 'here, not twenty miles away from a quiet, orderly community, there were women like none he knew or ever heard tell of'.¹⁶³ A fear of contagion lies behind the groups' action, which they frame to themselves as an act of defence: 'the mess' of the

¹⁵⁵ Jeremiah, 29:5. Quoted by Gorrington at the start of his fourth chapter, 'The Human Dwelling', pp.79-113, p.79

¹⁵⁶ For Dobbs, the house's 'designs [...] are often based on a repudiation and disavowal of an underclass that includes the poor, the nonwhite, and women' (Dobbs, p.112).

¹⁵⁷ Toni Morrison, *Paradise* (London:Vintage, 1998) Reprint, 1999, p.152.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p.276.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.18.

¹⁶² Cynthia Dobbs, 'Diasporic Designs of House, Home, and Haven in Toni Morrison's "Paradise"' *MELUS*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (Summer 2011), pp. 109-126 - Dobbs reads *Paradise* through the tropes of house, home and haven, arguing that Morrison '[couches] concerns' such as 'diaspora [...] gender, color, and race [in ideas of home]' - Dobbs, p.110.

¹⁶³ Morrison (1998), p.108.

mansion, they reason, 'is seeping back into *our* homes, *our* families.'¹⁶⁴ They act to protect, then, what Dobbs calls their 'communal home',¹⁶⁵ the 'Quiet white and yellow houses full of industry'¹⁶⁶ that line the streets of their town. Crucially, they also act to maintain their power. As the character Billie Delia words it, Ruby is a 'backward noplac ruled by men whose power to control was out of control and who had the nerve to say *who could live* and *who not* and *where*'.¹⁶⁷

As Dobbs notes, [t]o understand the role of home in Paradise is to understand the social fears and desires driving violence on any scale.'¹⁶⁸ What the men seek to protect with violence is a patriarchal model of home, with the father as the head of the household and the family as its ideological framework. Whilst in Genesis, Eve's¹⁶⁹ act may inaugurate this structure, there is another reading, which sees the patriarchal model of home as what is 'at stake' when she defies God. This reading relies on the conception of Eden, as examined by literary critic Lynda E. Boose, as a 'mythologized father's house'.¹⁷⁰ Eden is indeed constructed by a male father/God, who is responsible for its parameters and rules. Eve would thus be the problematic daughter of this household, in the process of becoming a wife.¹⁷¹ Indeed, Boose argues that 'the Judeo-Christian creation myth' is actually 'one of a daughter's rebellion',¹⁷²

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., p.276.

¹⁶⁵ Dobbs, p.110 - conversely, Warren describes the home itself as an 'intentional community' - Warren, p. 217.

¹⁶⁶ Morrison, (1998), p.111.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., p.308, my italics.

¹⁶⁸ Dobbs, p.120.

¹⁶⁹ In chapter three, verse twenty, the woman is named 'Eve' and the man is becomes 'Adam'.

¹⁷⁰ Lynda E. Boose, 'The Father's House and the Daughter In It' in Lynda E. Boose, and Betty S. Flowers, *Daughters and Fathers* (London: John Hopkins University Press, 1989), p.60.

¹⁷¹ In Boose's words, '[the daughter] is the temporary sojourner within her family, destined to seek legitimation [...] outside its boundaries' (Boose, p.21). Many see Eve as primarily a 'daughter' - for instance see Pardes, p.49-54 and Boose, p.164.

¹⁷² Boose, p.54 - As the Hebrew word for daughter, 'בת' begins with the letter *bet*: the biblical daughter's existence begins with the house both typographically and literally.

and we should also remember Lilith, the ‘other’ transgressive daughter of Judeo-Christianity.¹⁷³

Zornberg writes of the ‘tormented experience [of] separation’ that occurs when children reach adolescence,¹⁷⁴ another interesting angle on Genesis chapter three. If humans ‘*must* find a space of separateness, in order to be’,¹⁷⁵ Adam and Eve’s banishment is a necessary stage in their upbringing. Like the adolescent leaving the parents’ house, they leave Eden, the father/God’s household, their first home. Correlatively, in *Lilith & Her Demons* by Enid Dame, as Rivkah M. Walton discusses, Lilith’s banishment is self-induced: ‘[I] stormed out of Eden [...] Into history’.¹⁷⁶ Much like the biblical protagonists, ‘legend leaves [Lilith] to wander’.¹⁷⁷ Whilst Lilith wanders alone, her female counterpart in Genesis is still tied to her male partner. As Boose argues, ‘Eve is thrown out of the Father’s house and then simultaneously reinscribed into it.’¹⁷⁸ She ‘*must* cohabit with Adam’,¹⁷⁹ and God’s curses render this cohabitation an uneasy, painful one.

In *Paradise*, the troubled cohabitation of women and men necessitates Connie’s ‘refuge’. The women who come to live with her, seen as ‘outsiders’ by the people of Ruby,¹⁸⁰ are those for whom ‘home’ is a failed idea. As Dobbs notes, ‘[t]he women who occupy the Convent as

¹⁷³ Rivkah M. Walton has discussed Lilith as a vital ‘feminist archetype’ in women’s midrash - Rivkah M. Walton, ‘Lilith’s Daughters, Miriam’s Chorus: Two Decades of Feminist Midrash’ *Religion & Literature*, Vol. 43, No. 2 (Summer, 2011), pp. 115-127.

Interestingly, when Ostriker revisited the myth of ‘Lilith’ in her ‘Lilith Poems’ she used the figure, in Walton’s words, to ‘[articulate] class/racial resentments and fears’ (Walton, R.M., p.120) making her, literally, a ‘Bodacious black [Eve]’ (Morrison, p.18) - Alicia Ostriker, ‘The Lilith Poems: For Enid Dame and Grace Paley’, *Women’s Studies: An inter-disciplinary journal*, 26:3-4 (1997), pp.251-257.

¹⁷⁴ Zornberg, p.20.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, my italics.

¹⁷⁶ Enid Dame, *Lilith & Her Demons* (Merrick, NY: Cross-Cultural Communications, 1989), quoted by R.M. Walton, pp.119-20.

¹⁷⁷ Boose, p.50.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.52-3.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.52.

¹⁸⁰ Though as Christopher argues, the novel ultimately ‘explodes the spatialized dichotomies of insider/outsider’ and so on - Lindsay M. Christopher, ‘The Geographical Imagination in Toni Morrison’s “Paradise”’ *Rocky Mountain Review*, Vol. 63, No. 1 (Spring, 2009), pp. 89-95, p.91.

house and fragile home have all previously escaped from what [Homi K.] Bhabha would dub “unhomely” spaces.’¹⁸¹ To some extent, they are homeless.¹⁸² Mavis, for example, fears being killed by her husband and children¹⁸³ and escapes her home-town to hide at the convent, living alongside other women including Seneca, who has been sexually abused in a former foster-home. In *Paradise*, then, Morrison deconstructs the concept of the ‘family’, which, as Young puts it, ordinarily ‘means an orderly hierarchy of father, mother, and children’, a structure within which ‘each knows his or her place’.¹⁸⁴ The patriarchal model of ‘home’, as Warren argues, is ‘characterised by rigid roles, inflexible rules’, and as Morrison’s novel makes clear, ‘by such social realities as domestic abuse, emotional neglect, sexual assault [...] and [gendered] divisions of labor.’¹⁸⁵ It is thus ‘dysfunctional’ and ‘ultimately, unhealthy’, to use Warren’s terms.¹⁸⁶ Dobbs, in response to *Paradise*, asks how ‘[how] the relationship between house and home shift[s] under the pressure of gender’:¹⁸⁷ it is clear that a ‘house’ is not always a ‘home’ for its female inhabitants.

Morrison’s protagonists’ making of a new home, then, must be understood in the context of their departure from these old, abusive homes. These departures constitute what Richard Baxter and Katherine Brickell have termed ‘home unmaking’, a ‘process’ that they argue ‘warrants its own storytelling’, and is ‘experienced by all home dwellers at some point’.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸¹ Dobbs, p.115 - In *Paradise*, Dobbs argues, Morrison ‘[gives] the theme of an “unhomely” domestic space her own African Americanist, feminist, and womanist twist.’ - Ibid., p.111.

¹⁸² As Blunt and Dowling write, ‘houselessness and homelessness are not the same. It is possible to be homeless even while physically sheltered.’ - Alison Blunt, and Robyn Dowling, *Home* (London: Routledge, 2006) p.127.

¹⁸³ “I’m saying they are going to kill me” - Morrison (1998), p.31.

¹⁸⁴ Iris Marion Young, ‘Reflections on Families in the Age of Murphy Brown: On Justice, Gender and Sexuality’ in *Intersecting Voices: Dilemmas of Gender, Political Philosophy, and Policy* (Chichester: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp.95-113, p.95.

¹⁸⁵ Warren, p.219.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid. - Feminist writers have drawn out similar possibilities in Genesis: as Sydney Stoyan notes, Ostriker’s ‘postlapsarian Eve [...] recalls the perfect human-animal harmony of Eden but refrains from reminiscing in front of Adam, because “if she reminds him, he hits her”’ - Sydney Stoyan, ‘Reviewed Works: *The Biblical Web* by Ruth apRoberts; *The Nakedness of the Fathers: Biblical Visions and Revisions* by Alicia Suskin Ostriker’, *Religion & Literature*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (Summer, 1995), pp. 87-91, p.90.

¹⁸⁷ Dobbs, p.111.

¹⁸⁸ Richard Baxter and Katherine Brickell, ‘For Home Unmaking’ *Home Cultures* Vol. 11, Issue 2 (2014), pp.133-44, pp.134-7.

Home unmaking, they suggest, is ‘the precarious process by which material and/or imaginary components of home are unintentionally or deliberately, temporarily or permanently, divested, damaged or even destroyed.’¹⁸⁹ Furthermore, Baxter and Brickell argue that

home unmaking should not be understood as an exclusively negative erosion of material integrity and/or loss of attachment. Rather, *unmaking* can also work symbiotically with the recovery or *remaking of home* too.¹⁹⁰

Despite their lack of legal security, it is clear that for the women of *Paradise*, home unmaking is indeed ‘not necessarily a negative process’,¹⁹¹ and they do temporarily experience a better kind of home. The feminist writer Magdalene Ang-Lygate has discussed ‘the nature of alternative-home structures when family-based home structures are not in place’,¹⁹² and this is what the convent/coven gives us a glimpse of. It shows us, to use Berquist’s phrase, that ‘[t]he household is not the only social structure available’.¹⁹³ Billie Delia, who stays at the convent after a violent argument with her mother, tells another woman: “This is a place where you can stay for a while. [...] collect yourself [...] think things through...”¹⁹⁴ The home-space that Morrison’s protagonists create is continually glimpsed in the literary and midrashic intertexts I use throughout this thesis. It’s the alternative to the patriarchal home, an egalitarian and creative possibility, as the architectural theorist Christiane Erlemann has discussed.¹⁹⁵ It’s also a dramatisation of what the feminist theologian Judith Plaskow imagines:

God and Adam were expectant and afraid of the day Eve and Lilith returned to the garden, bursting with possibilities, ready to build it together.¹⁹⁶

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., p.134.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., p.135, my italics.

¹⁹¹ Baxter and Brickell, p.141.

¹⁹² Ang-Lygate, p.381.

¹⁹³ Berquist, p.149.

¹⁹⁴ Morrison, (1998), pp.175-6.

¹⁹⁵ ‘a building in which only women would live; [...] could be designed in freely flowing creativity [...]’ - Erlemann, Christiane (1985) ‘What is Feminist Architecture?’ in Gisela Ecker, *Feminist Aesthetics* trans. by Harriet Anderson, (London: The Women’s Press Ltd, 1985), pp.125-134, p.128.

¹⁹⁶ Walton, R.M, p.119.

The idea of woman-only homes, ‘alternative spaces of belonging’,¹⁹⁸ tells us much, in absentia, about the patriarchal home. Postcolonial critic Jayita Sengupta’s description of the mansion of *Paradise* is worth quoting at length:

‘Paradise’ as the name suggests is the embodiment of the dreams of a community which the fleeing homeless women have created for themselves in the convent through their desires, imagination and their bonding. The convent was [...] their home where everyone was taken in, accepted and had space in spite of the differences [...]¹⁹⁹

Sengupta goes on to describe the convent/coven as an ‘ark for women’s hidden desires’,²⁰⁰ which foreshadows a woman-space I will explore in my next chapter, imagined in Michèle Roberts’ *The book of Mrs Noah* (1987). For Erlemann, feminist spaces are inevitably bound up with ‘new architectural forms’:²⁰¹ literal and social structures, she acknowledges, work in conjunction, and an “infrastructure”²⁰² is vital. Having experienced ‘loss of identity, fear of one’s husband, isolation’,²⁰³ the women of *Paradise* seek new kinds of relationship within the home-space. Arguing that man confines woman in a home to ‘[reflect] his identity to him’, Irigaray suggests that she has ‘no self of her own.’²⁰⁴ It makes sense, then, that after moving into this woman-only space, one of the first things the young woman Pallas observes is that:

¹⁹⁷ Martin and Mohanty, p.207

¹⁹⁸ Mary Gilmartin, ‘Making Space for Personal Journeys’ in Pamela Moss, ed. *Feminist Geography in Practise: Research and Methods* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2001), pp. p.35.

¹⁹⁹ Jayita Sengupta, *Refractions of Desire: Feminist Perspectives in the Novels of Toni Morrison, Michèle Roberts and Anita Desai* (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 2006) p.134.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Erlemann, p.129.

²⁰² Ibid., p.134.

²⁰³ Erlemann lists these problems in her essay ‘What is Feminist Architecture?’ (1985), in which she discusses women’s struggle to find a place in male-dominated occupations like architecture, in the late twentieth century. She talks of ‘women planners’ who ‘live[d] in communes’, living out alternative possibilities whilst exploring them in their work. - Erlemann, p.127.

²⁰⁴ Young, p.135. - in other words, the ‘stability of [the symbolic order] is dependent upon the erasure of women.’ - Emma Parker, ‘From House to Home: A Kristevan Reading of Michèle Roberts’s *Daughters of the House*’, *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction* 41:2 (Winter, 2000), pp. 153-73, p.158.

[t]he whole house [feels] permeated with a blessed malelessness, like a protected domain [...] As though she might meet herself here - an unbridled, authentic self.²⁰⁵

For Morrison's protagonists in *Paradise*, the absence of men is redemptive, and necessary for the retrieval of their self-identity.²⁰⁶ Yet it is exactly this segregation that provokes Ruby's men to the point of violence. 'For women who leave abusive marriages' Baxter and Brickell note, 'home *unmaking* has the potential to be concurrently liberating and disempowering, as trade-offs are made between a life free from violence and the stigma associated with a broken family.'²⁰⁷ Here we have the crux of the convent women's dilemma; the 'risk' of their home-making project. Living together in the mansion, they are free from the tyranny²⁰⁸ of their previous dwellings, but find themselves unrooted from the security of normal life. As Zornberg notes of Jacob's story in Genesis:

To detach oneself from imposed conditions, from the roles assigned by birth and social rank, is to lose oneself, but [...] to gain access to a new authenticity of self.²⁰⁹

Erlemann's statement that women only rarely own land²¹⁰ holds true in *Paradise*. To the women living in her house, Connie is a 'perfect landlord who charge[s] nothing and welcome[s] anybody'.²¹¹ Yet when her adoptive mother dies, Connie feels unrooted: with 'no

²⁰⁵ Morrison (1998), p.177.

²⁰⁶ Mark Wigley has suggested that 'identity theory is necessarily spatial theory' - quoted by Dobbs, p.109.

²⁰⁷ Baxter and Brickell, p.135: Erlemann also notes this phenomena, for women in particular - Erlemann, p. 129).

²⁰⁸ 'The space of home can quickly become tyrannical' - Daniel Boscaljon, ed. *Resisting the Place of Belonging: Uncanny Homecomings in Religion, Narrative and the Arts* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2013) p.2.

²⁰⁹ Zornberg, p.154.

²¹⁰ Erlemann, p.129.

²¹¹ Morrison (1998), p.262

identification, no insurance, no family', she 'wait[s] to be evicted'²¹² from the house is not legally hers.

*He forgets that the garden was my garden*²¹³

Just as the mansion in *Paradise*, built by a man, is reclaimed by female occupants, the garden of Eden can be read as a female space. This idea has historical roots; as Warren identifies, 'both the home and nature' have been, historically, 'female-gender-identified', as demonstrated, for example, through the phrase "mother earth".²¹⁴ Whilst this has been used against women,²¹⁵ it has also proved redemptive. In her essay 'In Search of our Mothers' Gardens' (1984), Alice Walker 'describes her mother's garden as the site of her creativity and artistic expression',²¹⁶ whilst in the biblical book the Song of Songs, the empowered female character 'is the garden'²¹⁷ to which the man comes. In *Paradise*, too, the garden-space facilitates a rehabilitation of sexual relationships: having sex with a man from Ruby 'outside', amongst nature, Connie 'envision[s] herself and her new lover in the original Garden of Eden.'²¹⁸ But as Christopher argues, '[Morrison] provides several versions of the garden',²¹⁹

²¹² Ibid., p.247. - In fiction, women often struggle to find security in houses built and owned by men, and the communal, woman-only homes are often contained within male structures. In Michèle Roberts' *A Piece of the Night* (1978), the protagonist creates a different family/home when she separates from her husband, moving into a house with four other women: 'this house of yours', her father remarks, 'I don't understand it [...] all women, living together like that' (Roberts, p.40). The women's landlord, however, is Julie's ex-husband: he evicts them.

²¹³ Alicia S. Ostriker, *The Nakedness of the Fathers* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1994), p.24.

²¹⁴ Warren, pp.221-2.

²¹⁵ The Victorian thinker John Ruskin once gave a public lecture titled 'Of Queen's Gardens', in which, as the feminist geographer Gillian Rose identifies, he '[described] women as flowers. Their 'garden', bounded by its walls, was the home' - Gillian Rose, *Feminism and Geography: the limits of geographical knowledge* (Oxford: Polity, 1993), p.18. Kate Millet, in her essay 'Sexual Politics' (1969), also analyses Ruskin's lecture.

The lecture was later published in *Sesame and Lilies* (1865) - accessed via the British Library online collection, 5/05/15: <http://www.bl.uk/collection-items/john-ruskins-lecture-of-queens-gardens>.

²¹⁶ Blunt and Dowling, p.47.

²¹⁷ Tribble, p.43, my italics.

²¹⁸ Christopher, p.93 - Morrison (1998), p.229.

²¹⁹ 'an Edenic paradise where men hold dominion over all; a safe haven for women recovering from damaging relationships; bountiful, bounded gardens that provide food and aesthetic value to their growers; and a wild, flat landscape full of beauty...' - Christopher, p.89.

and one worth noting is the garden as ‘maternal space’, a reading also possible in relation to Genesis’ garden.

In *Paradise*, Connie is the mansions’ ‘master gardener’,²²⁰ to use Christopher’s phrase; its God/mother-figure. Dan W. Forsyth, in analysing the ‘symbolic equations’ of the Genesis narrative, discusses how God has been seen as ‘the masculine aspect of the creator/parent’, with ‘the Garden [a]s the feminine aspect’.²²¹ In eating the fruit, Forsyth suggests, Eve is ‘disobeying the father by violating his control over the mother’s body (the garden/tree/fruit)’.²²² In this reading, when God ‘banishes them from the Garden’, He ‘denies them access to the mother.’²²³ The idea of Eden as ‘mother’ makes sense within a discourse that views ‘the body of the mother’, in Parker’s words, as ‘the first home’.²²⁴

This idea is central to what Dobbs terms the ‘final transformation of the Convent’ in *Paradise* ‘from house to home’.²²⁵ The mansion, a ‘phallic house’, is finally ‘transformed into a feminized, *matriarchal* space [...]’,²²⁶ as the women retrieve their sense of self and their control over their bodies.²²⁷ In *Paradise*, Dobbs suggests, ‘the maternal body becomes a creative space for that illusory holy grail for the twentieth century unhomed exile: a home in which one might find authenticity of self’.²²⁸ When Connie is reunited with her adoptive

²²⁰ Christopher, p.93.

²²¹ Dan W. Forsyth, “Sibling Rivalry, Aesthetic Sensibility, and Social Structure in Genesis” in *Ethos* Vol. 19, No.4 (1991), pp.453-510, p.473.

²²² Forsyth, p.475 - In a *A Land of Stone and Thyme*, the first story, ‘The Tree’ by Ahmed Omar Shaheen, centers on the destruction of an ancient tree which was ‘[I]ike a mother’ - Shaheen, Ahmed Omar, ‘The Tree’, p.33.

²²³ Forsyth, p.474.

²²⁴ Parker, p.171 - In Ostriker’s *Nakedness of the Fathers*, we find the gynocentric image of ‘Eden contract[ing] like a womb to expel Adam and Eve’ - Ostriker (1994), p.35.

Bachelard (1992) discusses mother/home symbolism briefly in *The Poetics of Space* (Massachusetts: Beacon Press), p.45.

²²⁵ Dobbs, p.114.

²²⁶ Dobbs, p.116, my italics.

²²⁷ Something akin to this in the Hebrew Bible, what Pardes calls the ‘mother’s house’, is ‘a rare construction. It appears only in the story of Rebekah, in the Book of Ruth, and in the Song of Songs. Elsewhere the father’s house prevails.’ - Pardes, p.156.

²²⁸ Ibid.

mother, in whom she finds ‘the unambivalent bliss of going home to be at home’,²²⁹ the idea of ‘mother’ as home is fully re-appropriated.

In *Paradise*, Morrison also works to break down the boundaries of ‘home’, as well as the ‘private | public’ binary that has been an integral part of its symbolic construction. ‘[H]omes have the structural property of gathering,’ Boscaljon has written: ‘we do not think of their possibilities as boundless’.²³⁰ Yet in *Paradise*, Dobbs argues, ‘Morrison moves the idea of home from one contained within the house to an explicitly gendered, open-borders communal space’.²³¹ ‘An edenic home is not signaled here by a domestic (private, interior) place’, she continues; ‘rather, home is expanded to include the houses of other women and the interstices between those houses, a borderless space that encompasses both house and beyond.’²³² Along the same lines, Baxter and Brickell quote the geographer Doreen Massey (1992), who states that ‘the identity of home derives “precisely from the fact that it had always in one way or another been *open*; constructed out of movement, communication, social relations which always stretched beyond it.”’²³³ The ‘openness’ of home proves important in my later chapters, in relation to the openings of the ark, and the emphasis on the doorway of Abraham’s tent; here, it is enough to say that the inhabitants of Connie’s convent/coven are always free to wander, never trapped within a ‘domestic (private, interior) place’.²³⁴

Another binary Morrison works to subvert is that of ‘outside | inside’. The spatial role of garden, in particular, is to act as a symbolic and literal boundary between the house and the outside world, between humans and nature²³⁵. In Michèle Roberts’ *A Piece of the Night* (1978), the female protagonist Julie

²²⁹ Morrison (1998), p.318

²³⁰ Boscaljon, ‘Dwelling Beyond Poetry’, p.50.

²³¹ Dobbs, pp.109-10.

²³² Ibid., p.110.

²³³ Baxter and Brickell, p.136, my italics.

²³⁴ Dobbs, p.110.

