

Biopower and Reproductive Politics in Octavia Butler's *Lilith's Brood*

Senthamizh Inmozhi¹, & Sushant Kishore¹

¹ Department of English, School of Social Sciences and Languages, Vellore Institute of Technology, Vellore, Tamilnadu – 632014, India

Correspondence: Sushant Kishore, Department of English, School of Social Sciences and Languages, Vellore Institute of Technology, Vellore, Tamilnadu, - 632014, India.

Received: February 23, 2026

Accepted: July 6, 2026

Online Published: October 23, 2026

doi:10.5430/wjel.v17n1p357

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v17n1p357>

Abstract

Octavia Butler's *Lilith's Brood* probes the regulation of bodies, reproduction, and survival within a hostile, post-apocalyptic, politically charged environment in which humanity's continuation depends on genetic hybridization and alien intervention. While Butler's trilogy engages deeply with questions of agency, coercion, and biopolitical rule, its intersection with contemporary reproductive laws and governance remains underexplored. This study investigates how Butler dramatizes reproductive control, hybridity, and negotiated consent as central optics through which gender, race, class, sexuality, technology, and power are reimagined in a speculative context. Drawing on Michel Foucault's concept of biopower, this study employs a multidisciplinary approach that combines literary and philosophical analyses by conducting a comparative analysis of the trilogy alongside landmark surrogacy cases and legislation, including *In re Baby M*, *Johnson v. Calvert*, *Re X & Y*, and India's Surrogacy (Regulation) Act, 2021. The analysis demonstrates that Butler's speculative treatment of consent, reproductive governance, and bodily autonomy anticipates concerns that are now central to contemporary reproductive laws. The characters in *Lilith's Brood* find themselves in a struggle between defying the institutions of reproductive control, revealing identity as a dynamic, and contested concept within the power relations. This study examines Butler's writings through the lens of biopower and its implications for resistance, transformation, and the radical possibilities of human survival.

Keywords: Biopower, Surrogacy, Reproductive Politics, Negotiated Consent, Hybridity, Seductive Normalization, Subjectification, Anato-politics

1. Introduction

Reproductive governance is a pivotal tool for social hierarchy, historical oppression, and the construction of gendered and racialized identities. Michel Foucault, in his definition of biopower, defines modern power as the power to control and shape populations through the management of the biological processes of reproduction and sexuality (Foucault, 1978). According to Foucault (1978), biopower is enacted through a disciplinary process of normalization rather than expressions of sovereign power and overt violence. However, feminist and postcolonial scholars note that the impact of these biopolitical processes is most strongly felt in the reproduction policing of women who are marginalized in society. This intersection is particularly evident in the reproductive technologies of surrogacy, which has both disrupted and reinforced kinship and social stratification. By projecting future possibilities onto current conditions, speculative fiction serves as a useful method for analyzing current reproductive crises.

Octavia Butler's foundational trilogy, *Lilith's Brood* comprising *Dawn* (1987), *Adulthood Rites* (1988), and *Imago* (1989), stands as a central, speculative interrogation of reproductive biopolitics, consent, and bodily autonomy. Focusing on the characters of Lilith Iyapo, a Black woman who must guide the adaptation of humanity to its new environment; Akin, her construct son; and Jodahs, the first human-born ooloi, Butler illustrates how questions of identity, reproduction, and belonging evolve when control of the fate of the human race is placed in the hands of a powerful other.

The biopolitical implications of Butler's trilogy have been widely studied and discussed by many scholars. For instance, Schuster (2023) asserted that the Oankali intervention is an explicit act of population control meant to forestall the extinction of a species. Donaldson (2020) argued that the Oankali intervention reflects the historical exploitation of people of color by the medical profession. Further emphasizing a Foucauldian interpretation, Dennis (2025) highlighted how Foucault's work does not fully consider the effects of slavery on Black people and thus is modified to consider the effects of slavery on Black bodies. However, the current research examines *Lilith's Brood* alongside contemporary reproductive jurisprudence, particularly the legal frameworks and landmark cases governing global surrogacy.

To close this gap, this paper integrates Foucauldian biopolitics with legal posthumanist and feminist approaches, reading *Lilith's Brood* through the lens of 'seductive normalization,' where consent is gained by the prospect of extermination as opposed to direct force. Rather than focusing on the text alone, the originality of the research lies in the comparative approach in which Butler's fictional human-alien hybridization is weighed against real-world reproductive rights law. Based on this comparison, this study asserts that the trilogy foreshadows issues pertaining to social stratification, legislative incoherence, and bioethical questions that are currently relevant to modern transnational reproductive labor, and that Butler's work can serve as a vehicle for assessing the actual political economy and legal

regulation of reproductive rights.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Writing under Reproductive Politics

When examined through a Foucauldian viewpoint, modern surrogacy extends beyond medical treatment for infertility and functions as a commodified system of stratified reproductive labor (Sharmila & Hameed, 2022). This stratification is evident in how reproductive labor and institutional protections are shaped by unequal axes of race, socioeconomic status, and geographic location (López, 2008), while the rights of intended parents often take precedence over the bodily autonomy of surrogates (Suganya & Vijayakumar, 2022). Sugamele (2019) argued that one of the defining characteristics of neoliberalism, which transforms women's reproductive capacity into a commercialized, commodified, contractable form of labor, obscures systemic exploitation under an ideology of freedom. This imbalance is particularly evident in developing contexts, where economically marginalized women are placed under strict restrictions within the global surrogacy industry, where bodies are intensely regulated to satisfy the consumer's genetic product (Navarro-Tejero, 2024).

In this manner of power, it becomes possible to observe Foucault's idea of biopower, which is the collaboration of state, legal, and medical institutions to control populations and the biological processes of bodies (Urías Martínez, 2020). This surveillance, discipline, and medicalization of the surrogate's body serve to protect the needs of the intended parents. The current explicit commodification of surrogacy is new, but the history of using institutional power to police and mark women's bodies is long.

