

Economies of Fear: Menstrual Blood and Psi as War-Machines in 1970s Horror

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The menstrual body has both culturally and historically been located as one of consternation and conflict. No more so is this evident than in the horror genre and particularly in the 1960s and 1970s conflation of Christian and militaristic anxieties with the menstrual young girl and the paranormal. A remarkable number of novels and films which centre on manifestations of the paranormal – including psychic abilities, telekinesis and possession – were produced between the late 1960s and 1970s; these include, for example, *The Power* (1968), *The Exorcist* (1973), *Carrie* (1976), *The Spell* (1977), *The Initiation of Sarah* (1978), *The Fury* (1978) and *The Medusa Touch* (1978). In this article, I wish to articulate a link between the menstruant, the paranormal, the State and military concerns. I will argue that the menstruant in horror is an anti-Oedipal war-machine. As Robert Deuchars explains, the war machine is better thought of as 'a politico-philosophical project' or as "a war of becoming over being" (Deuchars, 2011, p. 1). The young menstrual-Psi warriors of 1960s and 1970s horror literature and cinema generate positive lines of flight, activating resistance to gender and capitalist politics. However, in order demonstrate the resistance of the leaky, menstrual body, I will first investigate why the 1970s were ripe for the production of literary and cinematic texts which brought together the connected, yet seemingly disparate strands of feminism, the body, medicine, science, capitalism, the military and Psi research.

Feminism, Capitalism and Psi Research

The relationship between the female body and the State took a seismic technological shift in the 1960s and 1970s. It was the era of Women's Liberation, characterised by events such as the publication of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963 and Shulamith Firestone's *The Dialectic of Sex* in 1970;

the approval of the contraceptive pill for use in America in 1960; and the first IVF or test-tube baby in 1978. Such socio-cultural and political shifts, alongside technological advances, were changing traditional gender roles and the structure of the Oedipal family unit. As Maria Cancian and Deborah Reed observe, marriage rates have fallen over time with one of “the steepest declines in age-specific marriage percentages occurring between 1970 and 1980 and between 1980 and 1990, with more modest declines after 1990. For example, among women ages 40 to 44, the share married fell from 82 percent in 1970 to 70 percent in 1990 and then to 64 percent in 2006” (2009, p. 22). Unsurprisingly, anxieties pertaining to the family, the female body and reproduction were reflected in horror cinema of the time. The punishment and the abjection of the female body became a mainstay of horror cinema in these decades. For example, this was seen in the treatment of the body of the mother in films such as Roman Polanski’s *Rosemary’s Baby* (1968) which is often read as a reaction to the thalidomide scares of the 1960s (Skal, 1994, pp. 290-291) or in the sheer violence exacted on the female body in films such as *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (1974) and the more exploitative *Last House on the Left* (1972) and *I Spit on Your Grave* (1978). It could be argued that these films reflect an attitude or deep-held belief that this generation of young women who were now claiming personal, sexual and political freedoms and equalities outside of the domestic sphere somehow deserved to be punished.

What also becomes increasingly clear in the 1970s is the link between disintegrating Oedipal models of the family, Oedipal desire and capitalist production. As Tamsin Lorraine argues, “‘Oedipalisation’ is a contemporary form of social repression which reduces the forms that desire takes – and thus the connections that desire makes – to those that sustain the social formation of capitalism” (2010, p. 189). If the reproductive body is a bio-political construct of capitalist, Oedipal production, it can therefore be argued that the menstruant is anti-capitalist. As Emily Martin writes, “menstruation not only carries with it the connotation of a productive system that has failed to produce, it also carries the idea of production gone awry, making products of no use, not to specification, unsalable, wasted scrap” (1997, p. 29).

Alongside the oil crisis of 1973 and the collapse of the international gold standard, the US military found itself in a difficult position in the 1970s as technological advances which had secured strategic

success for the Allied Forces in the Second World War saw a reversal of fortunes. Xu Jin argues that the development of "anti-tank and anti-aircraft weaponry after World War II significantly decreased the superiority of offensive weaponry, restoring the ODB [offence/defence balance]. Unable to gain a clear technological advantage, the United States and the Soviet Union sought to strengthen their respective positions by stockpiling armaments and firepower" (p. 186). Moreover, in relation to Cold War politics he points out that "in order to compensate for NATO's inferiority in Europe, the United States upheld a ruthless strategy of attrition" (p. 186). As a direct result of such policies the 1970s saw the Warsaw Pact countries gain an advantage in terms of firepower and, 'had they elected to conduct a large-scale armored assault, NATO would simply not have been able to hold them off' (Xu Jin, 186). He goes on to make the point, that although "America's failure in Europe was entirely theoretical ... its failure in Vietnam was very real" (p. 187). It was this type of military anxiety and competition that propelled another aspect of Cold War politics, the Space Race, which saw the Russians launch the first satellite, *Sputnik 1*, into space in 1957, followed by America's symbolically and technologically significant achievement of putting the first man on the moon in 1969. Again the Russian's took the lead in 1971 when they launched the first space station. It was not until 1975 that Space Race tensions eased when both the US and the Russians jointly collaborated on the Apollo-Soyuz Test project.

If the above can be termed the outer stratum or public face of 1970s politics, economics and the military, I would now like to proffer what I will argue is the covert "epi" or para-stratum of the State machinic-apparatus. As Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari note, alongside Imperial or State science there coexists what they term "Nomad" or "Minor Science": "[it] would seem that a whole nomad science develops eccentrically, one that is very different from the royal or imperial sciences" (2004a, p. 399). Furthermore, "this nomad science is continually 'barred,' or inhibited, or banned by the demands and condition of State science" (2004a, p. 399). They argue that "if it opposes vague essences and the operative geometry of the trait, it does so not because the content of these sciences is inexact or imperfect, or because of their magic or initiatory character, but because they imply a division of labour opposed to the norms of the state" (2004a, p. 406). As such, research into parapsychology as a military weapon was covertly being carried on alongside more traditional and metric models of scientific investigation.