²³⁵ Outside the garden, nature can be dangerous, as the ‘thorns and thistles’ (3:18) of Adam’s curse, which Alter sees as ‘diametrically opposed to the luscious vegetation of the garden’ (Alter, p.14), suggest.

delights in the tension of trees, their bursting reality, their place in gardens and in seasons, and the magic of them, flowering in her head whenever she needs a way out, their green tips pushing up through the carpet of her room.²³⁶

Here, nature plays its part in a wider attempt to escape pre-existing structures; the ‘green tips pushing up through [the] carpet’ threaten the ‘outside | inside’ binary. Elsewhere in literary texts, a breakdown between the garden and the house is used to signify domestic unrest, specifically in the context of absent or ill mothers.²³⁷ For instance, in Michèle Roberts’ *Daughters of the House* (1992), as the literary critic Emma Parker notes, weeds ““swarm” around the gateposts at the main entrance’ of the Fanchot family home, ‘making it “untidy” and “wild””²³⁸ whilst the mother of the family is ill. Similarly, in Marilynne Robinson’s *Housekeeping* (1980), young women left to keep house by themselves allow the boundary between the inside and outside to blur,²³⁹ leaving window panes broken and the lamps off at night. Whereas the garden has been described as ‘an outside turned into an inside’,²⁴⁰ the home of *Housekeeping* is the opposite, an inside turned into an outside.

In each of the texts referenced here, the blurring of symbolic boundaries signals a change in the homeplace. In *Paradise*, particularly, the failure to keep nature restrained symbolises a larger failure by the houses’ occupants to maintain an acceptable level of domesticity, as well as a further elaboration of the symbolic equation of mother/garden. In *Paradise*, the garden becomes a marker of the inhabitants’ fates. Once key to the women’s self-sufficiency, it later falls to ruin, its tomato vines ‘[hanging] limp over fallen fruit, black and smashed in the dirt’ and its mustards ‘pale yellow with rot and inattention [...]’²⁴¹ Like Eden and its own ‘fallen fruit’, the mansion’s garden, once carefully cultivated and preserved, is ultimately abandoned.

²³⁶ Roberts, *A Piece of the Night* First published, 1978. (London: The Women’s Press) Reprint, 2002, p.59.

²³⁷ In extreme cases, the mother’s death can herald the loss of home. The biblical flood-story is one example, as I will explore in my next chapter, as well as Genesis chapter nineteen, in which a mother/home are destroyed simultaneously.

²³⁸ Parker, p.161.

²³⁹ Marilynne Robinson, *Housekeeping*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p.102.

²⁴⁰ Bruno, Giuliana, *Atlas of Emotion: Journeys in Art, Architecture and Film* (New York: Verso, 2002), p. 203.

²⁴¹ Morrison (1998), p.255 - Earlier on, the house’s infrastructure has also started to break down: lying in her ‘lukewarm’ bath, Gigi observes that ‘[t]he plumbing in the mansion [is] breaking up’ - p.251.

At the end of the novel, when two of Ruby's inhabitants re-visit the mansion and enter its garden, they find the '[p]epper bushes [in] full flower, but the rest of the garden [...] lost'.²⁴²

Longing for home

'Our successive living spaces', Michel de Certeau writes, 'never disappear completely; we leave them without leaving them because they live in turn, invisible and present, in our memories and in our dreams.'²⁴³ In Genesis, the loss of Eden sets in motion a central thematic thread: the longing for home. As Warren words it,

"longing for home" is [a] searching, a remembering, a desiring for a place and a set of practices that is life-affirming and where one's basic needs (physical, emotional, and spiritual) get met.²⁴⁴

In *Paradise*, Dobbs argues, a 'diasporic longing for home'²⁴⁵ lies behind both Ruby's construction, and the women's convent/coven. Yet Young, in particular, reminds us to 'critique' the 'longing for home',²⁴⁶ which is, as she writes, 'a longing bought at the expense of women and of those constructed as Others, strangers, not-home'.²⁴⁷ These 'other' inhabitants rarely find, to use Warren's phrasing, homes 'worth longing for'.²⁴⁸ But linking this yearning to nostalgia, Young writes that 'longing is always for an *elsewhere*. Remembrance is the affirmation of what brought us *here*'.²⁴⁹ Eden is indeed often described

²⁴² Morrison (1998), p.303.

²⁴³ Michel de Certeau, 'Private Spaces', in Michel de Certeau, Luce Giard, and Pierre Mayol, *The Practise of Everyday Life, Volume 2: Living and Cooking* First published, 1994. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), pp.145-148, p.148.

²⁴⁴ Warren, p.226.

²⁴⁵ Dobbs, p.120.

²⁴⁶ Young, p.135.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., p.164.

²⁴⁸ Warren, p.226.

²⁴⁹ Young, p.154, my italics - Elsewhere, Forrest Clingerman has written of 'environmental amnesia'; the 'inability to remember where and who we are.' - Forrest Clingerman, 'Homecoming and the Half-Remembered: Environmental Amnesia, the Uncanny and the Path Home' in Boscaljon, ed. *Resisting the Place of Belonging* (2013), pp.33-46, p.33-34.

as ‘Somewhere Else’,²⁵⁰ the *elsewhere* to Young’s *here*. One potent episode in Genesis suggests the dangers of longing for home; the story of Lot’s wife in chapter nineteen. Rescued from her doomed city, Lot’s wife defiantly ‘look[s] back’ at her home for the last time, and ‘[becomes] a pillar of salt.’ (19:26).²⁵¹ As Young writes:

the narratives of the history of what brought us here are not fixed, and part of the creative and moral task of preservation is to reconstruct the connection of the past to the present²⁵²

Whilst I will return to the idea of re-connecting the past to the present within the home-space²⁵³ in my final chapter, it is enough to note here that because of its inhabitant’s memories, the mansion of *Paradise* is not an idyllic home-space where the women find complete well-being.²⁵⁴ Morrison’s text, like Boscaljon’s critical work, ‘resists the place of belonging’,²⁵⁵ and though a ‘longing for home’ may lie behind her protagonists’ actions, this ‘longing’ can never be fully sated, and is finally denied.

Eden, the Hebrew Bible’s first dwelling, lives on in a slightly different way, as a potent memory of ‘home’. As Tribble recognises, ‘we cannot return to the primeval garden’,²⁵⁶ but we can remember it. Its key embodiment in Genesis is found in the idea of a ‘promised land’, which, as Boose notes, is ‘a space that recapitulates the [...] original garden’,²⁵⁷ and is the site towards which Abraham journeys. Eden is also remembered in scattered references

²⁵⁰ Hélène Cixous, (1993:21) quoted by Heather Walton, ‘Fireflies and the Art Candle’ (2007), p.62.

²⁵¹ Interestingly, biblical critics have detected the possibility of marital discord in Lot’s wife’s actions: ‘Nowhere’, Davies writes, ‘has it been asked whether the spouse of such a character would prefer to stay in a disintegrating Sodom than spend the rest of her life with a man of dubious sexual morals’ (Davies, p.14).

²⁵² Young, p.154 - Intertextual readings could themselves be described as “reinterpretive preservation” to use Weir’s phrase - Allison Weir, ‘Home and Identity: In Memory of Iris Marion Young’ *Hypatia*, Vol. 23, No. 3, (Summer, 2008), pp. 4-21, p.18.

²⁵³ Allison Weir, in discussing the ‘values’ of home, also talks of a ‘*connection to past and future* [...] through reinterpretive preservation and transformative identification.’ - Weir, p.5, my italics.

²⁵⁴ Two of the women - Mavis and Gigi - struggle to get along with each other, whilst Seneca continues to self-harm even in her new home - Morrison (1998), p.260.

²⁵⁵ Boscaljon goes so far as to question the very possibility of having a home - Boscaljon, ‘Introduction’, p. 4.

²⁵⁶ Tribble, p.47.

²⁵⁷ Boose, p.55.

throughout the Hebrew Bible, such as Lot's statement that the land that he will make his new home is 'well watered everywhere like the garden of the Lord' (13:10).²⁵⁸ Elsewhere, looking back to a lost garden becomes a way of understanding the loss of a homeland in different political contexts.²⁵⁹ In *Paradise*, meanwhile, Ruby is both Eden and the promised land: 'There is honey in this land sweeter than any I know of [...]'²⁶⁰ remarks one of the town's elders. I will return to the idea of the 'promised land' in my third chapter, where it is part of a wider, more complex, search for 'home'.

Meanwhile, Adam and Eve's story does not end with exile, and on the post-lapsarian earth, Eve gives birth to her first child, Cain. 'I have produced a man with the help of the Lord' (4:1), she declares, staking a claim on the maternal power "to make",²⁶¹ and asserting that the family is a shared building project. But as Morrison reminds us in myriad ways in *Paradise*, violence is always a possibility beneath a calm domestic surface, and in Genesis this takes the form of fratricide, when Cain kills his brother Abel (4:8). When God states that he can hear Abel's blood 'crying out to [Him] from the ground' (4:10), his words take us back to the baseline of the *bet*, and emphasise the shaky foundations of Adam and Eve's new home. Theirs is a 'fallen house',²⁶² fragmented from within. Again, God's response is bound up with dwelling: 'you will be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth' (4:11-12), he tells Cain.²⁶³ Doomed to never find a stable home, and 'banished from his homeland', Cain 'becomes a fugitive nomad',²⁶⁴ as the anthropologist Dan W. Forsyth notes. Forsyth finds Cain's punishment 'puzzling',²⁶⁵ but as Alter reminds us, '[t]he biblical imagination is [...] preoccupied with the theme of exile (this is already the second expulsion)'.²⁶⁶ Born of banished parents, Cain's exile is doubly wrought.

²⁵⁸ This reference to Eden, of course, also pre-empts Lot's family's ultimate expulsion from this place.

²⁵⁹ For instance, see Rasmi Abu Ali, 'Kurza' in *A Land of Stone and Thyme* (1996), pp.51-53.

²⁶⁰ Morrison (1998), p.204.

²⁶¹ Alter, p.16. - Umberto Cassuto has also noted this (see Pardes, p.44).

²⁶² Robinson (1980), p.158.

²⁶³ Indeed, he settles 'in the land of Nod' (4:16), which in the Hebrew is 'cognate with "wanderer" in verse 12.' (Alter, p.19).

²⁶⁴ Forsyth, p.478.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Alter, p.18.

True to its thematic tension between exile and home, *Paradise* ends with the dispersal of Connie's discordant, unhoused family.²⁶⁷ For Dobbs, the mansion is 'a palimpsest of failed [...] patriarchal designs',²⁶⁸ and the last layer of this is the men's attack. Their arrival on the women's doorstep is preceded by a heavy, long-awaited rainfall. Rushing out to the garden, the women dance in the deluge and feel their past traumas being washed away,²⁶⁹ in a redemptive scene that ends when dawn arrives, bringing men with weapons through the mist. The attack only draws to an end when other people from Ruby appear. Those who later return to the mansion to retrieve the women's bodies find that they have disappeared,²⁷⁰ and the episode leaves a sour taste in the mouths of Ruby's inhabitants. Unsheltered as Morrison's protagonists are, Adam and Eve are nevertheless able to re-gather and re-build their family, a process which is bound up with their making of a new home. As Young writes, '[T]o remain, to stay in place, is an important meaning of dwelling',²⁷¹ and when Eve has a third son (4:25), she calls him Seth, which as Jeff A. Benner identifies, 'is a root word meaning "to set something in place"'.²⁷² Through her son's name, Eve thus signals her intention to find a safe footing on the earth outwith Eden.

The story of the garden of Eden, read alongside its modern intertext *Paradise*, has opened this study of dwelling in Genesis. In both texts, 'Home is not a little thing',²⁷³ but one that people are willing to kill for. *Paradise* is a novel about an alternative home,²⁷⁴ a house that is appropriated by a discordant group of women, who threaten to unsettle a nearby community.

²⁶⁷ The fate of a family and its home are often connected. Sahar Khalifeh's novel *Wild Thorns*, for example, ends with the destruction of the Karmi family's home. The narrator remarks: 'The family will be dispersed; that's what usually happens to people whose homes are demolished.' Sahar Khalifeh, *Wild Thorns*, trans. Elizabeth Fernea and Trevor LeGassick, (New York: Olive Branch Press, 1989), Reprint, 1985, pp.186-7.

²⁶⁸ Dobbs, p.113.

²⁶⁹ Morrison (1998), p.283.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., p.292.

²⁷¹ Young, p.136.

²⁷² Jeff. A. Benner, Ancient Hebrew Research Center, Biblical Hebrew E-Magazine (July, 2004) Issue 5. Accessed online at: <http://www.ancient-hebrew.org/emagazine/005.html>, 3/05/15.

²⁷³ Morrison (1998), p.213.

²⁷⁴ Morrison imagines alternative female homes throughout her work. The novel *Sula* (1973), for example, depicts a female home that is open to the community, and in *Song of Solomon* (1977), a grandmother, mother and daughter live together in a house vastly different to that of the protagonist Macon Dead, a landlord by occupation.

More simply, Morrison's novel is about people finding a place to live in the world, from freed slaves to victims of domestic abuse. It is a story of 'home' and all the unhomeliness to be found there, if you look closely. Connie's household is constructed from histories of domestic abuse and homelessness: from these she is able to retrieve the transformative potential of an/ other home. Morrison's protagonists' struggle to defend this home reminds us that 'the politics of home and belonging are gendered [and] racialized',²⁷⁵ and that former homes cannot be fully left behind, ideas I will return to in my third and fourth chapters. Furthermore, the mansion in *Paradise* - in turn a patriarchal project, a nun's convent and finally a woman-only space - dramatises different lived versions of 'home'. As the novel's readers, Christopher suggests, 'we recognize there are multiple cartographies, multiple maps, and many ideas of paradise';²⁷⁶ many ways to dwell. The descendants of Adam and Eve, exiled from Eden, will both 'build' and 'preserve', to return to Heidegger's terms, in a more complex form of dwelling than God originally intended for humans.

A final point is worth making through eco-feminism. In Eden, Warren argues, we can trace the roots of 'the beliefs that women are inferior and that humans have a God-given right to exploit the earth'.²⁷⁷ Warren also suggests that 'there are important connections [...] between how one treats women (and other subdominant groups) and how one treats the nonhuman natural environment'.²⁷⁸ This connection holds true in Genesis. In the garden of Eden, men and women live side by side in a harmonious relationship with nature. Once out of Eden, this falls apart, and in the narratives of Noah family the toxic earth is wiped clean, and as I will discuss below, the ark's women are nullified. In the Abrahamic narratives, women are variously described as 'sister', 'wife' or 'servant'; this fragile, fragmented relationship with women directly reflects the characters' nomadic lifestyle. This is one way of framing the unhomeliness of the biblical home for its female inhabitants, an attribute I will examine further in each chapter.

The un-homing of the women in *Paradise* is accompanied by heavy rainfall, an aqueous image we find wrought large in the next narrative of Genesis; that of Noah's ark. Whilst the

²⁷⁵ Blunt and Dowling, p.188 - I will also return to in my third chapter, in relation to the story of Hagar.

²⁷⁶ Christopher, p.89.

²⁷⁷ Warren, p.225.

²⁷⁸ Warren, pp.219-20.

first man and woman's consumption of the Edenic fruit causes the loss of their home, Noah and his family do nothing to actively endanger theirs but are instead chosen by God to be saved from its destruction. The flood which destroys their earthly home necessitates the construction of a new kind of dwelling, a temporary structure built to withstand a great degree, known as 'Noah's ark'.

Exile

*to make an end*²⁷⁹

Genesis, as I have already begun to explore, is a book of ‘making and unmaking’,²⁸⁰ specifically, in relation to Baxter and Brickell’s ideas, the ‘unmaking’ of home. We have now reached a narrative that concerns the latter, on a global scale; the story of the flood. If ‘[d]isasters are places where poems cluster like leaves trapped in the fissures of windswept walls’,²⁸¹ many intertexts - or literary leaves - cling to the walls of the ark. This second chapter, more than the first, is characterised by ‘methodological diversity and eclecticism’,²⁸² drawing on the phenomenological writings of Gaston Bachelard and Alain de Botton, biblical criticism such as Alicia S. Ostriker’s, and literary texts that rework the flood story, in order to build up a better understanding of the ark as a second significant biblical dwelling.

At the beginning of Genesis chapter six, God sees that ‘wickedness [is] great in the earth’ (6:5) he regrets making humankind, and grieves for his broken creation (6:6): the Hebrew word for his grief is connected via a ‘verbal root [to] Eve’s pangs, [and] Adam’s pain’,²⁸³ i.e. to the curses that hang over the postlapsarian earth. The mistakes Adam and Eve made in the garden are being repeated by their descendants, and God’s solution is a second unmaking of home:

I will blot out from the earth the human beings I have created – people together with animals and creeping things and birds of the air [...] (6:7)

God’s creations are here named in the reverse order of Genesis one: even syntactically, God is beginning to go back on his work. A total reversal is pulled back from at the last minute, in the final sentence: ‘But Noah’ - whom we have been introduced to at the end of chapter five - ‘found favour in the sight of the Lord’ (6:8). ‘In a creative project that has proved a total

²⁷⁹ Genesis, chapter six, verse thirteen.

²⁸⁰ Aviva Gottlieb Zornberg, *The Beginning of Desire: Reflections on Genesis* (New York: Schocken Books, 1995), p.21.

²⁸¹ John Caputo, quoted by Heather Walton, *Imagining Theology: Women, Writing and God* (London: T&T Clark, 2007) p.47.

²⁸² David J.A. Clines, and Cheryl J. Exum, eds. *The New Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, imprint of Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), p.14.

²⁸³ Robert Alter, *Genesis: Translation and Commentary* (London: W.W. Norton and Company, 1996), p.28.

failure, there is yet one detail that can be salvaged and can provide a basis for a reworking of the idea',²⁸⁴ and that detail is a man. A mini genealogy is slotted in next, reminding us that Noah has three sons - Shem, Ham, and Japheth (5:32; 6:10) as if to justify his next role in the narrative, as the forefather of God's second draft of humanity. Noah's wife, and her daughters-in-law, will of course be crucial to the repopulation project, but are not yet mentioned here, due to the text's 'patrilineal imagination',²⁸⁵ its preoccupation with the male line. God tells Noah he has 'determined to make an end of all flesh' (6:13), but if he is about to demolish his own construction, humans began the process: 'The structures are already lost.'²⁸⁶

In her novel *Housekeeping* (1980), Marilynne Robinson imagines the breakdown of domestic structures, and the results are similarly aqueous; in this text, too, 'the divine [...] appears as a deluge'.²⁸⁷ In the family home built by their grandfather, two young girls are cared for by their aunt,²⁸⁸ but the house proves to be a 'frail structure'²⁸⁹ in women's hands in this anti-home²⁹⁰ text. Writing of 'nomadic fictions and repudiations of the domestic' in recent women's writing, Sinead McDermott cites *Housekeeping* as an example.²⁹¹ As Heather Walton puts it: '[t]his is a novel in which nothing is permanent or established'.²⁹² Soon after Sylvie has arrived, heavy rain floods the town and reaches the house: 'It's like the end of the world'²⁹³ she declares. Boat imagery is a recurring motif in *Housekeeping*, and is connected to the 'water imagery' which Walton identifies as key to Robinson's writing, inspired by 'the

²⁸⁴ Ibid., p.40.

²⁸⁵ Alter, p.26.

²⁸⁶ Zornberg, p.50.

²⁸⁷ Heather Walton, 'A World Built on Water: Symbols of the Divine in the Novels of Marilynne Robinson', *Imagining Theology: Women, Writing and God* (T&T Clark, 2007), pp.119-133, p.120.

²⁸⁸ The book as a whole lacks male characters: in the later passages, only a gesticulating fisherman is left behind on the shore as Sylvie and Ruth row away in his boat.

²⁸⁹ Marilynne Robinson, *Housekeeping* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p.159.

²⁹⁰ A term used by, among others, Deborah Kapchan; Kapchan 'argue[s] that "home" does not exist apart from its counterpart, the "anti-home."' - Deborah Kapchan, 'Talking Trash: Performing Home and Anti-Home in Austin's Salsa Culture' *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 33, No. 3 (August, 2006), pp.361-377, p.362.

²⁹¹ *Literature, Gender, Space* by Sonia Villegas-López; Beatriz Domínguez-García. Review by: Sinead McDermott *Atlantis*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (December), pp. 221-226, p.221.

²⁹² Heather Walton, 'A World Built on Water', p.120 - Walton also links *Housekeeping* to the Genesis flood narrative.

²⁹³ Robinson (1980), p.70.

biblical narratives of creation and flood; exile and deliverance; baptism and regeneration.²⁹⁴ Later on, when Sylvie lets nature take over, the house is like a ‘drowned ship’.²⁹⁵

If in *Housekeeping*, as Walton suggests, ‘the waters’ are a ‘dark primeval power’ that ‘cannot be prevented from welling up and flooding our human dwellings’,²⁹⁶ we are reminded of the frailty of dwellings in Genesis as well. As the anthropologist Mary Douglas writes, ‘home is a fragile system, easy to subvert’.²⁹⁷ A second dialectic is present here, and it is to do with the symbolic boundaries that lie behind the ‘home’. Blunt and Dowling have examined how in 2005, Hurricane Katrina ‘overturned the constructed boundaries between ‘natural’ and ‘domestic’ spaces that are both necessary and yet usually rendered invisible within the home.’²⁹⁸ In the aftermath of the hurricane, they argue, ‘Home became unknown to itself, unhomely, because the natural was within, rather than outside it.’²⁹⁹ This is what occurs in *Housekeeping*, and to some extent in the biblical flood story, wherein nature is brought into the ark/house for its own protection; yet between this shelter of domesticity and the wild water outside, the boundaries are just about maintained.

As in Morrison’s novel *Paradise*, the women’s wild domesticity in *Housekeeping* threatens the rest of the community. When one of the sisters decided to leave, she turns on the light and startles the others into seeing what is happening to the house: ‘Everywhere the paint was chipped [...] the cupboard tops were thickly felted with dust...’³⁰⁰ Sylvie and her nieces have ‘retreat[ed] [...] into the interiority of home’³⁰¹ on an excessive level, but have failed to maintain the house itself. In Roberts’ *A Piece of the Night*, the lack of an authoritative parental figure is also echoed in the state of the family house: dust ‘breathes out from the carpet’, which also ‘smells of wood in various stages of decay...’³⁰² and the plants on the window-sill

²⁹⁴ Walton, H. ‘A World Built on Water’, pp.120-2.

²⁹⁵ Robinson (1980), p.102.

²⁹⁶ Ibid., p.123.

²⁹⁷ Mary Douglas, “The Idea of a Home: A Kind of Space” *Social Research*, Vol. 58, No. 1 (Spring, 1991), pp.287-307, p.301.

²⁹⁸ Blunt and Dowling, p.261.

²⁹⁹ Ibid., pp.261-2.

³⁰⁰ Robinson (1980), p.101.

³⁰¹ Baxter and Brickell, p.137.

³⁰² Roberts (1978), p.22.

begin to ‘wither’.³⁰³ *Paradise, Housekeeping* and *A Piece of the Night* thus each depict a kind of ‘domestic disorder’.³⁰⁴ Meanwhile in Genesis, ‘the house of the world’³⁰⁵ is in similar disrepair due to its rebellious tenants, and God’s solution is to wash it empty.