George (2026) illustrated that *The Scarlet Letter* contains a rudimentary manifestation of what is now understood as biopower, Hester Prynne's marked body is placed on display for the public gaze. Sharma (2023) noted this historical regulation of women's bodies through surveillance and societal judgment continues to influence the present-day politics of reproduction. Restrictive legal contracts and demanding medical protocols are bodily surveillance in the context of transnational surrogacy. The extreme reproductive containment and identity manipulation that Butler projects onto the surrogates and hybrid bodies of *Lilith's Brood* are hinted at by the historical trajectory of bodily regulation.

2.2. Biopolitical Negotiations in Octavia Butler's *Lilith's Brood*

Through Lilith Iyapo, an African American protagonist who must survive a forced breeding program of humans and Oankali, *Lilith's Brood* becomes a profound speculative space for interrogating the distinctions between coerced and consensual reproduction. The current literature on the trilogy mainly pivots towards gender, race, and imperial domination. De Adana (2012) considered the trilogy as a warning to human's anthropocentrism, while Mesegué Molina (2016) explained the human's resistance based on the Oankali's coercive techniques like nonconsensual reproductive selection and alienation.

Current scholarship on the series mainly focuses on gender, race, and the British Empire. De Adana (2012) considered the trilogy as a warning to human's anthropocentrism, whereas Mesegué Molina (2016) explained the human's resistance according to the Oankali's coercive techniques as previously mentioned.

Scholars have used Butler's captivity setting to explore post-colonial and feminist concerns. Nanda (2013) described the Oankali as "a colonizer in a unique form driven by an ideology of biological conservation" and concluded that Butler challenges conventional domesticity to provide Lilith with some ambiguous agency in her role as reproductive surrogate. Awanjo (2015) developed these arguments to suggest an 'ethno-maternity' as a species, where the Oankali's biological hybridization turns maternal labor from a position of absolute servitude to an exercise of radical posthuman power. Bromage (2023) considered the trilogy a part of the dystopian genre and suggests that the novel's representation of the experiences of Black women reflects their real-world oppression, both historically and in the current era.

However, this body of work on colonialism and hybridity does not yet consider the mechanics of the Oankali government. While Donaldson (2020) linked Oankali medical practices to colonial forms of racial exploitation, biopower is not the primary lens in her analysis. Likewise, Nanda (2013) emphasized colonial political formations more than the colonial reproduction apparatus. Schuster (2023) focused on how the alien Oankali attempt to control species teetering on extinction and does not examine its larger implications.

This study addresses these gaps directly by applying a theoretical framework to argue that *Lilith's Brood* depicts an advanced form of biopower, where consent is engineered systematically rather than violently to cope with the threat of extinction. An intervention is developed in three areas that moves Butler from a commentary on historical biopower to a commentary on its modern instantiation.

- First, a Foucauldian method is used to map and analyze the various types of biological technologies of power in the trilogy.
- Second, drawing on Dennis' (2025) critique of Foucault's failure to engage with the realities of slavery and race, this study shows how Butler re-engages Foucault through African American race.
- Third, this article places *Lilith's Brood* into conversation with some pivotal reproductive law cases, such as *In re Baby M*, *Johnson v. Calvert*, *Re X & Y*, *Moore v. Regents of the University of California* and India's Surrogacy (Regulation) Act, 2021.

Doing so enables this paper to show that, perhaps no other than Butler's *Lilith's Brood*, can best foretell the unequal socioeconomic arrangements, curtailed liberties, and coerced consent, which are some defining factors of surrogacy labor across the globe.

3. Theoretical framework: Foucault's Biopower

3.1 Methodology and Analytical Procedure

This study employs a qualitative, theory-led, interpretive method to closely read Octavia Butler's *Lilith's Brood* considering Michel Foucault's model of biopower. Rather than viewing authority as merely repressive, this methodology normalizes discursive regulation and manages life (Foucault, 1990, 2007). With the addition of feminist and posthumanist theory, the research question allows for the exploration and analysis of the Oankali's governance of human reproduction, genetic mixing, and the continuation of the human race in the face of human extirpation, and how these experiences resemble contemporary issues of reproductive governance, the commodification of labor, and the lack of bodily autonomy.

To systematically trace these dynamics across the trilogy, textual analysis was executed in five sequential phases:

Phase 1: Contextual Reading. The trilogy was read in its entirety to establish narrative arcs, character trajectories, and core thematic boundaries regarding human-Oankali interbreeding.

Phase 2: Textual Coding. A second close reading was conducted to identify and analyze passages related to reproduction, genetic manipulation, bodily surveillance, and resistance. Drawing on Foucault's works (1990, 2007, 2008) and contemporary biopolitical theory (Rabinow & Rose, 2006), the passages were categorized into eight analytical frameworks: anatomo-politics, biopolitics, normalization, governmentality, subjectification, reproductive governance, hybridity/commodification, and consent/bodily autonomy themes. Because Butler's fictional universe depicts power through multiple intersecting mechanisms, some scenes were assigned to more than one category. For example, the scene in *Dawn* in which Lilith awakens was analyzed through the lenses of anatomo-politics, which concerns the discipline of individual bodies; normalization, which involves the regulation of behavior; and subjectification, which examines the formation of compliant identities.

Phase 3: Conceptual Refinement. The coding framework was iteratively refined to account for unique narrative nuances. Specifically, the ooloi's neurochemical interventions were reclassified from simple disciplinary containment to a specialized form of 'seductive normalization.'