The high level of mutual suspicion between America and Russia was significant in Cold War politics from the 1950s onwards. This mistrust resulted in an intensification of operations by the intelligence services on both sides and the obscure field of parapsychology in espionage received a significant injection of funding as a result. The explosion of interest in the possibilities of parapsychology for military intelligence came about after a series of inaccurate information leaks, the first being an article in a French newspaper in 1959 which reported a successful remote telepathic card-guessing experiment between an American research institution in Maryland and one of its submarines, *The Nautilus*. The Soviets were shocked by America's lead and in response increased their efforts into the military applicability of psychic research (Kripal, 319).

In a similar chain of events at a conference in Moscow in 1968, American scientists were deliberately confronted with film footage of Soviet successes in psychic research. As Elmer R. Gruber writes in *Psychic Wars*:

They were shown the exciting experiments in psychokinesis conducted by Nina Kulagina, and even permitted to 'smuggle' a copy of the film to the west. The Russian parapsychologist Eduard Naumov reported to the conference that the Red Army had successfully 'repeated' the Nautilus experiments. These and many even less verifiable – and therefore all the more spectacular stories were collected in a book by Sheila Ostrander and Lynn Schroeder, and the book, in turn, set off nervous reactions among Americans about the psi advances of the Soviets. (1999, p. 21)

Similarly, W. Adam Mandelbaum notes:

The intelligence services were concerned about a psychic gap between the United States and the Soviet Bloc. CIA reports warned of Russian dominance in the field, and books like *Psychic Discoveries behind the Iron Curtain* were telling tales of super psychics, psychotronic weapons, and other science-fiction-sounding wonders in the Warsaw Pact world. (2000, p. 126)

Published in 1970, *Psychic Discoveries Behind the Iron Curtain* carried reviews which fed the frenzy for information about the link between military intelligence and the use of psychic abilities for espionage. Above the book's title ran a review from the *Los Angeles Times* which stated "The most important book about ESP research and the validity of the occult tradition yet to appear" (Freedland, 1970).

In 1972, the American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) responded by founding the Psi research programme at the Stanford Research Institute (SRI) to investigate the possibilities of Psi for military purposes. The programme was set to last for 23 years. The subject under study was not whether Psi existed or not but rather how it could be used in intelligence operations to penetrate the Iron Curtain. The secrecy surrounding these experiments undoubtedly contributed to the overall mythologisation of military psychic spying. As Mandelbaum notes of SRI:

The research at SRI was not the first time that the government spent money on psychic research to determine its utility as a military and espionage tool. It was, however the most sustained effort by the United States to incorporate psychic spying in its arsenal of intelligence collection techniques. The research was to continue, and other laboratories were to make their contributions in the field of remote-viewing research, but it all started in Menlo Park, California at SRI. (2000, p. 126)

At the same time as research into remote viewing was being conducted, the military and government also created ARPA (Advanced Research Project Agency) in 1958, which became known as DARPA in 1972 (Defense Advanced Research Project Agency). This was initially a Cold War response to Russian advances in space technology and the launch of Sputnik 1. However, its remit soon expanded to include research into early internet development and military weaponry advances which included the stealth fighter and M16 assault rifle. As one DARPA publication states, its

primary mission is to foster advanced technologies and systems that create 'revolutionary' advantages for the U.S. military. ... DARPA program managers are encouraged to challenge existing approaches and to seek results rather than just

explore ideas. Hence, in addition to supporting technology and component development, DARPA has funded the integration of large-scale 'systems of systems' in order to demonstrate what we call today 'disruptive capabilities'. (Van Atta, 2008, p. 20)

Even if DARPA is again a more public front to the US government's military research, it is its "disruptive capabilities" that underpin the relationship between Imperial or State Science and nomadic science. Given the cultural sensibility of the 1970s, it seems unsurprising that yet another para-scientific institute was founded by astronaut Edgar J. Mitchell in 1973 to investigate what he considered to be the next frontier: human consciousness itself. The Noetics Institute, as it was called, is still operational today.

The conflation of the concepts outlined thus far – that is, the relationship between feminism, the State, capitalism and its para/psi military – becomes especially apparent in considering the militaristic approach to the body of the young menstrual girl in horror in the 1970s. The most infamous menstrual horror texts of the 1970s are William Peter Blatty's *The Exorcist* (1971), Stephen King's ubiquitous high school narrative *Carrie* (1974) and John Farris' *The Fury* (1976). Each of these novels was further adapted for the screen: *The Exorcist*, directed by William Friedkin in 1973, and both *Carrie* and *The Fury*, directed by Brian de Palma in 1976 and 1978 respectively.

The Exorcist tells the story of Regan MacNeil, a twelve-year-old girl who is possessed by a demon who calls himself Captain Howdy, an ancient evil also known as Pazuzu. With the release of Friedkin's film in the US on 26 December 1973, it was the first time in mainstream cinema that audiences were assailed with the desecration of the home, the family, the church and, perhaps most shockingly, the child (Kermode, 1999, p. 9). The young all-American girl Regan MacNeil, played by Linda Blair, becomes a depraved monster who urinates on the carpet of her home, vomits on the clergy, batters and humiliates her mother (actress Ellen Burstyn), spouts tirades of obscenities and blasphemes religious artifacts.