What follows in Genesis are a series of building instructions:

Make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and out with pitch. This is how you are to make it: the length of the ark three hundred cubits, its width fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits. Make a roof for the ark [...] and put the door of the ark in its side...³⁰⁶

God’s aim to ‘end all flesh’ has paradoxically initiated the plan for a salvific framework. God and man cooperate on the structure that carries a family into a redemptive world, one that contains the possibility of a new relationship between God and humans. Whereas in chapter one God was the architect *and* builder, here God imparts his plans to a human who will build it. Adam and Eve’s role was ‘to preserve and care for’ a ready-made living space (Heidegger’s ‘cultivation’), but in Noah’s story, ‘building’ becomes ‘a constructing’.³⁰⁷ Tellingly, women are excluded from this construction project, and it is only in literature that they have belatedly claimed a role in textual ship-building, as I will examine shortly.

*decreation*³⁰⁸

The contents of the ark are now specified: ‘of every living thing [...] you shall bring two of every kind into the ark’, God tells Noah, ‘to keep them alive [...] Also [store up food].’ (6:18-21) Noah does as he is told (6:22), and in the un-narrated space between the end of this chapter and the start of the next, the ark is built. The narrator of *Housekeeping* asks us

³⁰³ Ibid., p.85.

³⁰⁴ Robinson (1980), p.113.

³⁰⁵ B. Jacob, *The First Book of the Bible: Genesis* First published, 1934. Dr. Earnest I Jacob, and Dr. Walter, eds. and transl. (New York: Ktav Publishing House), New edition 1974, p.8.

³⁰⁶ Genesis 6:14-6.

³⁰⁷ Heidegger, p.349.

³⁰⁸ Zornberg, p.31.

to ‘Imagine that Noah knocked his house apart and used the planks to build an ark’.³⁰⁹ God knocks apart the earthly house he has built, but Robinson suggests that Noah’s family use the material of their old home to carry them forward to the next.³¹⁰ As the writer Michael Roemer has argued, ‘traditional folk narratives [...] function not to make the world a safe home but rather to allow humanity to encounter what is strange, unmanageable and *sacred*’.³¹¹ The Genesis flood narrative would appear to do both: the destructive waters are a strange, unmanageable and sacred phenomenon, but in their midst is an ark carrying a family that will continue the attempt to ‘make the world a safe home’. God now says to Noah, ‘Go into the ark, you and all your household...’ (7:1); after a week, ‘[he] will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights; and every living thing [will be blotted] out from the face of the ground.’ (7:4)

*an unmooring*³¹²

Noah with his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives’ now enters the ark ‘to escape the [flood]’ (7:7), along with the required animals (7:8-9). Thus are they ‘displaced yet emplaced’;³¹³ displaced from their former home, but emplaced within the ark. Philosophically, Zornberg argues, entering the ark is a crucial moment, suggesting that perhaps ‘Noah senses great danger in this entry, a cutting-off from all previous experience.’³¹⁴ Adam and Eve’s exile from Eden, their original living space, is here reenacted in their descendants’ uprooting. Whereas Adam and Eve were banished from Eden and thrown into the wider world, it is this world from which Noah’s family are temporarily banished.

Now the ‘fountains of the great deep burst forth’, and ‘the windows of the heavens [open]’ (7:11).³¹⁵ As Alter identifies, ‘The surge of waters from [...] below and [above is] a

³⁰⁹ Robinson, p.184.

³¹⁰ Significantly, the recent film *Noah* (2014) ends with the image of Noah’s oldest son putting the wooden framework for his new home in place, whilst nearby Noah’s wife – called Naameh in the film – lays out a herb garden. Aronofsky ends his epic, with its stormy central story, by returning to the domestic - *Noah* Directed by Darren Aronofsky [Film] (Hollywood, California: Paramount Pictures, 2014).

³¹¹ Heather Walton, p.44.

³¹² Helen Macdonald, *H is for Hawk* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2014), p.99.

³¹³ Alison Blunt, and Robyn Dowling, *Home* (London: Routledge, 2006), p.238.

³¹⁴ Zornberg, p.62.

³¹⁵ In line with the architectural imagery here, Alter has ‘casements’ - p.32.

striking reversal of the second day of creation, when [the] vault was erected to divide the [waters]':³¹⁶ God is dismantling the cosmic structures he put in place only chapters before, in order to temporarily merge what was separated. Yet another inventory of the ark's contents follows (7:13-5), however, to remind us that in the midst of this there remains a small microcosm of differentiation. Swelling with rain, the seas bear the ark upwards and it floats (7:17-8); soon, the highest mountains are covered (7:19). If '[t]here [was] a provisional quality to the reality of the world',³¹⁷ in the early chapters of Genesis, as Zornberg writes, we feel the truth of it now. The destruction out-with the ark is total: 'nothing is left of the world but what is *inside* the Ark'.³¹⁸

*we danced through ruinous currents [...] and were not capsized because the ruin
we rode upon was meant for greater things*³¹⁹

As the story of Noah's ark looms large in our cultural memory, it is worth dwelling on the symbolic qualities of the ark. Reproduced in miniature as a children's toy,³²⁰ the ark is also digitally resurrected in biblical epics such as Aronofsky's recent film 'Noah' (2014), and literally re-built in American 'biblical' theme parks.³²¹ If 'the house shelters day-dreaming'³²² as Bachelard suggests, Noah's family's temporary house has sheltered the day-dreams of many. Stephen Crites, as Walton identifies, writes of 'sacred stories which lie 'deep in the consciousness of a people' [...] forming a mythopoetic inheritance which is anonymous and communal. These stories are 'not like monuments... but like dwelling places. People *live* in them''.³²³ Indeed, Bachelard writes that 'at times, a provisional refuge or an occasional shelter

³¹⁶ Alter, p.32.

³¹⁷ Zornberg, p.27.

³¹⁸ Ibid., p.64; Genesis chapter seven, verse twenty-three.

³¹⁹ Robinson (1980), p.162.

³²⁰ In Roberts' *A Piece of the Night*, Julie's mother reminds her of childhood objects left in the family home such as a 'carved Noah's ark'. Interestingly, the toy is mentioned in the context of 'a family separated, a home being left behind' - Roberts (1978), p.163.

³²¹ A life-size 'replica' is under construction in Kentucky, USA: <https://arkencounter.com>. Accessed: 1st January, 2015.

³²² Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1992), p.6.

³²³ Stephen Crites, quoted by Heather Walton (2007) in a footnote, p.42, my italics.

is endowed in our intimate day-dreaming with virtues that have no objective foundation'³²⁴, and the ark is just such a 'provisional refuge'.³²⁵ Zornberg, too, writes of the ark as a 'closed daydream'³²⁶ in connection with Bachelard's theories. When Bachelard writes of 'the house's virtues of protection and resistance',³²⁷ Noah's ark is the subtext beneath his words:

[The house] braces itself to receive the downpour, it girds its loins. [...] Such a house as this invites mankind to heroism of cosmic proportions. It is an instrument with which to confront the cosmos [...] Come what may the house helps us to say: I will be an inhabitant of the world, in spite of the world.³²⁸

Similarly, Alain de Botton identifies that 'a certain kind of beauty' belongs to 'man-made objects which can withstand the life-destroying forces of heat, cold, gravity or wind [...] We respond with emotion to creations which transport us across distances we could never walk, which shelter us during storms we could not weather'.³²⁹ He also talks of 'a quality present whenever a work of architecture succeeds in carrying out an act of resistance – holding, spanning, sheltering – with grace and economy as well as strength':³³⁰ certainly the ark holds and shelters, 'spanning' the narrative space between the old world and the new, between life and death, and it is no wonder that Noah's family's uncanny, in-between experience in such an unusual structure continues to hold our interest.

In my first chapter, the openness of an Eden home proved an important idea. For Zornberg, '*Noah's* dream is a dream of the door, the window, the opening.'³³¹ That the ark is a fenestrated structure is of crucial importance to Zornberg: the window through which the

³²⁴ Bachelard, 'Introduction', p.xxxvi.

³²⁵ Nearly two decades later, in *Species of Spaces*, Georges Perec writes: 'We live in space [...] We can touch. We can even allow ourselves to dream.' - Georges Perec, 'Foreword' to *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces* First published, 1974. Sturrock, John, ed. and trans. (London: Penguin, 2008), p.5.

³²⁶ Zornberg, p.64.

³²⁷ Bachelard, p.46.

³²⁸ Ibid., pp.46-7.

³²⁹ Alain de Botton, *The Architecture of Happiness* (London: Penguin, 2006) Re-edition, 2014, p.204.

³³⁰ He continues: 'In literature, too, we admire prose in which a small and astutely arranged set of words has been constructed to carry a large consignment of ideas', which certainly applies to Genesis - de Botton, pp.206-7.

³³¹ Zornberg, p.64, my italics.

raven and dove are released is ‘the hole that perforates [Noah’s] box’.³³² Much emphasis is also placed in the biblical text on the door through which the ark’s inhabitants enter and exit. If the ark is a temporary shelter with several structural openings, it is related architecturally to the *sukkah* - which Mimi Levy Lipis calls a ‘hybrid place of belonging’³³³ - dwelt in by Jewish families for the week of Sukkot/h.³³⁴

Sukkoth, one of the ritual houses which Lipis analyses in her extended study *Symbolic Houses in Judaism*, are ‘temporary dwelling[s]’³³⁵ much like the ark. They are built for a specified amount of time, for a specific purpose. These structures ‘[have] walls but no roof’;³³⁶ similarly, the ark’s ‘covering’ or ‘roof’ (8:13; 6:16) is an important component of its construction. Interestingly, the daughters of Robinson’s novel *Housekeeping* construct a sukkah-like structure on the beach after running away from the house: ‘We used a big stone in its side as one wall, we made back and side walls of driftwood, and we left the third side *open* to the lake. We pulled down *fir limbs* and made a roof and floor [...]’³³⁷ This construction, of course, ties into the idea of the fragility of dwelling, as well as openness.

Ritual houses, for Lipis, are ‘sites, *lieux de mémoire*, for the abstracted homeland’.³³⁸ such is the ark’s symbolic function. Even in the midst of chaos, this salvific ship speaks to Noah and his family of the earth/home they will return to. Lipis also places much emphasis on portability, talking of it as a ‘survival strategy’ of the Jewish people,³³⁹ an idea foreshadowed in Noah’s family’s story. The *sukkah*, she writes, allows Jewish families to ‘[turn diaspora] into a sight of possibility instead of lack’,³⁴⁰ as the ark does. It is a salvific box that speaks of adaptability and survival. Whilst meals are shared and texts are read within the *sukkah*, it is not fully lived in; it is but a ritualised and temporary addition to a Jewish family’s dwelling

³³² Ibid., p.65.

³³³ Lipis, p.49.

³³⁴ Ibid., p.58.

³³⁵ Ibid., p.167.

³³⁶ Ibid., p.59.

³³⁷ Robinson (1980), p.114, my italics.

³³⁸ Lipis, p.69.

³³⁹ Ibid.

³⁴⁰ Lipis, p.106.

pattern. The ark is similarly temporary and portable: those archaeologists who seek remnants of the ark have, as the religious commentator Karen Armstrong has argued,³⁴¹ missed the point. As Lipis writes: ‘ritual houses are like nomadic architecture [...] no traces are left’.³⁴² What does remain, as we will now see, are literary traces.

*the ark experience*³⁴³

With his chosen family sheltered in the ark, God is simultaneously ‘destroying and saving’.³⁴⁴ The rain ceases, but the waters remain for one hundred and fifty days (7:24). We can only imagine the experience of Noah and his family, left cramped and traumatised with only a grey expanse of water as a view: ‘It [is] just the family now, the way it [is] going to be for a long long time...’³⁴⁵ Women writers in particular have revisited this singular story, and have not shied away from its horror. Ostriker imagines ‘Noah and his family [...] alone in that semi-darkness [...] sick [...] The water] crowded with the swollen dead. Men women children.’³⁴⁶ Similarly, in her poem about this biblical episode, Marie Ponsot onomatopoeically imagines ‘the stew and suck of reeking waters’.³⁴⁷

A crucial inhabitant on the ark lacks a name and an active role in the story,³⁴⁸ as do her daughters-in-law: Noah’s wife. Her absence is a specific factor addressed in literary intertexts of the story. Once again, Robinson’s novel *Housekeeping* narrates the un-narrated, seeking out Noah’s wife’s experience: ‘One can imagine that, at the apex of the Flood, when the globe was a ball of water [...] Noah’s wife must have opened the shutters...’; perhaps ‘the Deluge rippled and glistened’, its ‘waters [full] of people...’³⁴⁹ Robinson’s character is traumatised by her experience, and comes to a watery end by merging with the substance of the flood itself:

³⁴¹ Karen Armstrong, ‘Believers in the lost Ark: Treating myth as misunderstands the meaning of religion’, in *The Guardian*, 9th August, 2003.

³⁴² Lipis, p.74.

³⁴³ Zornberg, p.63.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.40.

³⁴⁵ Winterson (1985), p.143.

³⁴⁶ Alicia S. Ostriker, *The Nakedness of the Fathers* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1994), p.39.

³⁴⁷ Marie Ponsot ‘Evening the Ark’ *The Paris Review*, No. 133, (Winter 1994).

³⁴⁸ She is absent, too, from much commentary on the narrative: Zornberg makes no mention of Noah’s wife.

³⁴⁹ Robinson (1980), p.172.

If [...] Noah's wife, when she was old, found somewhere a remnant of the Deluge, she might have walked into it till her widow's dress floated above her head...

*And she would have left it to her sons to tell the tedious tale of generations. She was a nameless woman, and so at home among all those were never found and never missed...*³⁵⁰

In the poem 'Mrs Noah Speaks', Fay Zwicky's protagonist also grieves:³⁵¹ 'I mourn the wrack, the rock under the | blue sea, our old wound, the | dismantling storm and cannot | thank you.'³⁵² Here poetry is certainly 'concerned to articulate what is normally silenced'.³⁵³ just as Ponsot memorialises 'the wet sacrament of slaughter', Zwicky focuses on loss and grief, elements of the story which culture has tried to forget.³⁵⁴ Thus literature, as Walton has claimed, is 'able to witness to trauma'.³⁵⁵

Moving from trauma to transgression, a late thirteenth century manuscript depicts Noah's wife as an actively rebellious character reluctant to board the ark,³⁵⁶ as Adelaide Bennett has identified. Indeed, Bennett suggests that 'the legend of Noah's obstinate wife was better known than the few surviving [...] medieval examples would suggest'.³⁵⁷ Bennett notes that on the pages of the Ramsey Abbey Psalter, the 'unusual scene of Noah's wife refusing to enter the ark' is deliberately set up as a visual parallel to Eve's picking of the fruit, which

³⁵⁰ Ibid. - The idea of a woman being more emotionally affected by a disaster appears for a second time in Lot's wife's story; perhaps Noah's wife cannot help but look back either.

³⁵¹ Heidi Johnson begins her article with this quote from Zwicky's poem - Heidi Johnson, "'Matters That a Woman Rules': Marginalized Maternity in Jean Ingelow's *A Story of Doom*' *Victorian Poetry*, Vol. 33, No. 1, Women Poets (Spring, 1995), pp.75-88, p.75.

³⁵² <http://www.poetrylibrary.edu.au/poets/zwicky-fay/mrs-noah-speaks-0397012> Accessed 09/02/2015

³⁵³ Heather Walton, (2007), p.57.

³⁵⁴ Roberts uses Noah's wife's grief to align her with another biblical woman, Lot's wife: 'Yet salt can melt. If the flood comes again. If water surrounds her and [...] lets her dissolve in it. Sea water, salt tears [...] I am Lot's wife. Learning to mourn.' - Michèle Roberts, *The Book of Mrs Noah* First published, 1987. (London: Vintage, Random House, 1999), pp.123-4.

³⁵⁵ Heather Walton, (2007) p.58.

³⁵⁶ Adelaide Bennett, 'Noah's Recalcitrant Wife in the Ramsey Abbey Psalter' *Notes in the History of Art*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (Fall, 1982), pp.2-5.

³⁵⁷ Bennett, pp.2-3.

implies a wider dual tradition of female ‘disobedience’³⁵⁸ in relation to the two characters. Whilst Eve refuses to stay within the parameters of God’s Edenic prohibitions, Noah’s wife .resists the limitation of the ark

Jean Ingelow, in her nineteenth century epic poem *A Story of Doom* (1867), also positions Noah’s wife as ‘an Eve-like figure’,³⁵⁹ but with a more feminist ideology in mind. Ingelow’s character, named Niloiya,³⁶⁰ ‘opposes a mission that to her [is] mysterious and quixotic.’³⁶¹ Heidi Johnson tracks a similar process in *A Story of Doom* to that which Pardes finds in the first chapters of Genesis:³⁶² ‘Niloiya’s motherhood is gradually reduced from [a] powerful role’, and the poem ‘culminates in Niloiya’s final engulfment within the patriarchally dictated and created sphere of the ark, a male womb serving as the source of all future human generation.’³⁶³ Here, women certainly ‘occupy the structures already built’, in ‘a man’s world.’³⁶⁴

The idea of the ark as a sheltering yet constrictive space is worth pursuing; indeed, the idea of ‘home’ as ‘prison’ is widespread. In application to Genesis, Zornberg sees Adam and Noah as, ‘respectively, expelled and imprisoned’,³⁶⁵ identifies that ‘[o]ne of the central midrashic motifs on the Flood is [...] “Free me from *prison* [lit., from closedness]...”’³⁶⁶ Elsewhere, Mieke Bal has suggested that ‘the invisible parallel’ of the house in Genesis is ‘*prison* - that is, closed-house or guarded-house’.³⁶⁷ If ‘[Noah] is imprisoned by the ‘mighty

³⁵⁸ Ibid., p.3.

³⁵⁹ Johnson, p.76.

³⁶⁰ Unfortunately, like Noah’s wife, Ingelow herself has been largely excluded from the canon; in her case that of Victorian poetry - Johnson, p.77.

³⁶¹ Ibid., p.76.

³⁶² Ilana Pardes, *Countertraditions in the Bible: a feminist approach* (London: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp.42-5.

³⁶³ Johnson, p.77.

³⁶⁴ Iris Marion Young, ‘House and Home: Feminist Variations On A Theme’ in *Intersecting Voices: Dilemmas of Gender, Political Philosophy, and Policy* (Chichester: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 134-64, p.137.

³⁶⁵ Zornberg., p.109.

³⁶⁶ Ibid., p.49, my italics.

³⁶⁷ Bal (2008), p.36.

waters,” [...] his prison [yet] takes the form of a small, enclosed, safe space³⁶⁸ that he himself has built. After all, we know it as ‘Noah’s ark’: it is a patriarchal structure, built by a man. meaning ‘ – תֵּיבָה – ’Zornberg also writes of the ‘silent compression of the ark’,³⁶⁹ ‘the *teiva* both “box” and “word”’.³⁷⁰ In Ponsot’s poem the idea of the ark as a box allows her to suggest the physical discomfort of all of its human inhabitants, who leave it ‘Awkward, long doubled, | *unboxed & jostling*’.³⁷¹ A particularly vivid line in Genesis reminds us that the ark is an ‘enclosure’:³⁷² ‘the Lord shut him in.’ (7:16) This verse, ‘protecting, imprisoning’³⁷³ becomes the last line of Ingelow’s poem. For Ingelow’s female protagonist, ‘the male-dominated ark [...] is now invested with the hope of all future life.’³⁷⁴ The ark built by the family’s patriarch can thus be read as a prison for its un-named women, perhaps taken on board by force as the .manuscripts Bennett analysed suggest

Alternative arks

A more emancipatory reading is possible, and women writers in particular have set out to re-claim the ark. In the late twentieth century Jeannette Winterson appropriated the framework of this core cultural myth for humorous ends in a compact, ‘surreal fictional version’³⁷⁵ of Genesis: *Boating for Beginners* (1985). Once on board, Winterson’s Noah wonders how his old house ‘would look underwater’³⁷⁶ from his new, temporary home.³⁷⁷

³⁶⁸ Ibid., p.58.

³⁶⁹ Indeed, the story as a whole is full of eery silences: Noah’s, his wife’s, his sons’ and their wives’. ‘From beginning to end of the Flood narrative, Noah says not a word’ (Zornberg, p.58), accepting the impending destruction of his world.

³⁷⁰ Zornberg, p.50.

³⁷¹ Ponsot, ‘Evening the Ark’, my italics.

³⁷² Zornberg, p.49.

³⁷³ Ibid., p.63.

³⁷⁴ Johnson, p.84.

³⁷⁵ Monika Müller, ‘Love and Other Dismemberments in Jeanette Winterson’s Novels’ in Neumeier, Beate ed. *Engendering Realism and Postmodernism: Contemporary Women Writers in Britain* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001), pp.41-51, p.43.

³⁷⁶ Winterson (1985), p.143.

³⁷⁷ In Winterson’s text a group of other women also survive the flood by using life boats, and the letter of one is found at the end, an archaeological trace of female ingenuity.

Two years after Winterson's text was published, Michelle Roberts' *The Book of Mrs Noah* (1987) went further, re-imagining the ark as a refuge for women writers. Life on the ark is not narrated in Genesis; the ark is only fully inhabited in intertexts like these. Roberts explores the narrative possibilities of the ark as a shelter for women and their stories: her text is about 'women writing together – or rather *living* together and planning to write.'³⁷⁸ *The Book of Mrs Noah* begins with Noah's wife entering the ark in a dream, so we are back with Bachelard's ideas on chimerical dwellings, and Zornberg's on openings, for Robert's character immediately 'peer[s] out' from 'one of the hatches'³⁷⁹ of the boat once onboard.

*my wooden shelter*³⁸⁰

As Roberts' protagonist begins to plan her own, real ark for herself and other women writers, she first catalogues various male interpretations of the ark's design, such as Origen's, St Augustine's and St Ambrose's.³⁸¹ These different hermeneutical incarnations of the ark remind the reader of its flexibility as a structure, its accessibility as an architectural idea. Roberts' protagonists' ark is an alternative to these patriarchal progenitors: '[t]he Ark of Women is the *other* one' for 'the women who don't fit in'.³⁸² As the literary critic Cath Stowers writes, 'the novel effects a re-connecting of deterritorialised, separated, homeless women'³⁸³ by bringing them together on the ark, much as Connie's convent/coven did in *Paradise*. Zornberg writes of the biblical ark as a space of possibility: '[w]ithin the density and compression of the ark, multiple relationships and forms of knowledge open up.'³⁸⁴ Roberts' novel is one example of multiple relationships being imagined within the ark-space, and indeed alternative sexualities, in direct challenge to '[t]he traditional midrashic view

³⁷⁸ Michèle Roberts, interviewed by Olga Kenyon in *Women Writers Talk*, (Oxford: Lennard Publishing, 1989), p.161, my italics.

³⁷⁹ Roberts (1987), p.7.

³⁸⁰ Roberts (1978), p.7

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp.16-18.

³⁸² *Ibid.*, pp.19-20, my italics.

³⁸³ Cath Stowers, "No legitimate place, no land, no fatherland': Communities of women in the fiction of Roberts and Winterson' *Critical Survey*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (1996), pp.69-77, p.75.

³⁸⁴ Zornberg, p.63.

[that] sexuality receive[d] no expression in the ark.’³⁸⁵ Roberts’ ark is ‘not only an archive: it is a rest-home’: ‘women come [to] free their imaginations, to learn to play again, to destroy’,³⁸⁶ much like the tyrannical God of Genesis. The literary critic Kathleen L. Komar’s theory that ‘[t]he space of the literary text [has become] a powerful re-visionary site within which women can create new relational models of culture and society’³⁸⁷ holds true in the case of *Mrs Noah*.