Phase 4: Close Textual Analysis. High-density textual nodes and scenes where multiple coding categories intersected were subjected to rigorous literary analysis. This step focuses on dialogue, syntax, narrative perspective, and characterization to evaluate how biopolitical authority is enforced, negotiated, or resisted by human subjects.

Phase 5: Jurisprudential Integration. Finally, literary insights were combined with external social and legal contexts. Comparing Butler's hypothetical situations with modern reproductive law and ongoing surrogacy conversations internationally (Gola, 2021; Saluja, 2022; Vertommen, 2024) allowed the discussion around the texts to be situated in present-day bioethical and legal circumstances and showed the potential value of the trilogy's framework.

3.2 Foucault's Biopower

This study analyzes contemporary feminist critiques of stratified reproduction and the global bioeconomy using Michel Foucault's theory of biopower to examine how reproduction is regulated in speculative fiction. Foucault (1990) stated that biopower is a shift in the exercise of power from the sovereign right to take life or let live to the regulation and optimization of life. Foucault (2007) explained that biopower operates through two interconnected dimensions: anatomo-politics, which focuses on the discipline and control of individual bodies, and biopolitics, which governs populations by regulating reproduction, birth rates and longevity.

Biopower is not merely an expression of coercion but a productive type of power that shapes people's thoughts, actions, and perceptions about themselves through their interactions in society, types of knowledge, and social processes beyond state violence (Chhibber, 2021). Building on the works of Foucault, Rabinow and Rose (2006) presented three interlinked axes on which modern biopower operates:

1. Truth Discourses: Scientific/medical claims regarding biological existence.
2. Population Interventions: Systemic policies governing health and reproduction.
3. Subjectification Processes: Internalization of norms, where subjects police their own bodies and desires.

Structural and productive forms of power are especially relevant in this global division of reproductive labor (Barnett & Duvall, 2005). Structural power refers to the power to set and enforce geopolitical, economic, social, and cultural boundaries within which some women are pushed into exploitative situations, specifically those women from the global south who become the subjects of a new era of bioeconomic servitude (Navarro-Tejero, 2024). Conversely, productive power refers to the power to construct discourse and knowledge that can create a sense of normalcy that can cover exploitative situations. Hence, surrogacy is commonly conceptualized as an 'altruistic choice' or 'economic empowerment' rather than a coercive arrangement. This discursive strategy of constructing knowledge and normalcy around surrogacy undermines the authenticity of consent (Attawet et al., 2025; Chaitra & Hema, 2025). This vulnerability is further reinforced by the lack of synergy between biopolitical theory and legal advocacy to support reproductive workers in this industry. They are left subjected to stringent and restrictive legal agreements geared towards protecting the genetic asset as property rather than the bodily autonomy of gestational surrogate (Mutcherson, 2024).

The analytical lens of the intersection of anatomo-politics and biopolitics offers an apt vocabulary for decoding the plot structure of the trilogy because the Oankali's reproductive intervention and their coercion over the exchange of genetic material occurs at this precise

juncture. This study proposes to treat this alien intervention as a speculative projection of modern transnational surrogacy case laws. Foucault's (1978) concepts of normalization and subjectification form the study's theoretical foundation. This study aims to understand how the text critiques the production of consent within the context of an uneven and exploitative biopolitical global order.

3.2.1 Reproductive Governance and the Biopolitics of the State

Reproductive governance operationalizes Foucault's concept of biopolitics by integrating state policy, medical discourse, and legal mechanisms into a comprehensive system for population supervision. This system operates through the convergence of governmentality, which is the rationalization of political power across the domains of public health, economy, security, and biopolitics, and concerns the regulation and optimization of the biological processes of the social body (Basu, 2006). Within this context, sovereign power is expressed not in spectacular displays of violence but in regulatory measures and the imposition of normalizing population-level standards upon individual bodies. Foucault (2019; Basu, 2006) referred to this fusion of anatomo-politics and population biopolitics as "the optimization of anatomo-politics through population biopolitics".

Biopolitical state intervention has historically relied on eugenic and hygienic strategies to ensure demographic homogeneity, using pastoral surveillance to control individuals marked as sexually irresponsible or antisocial in the name of maintaining collective social cohesion (Foucault, 1990; Rose, 2001). Present-day biopolitical surveillance is less a form of state-sponsored eugenics and is instead constituted by highly medicalized and juridical modes of surveillance. The female body as a site of pregnancy and birth is one such inscription, wherein medicine, capital, and law coalesce (Takács, 2017). Hence, contemporary reproductive governance governs the politics of life through the contradictory forces of individualization as personal responsibility and socialization as population control in the service of stratified valuations of human worth (Rose, 2001; Spade, 2015).

3.2.2 Commodified Hybridity and Gestational Extraction

Assisted Reproductive Technologies (ART) and paid gestational surrogacy are the culmination of biopolitical hybridity that merges biology, capital, and technology, commodifying the most intimate of all biological acts in a global division of stratified reproductive labor (Vertommen & Barbagallo, 2022). Seen through the prism of embodied globalization, the surrogate's body operates as a transnational space of production at the intersection of market forces and desire (Bahri, 2019). This bioeconomy functions through the disaggregation of reproductive bodies into discrete exchange units: the gamete, the embryo, or gestational capacity, the latter being the primary focus as in the case of surrogacy, wherein the surrogate is reduced to a commodity or an objectified service in the regulated clinic space (Popova, 2024; Mukherjee, 2018).

Instead of facilitating intercultural fusion, this hybrid sphere operates through asymmetric extraction. Global surrogacy 'factories' take advantage of geopolitical and racialized power asymmetries, using bodies in the global south as bioresources to fulfill the reproductive exigencies of the citizens of the global north (Subedi, 2015; Vertommen, 2024). To disguise the unequal power relations inherent in this arrangement, dominant discourse reframes commercial surrogacy as a medical intervention or a benevolent exercise of individual choice (Fulfer, 2020; Jiabao, 2024). This language of choice and self-determination masks the enduring eugenic and settler-colonial logic, as genetic selection is integrated into capital accumulation processes, sustaining the racial and gendered divisions of labor through physical extraction on a global scale.