Carrie, Stephen King's first published novel and the book that launched his career, tells the story of a high school girl called Carrie White, the daughter of a religiously fanatical mother. A social outcast at

school because of her strange beliefs and dowdy clothes, she is the target of constant bullying by her classmates. However, she also possesses mild telekinetic powers which powerfully re-emerge with the onset of menstruation. Carrie's alienation and victimisation culminates with her using her powers to destroy her fellow students at her high school prom, wreaking havoc on the town on her way home, and lastly murdering her mother. The film version was released in 1976, directed by Brian de Palma and starring Sissy Spacek as Carrie, Piper Laurie as her fanatical mother and Amy Irving as her classmate Susan Snell.

Finally, John Farris' *The Fury*, published in 1976, is a novel of assassins, psychic twins and military black operations. Peter Sandza's psychic son Robin has been abducted by a secret military organisation named MORG (an acronym for Multiphastic Operations Research Group), which conducts experiments towards the use of psychic powers as a weapon in warfare. As Peter searches for his son he discovers Gillian Belaver, Robin's psychic twin, who is also under threat of abduction by this covert military organisation. *The Fury* was adapted for the screen in 1978, again directed by Brian DePalma, with the screenplay written by Farris. Kirk Douglas starred in the film as the renegade father in search of his son, with central character Gillian played by Amy Irving who also appeared in DePalma's *Carrie*. Since the publication of the novel and the film's release, Farris has followed up with three sequels to the original novel: *The Fury and the Terror* (1999), *The Fury and the Power* (2003) and *Avenging Fury* (2008).

Not coincidentally, these menstrual horror texts demonstrate a female bio-politics that is negotiated on the edges of the relationship between the female body and fringe science (Psi), where gender politics, Oedipal desire and capitalism are militarised. I will first argue that the Psi-menstruant in horror is a war-machine external to the State. With the onset of menstrual and Psi "affects", the young protagonists of these texts find themselves in a schizo-anarchic conflict with the State and its Paternalistic Laws of the Father(s) and thus their synthetic or secondary menstrual objective becomes war. The menstruant's weapons are projectiles – blood, vomit, telekinesis and psychokinetic affects are extraneously emitted and irrupted. It is at this point of menstrual-morphosis and menstrual/psi irruption that the State appropriates the body of the young girl, compelling her disruptive, leaky body to conform to State's paternal authority.

Menstrual-Morphosis and the Menstrual/Psi War-Machine in 1970s Horror

As Paul Patton explains, the War Machine “has little to do with actual war”; instead, “the real object of Deleuze and Guattari’s war-machine concept is not war but the conditions of mutation and change” (1984, p. 110). Most importantly, the war-machine is exterior to the State apparatus; in contrast to the army or military, it “is of another species, another nature, another origin than the State apparatus” (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004b, p. 350). The war machine is nomadic, molecular and rhizomic where war is not its primary goal. For example, Deleuze and Guattari make the point that the avant-garde or similar creative movements have artistic production as their primary aim and their disruptive resistance to the State as secondary. It is not until the State appropriates the war machine that it changes in nature and function. They argue that “it is at one and the same time that the State apparatus appropriates a war machine, that the war machine takes war as its object, and that war becomes subordinated to the aims of the State” (2004a, p. 461).

The first objective of the menstrual war-machine is menstruation. “The menstrual body as war-machine is a ‘hydraulic’ model of ‘becoming’, a menstrual-morphosis”. As Mary Douglas notes, menstrual blood is a viscous substance “half-way between solid and liquid. It is like a cross-section in a process of change” (2005, p. 38). In *The Exorcist*, *Carrie* and *The Fury*, the bodies of the young female protagonists Regan, Carrie and Gillian, aged 12, 16, and 14 respectively, are in the throes of menstruation and puberty. Although Regan is never directly referred to as menstrual, she is the ultimate oozing, leaky body as she publicly urinates, vomits green bile and bloodily masturbates with a crucifix. Carrie is the public menstruant who is told to “plug it up” and Gillian is the teenager who makes menstrual those with whom she comes into contact. Menstrual-morphosis is also a “becoming-woman” and, as becomings can only be minoritarian, that involves a move away from normative phallogocentric positions of power. Moreover, the girl occupies a unique position in relation to “becoming”. The girl is a threshold: she

is neither a representation nor the starting point for becoming-(a)-woman. Rather, the girl is the force of desire that breaks off particles from the molar compositions that constitute us as women and men, young and old, heterosexual, homosexual or bisexual,

creating lines of rampant propagation and contagion [and a] diversity of conjugated becomings. (Sotirin, 2005, p. 108)

As Deleuze and Guattari write of the war machine, “rather than being a theory of solids treating fluids as a special case; ancient atomism is inseparable from flows, and flux is reality itself, or consistency” (2004a, p. 398). They continue noting that the model in question is one of “becoming and heterogeneity, as opposed to the stable, the eternal, the identical, the constant” (2004a, p. 398). They point out that the “*problemata* are the war machine itself and are inseparable from inclined planes, passages to the limit, vortices, and projections. It would seem that the war machine is projected into an abstract knowledge formally different from the one that doubles the State apparatus” (2004a, p. 399). Moreover, this vortical model “operates in an open space throughout which things-flows are distributed, rather than plotting out a closed space for linear and solid things” (2004a, p. 399). Thus, menstrual-becoming or menstrual-morphosis involves what Deleuze and Guattari describe as “deformations, transmutations, passages to the limit, operations in which each figure describes an ‘event’ much more than an essence; ... the problem is affective and is inseparable from the metamorphoses, generations and creations within science” (2004a, p. 399).

As I have already pointed out, menstruation in 1970s horror is conflated with the para-scientific or the paranormal. Therefore, I would argue that Psi phenomena in these texts are menstrual affects linking what Deleuze and Guattari distinguish as the difference between noology and corporeality (*zoe*), and epistemology and the body (*bios*) – that is, the difference between nomadic science and Imperial or State science. The noological, menstrual body as war machine can be understood to be itinerant, schizoid and of nomadic science, whereas the striated menstrual body is instead coded and appropriated by the apparatuses of the State-machine.