Roberts’ ark is a container for ‘images of women as creators’,³⁸⁸ and whereas the protagonists predominantly produce *texts*, the theme of childbirth is nevertheless present: the collection of women, for instance, stay onboard for nine months.³⁸⁹ Robert’s ark, then, is a female structure, both textually and corporeally: ‘The idea of the ark’, she has stated, ‘came to suggest to me both a woman’s body and a storehouse for old books [...] Ideas around arks, archives, the pregnant body, came together.’³⁹⁰ The curved sides of the ark’s hull seem to shelter its inhabitants particularly well, both in the biblical text and Roberts’. ‘[W]omen’s spatial utopias’, Erlemann writes, ‘lean heavily towards curved forms’, and this is due to the binary of ‘curved/angular’ (women/men) in the architectural ‘language of shapes’³⁹¹ Komar cites an example from Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple* (1982); the hut of a woman named Nettie. This hut, in Nettie’s own words, is ‘round, walled, with a round roofleafroof.’³⁹² This ‘roofleafroof’, of course, recalls the natural, plant-based roof of the *sukkah*, and as Komar sees the hut as a ‘womblike space’³⁹³ it doubly recalls the ark. Roberts’ protagonist’s home,

³⁸⁵ Ibid., p.61 - Midrash comments that ‘[the people in the ark] were forbidden [lit., imprisoned] to have sexual relations [...] or] to procreate; so that there should not be a situation in which man is building while God is destroying.’ (*Tanhuma*, quoted by Zornberg, p.49).

³⁸⁶ Roberts (1987), p.21.

³⁸⁷ Kathleen L. Komar, ‘Feminist Curves in Contemporary Literary Space’ in Higonnet, Margaret H and Templeton, Joan *Reconfigured Spheres: Feminist Explorations of Literary Space* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994), pp.89-107, p.103.

³⁸⁸ Roberts, interviewed by Kenyon, p.160.

³⁸⁹ Roberts (1987), p.82.

³⁹⁰ Roberts, interviewed by Kenyon, p.160.

³⁹¹ Erlemann, p.130-1 - The archaeologist Cillie Rentmeister has also discussed the symbolism of curved constructions - see Komar (1994), p.89.

³⁹² Komar, p.90.

³⁹³ Ibid.

like the *sukkah*, is temporary: it is '[a] home at last', but 'one that dissolves, is incomplete, and vanishes.'³⁹⁴ She concludes:

the purpose of the ark is that I leave it. The purpose of the womb is that I be born from it. [...] Ark. Imagination. Body. Home. Book. [...] I have no name: I am Noah's wife. The Ark has drawn me onwards and has set me free.³⁹⁵

The ark is thus seen as a womb of sorts, carrying Noah's family into the new world. Yet this metaphor does not have a wholly positive resonance. Zornberg calls it a 'womb-prison',³⁹⁶ in a second elaboration of the idea explored above, and Johnson reads the ark of Ingelow's poem as 'a *male* womb',³⁹⁷ a male enclosure. Komar writes that '[t]he technique of forcing women back into an enclosed space reminiscent of a womb in order to destroy them is an old one', citing Antigone, as well as 'all the women of fairy tale and myth who are confined in caves or dungeons'.³⁹⁸ Thus, Roberts' ark reclaims this corporeal metaphor as it reclaims the structure itself: her novel is, finally, an 'arc of stories'.³⁹⁹ These intertexts of the flood story fill in not only Noah's wife's story and the experience of the ark, but also its traumatic aftermath, belying the textbook simplicity of the biblical ending.⁴⁰⁰ Leaving the ark behind proves similarly difficult.

*having flooded and covered the whole of everything it ever created...*⁴⁰¹

In chapter eight, God remembers the ark and its inhabitants (8:1). In a continuation of earlier architectural imagery, 'the windows of the heavens [are] closed' and 'the waters gradually [recede] from the earth.' (8:2) The ark '[comes] to rest on the mountains of Ararat' (8:4), and finally 'the tops of the mountains [appear]' (8:5). A different, much smaller window is now

³⁹⁴ Roberts (1987), p.274.

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

³⁹⁶ Zornberg, p.70.

³⁹⁷ Johnson, p.77, my italics - Elsewhere, John Hollander has noted 'the sense of [...] enclosure' created by the rhyming of the words "'womb'" and "'tomb'" (as if the -omb were the general human home).' - John Hollander, 'It All Depends' *Social Research* Vol. 58, No. 1 (Spring, 1991), pp.31-49, p.34.

³⁹⁸ Komar, p.91.

³⁹⁹ Roberts (1987), p.275.

⁴⁰⁰ Feminist criticism continues to problematise other biblical endings, such as the book of Job's.

⁴⁰¹ Luce Irigaray, *Elemental Passions*, trans. Collie, Joanne and Still, Judith (London: Athlone, 1992), p.83.

opened - the ark's - from which Noah releases a raven and a dove (8:6-8). The dove initially '[finds] no place to set its foot' - or as Alter has it, no 'resting place'⁴⁰² - and returns to the ark (8:9), but a week later, it brings back 'a freshly plucked olive leaf' (8:10-11). Like Eve's piece of fruit, this plucked segment of nature begets a new world; and like the banished Adam and Eve, the dove - sent out a third time - does not come back to the ark/garden (8:12). Noah knows the earth is habitable once more, but consistently obedient to God, does not leave the ark 'until he is told to do so'.⁴⁰³

On the first day of a new year, Noah 'remove[s] the covering of the ark' and sees the drying earth (8:13). At God's instruction, Noah and his family lead the animals out of the ark (8:15-6), into a postdiluvian world scoured clean of sin. As these living beings return to the earth, an earlier refrain returns to the story: 'be fruitful and multiply [...]' (8:17). To remind us of the social conditions necessary for procreation, the passage ends by telling us that 'everything that moves on the earth, went out of the ark by families' (8:19). Alter's translation semantically echoes the hierarchy that will reappear in this new world: 'And Noah went out, his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him.'⁴⁰⁴ Ponsot, in contrast, imagines Noah's family 'uncoupling [...] suddenly free',⁴⁰⁵ an idea which is perhaps a more suitable and realistic response to the claustrophobia of the last six months.

Construction now occurs. With his feet again on solid ground, Noah's first act is to build an altar to God and offer burnt offerings upon it (8:20). Zornberg reads this act as Noah constructing his reaction to the flood, due to the root *bina*, "'to build/understand'": 'God has saved him both from the "waters of the Flood" and from "that enclosure."⁴⁰⁶ For Zornberg, 'Noah builds his [new] world by understanding it'.⁴⁰⁷ Arguably, he also understands his new world by building. Furthermore, if fire is 'the mark of settlement'⁴⁰⁸ then the fire of Noah's sacrificial offering inscribes his family's return on the newly washed earth. Perhaps, to

⁴⁰² Alter, p.34: מְנוּחָה – the same word is used by Naomi in Ruth 3:1, when she wishes to find a resting place for Ruth.

⁴⁰³ Zornberg, p.65.

⁴⁰⁴ Alter, p.35.

⁴⁰⁵ Ponsot, 'Evening the Ark'.

⁴⁰⁶ Zornberg, pp.66-7.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid., p.68.

⁴⁰⁸ Joseph Rykwert, 'House and Home' *Social Research*, Vol. 58, No. 1 (Spring, 1991), pp.51-62, p.51.

continue Robinson's idea, Noah and his family now dismantle the ark to make their new dwellings, the same material having composed three different 'homes' for them. Or perhaps the material was defunct after the flood; too water-damaged to form the foundations of a post-diluvian home. In Ostriker's *The Nakedness of the Fathers* (1994), a text in which the earth is not newly scrubbed clean but strewn with the detritus of a global disaster, Noah's altar (8:20) is itself the burning ark:

To make a clearing [Noah] and his sons had to haul away the debris, including rotted tree trunks and the bones of drowned creatures [...] Noah went to the shore where the boat lay vacantly [...] By nightfall there was a pile of salt-caked wood as tall as a house. By dawn it was black coals [...]⁴⁰⁹

Parker has argued that 'women writers have a penchant for burning down paternal houses that do not offer their female protagonists satisfactory homes',⁴¹⁰ and *Housekeeping* also ends with Sylvie and Ruthie attempting to burn the family house down. Having enacted this final renunciation of the idea of a stable 'home', they leave it to become wanderers, or 'transients':⁴¹¹ the text's narrator, Ruthie, 'progressively un-housed'⁴¹² throughout the text, ends it homeless. Zwicky's poem holds the same idea, juxtaposing fire and water: 'Our raft is delicate and our fire | turns wood to ashes.'⁴¹³ If Eve's transgressive act in Eden threatened the father's house, Ostriker and Robinson take this one step further in their texts by physically attacking man-made structures, in examples of 'home unmaking'⁴¹⁴ akin to those of *Paradise*. Perhaps, as Morrison's writing often suggests, we shouldn't seek closure. In Genesis the fate of Noah's construction is unknown, and in her later novel *The Powerbook* (2000),⁴¹⁵ Jeannette Winterson imagines an abandoned ark:

⁴⁰⁹ Ostriker (1994), pp.40-1.

⁴¹⁰ Parker, p.153.

⁴¹¹ Robinson (1980), p.138 - as Walton puts it, 'Sylvie [...] is a 'transient', [who] recognizes the futility of housekeeping' - Heather Walton, 'A World Built on Water', p.124.

⁴¹² Ibid., p.125.

⁴¹³ <http://www.poetrylibrary.edu.au/poets/zwicky-fay/mrs-noah-speaks-0397012> Accessed 09/02/2015

⁴¹⁴ Richard Baxter and Katherine Brickell, 'For Home *Unmaking*' *Home Cultures* Vol. 11, Issue 2 (2014), pp.133-44, p.134.

⁴¹⁵ Jeannette Winterson, *The Powerbook* (London: Vintage, 2000).

Years and years later, the ground is long since dry and fertile, and the boat is still up there, beached on its mountain-top like a memory point.⁴¹⁶

*Drowning Home*⁴¹⁷

In contrast to the loss of Eden, the biblical flood is a ‘highly visible’ unmaking of home⁴¹⁸ on a larger geographical scale. Homelessness, Blunt and Dowling identify, can be a ‘direct result of disasters such as earthquakes, floods and hurricanes’, whilst ‘other people are forcibly evicted from their homes’.⁴¹⁹ This latter kind of event has been termed ‘domicide’ by Porteous and Smith, in their work *Domicide: The Global Destruction of Home* (2001).⁴²⁰ Domicide can include ‘eviction, exile, expropriation, displacement, dislocation and relocation’.⁴²¹ As Porteous and Smith note: ‘frequently, the elimination of home or homeland is justified as being in the public interest or for the *common good*’,⁴²² an idea inherent to Genesis chapters six to eight. Whilst the flood-story certainly narrates ‘the destruction of home as a result of a ‘natural’ disaster’,⁴²³ in the sense that the deadly flood waters are ‘natural’, it can also be read as ‘the deliberate destruction of home by human agency in pursuit of specified goals, which causes suffering to the victims’.⁴²⁴ Noah's flood is an ‘extreme’ form of domicile, a ‘major, planned [operation]’⁴²⁵ by a powerful figure. A later instance of domicile in Genesis, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, is found in chapter nineteen. As Alter notes, ‘In each case [...] one family [is marked] for survival’:⁴²⁶ whilst

⁴¹⁶ Winterson (2000), p.231.

⁴¹⁷ Chapter title in Douglas J. Porteous, and Sandra E. Smith, *Domicide: The Global Destruction of Home* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill Queen’s University Press, 2001), pp.151-181.

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.138.

⁴¹⁹ Blunt and Dowling, p.127.

⁴²⁰ The attack on the mansion of *Paradise*, which I discussed in my former chapter, is a small-scale domicile.

⁴²¹ Porteous and Smith, p.12.

⁴²² *Ibid.*, ix, my italics.

⁴²³ Blunt and Dowling, p.259.

⁴²⁴ Porteous and Smith, p.12 - if we accept ‘divine’ in the place of ‘human’ within the theological framework of the Hebrew Bible.

⁴²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.64.

⁴²⁶ Alter, p.88.

Noah's family saw the world undone by water, Lot's family's home is torn down with 'sulphur and fire' (19:24). Both families, to some extent 'heirs of an empty land',⁴²⁷ must make a new home elsewhere. In these texts, an ark/cave becomes a safe site amidst chaos.

Blunt and Dowling argue that 'home' should be perceived 'as a fluid, mobile place',⁴²⁸ and in this biblical narrative, we certainly encounter it as such. The ark is a movable, temporary dwelling built in response to a threatening environment: here, 'home' takes on a crucial symbolic role in the context of a global disaster. The ark is a refuge, a contained space of domesticity in which one family are held. Like other works of art, the flood-narrative, to borrow the religious philosopher Forrest Clingerman's words, 'forces us to confront the intimacy of home amidst the anonymity of destruction.'⁴²⁹ Rooted to earth only by God's promise, Noah and his family's experience has caught the imagination of many writers, who have reconstructed the ark in their own texts, building on ideas subtly hinted at in Genesis, such as the ark's imprisoning nature. If a more 'homely' ark is glimpsed in texts such as Roberts' *The Book of Mrs Noah*, and the biblical protagonists' return to earth seems redemptive, dwelling will once again prove frustratingly difficult for the post-diluvian inhabitants of earth in the next narratives of Genesis.

⁴²⁷ Jon L. Berquist, *Controlling Corporeality: the Body and the Household in Ancient Israel* (London: Rutgers University Press, 2002), p.56.

⁴²⁸ Blunt and Dowling, p.20.

⁴²⁹ Clingerman writes this whilst analysing Rachel Whiteread's sculpture *House* (1993-4) - Clingerman, Forrest 'Homecoming and the Half-Remembered: Environmental Amnesia, the Uncanny and the Path Home' in Daniel Boscaljon, ed. *Resisting the Place of Belonging: Uncanny Homecomings in Religion, Narrative and the Arts* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2013), pp.33-46, p.44.

Homeland

*Entering the tents*⁴³⁰

‘To live is to pass from one space to another, while doing your very best not to bump yourself’⁴³¹

‘To put down roots [...] to carve the place that will be yours out of space [...]’⁴³²

Postdiluvian Genesis is once more earth-based, and my third chapter will examine Abraham’s⁴³³ family’s struggle to find a home. In particular, I will examine the unhomely experience of one of the members of Abraham’s household, a servant named Hagar, in juxtaposition with the ‘ancient desert hospitality’⁴³⁴ that is developed elsewhere in the text. Again, I will use both literary and midrashic intertexts in my study of this biblical narrative, particularly in respect to Hagar’s experience. First, however, I will focus on the new dwelling structure which Abraham’s story introduces: the tent, found in the Hebrew term *ohel* (אֹהֶל). The tent is our most ubiquitous example of ‘nomadic architecture’,⁴³⁵ to use Lipis’ phrase. Used as a temporary home-space by Abraham’s family, the tent is like the ark in more ways than one. Abraham’s household’s journey through unknown and hostile spaces, *terra incognita*, necessitates its use. These tents symbolise home in a complex way; they are both temporary homes for the family, and in turn enable the journey to the homeland. Again, in the Genesis narrative, ‘home’ is both a material and imaginative space.

⁴³⁰ Ostriker’s title, taken from Ostriker, Alicia S (1994) *The Nakedness of the Fathers* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press).

⁴³¹ Georges Perec, *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces* First published, 1974. Sturrock, John, ed. and trans. (London: Penguin, 2008), p.6.

⁴³² *Ibid.*, p.71.

⁴³³ Abraham is at first called ‘Abram’, just as Sarah is at first ‘Sarai’, until their names are changed in Genesis chapter seventeen, verse five. For simplicity, I will just use the latter names.

⁴³⁴ Jerry Rabow, *The Lost Matriarch: Finding Leah in the Bible and Midrash* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, The Jewish Publication Society, 2014), p.25.

⁴³⁵ Lipis writes that ‘ritual houses’ in Judaism such as the *sukkah* ‘are like nomadic architecture’ - Mimi Levi Lipis, *Symbolic Houses in Judaism: how objects and metaphors construct hybrid places of belonging* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2011), p.74.

The narrative of Abraham and his family starts with yet another departure from home. In Genesis chapter twelve, God tells Abraham, a descendent of Shem, to go from his country and his father's house to the land that he will be shown (12:1). Again, the main implications of God's words pertain to dwelling and everyday life, in a verse which starts with a specific location but ends in locational uncertainty: as Boscaljon puts it, sometimes 'we leave our homes and strike out toward what is unknown and undefined.'⁴³⁶ Like Noah, Abraham has been singled out, asked to 'leave his home'⁴³⁷ and take his family on a journey, without being sure where they will end up.⁴³⁸ In exchange, God will make of Abraham 'a great nation' (12:2), blessed above all others. From this injunction onwards, Abraham's family is mobile and their dwelling pattern is nomadic: the household's 'migrations',⁴³⁹ to use Alter's word, are now of immediate concern, as a new stage of unstable inhabitation begins in the biblical text.

Whereas Adam and Eve were exiled from their first, Edenic home, and Noah and his family were forced to leave behind their earthly one, Abraham and Sarai's journey rests on the idea that 'home' is not the place they leave, nor to be found in the journey itself, but in their final destination,⁴⁴⁰ the 'homeland'. This place 'promise[s] the safety and familiarity of belonging',⁴⁴¹ to use Ang-Lygate's phrase. Yet the journey is important, as Zornberg points out: here, '[f]or the first time, a journey is undertaken not as an act of exile [...], but as a response to a divine imperative that articulates [...] displacement as its crucial experience'.⁴⁴² In-between the place that is 'not-home' and their 'homeland', it seems vital that Abraham and Sarah's family experiences 'displacement'. A second experience crucial to their story is

⁴³⁶ Daniel Boscaljon, 'Introduction: Uncanny Homecomings: Becoming Unsettled in Religion, Narrative, and Art' in *Resisting the Place of Belonging: Uncanny Homecomings in Religion, Narrative and the Arts* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2013), pp.1-6, p.1.

⁴³⁷ Thistle Hartog-Parker, 'The Stranger's Perspective' *Bridges Confronting Text and Tradition*, Vol 8, No 1/2 (Spring, 2000), pp.38-45, p.44.

⁴³⁸ Zornberg, too, notes that 'what is most striking here is the *indeterminacy* of the journey' - Aviva Gottlieb Zornberg, *The Beginning of Desire: Reflections on Genesis* (New York: Schocken Books, 1995), p.74.

⁴³⁹ Robert Alter, *Genesis: Translation and Commentary* (London: W.W. Norton and Company, 1996), p.49.

⁴⁴⁰ In each of these three biblical narratives God's words are nevertheless a catalyst for a family's departure.

⁴⁴¹ Magdalene Ang-Lygate, 'Everywhere to go but Home: On (Re) (Dis) (Un)location' *Journal of Gender Studies* 5.3 (1996), pp.375-388, p.380.

⁴⁴² Zornberg, p.74.

infertility,⁴⁴³ for their lack of a home is interwoven with their lack of children. Blunt and Dowling argue that '[c]hildren are presumed to be key inhabitants of 'homely' homes',⁴⁴⁴ so a further layer is added here to Abraham and Sarah's fractured attempts at dwelling. Both a son and living space for their descendants are promised by God (12:1), and throughout the narrative the couple's infertility and nomadism become inseparable elements.⁴⁴⁵ Abraham and Sarah travel in search of the land on which they will make a permanent home, *and* the son who will settle there with them. In the meantime, their tents are, to use Feldt's phrase, 'mobile, material space[s]'⁴⁴⁶ from which the promised land is dreamt of, constructions which facilitate dwelling during the journey to the ultimate dwelling-place.

The tent

The tent, Lipis writes, '[is one] of the oldest building types known',⁴⁴⁷ and is metonymic of ancient Israelite life in the eyes of many contemporary readers. Steven A. Rosen and Benjamin A. Saidel, who have studied 'the development [of] pastoral nomadism', identify 'portability' as the 'defining characteristic' of tents:⁴⁴⁸ they are structures that can be dismantled and re-assembled relatively quickly, and adapted to different environments. Together, Rosen and Saidel write, 'the camel and tent [...] allowed the entire residential unit, the *bayit* in classical Near Eastern terms, to migrate together (when desired).'⁴⁴⁹ As Rosen and Saidel emphasise, 'the actual meaning of terms translated as "tent" may vary over time,

⁴⁴³ As Alter notes, an acutely painful predicament [in the ancient setting]' - Alter, p.128.

⁴⁴⁴ Alison Blunt, and Robyn Dowling, *Home* (London: Routledge, 2006), p.115.

⁴⁴⁵ In chapter fifteen, when God tells Abraham that his 'offspring shall be aliens in a land that is not theirs, and shall be slaves there [for four hundred years]' (15:13), the 'homeland' suddenly seems further away.

⁴⁴⁶ Laura Feldt, "A Walk on the Wild Side with Yahweh: A Spatial Perspective on the Hebrew Deity in the National Epic", *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament: An International Journal of Nordic Theology*, 28:2 (2014), 185-21, p.199.

⁴⁴⁷ Lipis, p.17. - Rosen and Saidel identify that 'tents appear in ancient Near Eastern literature as early as the end of the third millennium b.c.' - Steven A. Rosen, and Benjamin A. Saidel, 'The Camel and the Tent: An Exploration of Technological Change among Early Pastoralists' *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, Vol. 69, No. 1 (April, 2010), pp.63-77, p.71.

⁴⁴⁸ Rosen and Saidel's focus, like mine, is on 'the domestic tent', as 'distinguished from both ritual and military tents.' - *Ibid.*, p.63-4.

⁴⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.76.

perhaps indicating one kind of structure in one period and another later on.⁴⁵⁰ The tents of the Genesis narrative have undoubtedly taken on different forms in the imaginations of readers throughout history,⁴⁵¹ and the structure of Abraham and Sarah's fabric dwelling is ambiguous. For instance, the couple may have shared one larger tent, divided on gendered lines⁴⁵² or their household may have used many different tents. It is thus with the less historically specific characteristics of tent living that we must remain largely concerned. Meanwhile, the nomadic lifestyle described in these narratives emerges as an alternative way of living based around .this unusually flexible, adaptable structure

*Decamping*⁴⁵³

When Abraham departs Haran, the components of this household are listed (12:4-5) as a reminder of the social and material consequences of the nomadic lifestyle, which as Savaş writes, entails the 'displacement and relocation of both people [and] objects'.⁴⁵⁴ From this point onwards, Abraham becomes a nomad who 'travels from place to place'.⁴⁵⁵ His household's journey is fragmented, marked by pauses and small acts of construction, by the building of altars (12:7, 12:8), the pitching of tents (12:8), and the reiteration of God's promises.⁴⁵⁶ The practicalities of the nomadic lifestyle are consistently noted; when Abraham 'pull[s] up his stakes', Alter explains, the Hebrew of this phrase 'is meticulous in reflecting the procedures of nomadic life.'⁴⁵⁷ Furthermore, the verb for 'journey' (12:9), Alter notes, 'also derives from another term for the pulling up of tent stakes, and the progressive form in

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid., p.71.

⁴⁵¹ Within the Hebrew Bible itself, different styles of tents are suggested. For instance, 'Tensile tents', a later type, 'appear to be reflected in biblical passages mentioning tent pegs (e.g., Judges. 4:21).' - Ibid., p.72

⁴⁵² Ibid., p.67.

⁴⁵³ Pereg, p.35.

⁴⁵⁴ O. Savaş, "The Collective Turkish Home in Vienna: Aesthetic Narratives of Migration and Belonging." *Home Cultures* 7:3 (2010), pp.313–40, p.316.

⁴⁵⁵ Ostriker, (1994), p.55.

⁴⁵⁶ Despite the fact that the land before Abraham is already inhabited (Genesis twelve, verses six to seven).