3.2.3 Subjectification and Structurally Conditioned Consent

In surrogacy networks, consent and autonomy are not embodiments of unrestricted free will; they are products of biopolitical subjectification. Even as the law imagines a surrogate as a legal agent who freely signs a contract, this autonomy is illusory, created to satisfy heteronormative, patriarchal, and capitalist goals (Gola, 2021). Laws that stress surrogates' autonomy obscure the fact that the power structures in which they operate severely limit their capacities. Given this situation, informed consent in surrogacy is more of a bureaucratic procedure than a means to ethical practice. Neoliberalism and patriarchy together allow economic desperation to be transformed into conditioned vulnerability (Saluja, 2022).

Surrogates often live in dire socioeconomic circumstances; yet, in most cases, surrogates are denied the right to a lawyer of their own, proper medical knowledge, and transparency. In such situations, decision-making is carefully guided and limited. To assess the issue of autonomy and consent in the context of surrogacy, it cannot be assumed that there is the individualistic or idealistic notion of choice but must instead see them in relation to other factors, such as how power is institutionally, economically, and affectively organized.

4. Analysis and Discussion

These three axes will help to decode the all-encompassing control that the Oankali exercise in the *Lilith's Brood* trilogy:

1. Reproductive Governance: This axis promotes understanding regarding how the Oankali simultaneously engage in population control (preventing the total annihilation of a species) and control of individual bodies (through the influence of ooloi, who manipulate human bodies with neurochemical agents).
2. Commodified Hybridity: The axis promotes understanding through the Oankali's human-alien hybridization and how, through this forced process, the Oankali treat human beings as mere genetic material from which they can extract components for the purposes of empire.

3. Conditioned Consent: The axis illustrates the process of seductive normalization through which the Oankali control the human body and its will, relying on a particular combination of the threat of complete human extirpation and the promise of genetic manipulation, similar to the dynamics between commercial surrogates and the intended parents in their respective contracts.

These axes illustrate how *Lilith's Brood* uses the politics of reproduction to perform the workings of biopower, to imagine a human battle for reproductive autonomy, biological agency, and boundaries around the human.

4.1 Reproductive Governance

Butler's *Lilith's Brood* depicts a comprehensive regime of reproductive governance in which the biological, economic, and political meet on the terrain of demographic regulation (Basu, 2006). This is a model of biopolitical power that is macro, rather than micro, that deploys biopower not by way of local, localized, and institutionalized disciplinarity (Foucault, 1977, 1990), but in terms of the systematic management of the production of life, human birthrates, longevity, and biological durability. Donaldson (2020) suggests that the Oankali justify their dominance over the human body and reproduction through the representation of humans as being inferior and incapable of making rational decisions. The biopolitical power they exert over humans merges the technical rationality of medicine with the power of biology to define human life, thus realizing the biopower that Foucault (2007) defined in terms of the scientific administration of the life process to legitimize the structural oppression of the Oankali.

Biopolitics operates through the suspension and monopoly of human fertility. As the ooloi Nikanj explains to Lilith that her fertility has been turned off while she sleeps because "it is not time for you to have children yet" (Butler, 1987, p. 98), the Oankali deprive the biological process of fertility of its personal meaning and treat it instead as a conditional privilege administered by the state. In doing so, they frame the forced chemical sterilization and suspension of fertility that they implement as methods of birth control, and by deploying the discourse of medical treatment, they further mask the Oankali's drive for a genetic agenda in which the possibility of independent human reproduction is eliminated. This illustrates how biopower is about the optimization, not repression, of life (Rose, 2001): genetic interventions in humans, such as the Oankali's use of the chemical command to make Lilith's body reabsorb the cancer cells, are presented in terms of their benevolence in preserving human life, yet such benevolence is the ultimate manifestation of hierarchy and the Oankali's control (Donaldson, 2020).

In the case of the Oankali, this production of the form of life Giorgio Agamben refers to as "bare life" takes place not by means of sovereign violence but through normalizing apparatuses (Agamben 1998, p. 2-6; Foucault, 1990). The Oankali establish such a space by framing hybridization as a requirement for survival; the status of being human is contingent upon Oankali terms rather than being an inalienable right. Nikanj explains the Oankali policy to her host in a conversation with her own genetic progeny: "[W]e couldn't carry on a normal trade. We couldn't let you breed alongside us... we couldn't let your numbers grow. We couldn't let you begin to become what you were." (Butler, 1987, pp. 290–291)

The Oankali are effectively stating that they cannot allow humans to breed or multiply, and they must not evolve on their own terms because such actions would compromise the Oankali's position as a higher species. This ban on becoming is a mechanism to prevent the re-emergence of human traits that could threaten Oankali authority, a form of a posthuman civilizing mission. It also echoes the historical context in which the state took responsibility for the biology and health of its citizens (Basu, 2006; Foucault, 1990; Nanda, 2013). For example, the Swedish government passed eugenic laws permitting forced sterilization and mandated care so that the state could oversee its lineage, remove deviant members of society, and ensure a demographically and genetically pure population (Basu, 2006; Nanda, 2013).

The Oankali similarly took charge of the human capacity to produce viable cancer, an ability that could be considered a form of human genetic talent (Butler, 1987). By exploiting the cancer ability in this way, the Oankali extract human genetic material for their own reproductive needs, thereby producing what Mitchell and Waldby (2006) called "bio-value" or "biological capital". These bio-objects are generated in the service of Oankali rather than human interest. Human biological material becomes subject to a form of biosociality in which a gene is identified by its association with a particular mode of life or with one of its risks and is thereby evaluated by its compatibility or incompatibility with the Oankali (Rabinow, 1997). The bio-value of humans, then, is based on how well their genetic material 'lives on' as Oankali, or whether a human is deemed worth saving by such a standard (Rabinow, 1997).