Schizo-Anarchy and the Menstrual War-Machine: Our Father(s) Deliver Us from Evil

Political sovereignty – or the State, as Deleuze and Guattari argue – has two heads: the magician king and the jurist priest (2004a, p. 388) Although, these two forms of State control are oppositional, they operate as a sovereign unity. It is for this reason that the *The Exorcist*, *Carrie* and *The Fury* are

populated by father figures of paternalistic Law and cultural prohibition. The Church (Jurist Priests) and the military (despotic Magician Kings) operate not as binary distinctions but instead function in order to secure, contain, then occupy and territorialise the leaky border of menstruation, a *terrain vague* of intense, fluid *event-affect*. These paternal law keepers intervene to curtail the schizo-anarchic menstruants of Regan, Carrie and Gillian who, in a secondary or synthetic flow, are in anti-Oedipal conflict or collision with the State.

The menstruants in these novels and films are set against a changing socio-political and cultural landscape. *The Exorcist* suggests the breakdown of the family, the lack of respect for religious traditions, the destruction of the home, all issues that were deeply troubling the conservative element of America, a world described by the police detective Kinderman in the novel as “having a massive nervous breakdown” (Blatty, 1998, p. 132). Stephen King describes the 1960s and 1970s in a similar manner, arguing that the gap between parents and children was more than generational. Instead, he writes, the “two generations seemed, like the San Andreas Fault, to be moving along opposing plates of social and cultural conscience, commitment, and definitions of civilized behaviour itself. The result was not so much an earthquake as it was a timequake” (1993, p. 167). Moreover, he describes *The Exorcist*, both the novel and film, as finely honed focusing points “for that entire youth explosion that took place in the late sixties and early seventies” (1993, pp. 196–7) and links his composition of *Carrie* to emerging feminist politics: “writing the book in 1973 and only out of college three years, I was fully aware of what Women’s Liberation implied for me and others of my sex. The book is, in its more adult implications, an uneasy masculine shrinking from a future of female equality” (1993, p. 170).

Contiguous with the novels of King and Blatty, Farris’ novel presents the reader with a rhizomatic, decentralised socio-political and cultural backdrop. Pointing explicitly to the breakdown and dissolution of social ideologies and practices and the subsequent disorientation and dislocation of young people – Avery Bellaver, Gillian’s father and the novel’s resident anthropologist – describes the world as one where

taboo is breaking down and family groups are fragmented, acceptance and approval are concentrated in highly structured peer-groups where the rules are constantly

changing, dictated by fashion, by the, ah, soul-destroying perversities of our merchandisers. ... Eventually emotional seams give way and our shamans appear unequal to the task of integrating the frail and the fallen into what is, essentially, a societal madhouse. (Farris, 1978, pp. 12-13)

The breaking down of taboo, family units and consumerism all contribute to chaos as emotional stitches begin to unravel.

This schizophrenic nature of society further reflects a conflict between capitalist production and Oedipal structures of desire. For both Freud and Lacan desire is predicated on lack. Conversely for Deleuze and Guattari the schizoid is incapable of experiencing lack; instead desire produces the real and creates new worlds and possibilities. The Deleuzio-Guattarian schizoid scrambles and decodes the Oedipal signifying chain. For Deleuze and Guattari schizophrenia is:

the exterior limit of capitalism itself or the conclusion of its deepest tendency, but that capitalism only functions on condition that it inhibit this tendency, or that it push back or displace this limitHence schizophrenia is not the identity of capitalism, but on the contrary its difference, its divergence, and its death. (2004b, p. 267)

Or, as Jonah Peretti notes: "As capitalism decodes and deterritorializes it reaches a limit at which point it must artificially reterritorialize by augmenting the state apparatus, and repressive bureaucratic and symbolic regimes" (1984). He further states that "Deleuze and Guattari see the schizophrenic as capitalism's exterminating angel. For them the schizo is a radical, revolutionary, nomadic wanderer who resists all forms of oppressive power" (1984).

Regan, Carrie and Gillian can be described as schizoid, menstrual Psi-warriors. Their bodies are matter and event-affect. Demonic possession, telekinesis and telepathy are the explicit outward expression of the menstrual war-machine. The demon possessing Regan's body is multiple. He refers to himself when asked as "Nowonmai" a phonetic anagram of "I am no one" (also of "no one me", "no one may",

"I am now on", or "I am not one"). The demon is legion, suggesting the Biblical exorcism of the possessed man at Gadara. According to the Gospel of St Luke, upon meeting the man, "Jesus asked him, saying what is thy name? And he said, Legion: because many devils were entered into him" (8:30). What is presented is a legion of voices or subjects and what is expressed by the demon through the possessed body of Regan is a schizophrenic appraisal of numerous anxieties which plague the central adult characters. There is no centralised subject or "I". The possessed Regan comments on her mother's relationship with the movie director Burke Denning; insults the inadequacies of the medical profession; and needles the guilt and crisis of faith plaguing the Church as it is personified in the character of Fr. Karras.

In *Carrie*, although King's narrative centres upon the misfit and misunderstood student Carrie White, four other female characters stand out strongly and present disturbing images of femininity: her mother Margaret White, her gym teacher Miss Desjardin (renamed Miss Collins in DePalma's film) and her classmates, Susan Snell and Chris Hargenson. Mrs White is the sexually repressed, fundamentalist zealot who seeks atonement through the body of Carrie; Miss Desjardin the concerned teacher who seeks to socialise her; Sue Snell the pretty, popular girl who seeks to allay her own feelings of guilt through Carrie; and finally Chris, the rich kid, spoilt and angry, who needs a scapegoat in order to alleviate her own anxieties about her femininity and sexuality. Thus, it is possible to read Carrie as the extreme embodiment of the anxieties of her mother, Miss Desjardin, Sue and Chris pertaining to what constitutes femininity and their individual identity as women. In an apocalyptic, pyrokinetic final sequence, having fallen victim to the horror of high school conformity and banality, Carrie locks her peers inside the school's gymnasium and burns down the hall at her prom before continuing to wreak havoc on the town itself, which offers an equally depressing female future of diet pills and the Parent Teacher Association.