⁴⁵⁷ Alter, p.50.

which it is cast is a precise indication of movement through successive encampments.⁴⁵⁸ The nomadic lifestyle thus inflects the text itself. As in the genealogies of Genesis, however, there is a hidden history behind the androcentric meta-narrative. Each ostensibly easy movement of Abraham's actually entails the complexities of packing-up, transporting and then reconstructing an entire household. As Rosen and Saidel write, '[a]nthropologists have noted that the movement of tent camps [...] involves a considerable amount of labor [...]'⁴⁵⁹

Abraham's altars, meanwhile, suggest that he feels something akin to the writer Georges Perec, for whom space was uncertain: 'Space is a doubt: I have constantly to mark it, to designate it. [...] I have to conquer it.'⁴⁶⁰ The altars are Abraham's 'mark[s] of settlement':⁴⁶¹ like his ancestor Noah, he is inscribing his family's presence on a new land through a religious structure⁴⁶². If 'home starts by bringing some space under control',⁴⁶³ as Douglas writes, then Abraham's altars are a gesture towards making the land 'home'. As Seed has identified, 'claims to territory' are often 'enacted through apparently 'mundane activity,' where the placement of objects - houses, fences, gardens - signifie[s] ownership', and colonial settlers have in the past 'inscribed their possession [by] affixing their own powerful cultural symbols of ownership - houses and fences - upon the landscape'.⁴⁶⁴ Forced to move his household (tent) with him, Abraham turns to cultic symbols instead. In his story, we see the truth of Young's suggestion that

⁴⁵⁸ Alter, p.51 - Cooper and Goldstein have also argued that '[t]he use of the idiom נטה אהל for pitching the tent is highly marked' - Alan M. Cooper, and Bernard R. Goldstein, 'At the Entrance to the Tent: More Cultic Resonances in Biblical Narrative' *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 116, No. 2 (Summer, 1997), pp. 201-215, p.205.

⁴⁵⁹ Rosen and Saidel, p.67.

⁴⁶⁰ Perec, p.91.

⁴⁶¹ Joseph Rykwert, 'House and Home' *Social Research*, Vol. 58, No. 1 (Spring 1991), pp.51-62, p.51.

⁴⁶² Though Noah's was a purged and vacant earth, not a populated area.

⁴⁶³ Mary Douglas, "The Idea of a Home: A Kind of Space" *Social Research*, Vol. 58, No. 1 (Spring, 1991), pp. 287-307, p.289

⁴⁶⁴ Quoted by Blomley, and referenced by Blunt and Dowling, p.185-6.

People inhabit the world by erecting material supports for their routines and rituals and then see the specificity of their lives reflected in the environment, the materiality of things gathered together with historical meaning.⁴⁶⁵

In Morrison's novel *Paradise*, the town of Ruby has what Dobbs describes as a 'masculinist memorial'⁴⁶⁶ at its centre, in the form of a communal oven built by the town's forefathers. Whilst it once served a practical purpose, the oven becomes a largely symbolic monument, and comes to epitomise the growing conflict in the town. In Genesis, both in Abraham's story and his son Isaac's,⁴⁶⁷ constructions engender conflict with the land's existing inhabitants, which is literally inscribed into the landscape through nomenclature. For instance, the names Isaac gives the wells he builds include 'Esek', '[r]oughly "contention"' and 'Sitnah', meaning "'accusation" or "hostility"',⁴⁶⁸ titles akin to the contested words on the communal oven in *Paradise*. When Isaac later digs a well which is not contested, he calls it Rehoboth (26:22), '[meaning] "open spaces"'⁴⁶⁹ and states: 'the Lord has made room for us' (26:22), or as Alter has it, 'space'.⁴⁷⁰ Here, to borrow Meredith's phrase, 'male power is mediated through the renegotiation of space',⁴⁷¹ and the ongoing emphasis on male construction in Genesis recalls Heidegger's assertion that

Through building, man establishes a world and his place in the world [...] establishes himself as somebody, with an identity and history.⁴⁷²

⁴⁶⁵ Young, p.136-7.

⁴⁶⁶ Cynthia Dobbs, 'Diasporic Designs of House, Home, and Haven in Toni Morrison's "Paradise"' *MELUS*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (Summer 2011), pp.109-126, p.116.

⁴⁶⁷ These constructions, of course, raise questions related to postcolonial theory and its exploration of the (re)possession of land and the marking of a cultic-religious identity over and against the native 'other'.

⁴⁶⁸ Alter, pp.134-5.

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p.135.

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid*.

⁴⁷¹ Christopher Meredith, "The Lattice and the Looking Glass: Gendered Space in Song of Songs 2:8-14" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* Vol. 80, No. 2 (June, 2012), pp.365-386, p.378.

⁴⁷² Young, pp.136-7.

The tent is not a monument or a religious symbol, but the site of everyday life and domestic activity. Yet in this space, too, power struggles over living-space occur, and ‘identity and history’ are again at stake. In the tent-based narrative of chapter sixteen, the main protagonists are Sarah and her ‘Egyptian slave-girl’ (16:1) Hagar. Taking the infertility of her marriage into her own hands, Sarah tells Abraham: ‘go in to my slave-girl; it may be that I shall obtain children by her.’ (16:2) She states that she may ‘be *built up* through [Hagar]’:⁴⁷⁴ like Eve, Sarah is actively constructing a family, this time through alternative methods.⁴⁷⁵ As Alter identifies, ‘[l]iving with the human consequences’ of this arrangement is ‘quite another matter’,⁴⁷⁶ and cohabiting with the pregnant Hagar proves unbearable for Sarah.

Abraham tells his wife to do as she pleases (16:5), so Sarah ‘deal[s] harshly with [Hagar]’, who runs away (16:6). As Alter points out, the verb of Sarah’s action is one ‘of harassment (or abuse, harsh handling, humiliation)’.⁴⁷⁷ Hagar’s pregnancy renders Abraham’s tents ‘unhomely’⁴⁷⁸ for her, and she becomes a victim of domestic violence. As Blunt and Dowling write, ‘domestic workers [...] often suffer violence and abuse within the home’.⁴⁷⁹ Here, an ‘imaginary [component] of home’, to borrow Baxter and Brickell’s phrasing - that of safety - is ‘damaged [...] even destroyed’⁴⁸⁰ by Abraham. In one of Thistle Hartog-Parker’s midrashic ‘responses’ to the story, Hagar talks of ‘the dirty, exhausting nomadic life, the beatings, the abuses’.⁴⁸¹ Hagar’s experience of Abraham’s tent thus problematises the conception of dwellings as places of safety and security.

⁴⁷³ Perc, p.7.

⁴⁷⁴ Alter, p.67.

⁴⁷⁵ Yet as Alter notes, ‘[t]he institution of surrogate maternity to which [Sarai] resorts is [...] well attested in ancient Near Eastern legal documents’ - Alter, p.67.

⁴⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p.67.

⁴⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p.70.

⁴⁷⁸ Blunt and Dowling, pp.261-2.

⁴⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.125 - In one Midrashic tradition, as Rabow points out, Sarah ‘[puts] the “evil eye” on Hagar’s pregnancy’, ‘causing her to miscarry’, and Ishmael is born later on - Midrash Rabbah, referenced by Rabow, p.90.

⁴⁸⁰ Baxter and Brickell, p.134.

⁴⁸¹ Hartog-Parker, pp.38-9.

The ‘acknowledgement of domestic violence and its implications for women’s experiences of dwelling’, Blunt and Dowling note, is largely ‘[a]bsent from [...] constructions of ideal homes’,⁴⁸³ and Hagar’s story is indeed often overlooked in the cultural memory of Abraham’s tents. Her experience reminds us that the biblical home ‘is not only gendered, but also classed and raced’, to use the geographer Andrew Gorman-Murray’s words, criss-crossed by the ‘overlapping identities that determine how homes are made and used.’⁴⁸⁴ As Blunt and Dowling note, ‘[d]omestic violence is [...] a significance cause of homelessness for women’.⁴⁸⁵ Hagar, already lacking a home, is unhoused through Sarah’s abuse. This is the dramatic climax of the episode; the ultimate domestic injustice. As Martin and Mohanty write, ‘[w]hen the alternatives would seem to be either the enclosing [...] constraining circle of home, or nowhere to go, the risk is enormous.’⁴⁸⁶ Forced into an inhospitable environment, the ‘wilderness’ (16:7), Hagar finds herself free from abuse, but completely ‘without access to shelter’.⁴⁸⁷

Laura Feldt has analysed the ‘wilderness space’ in the Hebrew Bible;⁴⁸⁸ she notes that it is ‘uninhabited’, ‘characterised by nomadic movement’ and a ‘lack of food and water’.⁴⁸⁹ In Genesis chapter sixteen, the narrator appears to rely on an opposition between Abraham’s family’s tents and the wilderness. ‘Domestic spaces,’ as Savaş has written, can ‘define an area of control and a refuge in an environment felt as hostile’.⁴⁹⁰ The representation of the

⁴⁸² Perec, p.88.

⁴⁸³ Blunt and Dowling, p.110. - Petersen (2005) has also drawn attention to the absence of the topic of ‘abuse’ from contemporary conversations about the family - Peterson, p.6.

⁴⁸⁴ Quoted by Blunt and Dowling, p.136.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid., p.126

⁴⁸⁶ Martin and Mohanty, quoted by Young, p.158

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁸ Specifically, its ‘implications [...] for the representation of Yahweh’ (p.185) in the book of Exodus. Feldt focuses on the term *midbār* (מדבר), ‘the most commonly used word for the desert wilderness in the Hebrew Bible’ (Feldt, p.191), and the space Hagar is exiled to (21:14, 21:20) - Laura Feldt, “A Walk on the Wild Side with Yahweh: A Spatial Perspective on the Hebrew Deity in the National Epic”, *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament*, 28:2 (2014), pp.185-21.

⁴⁸⁹ Feldt, p.191.

⁴⁹⁰ Savaş, talking of McCloud’s ideas, p.319.

wilderness throughout the Hebrew Bible, Feldt argues, ‘oscillates between [...] threat and promise, rescue and punishment’.⁴⁹¹ It is an in-between site within this story of liminal inhabitation. Like Eve’s exile from Eden, there is an ambiguity to Hagar’s exit from Abraham’s tents, and her willingness to leave.

Found in the wilderness by an angel, Hagar is asked where she is going (16:7-8). It soon becomes clear that she is going home, ‘[heading] back toward her native Egypt’,⁴⁹² but the messenger tells her to return to the site of her abuse (16:9). When Hagar gives birth to a son, it is not clear where the birth occurs.⁴⁹³ Yet as Anna Fisk identifies, there is a possibility that the birth occurs before Hagar returns, ‘in the wilderness’,⁴⁹⁴ an apt location for this un-homed slave-woman’s son to be born.⁴⁹⁵ This possibility connects Hagar’s story to that of another escaped slave-woman; Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*.⁴⁹⁶ As Shirley A. Stave notes, Morrison’s protagonist Sethe is ‘badly wounded from a severe whipping and nine months pregnant’ and ‘goes into labor’⁴⁹⁷ during her escape. Both Hagar and Sethe are beaten whilst pregnant, and give birth in a wilderness-like space,⁴⁹⁸ having escaped abusive ‘homes’.

⁴⁹¹ Feldt, p.210.

⁴⁹² Alter, p.69.

⁴⁹³ The boy is named Ishmael by Abraham in the same verse (16:15), at which point Hagar is clearly back in her masters’ household.

⁴⁹⁴ Anna Fisk, ‘Sisterhood in the Wilderness: Biblical Paradigms and Feminist Identity Politics in Readings of Hagar and Sarah’, in A.K.M. Adam and Samuel Tongue, eds., *Looking Through a Glass Bible: Postdisciplinary Biblical Interpretations from the Glasgow School* (London: Brill, 2014), pp.113-37, p.117.

⁴⁹⁵ It is an in-between site in Genesis, whilst Ishmael finds himself in a liminal position in Abraham’s household.

⁴⁹⁶ Hagar’s story, of course, foreshadows the escaped Hebrew slaves’ experiences in the biblical book of Exodus. Fisk also notes that if Hagar is seen as an abused slave, her escape ‘foreshadows the Exodus story’ - Fisk, p.115.

⁴⁹⁷ Shirley A. Stave, ‘Toni Morrison's "Beloved" and the Vindication of Lilith’ in *South Atlantic Review*, Vol. 58, No. 1 (January, 1993), pp.49-66, p.50.

⁴⁹⁸ A different elaboration of the wilderness-birth is found in *Paradise: the women of the convent/coven* live in ‘the wild space beyond Ruby’ (Christopher, p.93), and women from the town go there to give birth in secret.

Beloved, as Nancy Jessor writes, concerns the ‘movement toward a better home’,⁴⁹⁹ the northern states of the USA, which serve the same imaginative role as the ‘promised land’ in Genesis. When Sethe reaches the north, she makes a home at 124 Bluestone. ‘Located in disputed territory’, as Nancy Jessor phrases it, this house ‘is caught between the claims of past scripts and the imagined possibilities of a new story’.⁵⁰⁰ The same could be said of Abraham and Sarah’s tents in Genesis, caught as they are between ‘past scripts’ and the ‘possibilities’ of the promised land. Furthermore, both *Beloved*’s protagonist Sethe, and Hagar in *Genesis*, are initially ‘[l]ocated in disputed territory’⁵⁰¹ themselves. Hagar is an ‘outsider-within’ in Abraham’s tents, a ‘non-white-female-Other’,⁵⁰² as Sethe has been throughout her life. Foreignness, as Blunt and Dowling argue, is an important factor in the ideological construction of the borders of ‘home’, and Hagar’s problematic position as a domesticated outsider,⁵⁰³ to use their phrase, does bring attention to the bounded nature of Abraham and Sarah’s household. J. Hillis Miller, in an essay on *Beloved*, writes that ‘we all live our lives in terms of [...] boundaries and borders’, such as ‘the wall separating our living space from the outside’.⁵⁰⁴ Hagar’s departure draws attention to this in Genesis.

Jessor, dwelling on the problematic role of ‘home’ for women, writes that ‘it is not surprising [...] that most [women] have mixed feelings about a structure that contains the often unfulfilled dream of possession and the lived experience of servitude.’⁵⁰⁵ Such is the incongruity of the idea of ‘home’ for Hagar, as she returns to the unhomely tents of Abraham’s household. The next domestic scene in the biblical narrative, centred as it is on the idea of hospitality, should be read in juxtaposition to Sarah’s inhospitable treatment of Hagar. It also adds to our understanding of the biblical home as a bounded space.

⁴⁹⁹ Nancy Jessor, ‘Violence, Home, and Community in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*’ in *African American Review*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (Summer, 1999), pp.325-345, p.342.

⁵⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p.334.

⁵⁰¹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰² These words are taken from Ang-Lygate’s research into the experiences of immigrant Chinese women in modern day Glasgow - Ang-Lygate, p.377.

⁵⁰³ Blunt and Dowling, p.154.

⁵⁰⁴ J. Hillis Miller, ‘Boundaries in *Beloved*’ *symptome*, Vol. 15, No.1-2 (2007), pp.24-39, p.26.

⁵⁰⁵ Jessor, p.325.

Abraham is ‘sat at the entrance of his tent’ (18:1) when God appears in the form of three men on the outskirts of their camp. Eager to offer his visitors hospitality, Abraham asks permission to bring them water to wash their feet, and bread to eat (18:4-5), and rushes ‘into the tent to Sarah’ (18:6), telling her to make cakes for their visitors. Here, Abraham and Sarah work together, in what Zornberg suggests is ‘perhaps the most sensuous description of a meal in the Torah’.⁵⁰⁷ It is also an episode which hinges upon the practice of hospitality, a crucial component of our understanding of Abraham’s family’s temporary home, as well as the biblical ‘home’ in a wider sense.⁵⁰⁸ Indeed, Jillian Gould writes of the ‘*creation of home through hospitality*’⁵⁰⁹ in the context of contemporary research; Abraham and Sarah’s rush to welcome their visitors should therefore also be seen as a home-making activity. Furthermore, as the sociologist Marjorie DeVault has claimed, ‘[p]art of the intention behind producing a meal is to produce “home” and “family”’⁵¹⁰ Suitably, when Abraham’s guests have received their hosts’ food, they tell him that when they next return, Sarah will have a son (18:8).

T.R. Hobbs (2001), who has analysed hospitality in the Hebrew Bible,⁵¹¹ notes Waldemar Janzen’s definition of the phenomenon as ‘the extension of life and land (home) to the other’.⁵¹² Hobbs argues that ‘the practice of hospitality was taken seriously in the world of ancient Israel/Judah’.⁵¹³ Hospitality, Hobbs identifies, is ‘the act of giving’ two things: ‘food

⁵⁰⁶ Davies, p.13.

⁵⁰⁷ Zornberg, p.101 - whilst Zornberg is concerned with the theological nature of this human/divine encounter, I am interested in how it serves to fill in the domestic space of the text.

⁵⁰⁸ This passage contains all the ‘common elements’ of what Janzen categorised as ‘the classic texts of hospitality’: the washing of feet, food, shelter and so on (Hobbs, p.22), so I will treat it as largely paradigmatic of the concept.

⁵⁰⁹ Jillian Gould, ‘A Nice Piece of Cake and a Kibitz: Reinventing Sabbath Hospitality in an Institutional Home’ *Home Cultures* Vol 10, No 2 (July, 2010), pp.189-206, p.203, my italics.

⁵¹⁰ DeVault (1991), quoted by Gill Valentine, ‘Eating In: Home, Consumption and Identity’ *The Sociological Review* Vol 47 (1999), pp.491-524, pp.491-492.

⁵¹¹ T.R. Hobbs ‘Hospitality in the First Testament and the ‘Teleological Fallacy’ *JSOT* 95, Vol. 26, No. 1 (September, 2001) pp.3-30.

⁵¹² W. Janzen (1994), quoted by Hobbs, p.6.

⁵¹³ Hobbs, p.3.

and shelter'.⁵¹⁴ Ostriker dramatises both of these functions in *The Nakedness of the Fathers*, having Abraham 'offer [...] cakes, butter, milk [etc]' and 'the shade of a tree'⁵¹⁵ to his guests. Hospitality is a home-based practise, and as Hobbs identifies, an inherently spatial act: 'For the guest', he writes, 'hospitality consists of an entry into another's domain, into another's house.'⁵¹⁶ In Genesis chapter eighteen, the 'offering of food to the guest'⁵¹⁷ is vital. '[S]erving a meal' is an important domestic ritual,⁵¹⁸ and 'the spatial dynamics of cooking and eating'⁵¹⁹, as the social scientist Gill Valentine phrases it, gives shape to the 'home', ancient or modern. Cooking in ancient Israel/Judah, Hobbs suggests, involved a gendered 'division of labour', 'the *baking* of bread or cakes by the women, and the *preparation* of the meat by the men',⁵²⁰ it was, then, a collaborative endeavor.

When the visitors ask Abraham where Sarah is, he tells them: 'There, in the tent.'" (18:9) Sarah is indeed 'listening at the tent entrance' (18:10), at the threshold of her mobile home, where Abraham began the narrative.⁵²¹ Here, arguably for the first time in Genesis, we get a glimpse 'behind the walls of a dwelling',⁵²² and it is connected semantically to a woman's body: 'Now Abraham and Sarah were old [...] it has ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. [...]' (18:11-12) Skultans talks of the menopause as a 'period of transition',⁵²³ in which case Sarah's body reflects her nomadic life-style, as well as '[making] conception a biological impossibility'.⁵²⁴ Like her family's journey to the promised land, Sarai's journey to

⁵¹⁴ Ibid., p.29.

⁵¹⁵ Ostriker (1997), p.59.

⁵¹⁶ Hobbs, p.13.

⁵¹⁷ Ibid., p.16.

⁵¹⁸ Blunt and Dowling, p.49.

⁵¹⁹ Valentine, p.491.

⁵²⁰ Hobbs, p.15 and p.22 respectively (discussing Janzen's work).

⁵²¹ This emphasis on the tent's edges suggests we read this scene as a threshold ritual: controlling the 'entry of others into the host's [house]', hospitality is 'a means of [protecting] the household and the [community.]' - Hobbs, p.28.

⁵²² Gwendolyn Wright, 'Prescribing the Model Home', *Social Research*, Vol. 58, No. 1 (Spring, 1991), pp. 213-225, p.219.

⁵²³ Vieda Skultans, "The Symbolic Significance of Menstruation and the Menopause" *Man*, New Series, Vol. 5, No. 4 (December, 1970), pp. 639-651, p.639.

⁵²⁴ Alter, p.79.

motherhood is interrupted and delayed. As both Zornberg and Pardes note, ‘the term for “barren” in Hebrew, *‘aqara*, literally means “uprooted,”’.⁵²⁵ The physical incongruity of Sarah’s late motherhood is reflected within her family’s way of life, a ‘journey without apparent destination: absurdity at each step.’⁵²⁶

If the couples’ ‘domestic borders’ were problematised by Hagar’s pregnancy, they are ‘confirmed [in their] behaviour towards visitors’⁵²⁷ to adapt the anthropologist Irene Cieraad’s words. For hospitality is not offered to all, but specifically to ‘those relatively unknown travellers who are assumed to be members of one’s larger community’,⁵²⁸ as Hobbs words it. These travellers, temporarily ‘away from their houses’,⁵²⁹ are ‘out of place’,⁵³⁰ but deliberately *emplaced* through hospitality. In contrast, Hagar, as a foreign ‘other’, experiences inhospitality: as Hobbs writes, the ‘true “foreigner” is ‘never offered hospitality.’⁵³¹ The following narratives reassert this dynamic, as Hagar is once more exiled, following the birth of Abraham and Sarah’s long-awaited son (21:1). There is not enough room for both Ishmael and Isaac within the family or its living space, and Sarah tells Abraham to banish and disinherit Ishmael. In an ironic image of hospitality, Abraham gives bread and water to Hagar, before ‘[sending] her away’ (21:10-4). In reasserting her family’s ‘legitimate’ structure, Sarah un-houses/homes her son’s rival.⁵³²

This time, ‘Hagar and Ishmael are permanently banished’.⁵³³ Journeying ‘into the wilderness’ a second time, Hartog-Parker’s Hagar weighs her new-found ‘freedom’ against ‘the dangers

⁵²⁵ Pardes, ‘The Book of Ruth’ p.113 - See also Zornberg, p.76 and Anna Goldman-Amirav, ‘Behold, the Lord Hath Restrained me from Bearing’ *Reproductive and Genetic Engineering: Journal of International Feminist Analysis* Vol. 1, No. 3. (1998), Accessed online, 10/6/15: http://www.finrrage.org/pdf_files/RepTech%20General/Lord_Hath_Restrained-Me-from_Bearing.pdf.

⁵²⁶ Zornberg, p.76.

⁵²⁷ Cieraad, ‘Introduction’, p.4 - as opposed to foreigners.

⁵²⁸ Hobbs, p.24.

⁵²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.5.

⁵³⁰ Hobbs here uses W. Robertson Smith’s idea (1927), p.17.

⁵³¹ *Ibid.*, p.28.

⁵³² Ishmael’s displacement was of course foreshadowed in his wilderness birth, away from normative structures.