Using Achille Mbembe's (2003) concept of necropolitics, the Oankali's indirect sterilization of human resistance amounts to an administrative verdict of death because, by depriving uncooperative humans of a biological future, the Oankali eliminate opposition without killing them. What Nanda (2013) called 'altruistic domination' and what Donaldson (2020) referred to as 'hierarchies of care' are not competing motivations but rather serve as part of the Oankali's strategy to manage bodies. By controlling sexual behavior, reproduction, and the right to live, the Oankali's reproductive control practices create docile bodies (Foucault, 1978), which are politically subdued, constantly surveilled, biological subjects whose putative consent is manufactured under the fear of annihilation.

4.2 Commodified Hybridity and the Bioeconomics of Gestational Extraction

The forced genetic interbreeding portrayed in *Lilith's Brood* dramatizes a possible version of commodified hybridity, recasting reproduction as a point of unequal biological extraction rather than a means of cultural fusion on equal terms. By transforming the body into an extraction point of valuable genetic material, Oankali's genetic trade parallels the capitalist logic underpinning biocapitalism today, by which reproductive and corporate labor is divided into separate and purchasable components (Vertommen & Barbagallo, 2022). This

process is precisely the same as modern ART and international surrogacy programs, by which the reduction of life to exchangeable units is covered up by the narratives of evolution and medicine (Mukherjee, 2018; Popova, 2024).

This bioeconomy is not far removed from the famous American surrogacy case, *Baby M* (1988), where a court overturned a surrogacy contract for paying surrogate services and parental rights, thereby commodifying both mother and infant (Dolgin, 1990). Butler (1987) foreshadowed this dilemma: the ooloi Nikanj tells Lilith that hybridization is “a trade” in which the ooloi “will make changes in your reproductive cells before conception and... control conception” (p.42), and thus the intimate act of reproduction is alienated from relational agency and reimagined as a regulated and contractually supervised procedure.

The argument for this genetic tampering is found on the same condescending logic that informed the commercialized surrogate pregnancy industry until its ban, enacted by the Surrogacy (Regulation) Act 2021. The commercialization of a marginalized population of women’s wombs was similarly justified through the idea of an opportunity for economic upliftment in the context of surrogacy tourism by transnational agencies (Pande, 2014). The Oankali’s harvesting of the human body is also predicated on their idea that humans are inferior and “flawed and overspecialized... would have found another way to kill themselves” (Butler, 1989, p. 378) without the ooloi Shkht’s intervention, with the idea of saving humans as an excuse for the exploitative practices of extracting the human body.

While the physical and emotional costs of carrying out the hybridization are shouldered by humans to meet the needs and desires of a consumer or dominant species in a more indirect and abstracted manner, the Oankali themselves acknowledge their “powerfully acquisitive” nature, to “seek, investigate, manipulate, sort, [and] use” new lives (Butler, 1987, p. 41). Their practice of extracting from human bodies to meet the needs of another species has an antecedent in *Moore v. Regents of the University of California* (1990), in which a human body’s individual ownership was denied once the cells were extracted from the body and used for commercial purposes in the study. The extractive practice of the Oankali is similar in that the cells extracted from the human body, the human cancer talent, are harvested to improve the longevity of another species through the extraction of what was once considered a fatal disease. The cancer is, in fact, the cancer cells used as “a kind of treasure, to increase your lifespan” (Butler, 1987, p. 40), with the ooloi stating, “You’ll live... You’ll have your world again. We already have much of what we want of you. Your cancer in particular... The ooloi are intensely interested in it” (Butler, 1987, p. 40). This commodification of corporeal material generates what Mitchell and Waldby (2006) termed biovalue, or the yield of vitality produced by biotechnical manipulation. By treating human cells as raw biological capital, the Oankali establish a regime of biosociality in which genetic compatibility dictates an organism’s market utility (Rabinow, 1997).

The trilogy’s depiction of alien reproductive laboratories, where infants are engineered from the genetic material of unacquainted donors and gestated within nonhuman hosts, maps directly onto the stratified realities of modern “surrogacy factories” (Butler, 1987, p. 94). In these contemporary globalized spaces, gestational labor is tier-priced along racialized and geopolitical lines (Jana & Hammer, 2022; Vertommen, 2024). As Twine (2012) and Roberts (2014) demonstrated, modern reproductive markets routinely devalue the bodily integrity of low-income women of color, a structural dynamic that traces its lineage back to the reproductive exploitation of enslaved Black women. Butler (1987) pointed to the historic exploitation of Black women for reproductive labor through the figure of Lilith Iyapo, who is selected to be the principal Oankali-human contact precisely because of the racial capitalist history of extracting reproductive labor from Black women for the benefit of the state. This process of legal and bodily subordination in the U.S. is reflected and upheld in modern law, particularly the Uniform Parentage Act (UPA), which regulates the complicated relationships among biological, genetic, gestational, and intentional parents, ultimately favoring the parties who have contracted with one another (and thus the parties whose desires have been actualized) as parents (Jiabao, 2024).