Farris' Gillian also embodies the contemporary anxieties of her peers. In *The Fury* he also equates menstruation and female puberty with what he describes as a morbid crisis of startling personality changes, nervous breakdowns and anti-Oedipal desires. In describing Gillian's peers, most of whom have turned fifteen, he notes that one has had 'a bona fide nervous breakdown' and another, having

discovered sex, “was carrying on a precocious affair with a twenty-three year old seminarian at General Theological” (Farris, 1978, p. 11).

It is against this schizoid socio-cultural backdrop of menstrual paranormal girls that Jurist Priests intervene to reinstate Oedipal, paternal law. As Deleuze and Guattari write,

the State has at its disposal a violence that is not channelled through war – either it uses police officers and jailers in place of warriors, has no arms and no need of them, operates by immediate, magical capture, “seizes” and “binds” preventing all combat – or, the State acquires an army, but in a way that presupposes a juridical integration of war and the organisation of a military function. (2004a, p. 388)

Thus, the menstrual-warriors or menstrual war-machine protagonists of King, Blatty and Farris are “in the position of betraying everything, including the function of the military” (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004a, p. 388). Here I wish again to make the point that menstruation is an event-affect: it is noological or *zoe* rather than *bios*, where *zoe* is understood as an affirmative life force and *bios* as the intervention of sovereign power. The menstrual war-machine suggests the potential for transformation and change on both a molecular and corporeal level, whereas the State apparatuses of medicine, the family, education, the military and the Church all seek to striate and code the body of the young girl in these texts. This is especially evident in the militaristic function of both literal and figurative priests as Christian crusaders and Paternal Law keepers who intervene to curtail the menstrual anti-Oedipal disruptions of Regan, Carrie and Gillian.

Common to each of these texts is the absence of a father figure which causes a disruption to the Oedipal triad of Father/Mother/Child. In *The Exorcist*, Chris MacNeil is in the process of divorcing her husband who is absent throughout both the novel and film. The father figure in *Carrie* is dead and it is explicitly stated in *The Fury* that Gillian’s anthropologist father is frequently away for months at a time working. The absent father disrupts the operation of desire in these texts. As I have already noted in the previous section, the schizoid aspects of these young, pubescent, menstrual girls, create the possibility for disruption and change to Western social and economic structures of capitalist desire and

consumption. As this is the underlying fear of orthodox, majoritarian discourses and apparatuses, the disrupted territory of the Oedipal family triad must be reinstated. A replacement father figure is imperative to the project of reterritorialising these menstruous bodies. The substitute father figure in these texts is religious: an actual priest (*The Exorcist*), a performative priest (*The Fury*) or an image/icon of Christ, the ultimate priest figure (*Carrie*).

According to Deleuze and Guattari the priest is one of the most insidious obstructers of desire and deterritorialisation. They argue that: Every time desire is betrayed, cursed, uprooted from its field of immanence, a priest is behind it. The priest cast the triple curse on desire: the negative law, the extrinsic rule, and the transcendent ideal. (2004a, p. 154)

They go on to point out that the 'most recent figure of the priest is the psychoanalyst, with his or her three principles: Pleasure, Death, and Reality (2004a, pp. 154–5). Furthermore, they draw attention to the curtailment and control of desire in Western culture which has been religiously extended through a philosophy based on lack and castration anxiety, desire as pleasure through discharge (masturbation) and desire as impossibility (phantasy).

It has been critically observed that in *The Exorcist*, Regan's possession coincides with paternal rejection as well as menstruation and puberty, and occurs after she overhears a phone conversation between her mother and her father who has forgotten her birthday. From this point onwards in the narrative, a precocious sexuality emerges in Regan and her use of language becomes decidedly crude and sexualised. It is also suggested that Regan is responsible for a series of desecrations in a local church: human excrement is left on the altar, a massive phallus is sculpted in clay and glued to a statue of Christ, and a text (written in Latin) is discovered, detailing "an imagined homosexual encounter involving the Blessed Virgin and Mary Magdalene" (Blatty, 1998, p. 193). These desecrations can be read as deliberate disruptions to the Oedipal holy family. Alongside Regan's sexual precociousness, desire is deterritorialised and liberated from images and signifiers of the incest taboo. Gender and sexuality are destratified and a schizophrenic polymorphic sexuality replaces heterosexual normativity.

Perhaps the most controversial scene in both the novel and film is Regan's masturbation with a crucifix. The antithetical alignment of the genitalia and the crucifix initially can be read as blasphemous, but, if read in terms of Deleuze and Guattari, it is perhaps the most positively challenging and transgressive scene in both the novel and film. Desire as controlled and inscribed by religion and the Oedipal paradigm merge and intersect until it is unclear as to whether what is happening is an act of pleasure or masochism. Lack/castration, pleasure/pain and fantasy, collapse into a "fuzzy aggregate" a decoding of strata, and a deterritorialization of desire. Blatty describes the scene as follows:

Regan, her legs propped up and spread wide on a bed that was violently bouncing and shaking, clutched the bone-white crucifix in raw-knuckled hands, the bone-white crucifix poised at her vagina ... 'Yes you're going to let Jesus *fuck* you, *fuck* you, f__' Regan now, eyes wide and staring, flinching from the rush of some hideous finality, mouth agape shrieking at the dread of some ending. The abruptly the demonic face once more possessed her, now filled her, the room choking suddenly with a stench in the nostrils, with an icy cold that seeped from the walls as the rappings ended and Regan's piercing cry of terror turned to a guttural, yelping laugh of malevolent spite and rage triumphant while she thrust down down the crucifix into her vagina and began to masturbate ferociously, roaring in that deep, coarse, deafening voice, 'Now you're *mine*, now you're *mine*, you stinking cow! You bitch! Let Jesus *fuck* you, *fuck* you!' (1998, p. 182-3)

This scene further disrupts the Oedipal triad of desire and the law of the father with references to a menstrual, poly-gendered, poly-sexual Regan, intimating a complete break with the incest taboo. This taboo is further ruptured when the possessed Regan clutches her mother's hair and "yanked her face hard against her vagina, smearing it with blood while she frantically undulated her pelvis. 'Aahhh, little pig mother!' Regan crooned with a guttural, rasping, throaty eroticism. 'Lick me, lick me! Aahhhhhh!'" (Blatty, 1998, p.183).

A reinstatement of Oedipal law is achieved by replacing the absent father with another kind of father – a priest, who in turn is both assisted and replaced by the ultimate theological father figure of Christ/God. It is through the ritual of exorcism that Regan is reappropriated back into the familial fold. It encapsulates in all its forms the Deleuzio-Guattarian philosophy of ‘reterritorialisation’. Through the ritual of exorcism and the invocation of Christ, who, along with the Virgin Mary, is one of the most profoundly determined, striated and religiously inscribed bodies in Western culture, the menstruous-monstrous body of Regan is recoded. The words “the body of Christ compels you” are repeated incessantly throughout her exorcism: she is literally compelled and coerced by the body of Christ to re-stratify and reterritorialise.

The Oedipal reterritorialisation of Regan as menstrual war-machine is also reflective of anxieties concerning the dissipation of faith and religion in the 1960s and 1970s. The sixties saw a growing interest in Eastern religions and esoteric philosophies which greatly undermined the hitherto centralised control and influence of the Catholic Church. The modernisation and rebranding of Catholicism began in earnest with the Vatican II Council between 1962 and 1965. A further indication of how far people had begun to move away from organized religion and spiritual faith is evident in an address of Pope Paul VI to a general audience in November 1972, entitled “Confronting the Devil’s Power”, which opened with the statement that “one of the Church’s greatest needs is to be defended against the evil we call the Devil.” He further proclaimed that by leaving oneself open to “licentious sensual experiences and to harmful drugs, as well as to the ideological seductions of fashionable errors,” one was allowing cracks through which the Devil could enter. In conclusion he rallied that the “Christian must be a militant” giving both “meaning and, effectiveness to the familiar invocation in our principal prayer: ‘Our Father... deliver us from evil!’” This further demonstrates Catholicism’s attempt to reassert itself in a changing environment which had more or less rendered it obsolete in the lives of ordinary people. Both the novel and the film are permeated with this crisis of faith. The figure of Fr. Karras, a priest who has lost his faith and can also be said to be “fatherless” (that is, Godless) regains his religious belief through the exorcism of Regan. Chris MacNeil, the atheist mother, also has her faith renewed. Overall, what *The Exorcist* ultimately achieves is a reterritorialisation of rhizomatic socio-cultural and sexual lines of flight. In a faithless, fragmented, schizophrenic culture, Oedipal law is reinscribed. The horror lies not in the monstrous, grotesque, menstrual body of Regan or in her

possession as traditional structuralist readings of signifier and signified would suggest but, rather, in her "redemption/exorcism" and the reinscription and re-embodiment of rooted phallogentric desire and control through a reassertion of the following triad – lack/castration, masturbatory pleasure and desire as phantasy. Potentially positive lines of flight and deterritorialisations are reterritorialised and locked back into highly striated packages. The body, puberty, female sexuality, political agitation and change are all reconfigured in the exorcised Regan MacNeil. She has moved from menstrual war-machine, a becoming-woman, to becomes-monster, and is finally reconfigured as a socialised embodiment of femininity and traditional gender roles.

In *Carrie*, the father figure is dead, once again disrupting the Oedipal triad of desire. Carrie's mother, the fundamentalist zealot Margaret White, reconstructs this broken trinity by substituting the absent father with the figure of Christ. Religious iconography dominates the White household, but the ultimate item of religious paraphernalia in the White family home is a towering four foot high plaster crucifix, "a corpus" that has given Carrie endless nightmares. The White family is merely a simulacra of the Oedipal nuclear family, which perhaps provides the reason for both Carrie and her mother's ultimate death: the imaginary nuclear family is unable to sustain the polymorphic, sexual transgression of Carrie's becoming-woman, becoming menstrual-Psi-war-machine. Carrie is essentially captured within a Deleuzio-Guattarian catastrophic black-hole which swallows her up. This is perhaps also a warning to women's liberation and the changes it was affecting in relation to sexuality and the traditional family unit. Thus King's novel reinforces a traditional family politics.