⁵³³ Forsyth, p.481.

of the desert'.⁵³⁴ Yet in Genesis, as Hagar 'wander[s] about in the wilderness' (21:14), her water runs out and she fears Ishmael will die (21:16).⁵³⁵ Discussing the 'forms of violence [which] come into focus in female nomads', Braidotti writes of 'a sort of rough encounter with hostile environmental forces; an emphasis on physical resistance and stamina'⁵³⁶, and this certainly occurs here. Yet God comes to Hagar, reassuring her of Ishmael's future (21:17-8) and directing her sight to 'a well of water' (21:19). If the birth of Sethe's daughter in *Beloved* felt other-worldly,⁵³⁷ Hagar experiences something similar here when God rescues her, in this second wilderness-scene. This is the end of Hagar's story in Genesis,⁵³⁸ though many writers have conducted an intertextual dialogue with her story.

*We learn to live together*⁵³⁹

Through midrash, feminists have attempted to retrieve a more positive relationship between Sarah and Hagar. In Phyllis Ocean Berman's 'Why Hagar Left' (1997), for example, Sarah meets Hagar in the Pharaoh's harem and later, returning to nomadic life, they co-mother Ishmael when he is born.⁵⁴⁰ Yet we should not, as Ostriker reminds us, forget the very real issues of social class and race⁵⁴¹ that allow Hagar to be disenfranchised in Genesis, for this story also reminds us of the 'relations of power and privilege among women',⁵⁴² to use Weir's

⁵³⁴ Hartog-Parker, p.40.

⁵³⁵ Hartog-Parker's protagonist points out that whilst 'Yahweh, as always, was only concerned with politics, nations, kings, the chosen people; we needed water, shelter, and food [...]' (Hartog-Parker, p.40), emphasising the biblical text's tendency to dismiss everyday needs.

⁵³⁶ Rosi Braidotti, 'Introduction' *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), pp.1-39, p.28.

⁵³⁷ Denver later notes 'the magic of her birth, its miracle' - Toni Morrison, *Beloved* First published 1987 (London: Vintage, 1997), p.29.

⁵³⁸ There is another possible ending. Zornberg suggests that Abraham 'take[s] Hagar back': in 'midrashic tradition,' she notes, 'Keturah, whom Abraham marries at the end of his life, is identified with Hagar (25:1-6).' - Zornberg, p.136.

⁵³⁹ Roberts (1978), p.136.

⁵⁴⁰ Phyllis Ocean Berman, "Why Hagar Left." *Tikkun*, Vol.12, No.2. (March/April, 1997), pp.21-25, p.24.

⁵⁴¹ Hagar is a crucial figure in African American womanist theology; for instance see Delores S. Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk* First published 1993. (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2005).

⁵⁴² Allison Weir, 'Home and Identity: In Memory of Iris Marion Young' *Hypatia*, Vol. 23, No. 3, (Summer, 2008), pp.4-21, p.11.

phrase. In *The Nakedness of the Fathers*, Ostriker's Hagar cynically declares: 'forget | About social rank, [Sarah] would say | We are women together' but 'She used me | When she couldn't have a child herself [...] My son is *another* story [...]'.⁵⁴³ If we are to pay 'attention to [...] differences among women',⁵⁴⁴ as Braidotti words it in her discussion of feminism, we must acknowledge Sarah and Hagar's juxtaposed positions in Abraham's household.

*He lets us wander so we will know what it means to come home*⁵⁴⁵

In the Abrahamic narratives, we find a new struggle to dwell on the earth, to make a 'home'. On an imaginative level, we see 'the crucial importance of homemaking within the project of emigration and settling land',⁵⁴⁶ and the symbolic weight of the idea of a 'homeland', whilst on a material level, we encounter the nomadic lifestyle necessitated by the journey towards this promised place. Abraham and Sarah's nomadic lifestyle, their attempt to build a family, and their journey to the homeland are the narrative's core elements. In this narrative about establishing and marking out living spaces, Abraham's task, to use Berquist's phrase, is 'to carve out a place of livelihood in the midst of a harsh environment'.⁵⁴⁷

Abraham's story belies, as Kaplan has worded it, the 'spatial fixedness and rootedness that *homeland* implies',⁵⁴⁸ and through this paradox it extends the biblical text's commentary on 'the difficulties of dwelling'.⁵⁴⁹ Here, 'there is no simple transition from [...] wilderness to homeland',⁵⁵⁰ to use Feldt's phrase. Returning to the baseline of *bet*, and the idea of rootedness,⁵⁵¹ in this narrative a thoroughly unsettled form of dwelling - *rootlessness* - is

⁵⁴³ Ostriker (1994), pp.73-4, my italics.

⁵⁴⁴ Braidotti 'Introduction', p.21.

⁵⁴⁵ Marilynne Robinson, *Home* (London: Virago Press, 2008), p.106.

⁵⁴⁶ Janet Floyd, quoted by Blunt and Dowling, p.147.

⁵⁴⁷ Jon L. Berquist, *Controlling Corporeality: the Body and the Household in Ancient Israel* (London: Rutgers University Press, 2002), p.45.

⁵⁴⁸ Kaplan, quoted by Blunt and Dowling, p.171.

⁵⁴⁹ Blunt and Dowling, p.187.

⁵⁵⁰ Feldt, p.202 - Moses' followers also learn this in the book of Exodus.

⁵⁵¹ Zornberg identifies that a key midrashic concern is Abraham's search for 'a stable core [...] a *basis*, a *standing* ground)' - Zornberg, p.85.

enacted. Three observations Alter makes in his translation indicate this ‘groundlessness’,⁵⁵² as Zornberg terms it. Firstly, Abraham indicates his own ‘condition of unsettledness’⁵⁵³ when he tells King Abimelech that ‘the gods made [him] a wanderer from [his] father’s house’; here, as Alter notes, ‘far from suggesting that God has directed him to a promised land, [Abraham] stresses [...] a destiny of wandering.’⁵⁵⁴ Secondly, when Abraham’s nephew Lot ‘abandon[s] the semi-nomadic life for urban existence’,⁵⁵⁵ the verb used for him ‘[setting] up his tent’, ‘*ahal*, is ‘derived from the noun “tent” [and] is relatively rare, and seems to mean both to set up a tent [and] to fold up a tent in preparation for moving on’,⁵⁵⁶ indicating a thoroughly uneasy form of dwelling. Thirdly, though both Isaac and Ishmael have thoroughly ‘unrooted childhoods’, to use Blunt and Dowling’s phrase,⁵⁵⁷ it is Ishmael’s life which remains so, in the Judeo-Christian mindset. In recording Ishmael’s death, the biblical text states that ‘his kinfolk [...] ranged from Havilah to Shur [...]’:⁵⁵⁸ Alter argues that ‘[t]he verb *shakhan*’ translated as ‘ranged’, ‘suggests an activity *less fixed* than “to settle” or “to dwell”’.⁵⁵⁹

Abraham’s last, and most successful claim to rootedness takes the form of Sarah’s grave. As Alter puts it, ‘acquir[ing] a suitable burial plot for Sarah [is Abraham’s] final gesture in laying claim to the land.’⁵⁶⁰ She is laid to rest ‘in the cave of the field of Machpelah’ (23:19), legitimately bought from the Hittites. This collective burial-site becomes the final resting place of a thoroughly restless family.

In terms of the material role of ‘home’ here, Abraham’s tents are a new dwelling structure.⁵⁶¹ Pitched in numerous places, on the outskirts of cities and in the midst of the desert, they

⁵⁵² Ibid., p.91.

⁵⁵³ Ken Gelder and Jane Jacobs’ phrase, quoted by Blunt and Dowling, p.186.

⁵⁵⁴ Alter, p.95.

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid., p.55.

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁷ Blunt and Dowling, p.218.

⁵⁵⁸ Alter, pp.125-6.

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid., p.126, my italics.

⁵⁶⁰ Alter, p.107.

⁵⁶¹ Archaeologically *and* textually, the tent is a new building type: ‘with only one exception, there is no textual evidence for tents prior to the second millennium b.c.’ - Rosen and Saidel, p.72.

shelter Abraham's family from the elements,⁵⁶² just as the ark did. Whilst Abraham's smaller built forms are left behind, his family's fabric tents are carried from place to place. Tents, Rosen and Saidel argue, 'allowed [...] social groups [to] exploit new regions, creating new territories and new territorial structures'.⁵⁶³ The tent enables a new way of life and a new narrative form. The geographer James Kneale has suggested that 'the form or shape of [a] text' can '[play] a part in communicating [a] geographical experience'.⁵⁶⁴ Here, the disjointed episodes of Abraham's life certainly epitomise his nomadic lifestyle; each episode a temporary encampment, a narrative pause.

A 'textual cartography'⁵⁶⁵ emerges here, and it is one built through opposition. Narrative detours to urban centers such as Egypt and Sodom, and well as the wilderness, serve to establish counter-sites to Abraham's nomadic homestead.⁵⁶⁶ 'Texts build worlds', Christopher Meredith writes: 'they create imaginative landscapes for characters and readers to inhabit.'⁵⁶⁷ The imaginative landscape of this segment of Genesis is characterised by the 'contours of mountains, settlements of dirty stone, palms, pools',⁵⁶⁸ but also less concrete factors such as claims of ownership or settlement rights.

⁵⁶² 'Traditional Mediterranean society was 'agonistic', life was a struggle against the elements over which humans had no control' - Hobbs, p.7.

⁵⁶³ Rosen and Saidel, p.76.

⁵⁶⁴ James Kneale, 'Secondary Worlds: Reading Novels as Geographical Research' in A. Blunt, P. Gruffudd, J. May, M. Osborn and D. Pinder, eds. *Cultural Geography in Practise* (London: Arnold, 2003), pp.39-51, pp.46-7.

⁵⁶⁵ Christopher Harker, "Spacing Palestine through the Home." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 34:3 (2009), pp.320-32, p.322.

⁵⁶⁶ Alter takes note of a contrast between 'Abraham's "place"', his 'nomadic, uncorrupted existence in the land of promise', and 'Lot's location in one of the doomed cities of the plain' - Alter, p.83.

Braidotti also writes of 'Metropolitan space verses nomadic trajectories': 'It was the pastoral, open, nomadic spaces in opposition to which the sedentary [city] was erected [...]' - Braidotti 'Introduction', p. 27.

⁵⁶⁷ Christopher Meredith, "The Lattice and the Looking Glass: Gendered Space in Song of Songs 2:8-14" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* Vol. 80, No. 2 (June, 2012), pp.365-386, p.367.

⁵⁶⁸ Ostriker (1994), p.51.

Here, the tension between ‘being home and not being home’⁵⁶⁹ becomes integral to the biblical narrative; encapsulated, as I have argued, in the juxtaposition between Hagar’s unhomely experience and the practise of hospitality. Multiple experiences of dwelling coexist in this text, wherein ‘the home [...] is a site of violence and alienation as well as comfort and security’,⁵⁷⁰ attributes metered out along gendered and racial lines. Here, again ‘the home is possible only in light of the unhomely’,⁵⁷¹ to repeat Clingerman’s words. As argued above, Abraham and Sarah’s treatment of Hagar draws attention to the closed nature of their home/land, and the politics of cohabitation; who lives together and under what social and economic circumstances. Donohoe suggests that ‘[t]o be homeless is still to be bound up with home’,⁵⁷² and this is as true for Hagar as it was for the women of *Paradise*. My brief inclusion of Morrison’s earlier novel *Beloved* in this chapter also demonstrated the lingering importance of these ideas in more recent historical contexts.

In *Beloved* novel, Jesser writes, ‘The dwellings and places the characters move through and escape to become at times fixed containers of memory and desire, and at times spaces where boundaries between selves are softened...’⁵⁷³ Abraham’s altars can indeed be read as ‘fixed containers of memory and desire’; the memory of a promise and the desire for a home, and ‘at times [...] boundaries between selves’ are certainly ‘softened’ in this narrative.⁵⁷⁴ In chapter twelve, for instance, Abraham asks Sarai to act as his sister in Egypt (12:10-13), in a brief

⁵⁶⁹ Bidy Martin, and Chandra T. Mohanty, “Feminist Politics: What’s Home Got to Do with It?” in Mohanty, Chandra Talpade *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* (London: Duke University Press, 2003), pp.85-105, p.90.

⁵⁷⁰ Blunt and Dowling, p.258. - Isaac’s near-sacrifice - the *Akedah* - is one episode I have not had room to discuss. Whilst Noah was called to build a salvific framework for his family, Abraham is asked to build an altar upon which to sacrifice his son (22:1-2) At the last moment, Isaac is spared (22:11-18). Young discusses the possibility of ‘mountaintops’ being pseudo-homes for ‘pre-modern’ peoples which in turn suggests that we read this moment as a form of domestic abuse - Iris Marion Young, ‘House and Home: Feminist Variations On A Theme’ in *Intersecting Voices: Dilemmas of Gender, Political Philosophy, and Policy* (Chichester: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp.134-64, p.155.

⁵⁷¹ Forrest Clingerman, ‘Homecoming and the Half-Remembered: Environmental Amnesia, the Uncanny and the Path Home’ in Boscaljon, ed. *Resisting the Place of Belonging* (2013), pp.33-46, p.43.

⁵⁷² Donohoe ‘Coming Home’, p.177.

⁵⁷³ Jesser, p.325.

⁵⁷⁴ Braidotti notes that ‘nomadic consciousness consists in not taking any kind of identity as permanent.’ - Braidotti ‘Introduction’, p.33.

dramatisation of what has been called elsewhere ‘familial displacement’⁵⁷⁵ that is later repeated with King Abimelech (20:2-3). Indeed, for Braidotti, the nomad’s identity is ‘made of transitions’, just as ‘[t]he nomad’s relationship to the earth is one of transitory attachment’.⁵⁷⁶

Nathan E. Dickman has gone as far as to suggest that ‘Abraham is [...] incapable of achieving a state of being at home.’⁵⁷⁷ This is perhaps true in the sense of ‘home’ as a fixed, secure or safe space. Yet Rachel Wagner’s concept of ‘home as journey’⁵⁷⁸ is certainly relevant here. Sinead McDermott has written of the work of the interdisciplinary scholar James Clifford, who ‘has taken the lead in rethinking ideas of home and dwelling-place in the context of an increasingly globalised world’.⁵⁷⁹ Clifford’s ideas, paradoxically, work in the pre-globalised ‘seminomadic early Hebrew setting’.⁵⁸⁰ In McDermott’s words,

Clifford argues that we need to rethink our binary oppositions between stasis and movement, home and elsewhere, and uses the term “dwelling-in-motion” to try to account for the persistent dis/re/locations characteristic of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century.⁵⁸¹

Elsewhere, Savaş suggests that ‘[i]n a world increasingly characterized by travel, mobility, and displacement, the notion of the rooted home is usefully destabilized and the home is argued to be found *within the movement itself*’.⁵⁸² Perhaps then, the ideas of Clifford, Wagner et al are a postmodern way into understanding Abraham and Sarah’s making of ‘home’. Their

⁵⁷⁵ Blunt and Dowling, p.237 - As Alter points out, ‘Sarah is actually Abraham’s half-sister’ (Alter, p.52), so there is a half-truth here.

⁵⁷⁶ Braidotti ‘Introduction’, p.22 and p.25 respectively.

⁵⁷⁷ Nathan E. Dickman, ‘Faith or Friendship: On Integrating Dimensions of Self-Realization in Kierkegaard and Aristotle’, in Boscaljon, ed. *Resisting the Place of Belonging* (2013), pp.103-116, p.110.

⁵⁷⁸ Rachel Wagner discusses the concept of ‘home as journey’ in a modern, technological context in her essay ‘ALT + HOME: Digital Homecomings’, in *Resisting the Place of Belonging* (2013), pp.87-102: ‘The notion of home as defined by quest rather than origin, movement rather than fixedness’ - pp.88-9.

⁵⁷⁹ Sinead McDermott, ‘Review of *Literature, Gender, Space* by Sonia Villegas-López, Beatriz Domínguez-García’, *Atlantis* Vol. 27, No. 2 (December, 2005), pp. 221-226, p.224.

⁵⁸⁰ Alter, p.77.

⁵⁸¹ McDermott, p.224.

⁵⁸² Savaş, p.314, my italics.

fractured dwelling patterns pass on into the next generation,⁵⁸³ but it is the generation after this with which I will be concerned in my final chapter. Abraham's grandson Jacob is no more rooted than his forebear. For him and his wives Leah and Rachel, homemaking is once more a mobile practise in a changing environment. Again, the same imaginative and material components of 'home' prove vital to understanding the biblical plot-line.

⁵⁸³ Isaac's story entails the building of more altars and wells, as well as the repeated pitching of tents (26:23-25) and negotiations about living space (26:30).

Homecoming

*Stealing Away, We Returned*⁵⁸⁴

The story of Jacob, Leah and Rachel starts with yet another departure from home, but ends with an act not yet examined: homecoming. Reading the story of Jacob's family will conclude my study of the making of a 'home' in Genesis. Having examined different material and imaginative embodiments of the home in biblical narratives preceding this one, we can read Jacob's story of homecoming with a greater awareness of what it is he returns to. In the second part of this chapter, I will study Jacob's family's act of return through one episode in particular, that in which Rachel appropriates her father's household gods before the journey back. This episode reminds us of the importance of home as a material site, and the meaning of home-spaces to migrant groups, whilst Jacob's story as a whole can be read using recent geographical and sociological insights on refugee and migrant experiences. I will also use a mix of midrashic and literary intertexts. Whilst away from 'home', Jacob engages in diasporic home-making, constructing his own household, or home-away-from-home. In Genesis chapter thirty-eight, Jacob leaves his mother and father's home, his 'homeland',⁵⁸⁵ in a hurry. As it shapes his whole story, it is worth looking briefly at the reason behind his rushed departure.

*the scene in the tent*⁵⁸⁶

Jacob's story is first shared by him and his twin brother; Esau. The two are not alike, and this is articulated in spatial terms: 'Esau', a 'skilful hunter', is 'a man of the field', whereas Jacob is 'a quiet man, living in tents.' (25:27)⁵⁸⁷ Esau is, by a few minutes, the elder brother, but early on he exchanges his birthright for a portion of 'bread and lentil stew' that Jacob has made (25:29-34). Later, when the older Isaac lies 'bedridden',⁵⁸⁸ Rebekah overhears him ask

⁵⁸⁴ This is the title of a short story by Rasmi Abu Ali, published in Nur Elmessiri, and Abdel Wahab, eds. (*A Land of Stone and Thyme* (London: Quartet Books Ltd, 1996), pp.54-57.

⁵⁸⁵ Jerry Rabow, *The Lost Matriarch: Finding Leah in the Bible and Midrash* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, The Jewish Publication Society, 2014), p.124.

⁵⁸⁶ Robert Alter, *Genesis: Translation and Commentary* (London: W.W. Norton and Company, 1996), p. 147.

⁵⁸⁷ Their conflict is foreshadowed by the fact that when pregnant, Rebekah's twins '[struggle] together within her' (Genesis, chapter twenty-five, verses twenty one to two).

⁵⁸⁸ Alter, p.139.

Esau to bring him a meal so that he may bless him and helps Jacob claim the blessing in his brother's place (27:1-29). Like the birthright, the blessing is won through tactility; the taste of a favourite meal, the 'smell [of] garments' and the hair on a son's arms (27:23-7). Here, the bread and cakes (18:5-6) Abraham hastily fetches for his visitors, as part of an elaborate performance of hospitality, have become more substantial meals, bartered in exchange for paternal affection and patrimony. Rebekah's act is only the latest in a thread of haptic disobediences by biblical women:⁵⁸⁹ in contrast to the fading Isaac, she is the director of this domestic drama.

In these later passages of nomadic life, snatches of conversation are consistently overheard through thin tent walls, and family structures seem as movable as the dwellings themselves.⁵⁹⁰ Hearing that Esau plans to hurt his brother (27:41), Rebekah persuades Jacob to seek safety with her brother Laban (27:42-46). Whilst Sarah deliberately exiled Ishmael from Abraham's encampment, Jacob's leave-taking is painful for Rebekah. 'Leaving home', as Boscaljon notes, 'has been a staple of human narratives from Abraham to Odysseus'; it can be 'voluntary or enforced, permanent or temporary'.⁵⁹¹ Like many characters' departures, Jacob's is enforced by his circumstances, and proves to be temporary. 'Once we have left our home,' Boscaljon continues, 'even if our leave-taking was voluntary, our desires often become focused on the possibility of return.'⁵⁹² Thus when Jacob reaches the border of his homeland,⁵⁹³ he dreams of a 'ladder' (28:12), in a somnial scene which connects him to God's promise (28:12-15). Jacob looks to his safe return by inscribing this temporary rest-stop with

⁵⁸⁹ Eve tasted a forbidden part of her environment, Noah's wife perhaps refused to board or even touch the ark, and Lot's wife used sight transgressively. The tactility of Rebekah's story is foreshadowed in the fact that when she first sees Isaac from her camel (24:64), 'her whole body falls' (Zornberg, pp.158-9), in an echo of Eve.

⁵⁹⁰ Much to Isaac's horror, his mistake 'change[s]' the 'relationships of the family structure' - Rashi's thoughts, as noted by Aviva Gottlieb Zornberg, *The Beginning of Desire: Reflections on Genesis* (New York: Schocken Books, 1995), p.152.

⁵⁹¹ Boscaljon, 'Introduction', p.1 - Similarly, 'Exile can be voluntary' or 'enforced (as in the plight of refugees [...])' - David Jasper, 'Knowing for the First Time', in *Resisting the Place of Belonging*, pp.9-20, p.11.

⁵⁹² Boscaljon, 'Introduction', p.1.

⁵⁹³ Rabow, p.139.

religious meaning, naming the place ‘Bethel’ (28:19), and setting up a pillar there.⁵⁹⁴ Here, through construction, ‘an anonymous “place” [is] transformed into a “house of God”’,⁵⁹⁵ as Jacob leaves his ‘[human] father’s house’ (28:21) behind.

*stay with me*⁵⁹⁶

Jacob’s exile from his family’s home necessitates his temporary inhabitation in Laban’s household, when he arrives in Haran. Here, he will construct a ‘complex family’⁵⁹⁷ of his own, a family which will itself eventually make the journey back to Jacob’s homeland. Forsyth describes this period as Jacob’s ‘sojourn in Laban’s household’,⁵⁹⁸ using a word which echoes throughout these narratives.⁵⁹⁹ It is Laban’s daughter Rachel who takes Jacob to her father’s home. As Jacob’s relative, Laban must house this ‘stranger’ who has come to Haran. His is a somewhat different ‘articulation of hospitality’,⁶⁰⁰ to use Savaş’ phrase, than what we have seen so far. Jacob is almost immediately put to work, and after a month⁶⁰¹ it is agreed that he will serve his uncle for seven years to earn Rachel as a wife (29:15-19). Savaş talks of ‘temporary homes that are suspended between return and settlement’,⁶⁰² and that is

⁵⁹⁴ ‘Cultic pillars’, Alter writes, ‘were generally several feet high’ (Alter, p.150), in which case this unfinished monument recalls the Tower of Babel (Genesis chapter eleven), a textual and geological leftover.

⁵⁹⁵ Alter, p.198 - In chapter thirty-five, Jacob is told by God to return to Bethel (35:1), where he builds an altar and re-iterates the place’s name (35:7-15).

⁵⁹⁶ Genesis, chapter twenty-nine, verses twenty-nine to nineteen.

⁵⁹⁷ Rabow, p.98.

⁵⁹⁸ Dan W. Forsyth, “Sibling Rivalry, Aesthetic Sensibility, and Social Structure in Genesis” in *Ethos* Vol. 19, No.4 (1991), pp.453-510, p.485.