By defining the purchaser of reproductive labor as the legal parent, and thus legally defining the gestating individual as a non-parent, Butler (1987) argued that this law tears apart the emotional and physical ties between a pregnant woman and her fetus. Hybrid construct children, such as Lilith’s son Akin, are racialized, “a very valuable commodity” with superior linguistic and chemical skills and the ability to adapt to different habitats that render him “highly prized” by human and Oankali parties alike as both a genetic commodity and a new evolutionary possibility (Butler, 1988, p. 337-341). In this sense, Akin represents the total synthesis of the commodity and life. Butler showed that even Oankali advancements and innovations are merely different ways of exploiting reproductive labor (Fulfer, 2020; Jiabao, 2024), and thus the novel can be read as an examination and critique of the changes in reproductive law (Jiabao, 2024). Butler (1988) showed that through hybrid reproduction and interbreeding, where the market is unbalanced and there exists asymmetrical power, the hybrid is no longer mutually beneficial or symbiotic; instead, she is merely the means to one’s own ends.

4.3 Conditioned Consent and the Illusion of Relational Autonomy

In a biopolitical economy, in commercial surrogacy, consent and bodily autonomy are not simply the products of unrestrained and free consent but are the products of a process of subjectification and institutional governance (Gola, 2021). However, whereas the violence associated with the reproductive arrangements is not overt in the Oankali’s reproductive politics of the novel, in *Lilith’s Brood* and in transnational networks of contemporary surrogacy, it has to do rather with the notion of seductive normalization, a strategy of soft power that relies on dependency, economic or existential vulnerability, and discourse of care to ensure the submission of the subject.

This manufactured consent becomes particularly visible in the English legal decision *Re X & Y (Foreign Surrogacy)* (2008), in which, even though the court noted that the Ukrainian surrogate did not receive independent legal advice, was living in dire poverty, and was unable to comprehend the terms of the contract, the court granted a parental order to the parents in the first place. In prioritizing the best interests of the child to justify parental orders in a situation where the surrogate had been systematically denied informed consent, *Re X &*

Y established a precedent in which commercial interests and the interests of consumers take precedence over the gestating individual's autonomy. As Butler foreshadowed in *Dawn*, while her confinement is ongoing, Lilith realizes that any choice she makes "could not matter while she was confined this way, kept helpless, alone, and ignorant" (Butler, 1987, p. 1). In the case of both real-world surrogates and fictional, speculative human subjects, their consent turns out to be a sort of retroactive validation of their position in the relationship, given the absence of informational and legal transparency.

A more explicit recognition of such an asymmetry in power can be found in the doctrine of unconscionability as applied in contract law, which seeks to deal with cases where one party is significantly less powerful than the other, so that a valid agreement cannot be entered into. In *Johnson v. Calvert* (1993), the Supreme Court of California rejected gestational surrogate Anna Johnson's claim that the stark socioeconomic disparities between her and the commissioning couple rendered the surrogacy contract unconscionable. By placing the intent of the genetic consumers on a higher ground than the physical or affective contribution of the gestating individual, the judiciary effectively turned the surrogate into a mere instrument of the will of the consumers. Butler similarly echoed such instrumentalization with the Oankali insistence on genetic redistribution: while Lilith protests the loss of unhybridized humans, proclaiming, "I don't believe it has to be like that" (Butler, 1987, p. 92), someone reminds her that her attempts at resistance are fruitless because: "The price... is just the same. When they're finished with us there won't be any real human beings left... What the bombs started, they'll finish" (Butler, 1987, p. 92).

By casting compliance as the only viable option for survival and death, the Oankali negate any choice to reject the deal. This existential threat has the same function as the economic vulnerability of surrogates who are pushed into commercial surrogacy markets, transforming an exploitative relationship into a survival strategy through compulsion (Saluja, 2022). The systemic nature of this dynamic power is exemplified by the physical violation inflicted on the surrogate under the guise of medical treatment. When Lilith uncovers the surgery mark, Nikanj explains it away as the non-consensual excision of a malignant growth (Butler, 1987, p. 21), highlighting how the body is subsumed as a scientific object for biopower experiments and exploitation. In her commentary, Lilith expresses resistance to forced containment: "we used to treat animals that way...inoculations, surgery, isolation, all for their own good" (Butler, 1987, p. 33). In a similar vein, the forced elimination of the twin, in which a gestational surrogate carrying twins is subjected to intense institutional and contractual pressure to abort one fetus, highlights the biopolitical implications of surrogacy, where the state and the surrogacy agency coerce surrogates into terminating pregnancies to meet the expectations of their prospective parents, while also seeking to protect corporate interests (Deonandan, 2012).

Although the surrogate successfully resisted, the case exposes how surrogacy contracts weaponize health and liability clauses to strip women of somatic control during pregnancy. Similarly, when India passed the Surrogacy (Regulation) Act 2021, which ended the commercial surrogacy market and shifted toward an altruistic, family-oriented approach, the fact that such a drastic measure became necessary demonstrates the structural compromise of market consent in a capitalist setting. However, even here, as in Lilith's case, biopolitics remains unchecked, as criminalizing commercial surrogacy, instead of abolishing the market for the reproduction service, simply renders the entire industry more underground and leaves the gestational laborers with neither legal nor safety rights (Saravanan, 2018). In *Adulthood Rites*, Butler (1988) underscored the impossibility of these kinds of state-sanctioned concessions by introducing a colony of human resistors on Mars. The presence of this colony seems to return some degree of autonomy to humanity, but it is, in fact, entirely designed, managed, and approved by the Oankali as a regulatory safety valve for their system of genetic engineering. Both *Lilith's Brood* and contemporary reproductive law show that when individual choice is dispensed by all-encompassing institutional structures, informed consent becomes less an expression of free will than an alibi for routine hegemony (Pateman, 1988).