Less explicit is the figure of the priest in *The Fury* who features in a performative capacity. Like her counterparts Regan and Carrie, Gillian inhabits a disrupted nuclear family circuit with a father who spends a large amount of time away from his family due to his work as an anthropologist. While recovering from a viral infection in hospital she is approached by Peter Sandza, the father of her psychic twin Robin. Peter comes to Gillian dressed in the guise of a priest. Once again, there is a decisive inversion or perversion of the Oedipus complex. With Gillian in a state of panic and anxiety, Peter first strikes her in an effort to calm her down. When this fails to work, he

kissed her instead, tenderly and with as much lust as he thought she might be familiar with at her age. Gillian found this new approach confusing, shocking and indefensible, and as she grew slack in his arms gradually the kiss became a comfort to her. With his own eyes closed Peter readily lost awareness of her youth; the snug pressure of her uncovered cunt against his body was mature enough, even insinuating. (Farris, 1978, pp. 124-5)

Peter is further described as

Grotesquely ambivalent toward this unusual girl, as if he'd just given birth to her, as if they were already lovers. He was in the worst possible danger, or he would've taken her with him ... and Peter knew Gillian would accompany him without question. He had saved her from the fury and the terror, and in a sense he owned her now. (1978, p. 125)

As Gillian comes to her senses and gains awareness, Peter explains that he is not a priest and that he is just wearing "a lousy disguise". A substitute father, he saves Gillian from madness in the guise of a priest; moreover, this father figure is the *actual* father of Robin. This establishes another unholy trinity or perverse Oedipal triad – Gillian, Peter and Robin. Such transgressions of the incest taboo are continuously intimated throughout the novel.

However, in *The Fury* it is State/Government intervention which ultimately restratifies and recodes the body of Gillian as menstrual war-machine and reinstates the nuclear, Oedipal family unit. The interference of the covert military agency MORG is a deliberate strategy to maintain the capitalist machine, and this is again connected to the Oedipal paradigms of desire and capitalist production. Thus, the psychic abilities of the two main protagonists Gillian and Robin are captured, analysed and researched by the military for the productive use in espionage and total war. Published at the height of experimentation in the field, Farris's novel exploits fears of communism, nuclear war and the dangers of using the human mind as a military weapon. The agency MORG and the Paragon Institute are

fictional representations of the CIA and the psychic research programme undertaken at the Stanford Research Institute. Headed by a man named Childermass, Farris writes:

He conned large numbers of otherwise sensible men into believing that the CIA and FBI weren't enough. We needed MORG. And did we ever get it. ... 'You didn't know Childermass was interested in psychic phenomena'. 'No. The Russians and Czechs had been diddling with it for years, reason enough for Childermass to sink a few million into Paragon Institute. Nothing much had come of his investments. But it was all there, just waiting, for Robin.' ... Childermass found himself in the possession of a unique natural resource. The Russians don't have one. The Chinese don't have one. He wanted Robin locked up – the euphemism is 'involuntary sequestration' – where his researchers could devote full time to him. (Farris, 1978, p. 102)

Childermass can also be read as a characterisation of the actual scientists who were employed to conduct the psychic research at SRI. The first person to head the research programme was a Dr Harold Puthoff who had previously served in Naval Intelligence and as a civilian at the National Security Agency. Other notable characters are the psychic spies Ed Dames, Lyn Buchanan, David Morehouse, Joseph McMoneagle, General Stubblebine and Ingo Swann. Thus Robin and Gillian are further fictionalised characterisations of so-called "psychic spies" employed by the US military from the 1960s until the mid-1990s.

In contemporary culture the military's appropriation of 'war machine-philosophy' has for the time-being replaced the emphasis on psychic spies or Psi-weaponry. For example in relation to the Israeli-Palestine conflict, Shimon Naveh, a retired Brigadier General who directs the Operational Theory Research Institute founded in 1996 which trains staff officers from the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and other militaries in operational theory, states: "We are like the Jesuit Order. We attempt to teach and train soldiers to think" (Weizman). Again this echoes the intervention of the Catholic Church in *The Exorcist* and the fanatical tirades of Carrie White's mother in King's novel *Carrie*. Furthermore, it draws a connection between military motivation and the fervour of the Christian crusader. This was echoed

throughout the 1990s and the 2000s during the Bush administration and also in the presidential campaigns of John McCain and Sarah Palin, whereby, military, familial and religious discourse became inseparable and interchangeable. Eyal Weizman notes the intensity of the use of postmodern theory in teaching at the Research Institute:

In a lecture Naveh showed a diagram resembling a 'square of opposition' that plots a set of logical relationships between certain propositions referring to military and guerrilla operations. Labelled with phrases such as 'Difference and Repetition – The Dialectics of Structuring and Structure', 'Formless Rival Entities', 'Fractal Manoeuvre', 'Velocity vs. Rhythms', 'The Wahabi War Machine', 'Postmodern Anarchists' and 'Nomadic Terrorists', they often reference the work of Deleuze and Guattari. War machines, according to the philosophers, are polymorphous; diffuse organizations characterized by their capacity for metamorphosis, made up of small groups that split up or merge with one another, depending on contingency and circumstances. (Deleuze and Guattari were aware that the state can willingly transform itself into a war machine. Similarly, in their discussion of 'smooth space' it is implied that this conception may lead to domination.) (Weizman)

Thus the Operational Research Institute of the IDF is, in effect, another version of the SRI or Farris' MORG (institutions that appropriate the nomadic war machine in the form of the State military). Interestingly, investigative work into the subject of psychic spies, written by Jon Ronson and entitled *Men who Stare at Goats* (2004), was also released in 2009 as a feature-length movie starring George Clooney in the central role. What is striking about the timing of the book's publication and the film's release is that they emerge not within a climate of capitalist fears of communism but instead within a new climate of post 9/11 paranoia. This contemporary cultural atmosphere is more notable for its fears of terrorism, jihad and Islam as well as a climate of fear which again can be directly traced to a threat on capitalism. The iconic attack on 11 September 2001 was epitomised by the fall of the Twin Towers of the World Trade Centre, the epicentre of global capitalism. This leads me into the final section in

which I will briefly comment on more contemporary examples of Psi narratives and the menstrual war-machine both in cinema and in recent television series.