⁵⁹⁹ ‘[S]ojourner’, Alter writes, is the verb ‘technically used for resident aliens’ (Alter, p.86). Whilst Abraham earlier describes himself as ‘a sojourning settler’ (Alter, p.109), in chapter forty-seven, Jacob tells Pharaoh: ‘The years of my *sojourn* [on earth] are one hundred and thirty.’ (47:9, Pardes’ translation) - Ilana Pardes, *Countertraditions in the Bible: a feminist approach* (London: Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 76, my italics.

⁶⁰⁰ O. Savaş, “The Collective Turkish Home in Vienna: Aesthetic Narratives of Migration and Belonging.” *Home Cultures* 7:3 (2010), pp.313–40, p.318.

⁶⁰¹ Rabow suggests a ‘customary one-month term of hospitality for relatives.’ - Rabow, p.27.

⁶⁰² Savaş, p.331.

what Laban's household becomes for Jacob, who is from this point onwards torn between his home of residence and his home of origin.⁶⁰³

After seven years, however, Jacob is instead given Leah, Rachel's older sister (29:23), in an ironic echo of his own act of trickery.⁶⁰⁴ Laban is forthright in his defence: 'This is not done in our country - giving the younger before the firstborn [...]' (29:27). Alter translates the statement as 'It is not done thus in *our place*',⁶⁰⁵ arguing that '[Laban's] reference to "our place" has the effect of touching a nerve [...] in Jacob, who in *his* place acted to put the younger before the firstborn.' Laban's words, I would argue, also have another purpose, and it is to do with the 'hospitality' he has given him. As Michael Herzfeld argues, the fact that 'the guest is often made aware of the fact that he/she is on the territory of the host' is done 'not necessarily to make the guest feel 'at home''.⁶⁰⁶ '[t]he point is precisely that the visitor is *not* at home'.⁶⁰⁷ Though he has worked for Laban for nearly a decade, Jacob is not at home. Just as he seems caught between two dwellings - his father's and Laban's - Jacob will be caught between two wives; after a week, he is also given Rachel in exchange 'for another seven years' (29:28-30).

Just as Jacob longs for his first home, the one he has left behind, he makes no secret of preferring Rachel to Leah (29:31). Seeing that Leah is 'the unfavored co-wife',⁶⁰⁸ God opens her womb, but leaves Rachel barren (29:31). In quick succession Leah bears four sons (29:32-35), only ceasing when, as Alter re-phrases it, Jacob 'cease[s] for a long period to cohabit with Leah'.⁶⁰⁹ No response from Jacob towards his new-born sons is recorded.

⁶⁰³ Savaş talks of a person's 'country of residence [and] country of origin' - Ibid., p.315.

⁶⁰⁴ As Pardes notes, 'the reversal of the primogeniture law, a pivotal phenomenon in [Genesis], doesn't quite work when women are involved' - Pardes, p.62.

⁶⁰⁵ Alter, p.155, my italics.

⁶⁰⁶ T.R. Hobbs, 'Hospitality in the First Testament and the 'Teleological Fallacy' *JSOT* 95 (2001), pp.3-30, pp.12-3.

⁶⁰⁷ Quoted by Hobbs, p.13.

⁶⁰⁸ Alter, p.155 - For an extended retrieval of the character of Leah, see Rabow's *The Lost Matriarch*, which uses midrash and biblical criticism to creatively expand her story.

⁶⁰⁹ Alter, p.157; This transfers the causation from the female body to, more simply, altered spatial arrangements.

Rachel, meanwhile, ‘fall[s] back on the strategy of surrogate maternity’:⁶¹⁰ like Sarah, Rachel is ‘built up’⁶¹¹ through the sons of her maid Bilhah (30:4-8), but so is Leah, through her maid Zilpah (30:9-13). Here, we have an exaggerated example of a ‘polygynous’ marriage structure, as Berquist describes it, i.e. ‘many women within the structure’.⁶¹² Berquist ascribes this to the need for greater fertility, but it also creates the possibility of collective motherhood,⁶¹³ taking us back to the domestic tensions of Morrison’s text *Paradise*.

In Genesis, Rachel and Leah dwell alongside each-other in uneasy, unusual circumstances. Michèle Roberts’ *Daughters of the House* (1992)⁶¹⁴ is also about two sisters’ relationship with a home, namely Léonie and Thérèse’s childhood in their family’s house in Normandy, after World War II. The home of this text, a ‘place of secrets and mysteries’,⁶¹⁵ is a contested space, and like Leah and Rachel, Roberts’ protagonists each struggle to call it theirs. In *Daughters*, as in many of the literary intertexts I have used so far, we find a house with no authoritative male presence; when Thérèse’s father Louis suffers a stroke, his ineffectual presence becomes akin to Isaac’s⁶¹⁶ in Genesis. For the Martin family, as Patricia Plummer notes, is ‘a family

⁶¹⁰ Ibid., p.158

⁶¹¹ ‘As with Sarai in chapter 16, the verb *’ibaneh*, puns on *ben*, “son.”’ - Ibid., p.159.

⁶¹² Jon L. Berquist, *Controlling Corporeality: the Body and the Household in Ancient Israel* (London: Rutgers University Press, 2002), pp.64-5.

⁶¹³ Rabow notes the midrashic tradition that Bilhah and Zilpah are Laban’s other daughters (Rabow, p. 29-30) and Anita Diamant uses this premise in *The Red Tent*, her Dinah stating: ‘I had four mothers’ - Anita Diamant *The Red Tent* First published, 1997 (London: Pan Macmillan, 2002), p.1.

Here, again, ‘sororal relationships that replace the hierarchical patterns of patriarchal culture’ are glimpsed - Kathleen L. Komar, ‘Feminist Curves in Contemporary Literary Space’ in Margaret H. Higonnet, and Joan Templeton, *Reconfigured Spheres: Feminist Explorations of Literary Space* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994), pp.89-107, p.104.

⁶¹⁴ Michèle Roberts, *Daughters of the House* First published, 1992 (London: Virago Press, 1997).

⁶¹⁵ ‘[...] most notably the mystery of what happened to Antoinette in the cellar’, but also the secret that a Jewish family was temporarily imprisoned in one of its rooms, both ‘during the war’ - Bernhard Reitz, ‘Virgins in the Frying-Pan: Peepholes and Perspectives in Michèle Roberts’s *Daughters of the House*’ in Beate Neumeier, ed. *Engendering Realism and Postmodernism: Contemporary Women Writers in Britain* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001), pp.53-61, p.57.

⁶¹⁶ In the events outlined above, Jacob concedes to marrying both sisters, then silently accepts their later suggestion that he takes two more women as wives.

dominated by women',⁶¹⁷ an idea that recalls the mansion in *Paradise*,⁶¹⁸ but also applies to the four co-wives of Jacob's tents. [...] Later on, when Thérèse has become a nun and Léonie is a mother and '(house)wife',⁶¹⁹ it becomes clear, as Emma Parker words it, that

Neither of them feels completely at home in the family house. The house belongs to Thérèse, but it is not her home because she does not live there; Léonie lives there with her family but does not feel secure because she fears eviction by Thérèse.⁶²⁰

Like the stories of Jacob and his family in Genesis, in *Daughters* the home is a tangible, material site; throughout, as Bernhard Reitz notes, there is an 'insistence on the importance of the little things and duties of everyday life'.⁶²¹ Plummer goes further, arguing that the novel is 'a celebration of domesticity that transforms female domestic labour into an almost magical art.'⁶²² Something similar occurs in Genesis during the episode when Leah's eldest son, Reuben, brings her mandrakes from the fields (30:14). This plant, as Rabow notes, 'was deemed in folklore to possess magical aphrodisiac or fertility powers'⁶²³ which may, as Alter identifies, be the reason Rachel asks her sister for it.⁶²⁴ Leah exchanges some of the mandrakes for a night with Jacob (30:15-6), temporarily re-negotiating the spatial aspects of the household. Walking out to meet Jacob when he '[comes] from the field in the evening',⁶²⁵ the empowered Leah redirects him 'from Rachel's tent to [hers]'. Here, as Pardes identifies,

⁶¹⁷ Ibid., p.66.

⁶¹⁸ Plummer argues that *Daughters* is 'about a matriarchal enclave within a patriarchal society' - Ibid., p. 83.

⁶¹⁹ Ibid., p.72.

⁶²⁰ Emma Parker, 'From House to Home: A Kristevan Reading of Michèle Roberts's *Daughters of the House*', *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction* 41:2 (Winter, 2000), pp.153-73, p.157.

⁶²¹ Reitz, p.59.

⁶²² Plummer, p.68.

⁶²³ Rabow, p.102.

⁶²⁴ Alter, p.160 - furthermore, as Pardes notes, in coming from Jacob's eldest son, the mandrake 'metonymically [represents] the son' - Pardes, p.66.

⁶²⁵ Alter, p.160.

fertility is temporarily ‘controlled by women’.⁶²⁶ More than fertility is at stake, however: like Roberts’ protagonists Léonie and Thérèse, Leah and Rachel are also competing for a home. When fertility does return to the text, and Leah gives birth to her last son (30:17-20), she exclaims: ‘Now will my husband live with me...’⁶²⁷ Her hopes, however, are unfulfilled.

As Jacob’s sons multiply, Laban’s household becomes a ‘multigenerational dwelling’,⁶²⁸ to use Wright’s phrase. ‘Jacob’s complex household of four wives and multiple children’, Rabow argues ‘precariously endures in a delicate balance’.⁶²⁹ Pardes writes of ‘[t]he *beena* marriage, which was often practiced by nomads’, and ‘entailed the following arrangement: the younger man, who had no fixed dwelling, tended the flocks of his father-in-law, whose house served as the center of power and wealth.’⁶³⁰ It is the gradual transferral of power and wealth away from Laban’s household and towards Jacobs’ which will tip the balance. The final component of ‘the “building” of [Jacob’s] house’⁶³¹ is the birth of Rachel’s long-awaited son, whom she names Joseph (30:24). It is this birth which seems to instil in Jacob a wish to return ‘to [his] own home and country’ (30:25), or as Alter translates his words: ‘*my* place and *my* land.’⁶³² Laban’s earlier hospitality, such as it was, has become ‘hostility’,⁶³³ and God appears to Jacob to urgently tell him to return to his father’s people (31:3), in his true ‘homeland’.⁶³⁴ Laban’s household is now a decidedly ‘unhomely’ home for Jacob’s family, and Rachel and Leah agree to leave, speaking from their shared dual identity as Laban’s daughter/Jacob’s wife: ‘Is

⁶²⁶ Pardes, p.67 - Pardes talks of ‘Rachel’s willingness to use dubious means to acquire fertility’ (Pardes, p. 66), but I am more inclined to read this as a further example of biblical women’s creative family-shaping methods.

⁶²⁷ Genesis 30:20, as translated by Rabow, p.110.

⁶²⁸ Gwendolyn Wright, ‘Prescribing the Model Home’, *Social Research*, Vol. 58, No.1 (Spring, 1991), pp. 213-225, p.214.

⁶²⁹ Rabow, p.166.

⁶³⁰ Pardes references ‘Julius Morgenstern’s study of the *beena* marriage in the Bible’ here - Pardes, p.166.

⁶³¹ Pardes, p.67 - Later in the Hebrew Bible, in the book of Ruth (4:11), Leah and Rachel are remembered as participating in the “building” of the house of Israel’, as Pardes discusses in the chapter ‘The Book of Ruth: Idyllic Revisionism’, in *Countertraditions in the Bible* (1992), pp.98-117, p.98.

⁶³² Alter, p.162, my italics.

⁶³³ *Ibid.*, p.166.

⁶³⁴ Rabow, p.124.

there any portion or inheritance left to us in our father's house? Are we not regarded by him as foreigners?' (31:14). As Berquist words it, 'no woman can be part of two households',⁶³⁵ and Rachel and Leah now belong to Jacob's.

The journey cannot begin straight away. Jacob, aware that he has built up another's household (30:30), takes time to draw together 'large flocks, [...] slaves, and camels and donkeys' (30:43) for himself. As Pardes reminds us:

There is nothing more alienating and unheroic than returning to one's home empty-handed. Male protagonists - Jacob is a fine example - make sure they return home with wives, children, and a good deal of property.⁶³⁶

Homecoming

At 'the end of Jacob's sojourn in Haran',⁶³⁷ he and his family depart quickly with their 'livestock [and] property' (31:17-8). Once more, in response to danger, a household becomes portable. After serving Laban for roughly twenty years, Jacob now faces a two-year journey home.⁶³⁸ Jacob's original journey from Canaan to Haran was fraught with danger,⁶³⁹ and his return journey is no less so. As he leaves his manipulative father-in-law behind, Jacob faces the prospect of reuniting with the brother and father from whom he originally fled.

Problematic homecomings are a common trope within literature,⁶⁴⁰ and Jacob's story is no exception. Marilynne Robinson's later novel *Home* (2008), for example, concerns the return of a wayward son to his father's house. At one point, on re-entering his family home, Robinson's protagonist Jack finds crossing the threshold difficult, and stands 'just inside the

⁶³⁵ Berquist, p.103 - Women can move households e.g. Abigail in 1 Samuel 25, who is temporarily between households with a 'dual allegiance' (Berquist, p.104) and Bathsheba: both women's original households are destroyed - Berquist, pp.104-5.

⁶³⁶ Pardes, p.113.

⁶³⁷ Rabow, p.119.

⁶³⁸ Ibid., p.132.

⁶³⁹ As Alter notes, he 'fle[d] alone on foot', in what was 'a very dangerous journey.' - Alter, p.150.

⁶⁴⁰ The parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15) is an example from the New Testament.

door, like a stranger unsure of his welcome.⁶⁴¹ Robinson's novel is in many ways an extended answer to the question Jack's sister Glory asks: 'What does it mean to come home?'.⁶⁴² 'Homecomings,' Boscaljon writes, 'are mediated activities, emerging dialectically between things we find and things we make.'⁶⁴³ This is certainly true in *Home*, in which Glory and Jack reconnect with their father through childhood objects, such as a well-worn checkerboard.⁶⁴⁴ In Genesis, Jacob's homecoming is also interwoven with 'things', but a certain group of these threatens to destabilise the entire process, in an episode which also allows us to understand Jacob's family's tents as diasporic home-spaces.

Laban realises that his household gods are missing (31:30), and follows Jacob's household to reclaim them. Unbeknownst to Jacob, Rachel has stolen them (31:19), and this act gives her father a pretext to delay her household's onward journey. Beginning his search, Laban enacts an almost comical movement from one tent to the next, in a hyperbolic allusion-of-sorts to the nomadic way of life. Going 'into Jacob's tent', then 'Leah's tent, and into the tent of the two maids', Laban fails to find his Gods (31:33). Rachel's tent is next, but here she proves to be as resourceful as her husband:

Now Rachel had taken the household gods and put them in the camel's saddle,⁶⁴⁵ and sat on them.⁶⁴⁶ Laban felt all about in [her] tent, but did not find them. And she said to her father, 'Let not my lord be angry that I cannot rise before you, for the way⁶⁴⁷ of women is upon me.' So he searched, but did not find the household gods. (31:34-5)

⁶⁴¹ Marilynne Robinson, *Home* (London: Virago Press, 2008), p.81.

⁶⁴² Robinson (2008), p.106.

⁶⁴³ Boscaljon, 'Introduction', p.5.

⁶⁴⁴ Robinson (2008), p.81.

⁶⁴⁵ Rather than 'saddle', Ostriker uses the word 'furniture' (1994:107), emphasising the domesticity of the scene.

⁶⁴⁶ As Alter notes, 'necessity compels Rachel to assume [an] irreverent posture toward [the *terafim*]' - Alter, p.172.

⁶⁴⁷ 'Halakhah (rabbinic law; metaphorically "way," as it shares a root with the verb to walk)' - Ostriker (1994), p.9.

This is an intriguing episode, and only the latest in Genesis' long line of 'conflicts and contests that are played out in the materiality of the everyday',⁶⁴⁸ to use Savaş' phrase. As with Jacob and Esau's haggling over a bowl of stew, and Leah and Rachel's bartering over a handful of mandrakes, more is at stake here than the physical object itself. Pardes links this episode to Jacob's deception of Isaac, another episode of tactile misunderstanding. Pardes notes that the two narratives are '[linked by] the verb *mishesh* (feel, or touch)': 'When Laban enters Rachel's tent, he "feels" all her belongings, but fails to find the *terafim*',⁶⁴⁹ just as Isaac failed to "feel" Jacob. By stealing her father's household gods, Rachel would appear to be attempting to understand her situation through the material culture of her first – and now former – home.

Once again, a woman's body is interrelated with the patterns of dwelling. Rachel's act occurs during her family's journey, and her phrase - the 'way of women' - likens menstruation to a journey,⁶⁵⁰ as Lapsley has identified. The fact that this incident has come to be metonymic of Rachel's character also has a certain irony; menstruation signals a non-pregnant female body, and Rachel's long-endured barrenness, her 'deferred motherhood'⁶⁵¹ as Pardes puts it, would have been marked by many unwanted periods.⁶⁵² Here, as Lapsley identifies, 'menstrual purity laws' are 'constraining' to men, not women,⁶⁵³ as Rachel appropriates them for her own ends. Boose's suggestion that periods engender 'a new distance from [the] father'⁶⁵⁴ holds true on many levels here, as does Boose's statement that '[t]he daughter's struggle with her father is one of separation'.⁶⁵⁵ Furthermore, Zornberg notes that 'in the typology of the Torah,

⁶⁴⁸ Savaş, p.335.

⁶⁴⁹ Ilana Pardes, 'Rachel's Dream: The Female Subplot' in *Countertraditions in the Bible: a feminist approach* (London: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp.60-78, p.70.

⁶⁵⁰ Lapsley, p.233 - Lapsley also notes that this is the euphemism's 'only occurrence' in the Hebrew Bible - J. E. Lapsley, 'The voice of Rachel: Resistance and Polyphony in Genesis 31.14-35' in Brenner, Athalya, ed. *Genesis: Feminist Companion* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), pp. 232-247, p.243.

⁶⁵¹ Pardes, p.63.

⁶⁵² Alter also notes that Rachel here 'invoke[s] all those years of uninterrupted menses before she was at last able to conceive and bear her only son.' - Alter, p.172.

⁶⁵³ Lapsley, p.243.

⁶⁵⁴ Boose, p.35.

⁶⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.32-3.

the father-daughter connection is [...] more fraught with tension than the father-son relation'.⁶⁵⁶ Rachel's theft of the gods, and consequent manoeuvre to retain them, materialises the difficulties of this relationship.

Rachel's importance in this episode reminds us that whilst this narrative does concern Jacob's return to his home of origin, it also concerns Rachel and Leah's journey to a new home. As Pardes writes, 'Rachel and Leah follow Jacob to Canaan with the implied hope that in that foreign land they will feel more at home than in their father's household.'⁶⁵⁷ 'Homecoming', Pardes argues, is the 'touchstone of heroism in biblical narrative' but is 'far more difficult when a woman takes on such a task'.⁶⁵⁸ It is not Leah but Rachel who commits this theft. Whilst Leah travels with six sons and one daughter, and a secure place in the household, Rachel travels with just one son, in a somewhat shakier position. What Rachel effectively does is appropriate a material fragment of her former home, with the aim of incorporating it into her new one: 'The process of moving into a new home', Boscaljon writes, 'is usually attended by moving one's things. Relics of this sort provide us with tangible points of continuity...'⁶⁵⁹

'The activities of homemaking', Young argues, '[give] material support to the identity of those whose home it is.'⁶⁶⁰ Rachel's theft of the gods reminds us of her and Leah's dual identity, as both Laban's daughters and Jacob's wives. In *Daughters of the House* Léonie does something similar: though she 'gets the house in which she was initially only a guest', as Reitz notes, 'it never becomes her home'.⁶⁶¹ Léonie's is an uneasy inhabitation, fraught with questions of ownership, longevity and inheritance. Faced with Thérèse's return, Léonie seeks to make a claim on her former home through its objects:

⁶⁵⁶ Zornberg, p.112.

⁶⁵⁷ Pardes, 'The Book of Ruth', p.115.

⁶⁵⁸ Pardes uses Naomi's story in the book of Ruth to demonstrate this: 'Her return, at least in the initial stages, turns out to be worse than exile, for she feels, not unlike Rachel and Leah, a stranger in her own homeland.' - Ibid., p.113.

⁶⁵⁹ Boscaljon, 'Dwelling Beyond Poetry', p.47.

⁶⁶⁰ Young, p.151.

⁶⁶¹ Reitz, p.54.

She wandered in imagination through her house. [...] She caressed her well-tended furniture [...] she recited her litany of solid objects [...] She counted and inspected the contents of larders, china cabinets, cupboards [It was hers. It was her house].⁶⁶²

Léonie and Thérèse, like Rachel and Leah, must share their home, and their domestic struggle is ultimately left unresolved.

Just as *Daughters* is more than just ‘an inventory of the contents of the house’,⁶⁶³ Rachel’s act in Genesis is equally important in a symbolic sense. As Alter notes, Rachel has stolen the ‘small figurines representing the deities responsible for the well-being and prosperity of the household’.⁶⁶⁴ Rachel’s act, then, implies that the prosperity of Laban’s household may now cease, with Jacob’s stay there at an end, but it may also hint that Rachel intends to harm Laban’s house, or simply that she wants to ensure the well-being of her future home. Rabow, in turn, suggests that Rachel ‘steals the teraphim because they are idols of the pagan goddess of fertility’,⁶⁶⁵ which adds further symbolic weight to her decision to place the figures beneath her body, whilst also linking these objects to the contested mandrakes.

We can understand Rachel’s act through work on domestic material culture, as well as studies of migrant home-making practices. Savaş’ (2010) research on the homes of Turkish migrants in Vienna, for example, studies the ‘materialities of homes that displaced people establish in new places of dwelling’, specifically ‘[in] diasporic or migratory resettlements’.⁶⁶⁶ Savaş argues that through the ‘home’, ‘people can objectify their story of migration and resettlement, [...] and transform their sense of belonging to the space and time they inhabit.’⁶⁶⁷ Perhaps Rachel takes her father’s household Gods in order to tell her story of ‘migration and resettlement’. Objects in migrant homes, as Salih (2002) has identified, often

⁶⁶² Roberts (1997) p.168 - As Reitz notes, the chapter-names of this novel, constituting ‘Forty-nine objects of the house’ (Reitz, p.59), also form a textual inventory of sorts.

⁶⁶³ Roberts, quoted in Reitz, p.55.

⁶⁶⁴ Alter, p.169.

⁶⁶⁵ Rabow, p.129.

⁶⁶⁶ Savaş, p.314.

⁶⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p.335

‘[reveal] double belongings and plural identities’;⁶⁶⁸ Rachel’s clandestine idols speak to both her dual identity, as referenced above, and religious/cultural instability.⁶⁶⁹ Again, corporeal ideas are relevant. If ‘menstrual blood’ is a ‘[substance] that cross[es] body boundaries’ and ‘traverse[s] physical thresholds’,⁶⁷⁰ as Parker notes, Rachel’s allows her to create a meaningful link between her old home and the new one she journeys towards. Savaş talks of how ‘displaced people dislocate and relocate material objects and their meanings’,⁶⁷¹ and this is what Rachel has done. In his study of people’s relationships with significant objects in their homes, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi has also noted that ‘objects often bridged relationships between several generations’.⁶⁷² If Rachel’s stolen idols achieve this, they also materialise the dissatisfactions of this relationship, as I have argued above.