Menstrual War-Machines and Psi:

The Politics of a Neoliberal, Corporate, Reproductive Death Drive

Since 9/11 and the economic crash of 2008, global capitalism has entered into one of its most uncertain phases since the Great Depression of the 1930s. More than ever before, the fluxes and flows of economy as ideology have come to the fore. This shift in economies from the Cold War era to the contemporary has been marked, as Rosi Braidotti notes, by an emphasis on market forces. Here Braidotti points to the continuing role of bio-technologies and the need to account for “the very vital forces that, per definition, escape political control” (2006, p. 38). Moreover, Giorgio Agamben makes the point that there is now a the need to bring to light “the ungovernable, which is the beginning and, at the same time, the vanishing point of every politics” (24). What this means for women and, in particular, the Deleuzo-Guattarian politics of becoming-girl has never been more explicit; the “cunt” or the reproductive capacity of the female body, its link to capitalism and technology and, even more so, its disruptive capabilities with regards to the religious tension between a perceived Christian West and an Islamic East are in stark relief. Nowhere is this more evident than in the recent controversy surrounding the incarceration of feminist punk band Pussy Riot members in Russia. The trial draws to attention the distinction between the war-machine or nomadic warrior and the terrorist. The members of Pussy Riot had to be re-coded as potential terrorists and sentenced on charges of hooliganism motivated by religious hatred.

Such cultural anxiety about women, sexuality and war can also be found in recent productions of so-called psychic films which have included a 1999 sequel to *Carrie* entitled *The Rage: Carrie 2* and *X-Men* (now an entire franchise) in 2000; *Project: Human Weapon* (2001) *Firestarter 2* (2002); *The Echo Game* (2009); *Push* (2009); *Chronicle* (2012); and *Looper* (2012). In 2013, another remake of DePalma's *Carrie* was released in the US starring Chloe Moretz. War, the military and capitalism are all evident in such film productions.

The link between the unpredictable, the ungovernable or the leaky female body in recent cinema constitutes what Braidotti describes as the "genetic social imaginary" (2006, p.47). This is seen in the interminable marketing of the next generation of gadgets, phones and cars. It is further pointed out that "another aspect to this phenomenon is the uses of genetics in political debates on race, ethnicity and immigration, as well as public debates ranging from abortion to stem-cell research to new kinship and family structures" (Braidotti, 2007). In cinema, the human or more specifically the woman, genetically or technologically evolves and mutates (for instance, in *X-Men* and *Chronicle*). In politics, the abortion debates continue with scientific advances showing a retrenchment in the availability of abortion simultaneous with an expansion in assisted reproductive technologies. As Braidotti warns, this veritable "explosion of discursive interest in the politics of life itself affects also the question of death and new ways of dying. Bio-power and necro-politics are two sides of the same coin" (Braidotti, 2007).

Recent Psi cinematic productions alongside the release of a number of European horror films indicate a particular form of necro-politics which I determine to be indicative of a contemporary, corporate, reproductive death drive. The neoliberal, hyper-individualisation of health and body management has impacted significantly on the reproductive body. Reproduction is now a capitalist investment outside of the female body. Eggs and sperm are commodities and wombs are rentable. As such, perhaps the Oedipal family unit is no longer the elevated, privileged model of a desiring-capitalist-machine. Indeed, it could be argued that the traditional family no longer suits the neoliberal agenda. Perhaps this is why the family in horror has once again become a dark and dangerous space.

However, the notable difference in contemporary family horror narratives and those of the 1970s as explored in *The Exorcist*, *Carrie* and *The Fury* is that there is no restitution of order or return to equilibrium; the ending provides no relief. In European horror, two notable films which articulate contemporary familial anxieties are Pascale Laugier's *Martyrs* (2008) and the Greek film *Dogtooth* (2009). *Martyrs* belongs to a category of new wave extreme French horror cinema and tells the story of the abduction and escape of a young girl in the 1970s by what is assumed to be a paedophile gang. Traumatized by the events and the torture that she suffered as a child, she is irreparably psychologically damaged. Years later, when her abusers are tracked down, it is revealed that she was actually abducted by a bourgeois group of individuals (a corporation) who are sadistic torturers

hoping to discover what lies beyond the transcendent. *Dogtooth* is a dark horror/comedy of a strange family set-up. The parents have lied to their children in order to keep them confined within the family compound in the Greek countryside. Having had no contact with the outside world, the children are infantilised and their vocabulary is filled with words which do not signify what they should – the vagina is called a piano and the pussy signifies a light switch.

What is notable in both *Dogtooth* and *Martyrs* is the revelation of the family as a dark, incestuous and sadistic space. If contemporary, neoliberal culture views technology and life as capitalist products circulating in a free market economy, then it is a bio-power of death. Families are now dangerous spaces outside of corporate or State control. For example, the cabin in the woods, the bunker, the bomb shelter and the basement are now potentially anti-Oedipal incestuous prisons. Contemporary media constantly assail us with reports of women who have escaped their abductors or who have been discovered by the authorities such as Natascha Kampusch, Jaycee Lee Dugard and Elizabeth who was kept captive for over 24 years by her father Josef Fritzl. These women are abjected from the cultural intelligibility of child birth and sexuality as a result of the perverse circumstances of their rapes and pregnancies. Moreover, Western, middle-class women are being pushed to delay child birth until it becomes necessary to buy the IVF treatments and, if successful, to then rush to “Mothercare” to purchase the latest must-have accoutrements of commercial child-rearing.

However, the one body that continues to defy the corporate, the technological, the capitalist and familial, Oedipal model is the menstruant. In an era when one can outsource child bearing to women in developing countries, the menstrual, non-productive, leaky female body continues to disrupt. The menstrual war-machine is a viscous, mucosal, schizoid, nomadic, smooth vortical space of vital political resistance to the bio-power of the contemporary neoliberal, corporate, war-mongering, reproductive death drive.

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