As Blunt and Dowling argue, ‘diasporic home-making [...] is a dynamic and transformative process shaped by the mixing and reworking of traditions and cultures.’⁶⁷³ The stolen gods are a trace of the home Rachel has left behind, but may also be read as an active contestation of her assimilation into Jacob’s religious identity: objects can ‘[lend themselves] to the expression of difference, indicating the separate domains to which people or aspects of people belong’.⁶⁷⁴ Jacob’s later instructions (Genesis 35), as Alter points out, suggest that Rachel is not the only person to ‘have brought cultic figurines [...] from Mesopotamia’,⁶⁷⁵ in which case we should detect a more widespread act of material/religious resistance. Interestingly, Savaş ‘highlights the agency of women in shaping diasporic belongings and relations’:

It has been well documented that as a site where women [...] construct themselves and their relations, the home ascribes agency and power to them [...] While women create

⁶⁶⁸ Ibid., p.315

⁶⁶⁹ Similarly, the protagonists of *Daughters of the House* are torn between cultural identities.

⁶⁷⁰ Parker, p.154.

⁶⁷¹ Savaş, p.316.

⁶⁷² Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, ‘Design and Order in Everyday Life’, *Design Issues*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (Autumn, 1991), pp. 26-34, p.29.

⁶⁷³ Blunt and Dowling, p.215

⁶⁷⁴ Miller, quoted in Savaş, p.324.

⁶⁷⁵ Alter, p.195.

and re-create their homes and give meaning to this space, they also articulate collective identities and diasporic social relations.⁶⁷⁶

Braidotti, too, notes that '[migrant] women usually play the role of the loyal keepers of the original home culture.'⁶⁷⁷ In Rasmi Abu Ali's short story 'Stealing Away, We Returned',⁶⁷⁸ a woman returns to her father's household, in a village abandoned due to conflict. Grabbing things like clothes and a 'broken serving spoon',⁶⁷⁹ the woman and her child only just manage to escape. The very real danger in Abu Ali's story emphasises, in turn, Rachel's somewhat desperate situation. In an emergency, people are often able to take only what they can carry; small material fragments of their homes.

*I have become two camps*⁶⁸⁰

On his journey home, Jacob articulates his in-betweenness in the name 'Mahanaim', which he gives to a site where he encounters 'messengers of God'.⁶⁸¹ As Alter explains, 'The Hebrew for "camp" is *mahaneh*. Mahanaim [...] means twin camps';⁶⁸² within this etymology, then, we can detect Jacob's awareness that he is between two homes. At night-time, Jacob '[takes] his wives and his two slavegirls and his eleven boys and [crosses] over the Jabbok ford'.⁶⁸³ Next, he is forced to wrestle with an ambiguous figure 'until daybreak' (33:24-32), in an abrasive rite of passage which continues the narrative's tactility. As the sun rises, the contest ends, and whilst 'Jacob's ignominious flight from home [was] marked by the setting of the sun [...] the radiance of the sun greets [him] as he crosses back into his native land.'⁶⁸⁴ When

⁶⁷⁶ Savaş, p.335.

⁶⁷⁷ Braidotti 'Introduction', p.22.

⁶⁷⁸ *A Land of Stone and Thyme*, pp.54-57.

⁶⁷⁹ Abu Ali, pp.56-7.

⁶⁸⁰ Alter, p.179.

⁶⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p.177.

⁶⁸² *Ibid.* - Alter goes on to identify 'doubling' as a structural characteristic of Jacob's story - Alter, p.181.

⁶⁸³ Noting the absence of Leah's daughter Dinah here, Rabow cites the midrashic idea that 'Jacob brings Dinah into the Promised Land hidden in a wooden chest', to conceal and protect her from Esau (Rabow, p. 144-5), an idea which takes us back to the "box" (Zornberg, p.50) of the ark, and its silent female inhabitants.

⁶⁸⁴ Nahum Sarna, quoted by Alter, p.183.

Jacob seeks food and shelter in his uncle's household, he is a vulnerable traveller. Under these circumstances, Janzen argues, '[hospitality] embraces the biblical equivalent to our policies regarding refugees, immigrants and welfare.'⁶⁸⁵ Whilst Hobbs argues that 'the notion of the refugee is anachronistic'⁶⁸⁶ to the Hebrew Bible, Jacob certainly 'seek[s] refuge' with Laban,⁶⁸⁷ as Rabow notes, in a basic sense. Now, as Alter notes, Jacob 'invoke[s] an emblematic image of himself as refugee and pedestrian border crosser in his reunion with Esau'.⁶⁸⁸ The brothers have 'led their lives separately',⁶⁸⁹ and agree to continue to do so.

Having held his own in a mysterious nocturnal struggle, and also emerged unscathed from meeting his brother Esau (33:11), Jacob journeys north, and comes to 'the city of Shechem, [in] the land of Canaan'.⁶⁹⁰ Here, Jacob buys 'the plot of land on which he [has] pitched his tent', 'erect[ing] an altar' and naming his new living space 'El-Elohe-Israel.' (33:18-20)⁶⁹¹ As Alter notes, in purchasing land, 'as with Abraham at Hebron', Jacob is 'making a claim to permanent residence.'⁶⁹² 'Whether properly characterized as immigrant or refugee,' Peterson writes, 'the patrilineage of Terah has left its homeland, entered a new one, and prospered.'⁶⁹³

For Janet Donohoe, 'homecomings bring us into relation with our own mortality',⁶⁹⁴ and just as Jacob's occurs, he is met with such a reminder. Whilst the group is still 'some distance from Ephrath', Rachel dies giving birth to her second son, Benjamin (35:16-18). This birth, mid-journey and between homes, recalls those of Genesis 16 and *Beloved*. Her death initiates a return to the site encountered at the end of Sarah's story in the previous chapter: the grave.

⁶⁸⁵ W. Janzen (1994), quoted by Hobbs, p.5.

⁶⁸⁶ Hobbs, p.18.

⁶⁸⁷ Rabow, p.8 - Alter has earlier described Abraham's family as immigrants (Alter, p.54).

⁶⁸⁸ Alter, p.150.

⁶⁸⁹ Ostriker (1994), p.96.

⁶⁹⁰ Alter, p.188.

⁶⁹¹ With this name, Claus Westermann has argued that Jacob 'marks his taking up residence in Canaan by subsuming the Canaanite sky god [to] "the God of the people of Israel."' - Alter, p.188.

⁶⁹² Ibid.

⁶⁹³ Peterson, p.14

⁶⁹⁴ Janet Donohoe 'Coming Home and Places of Mourning', in Boscaljon, ed. *Resisting the Place of Belonging* (2013), pp.171-179, p.171.

As Jacob ‘end[s] up preferring the traditional burial place’ at Machpelah, ‘to being buried as an outsider, on the road, with Rachel’,⁶⁹⁵ she ends up ‘buried alone’, ‘at the border of the Promised Land’.⁶⁹⁶ There are connections between this episode and that of the stolen Gods: Miller, for example, analyses graves as a ‘[genre] of object’ as part of ‘material culture’.⁶⁹⁷ Furthermore, the importance of burial sites to ‘returned migrants’, even in modernity, is widely attested to. For example, discussing Heather Horst’s work on ‘Jamaican migrants returning to their homeland’, and in particular their ‘highly elaborate funerals’, Daniel Miller writes:

it is only in death [...] interred in the Jamaican earth itself, that the final return [...] is successfully completed.⁶⁹⁸

Donohoe has also written about ‘the work that cemeteries do in mediating homecomings’.⁶⁹⁹ At the close of the chapter, Jacob returns to his father Isaac in Hebron, who dies and is buried by both of his sons (35:27-9) in a second elaboration of the burial-site/home idea. If ‘cemeteries serve to remind us of [...] our temporary stay on this earth’,⁷⁰⁰ then the ubiquitous presence of burial sites in the narratives of both Abraham and Jacob’s families is yet another dimension of the biblical text’s emphasis on temporary dwelling. As Pardes notes, ‘[we] never learn whether or not [Rachel and Leah’s] move into the house of Israel brought about a change in their sense of estrangement. Rachel’s death on the way to Bethlehem may in fact point to the contrary.’⁷⁰¹ Yet Rachel was able to exercise creativity in shaping a diasporic home (embodied by the tent-form) along the journey, just as, in Parker’s words, ‘the daughters

⁶⁹⁵ Pardes, p.74.

⁶⁹⁶ Rabow, p.20 and p.70 respectively.

⁶⁹⁷ Daniel Miller, ‘A Porous Vessel’ in Daniel Miller, *The Comfort of Things* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), pp.32-45, p.42.

⁶⁹⁸ Miller, ‘Home and Homeland’, in *The Comfort of Things*, pp.73-82, pp.77-78.

⁶⁹⁹ Boscaljon, ‘Introduction’, p.5.

⁷⁰⁰ Donohoe ‘Coming Home’, p.172.

⁷⁰¹ Pardes, ‘The Book of Ruth’ p.115 - In connection with this, Pardes sees ‘the return to the Promised Land’ itself as a patriarchal value - Pardes, p.101.

of Roberts's text ultimately attempt to rebuild the house that they inherit to make it a home they can inhabit.⁷⁰²

Leaving the tents

In the story of Jacob's family, we find a final struggle to make a home on the earth. Again, the home is an imagined and material space, mobile and changeable. Much drama unfolds within the domestic space in these chapters, from re-appropriated blessings and misplaced wives, to hidden household gods. Here, home-based acts change family structures. Zornberg talks of a 'theme of change' in these chapters, 'of manipulation of [...] material'.⁷⁰³ Through moments such as Esau hovering hungrily over Jacob's stove-pot, or Leah and Rachel's haggling over the mandrakes, we also gain more of an understanding of 'the material textures and rhythms of daily life'⁷⁰⁴ in an ancient Israelite setting. The importance of the senses in the stories of Jacob's family perhaps signals a materialist turn in the biblical text.

On an imaginative level, the 'home' in this text is that to which Jacob longs to return, and he does finally achieve a 'homecoming'. Yet, as Rabow words it, Jacob's 'family's journey back from Haran is more than a simple return to Jacob's homeland in Canaan'.⁷⁰⁵ He sets out purposefully for home, but the journey is long and dangerous. This is foreshadowed in Jacob's name itself, which as Zornberg notes, 'derives from the root *akov* - crooked, indirect'.⁷⁰⁶ Jacob's 'longing for home' is complicated by Rachel's theft of the household gods, an act through which she looks back to her former home and 'articulate[s]' her family's 'collective identities'.⁷⁰⁷ As in *Paradise*, the past cannot be forgotten.

In *Daughters of the House*, Plummer writes, 'women are firmly in possession of the domestic sphere',⁷⁰⁸ and the same arguably applies to Jacob's tents. This begins, of course, with

⁷⁰² Parker, p.171.

⁷⁰³ Zornberg, p.151.

⁷⁰⁴ Rita Felski, 'Introduction' *New Literary History*, Volume 33, Number 4 (Autumn 2002), pp. 607-622, p. 620.

⁷⁰⁵ Rabow, p.137.

⁷⁰⁶ Zornberg, p.153.

⁷⁰⁷ Savaş, p.335.

⁷⁰⁸ Plummer, p.70.

Rebekah's behind-the-scenes manoeuvres, but continues with Leah's mandrake-haggling and Rachel's concealment of her father's divine figures. Whilst the patriarchs negotiate wider geographical ownership and legitimacy, their female counterparts change history from within the domestic space itself; the fact that this is the tent, a moveable, adaptable structure, may be an integral part of this.⁷⁰⁹

For instance, Nancy N. Knipe has conducted ethnographic research in women's tent-spaces. Following an earthquake in Turkey in 1999, Knipe documented everyday life in 'tent villages' constructed in Izmit, photographing quotidian activities such as 'women washing clothes at an outdoor faucet' and 'a woman peeling potatoes in front of her tent...'⁷¹⁰ Her initial assessment, that '[t]he tent village seems to be a woman's world', was 'reinforced' when Knipe was 'introduced to the woman's tent'.⁷¹¹ This she describes as a 'bright [space]', where 'plates of sweets and glasses of tea'⁷¹² are served, in an image of hospitality which recalls those in Genesis. What Knipe found was that '[i]n the close quarters of the tent village,' the Turkish women's 'lives [were] more communal', and that they '[had] a much larger role in the social structure of the tent city than they did in their former communities.'⁷¹³ Knipe's research concerns a type of temporary home used in a time of natural disaster, akin to the ark: both in her research and the narratives of Jacob's family, 'diasporic homes are sites of both containment *and* potential liberation for women'.⁷¹⁴ Yet the women's tent in Izmit, constructed in the context of the displacement of families, belies a simplistic, feminist-utopian reading of these female spaces. The women Knipe met may have found a safe space for themselves, but on leaving the tent they are once again displaced people who lack a stable, secure domestic footing. The home-space is always fragile.

⁷⁰⁹ Elsewhere in the Bible, women like Jael (Judges) and Judith (the book of Judith) use the tent as a setting for dramatic, political acts.

⁷¹⁰ Nancy Nye Knipe, 'Women of the Tent' *Women's Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 31, No. 3/4, Women and Development: Rethinking Policy and Reconceptualizing Practice (Fall - Winter, 2003), pp.261-268, p.262

⁷¹¹ Ibid.

⁷¹² Ibid.

⁷¹³ Ibid., p.264.

⁷¹⁴ Blunt and Dowling, p.214, my italics.

In this biblical narrative, ‘the peculiar tensions associated with homecomings’,⁷¹⁵ as Boscaljon puts it, are wrought large. These tensions are found in Jacob’s complex leave-taking from Laban, his nocturnal wrestling match and the nervously conducted approach to Esau,⁷¹⁶ as well as Rachel’s secret appropriation of objects from her former home. Her act, read alongside contemporary accounts of ‘hybrid home-making’,⁷¹⁷ proved vital to understanding the unique way in which ‘home’ is mobile in this final narrative. Finally, her death links back to Sarah’s, and all the rootlessness that lies in between these two women’s stories, partially counter-acted in the material fixedness of the grave-site. Rather than ‘roots’, Blunt and Dowling suggest, we might think of its homonym ‘routes’; the latter word, they add, turns our attention to ‘more mobile, multiple and transcultural geographies of home’,⁷¹⁸ and this is what we find throughout Genesis. In the story of Jacob, Leah and Rachel, acts of home-making are developed in response to this condition, with the ‘home’ once more proving integral to the workings of the biblical text.

⁷¹⁵ Boscaljon is concerned, specifically, with the ‘uncanny’ nature of homecomings: ‘In German,’ he writes, ‘an etymological bridge connects home with the uncanny - *heim* with what is *unheimlich*.’ - ‘Introduction’, p.1-2.

⁷¹⁶ Preparing to meet Esau, Jacob divides his caravan ‘into two camps’ (Alter p.178), carefully arranging his wives and their children (32:7-21).

⁷¹⁷ Blunt and Dowling, p.258.

⁷¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.199.

Conclusion

*Dwelling, then, brings us home*⁷¹⁹

‘We are ‘at home’ [...] In every place on earth, if only we carry everything within us’⁷²⁰

Here, in a ‘homecoming’ of sorts, my thesis ends, having investigated ‘what it means to make a home’⁷²¹ in Genesis, and what dwelling on the earth entails for the first inhabitants of the Judeo-Christian narrative. Blunt and Dowling’s work led me to consider the ‘home’ as both an imaginative and material space, so I have given attention to both ‘the static material structure of the house’⁷²² in Genesis, and its role as a symbolic space. I have, as a result, traced the material and imaginative geography of dwellings in the first book of the Bible, which takes as its central drama its characters’ struggle, as Gorringe puts it, ‘to call the world ‘home’’.⁷²³ Beginning with philosophical understandings of ‘dwelling’, and incorporating geographical critiques of the home-space, I have read the biblical narrative alongside its literary and midrashic intertexts as a way of drawing out the tension in certain episodes. Well-known episodes in Genesis are, I would argue, better understood within this thematic framework of ‘making a home’; for instance, the significance of Rachel’s theft during Jacob’s homecoming is better understood through the findings of migrant studies and material culture, as well as intertextual literary resonances.

The homes of Genesis are mobile in both an imaginative and material sense, embodied in temporary structures such as the ark, and Abraham’s nomadic tents. These built forms are ‘contingent responses’,⁷²⁴ to use Hollis’ words, to the environments the characters find themselves in, whether Noah and his wife’s diluvial setting or Abraham and Sarah’s hostile one. These characters respond to the difficulty of dwelling with movement, creativity and

⁷¹⁹ Clingerman, discussing Heidegger’s writing, p.42

⁷²⁰ Etty Hillesum *Etty, a diary, 1941-43* Introduced by J.G. Gaarlandt, Trans. Arnold J. Pomerans (London: Triad/Grafton Books, 1985), p.227.

⁷²¹ Daniel Boscaljon, ‘Introduction’ to *Resisting the Place of Belonging: Uncanny Homecomings in Religion, Narrative and the Arts* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2013), p.2

⁷²² Cieraad, p.5

⁷²³ Gorringe, p.23.

⁷²⁴ Hollis, p.6

vigour, and their homes are constructed from many elements: human conflict, hospitality towards strangers and hostility to others, as well as hastily cooked stews and stolen gods. In sum, across Genesis we find characters ‘feeling at home or not at home, at home in more than one place, or homeless’,⁷²⁵ and these universal experiences lend the Hebrew Bible a strange relevance even today.

Furthermore, the geographer Andrew Gorman-Murray suggests that ‘[home] is not bound to a pre-ordained site’:⁷²⁶ in Genesis, ‘home’ is bound to the earth that God creates in chapter one, but within this global scale, it is boundless. Blunt and Dowling’s recent comments hold true even in the context of an ancient text:

the home is both material and imaginative, is situated within a nexus of power and identity, and is mobilised and recast over a wide range of scales. Rather than view the home as static, fixed and bounded, the home is in process, shaped by home-making practices, and embedded within wider social, political [and] cultural [...] relations⁷²⁷

In my first chapter, I re-examined the Hebrew Bible’s first protagonists’ attempts to live in/‘preserve’ a home built for them. Their exile from this space is not a singular, unique event, but is repeated in different forms throughout the early narratives of Genesis. This takes its most dramatic and memorable shape in the narrative of Noah’s ark, a highly symbolic structure built from such conflicting properties as safety and imprisonment. Here, humans began to ‘construct’ as well as ‘preserve’, in a more elaborate form of dwelling. Questions of rootedness and safety persisted in the story of Abraham, Sarah and Hagar: in this family’s nomadic lifestyle, hospitality and hostility restlessly co-exist. Finally, in the narrative of Jacob’s family, further glimpses of daily life make the biblical home material and tactile. Once more, characters struggle to live in a home they have not built themselves, but after an arduous journey Jacob, Rachel and Leah’s story does end with a ‘homecoming’ of sorts. Across these segments of the Hebrew Bible, we encounter ‘the migrant, the exile, and the

⁷²⁵ Blunt and Dowling’s phrase - p.196.

⁷²⁶ Andrew Gorman-Murray, quoted by Blunt and Dowling, p.136.

⁷²⁷ Blunt and Dowling, p.265.

nomad'⁷²⁸ in the shape of well-known figures named Abraham, Eve and Sarah who each experience the difficulty of dwelling in their own way. We also see that, as the anthropologist John R. Short has written,

The home is a nodal point in a whole series of polarities: journey-arrival; rest-motion; sanctuary-outside; family-community; [...] inside-outside; private-public...⁷²⁹

The Hebrew Bible thus 'destablize[s] a sense of home as a stable origin and unsettle[s] the fixity and singularity of a place called home',⁷³⁰ as the persistent theme of rootedness - or lack of it - demonstrates. The pull between these ideals gives rise to the tension between 'being home and not being home'⁷³¹ that I have repeatedly examined. Allison Weir, influenced by the writing of Martin and Mohanty, argues that 'we need to *live on the tension between home and not home*',⁷³² and that is what the characters of Genesis are forced to do. '[A]ll homes', Boscaljon argues, 'rest on foundations that - when we contemplate them - *are unsettling*',⁷³³ and the homes of Genesis also rest on repeated stories of unsettlement. Whilst Gorringer takes note of what he calls a '[christian] tradition of unsettlement',⁷³⁴ Boscaljon has wondered about 'the theological possibilities awakened by having our habitat unsettled.'⁷³⁵ We find a glimpse of these possibilities in the early narratives of Genesis.

Using an inter-disciplinary range of research on the 'home', home-making practices and the concept of 'dwelling', I have constructed a critical and imaginative account of the biblical home in Genesis, as it is embodied in four different forms: the garden of Eden, Noah's ark, and the family tents of Abraham and Jacob. Throughout this thesis, I have drawn thoughts on 'home' from literary and biblical criticism, geography, anthropology and philosophy.

⁷²⁸ A title of an essay by Braidotti - Rosi Braidotti, "The Migrant, the Exile, and the Nomad" *Women's Studies International Forum* 15, No.1 (1992), pp.7-10.

⁷²⁹ Short, John Rennie 'Forward' to Irene Cieraad, ed. *At Home: An Anthropology of Domestic Space* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1999), pp.ix-x, p.x

⁷³⁰ Blunt and Dowling, p.198.

⁷³¹ Martin and Mohanty, p.90.

⁷³² Weir, p.7, my italics.

⁷³³ Boscaljon, p.4.

⁷³⁴ Gorringer, p.25.

⁷³⁵ Boscaljon, 'Introduction', p.3.

Similarly, biblical dwellings are constructed from a mix of materials: the birth of children, divine instructions and journeys, dreams, homemaking acts and so on. The investigation of the concept of ‘home’ in Genesis contributes to the study of this space more widely, as well as re-framing familiar biblical themes such as identity, family and community. The inclusion of sociological and anthropological ethnography, specifically, has formed a link between these ancient stories of dwelling and more contemporary accounts, an important aspect of studying such a ubiquitous and transhistorical concept.

The biblical home has also become an intertextual structure through the use of literary and midrashic intertexts which re-imagine the ‘unhomely’ experiences of certain characters, and draw out tensions in acts such as home-unmaking or homecomings. ‘[W]e rediscover possibilities of home’, Boscaljon suggests, ‘through the imaginative structures provided by narratives.’⁷³⁶ In Genesis, the biblical ‘home’ is often unhomely for women. Literally or symbolically banished from biblical homes, characters like Eve, Noah’s wife and Hagar are resettled in literary and midrashic intertexts. In these texts, the structures of Genesis become frameworks for reimagining the ‘home’ and rectifying its injustices: our understanding of ‘the troubled history of domestic spaces’⁷³⁷ is sharpened, and we remember ‘the political importance of the home as a site of history and memory’.⁷³⁸ Heidegger ends his essay by suggesting that ‘mortals [...] *must ever learn to dwell*’,⁷³⁹ and many echo this idea: Jesser argues that ‘creating spaces in which to live is always a process, and never a state’,⁷⁴⁰ whilst Boscaljon writes of ‘[t]he continual creative effort required in making homes and making ourselves at home’;⁷⁴¹ lastly, Baxter and Brickell remind us that ‘dwelling and belonging “at home” is rarely a completed endeavor [...]’⁷⁴² Each of these is true in Genesis, wherein dwelling is a learning curve, the ‘making of home’ is an ongoing, difficult process and home-making persistently calls for creativity and adaptability, as it still does today.

⁷³⁶ Boscaljon, ‘Introduction’, p.3.

⁷³⁷ Jesser, p.326.

⁷³⁸ Blunt and Dowling, p.33.

⁷³⁹ Heidegger, p.363, his italics.

⁷⁴⁰ Jesser, p.327.

⁷⁴¹ Boscaljon, ‘Introduction’, p.3.

⁷⁴² Baxter and Brickell, p.136.

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