5. Conclusion

This paper examined *Lilith's Brood* through the lens of biopower as seductive normalization rather than brute repression, which in this narrative, has become the requirement for survival. Using a consistent Foucauldian framework throughout the trilogy and juxtaposing these readings with seminal surrogacy cases, the analysis produced three major results. First, reproductive law and its mechanisms are applied through the interlocking operations of anatomo-politics, biopolitics, and governmentality. The Oankali exercise direct bodily control by subtly adjusting humans' reproductive capacities and appropriating the cancer talent as bio-value; they influence species' development by eliminating the 'Human Contradiction;' and they shape the desires of human subjects in ways that lead humans to embrace dependency as rationality itself. This layered application extends beyond Donaldson's (2020) contextual use of biopower and Schuster's (2023) limitation of reproductive governance to the extinction scenario, demonstrating that seductive normalization is a continuous structural operation, rather than a crisis-specific response.

Second, hybridity and commodification do not function as cultural fusion but as bioextractive logic: the systematic conversion of human biological material into Oankali evolutionary capital. The comparative mapping of the Oankali's genetic trade against *In re Baby M*, *Moore v. Regents*, *Johnson v. Calvert*, and the Uniform Parentage Act's intentional parenthood doctrine demonstrates that Butler's fiction does not merely mirror contemporary reproductive law but anticipates its precise doctrinal reasoning, which is the study's primary contribution to *Lilith's Brood* scholarship.

Third, consent and bodily autonomy are revealed as structurally evacuated categories, constituted by the four conditions identified by Pateman (1988) as non-consent: physical restraint, absence of power, isolation, and information deprivation. The structural parallels with *Re X & Y* (2008) and India's Surrogacy (Regulation) Act of 2021 confirm that these conditions are the defining features of real-world

reproductive governance. Lilith's position in turn confirms Dennis's (2025) assertion that biopower in Butler's novels is constituted by racial difference, a line of interpretation that prior scholarship has not fully pursued. Finally, placing the process of reproductive extraction in the context of an alien civilization allows Butler to expose, through the colonial as the operative principle of reproductive governance, seductive normalization: when one person controls the biological existence of another, the process becomes one of reproductive extraction.

By explicitly linking Butler to contemporary, actual, real-life reproductive laws and cases, which is the study's main claim, the article makes an interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary connection between real and fictitious reproductive governance in its analysis of Butler's speculative fiction and the real-world Surrogacy Act and real court cases, in *In re Baby M* and *Johnson v. Calvert* and *Moore v. Regents of the University of California*. In Butler's story, the Oankali perform the same bureaucratic, administrative, legal, and regulatory roles as the global surrogacy industry. The connection between the fictitious reproductive extractions of the aliens and the commercial exploitation of real women and children is thus revealed in their structural symmetry: the separation of the gestating individual from her body, her body into separable pieces, into pieces that are sold and exchanged; the use of severe legal, medical, and institutional surveillance to guard the product that is their genetic material; and the exploitation of a pre-existing socioeconomic or even existential vulnerability to extract consensual compliance, one enforced contractually, from the one that is exploited. This article uses Dennis's (2025) critique of Foucault's lack of analysis of race in the history of Foucault's power to make explicit Butler's deliberate invocation and representation of an African American of what Dennis refers to as Foucault's blind spots, namely, the biopolitical exploitation and containment of people who are racially distinct, that is, of people of Black color, whose bodies had been commodified, whose lives could be exploited, and who had historically been subject to racial containment, confinement, and exploitation.

Reading *Lilith's Brood* through the prism of current international legislation, specifically India's Surrogacy (Regulation) Act, 2021, demonstrates that the ethical schisms, broken family ties, and alienation of the body depicted by Butler in the late twentieth century have now come to full fruition in today's international bioeconomy. Butler's fiction lays bare the altruistic delusion that often accompanies modern reproductive technology, proving that when individual volition is subjugated by skewed systemic forces, the concept of "choice" transforms from a reality into mere bureaucracy. *Lilith's Brood* thus provides a valuable tool for current bioethical and legal scholars to decipher, deconstruct, and reimagine the deeply tiered structures of reproductive labor.

Declaration of the Use of AI

ChatGPT, Grammarly, and Paperpal were used for AI-assisted language editing. These tools were not utilized for the development of scientific content, its interpretation, or any other aspect of the article; they were just utilized to improve the language polishing, enhance academic style and tone, provide alternative words without changing meaning, and to fix grammatical errors. The authors verified that AI-assisted edits fully complied with the journal's AI policy.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to their institution for their valuable support and encouragement throughout this research.

Author contributions

- S. Senthamizh Inmozhi: Conceptualization, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Methodology, Writing – Original Draft.
- Sushant Kishore: Conceptualization, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Methodology, Project Administration, Supervision, Validation, Writing – Review & Editing.

All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding

Not applicable

Competing interests

Not applicable

Informed consent

Not applicable.

Ethics approval

Not applicable.

Provenance and peer review

Not commissioned; externally double-blind peer reviewed.

Data availability statement

Not applicable. This study is a textual analysis of literary works and contains no underlying research dataset.

Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

Open access

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

References

- Agamben, G., & Sacer, H. (1998). Sovereign power and bare life. *Homo sacer*, 1.
- Attawet, J., Alsharaydeh, E., & Brady, M. (2025). Commercial surrogacy: Landscapes of empowerment or oppression explored through an integrative review. *Health Care for Women International*, 46(10), 1081-1099. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07399332.2024.2303520>
- Awanjo, A. (2015). *Revising black female slave identity, post-coloniality, and ethno-maternalism in Octavia Butler's "Kindred" and "Lilith's Brood"* (Doctoral dissertation, Rutgers University-Camden Graduate School). <https://doi.org/doi:10.7282/T3VM4F2V>
- Bahri, D. (2019). Gendering hybridity: the womb as site of production in globalization. *Interventions*, 21(3), 301-317. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369801X.2018.1558089>
- Barnett, M., & Duvall, R. (2005). Power in International Politics. *International organization*, 59(1), 39-75. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818305050010>
- Basu, M. (2006). *Biopolitics or the legislation of life: a Foucauldian analysis*. Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College.
- Bromage, G. J. (2023). Narratives of Feminist Resistance: Women's Bodily Autonomy and the Dystopian Mode.
- Butler, Octavia E. (1987). *Dawn*. New York: Warner Books.
- Butler, Octavia E. *Lilith's Brood*. Grand Central Publishing, 2000.
- Chaitra, V., & Hema, K. (2025). Navigating Human Rights and Ethical Challenges in Compensation Models of Commercial Surrogacy: Comparative Analysis. In *Global Perspectives on Reproductive Rights and Policies* (pp. 267-292). IGI Global Scientific Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3693-7837-3.ch010>
- Chhibber, A. (2021). Biopower. *Global Social Theory*. <https://globalsocialtheory.org/concepts/biopower/>
- de Adana, F. S. (2012). The Ambivalence of the Gene Trade in Octavia Butler's Xenogenesis Trilogy. *Ecozon@: European Journal of Literature, Culture and Environment*, 3(1). <https://doi.org/10.37536/ECOZONA.2012.3.1.453>
- Dennis, J. (2025). Policing Black Data: The Semiology of Carcerality and Slavery in Michel Foucault's Discipline and Punish. *Race and Justice*, 21533687251377229.
- Deonandan, R., Green, S., & Van Beinum, A. (2012). Ethical concerns for maternal surrogacy and reproductive tourism. *Journal of Medical Ethics*, 38(12), 742-745. <https://doi.org/10.1136/medethics-2012-100551>
- Dolgin, J. L. (1990). Status and contract in surrogate motherhood: an illumination of the surrogacy debate. *Buff. L. Rev.*, 38, 515.
- Donaldson, E. (2020). Contact Zone Earth: Power and Consent in Steven Universe and Octavia Butler's Lilith's Brood. In *Representation in Steven Universe* (pp. 153-170). Cham: Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-31881-9_8
- Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and Punish: the birth of the prison* London: Penguin.
- Foucault, M. (1990). *The history of sexuality: An introduction*. Vintage.
- Foucault, M. (2007). *Security, territory, population: lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-78*. Springer.
- Foucault, M. (2008). *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979*. <https://link.springer.com/series/14805>
- Foucault, M. (2019). *Ethics: subjectivity and truth: essential works of Michel Foucault 1954-1984*. Penguin UK.
- Fulfer, K. (2020). A Partial Defense of the Non-Commercialization of Surrogacy. *Canadian Journal of Bioethics*, 3(3), 88-99. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1073783ar>
- George, R. (2026). Symbolic Anthropology and Literary Analysis: The Scarlet Letter as a Lens for Modern Social Issues. *World Journal of English Language*, 16(3), 52-60. <https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v16n3p52>
- Gola, S. (2021). One step forward or one step back? Autonomy, agency and surrogates in the Indian Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill 2019. *International Journal of Law in Context*, 17(1), 58-74. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S174455232100001X>
- Jana, M., & Hammer, A. (2022). Reproductive work in the global south: Lived experiences and social relations of commercial surrogacy in India. *Work, Employment and Society*, 36(5), 945-966. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0950017021997370>
- Jiabao, P. (2024). Global Unequal Production in Surrogacy Industry: Analysis Based on Cultural Anthropology. *Anthropological*

- Explorations of Gender, Identity, and Economics*, 194. <https://doi.org/10.9734/bpi/mono/978-81-970867-8-6/CH18>
- Johnson v. Calvert, 5 Cal. 4th 84 (1993). <https://law.justia.com/cases/california/supreme-court/4th/5/84.html>
- López, I. O. (2008). *Matters of choice: Puerto Rican women's struggle for reproductive freedom*. Rutgers University Press.
- Mbembe, A. (2003). Necropolitics. *Public Culture*, 15(1) 11-40. <https://doi.org/10.1215/08992363-15-1-11>
- Mesegué Molina, A. (2016). “*That Alien. That Ugly. That Powerful.*”: *An Analysis Of The Oankali As The Monstrous Other in Octavia Butler's Lilith's Brood*.
- Mitchell, R., & Waldby, C. (2006). *Tissue economies: Blood, organs, and cell lines in late capitalism*. Duke University Press.
- Moore v. Regents of the University of California (1990) <https://law.justia.com/cases/california/supreme-court/3d/51/120.html>
- Mukherjee, M. (2018). More than a womb: Recognizing and protecting ‘gestational motherhood’ in India’s commercial surrogacy industry.
- Mutcherson, K. (2024). Surrogacy and global justice. In *Research Handbook on Surrogacy and the Law* (pp. 24-39). Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781802207651.00008>
- Nanda, A. (2013). Power, Politics, and Domestic Desire in Octavia Butler's Lilith's Brood. *Callaloo*, 36(3), 773-788. <https://doi.org/10.1353/cal.2013.0164>
- Navarro-Tejero, A. (2024). Biopolitics and crisis in South Asian literary representations of midwifery and surrogacy 1. In *The Routledge Companion to Literatures and Crisis* (pp. 376-385). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003362883-44>
- Pande, A. (2014). *Wombs in labor: Transnational commercial surrogacy in India*. Columbia University Press. <https://doi.org/10.7312/pand16990>
- Pateman, C. (1988). *The Sexual Contract* Stanford, CA: Stanford Univ. Press. 276pp.
- Popova, O. V. (2024). Surrogacy as an anthropological and technoscientific phenomenon. *Človek*, 35(6), 48-69. <https://doi.org/10.31857/S0236200724060048>
- Rabinow, P. (1997). *Essays on the Anthropology of Reason*. Princeton University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400851799>
- Rabinow, P., & Rose, N. (2006). Biopower today. *BioSocieties*, 1(2), 195-217. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1745855206040014>
- Re, X. Y (Foreign Surrogacy) [2008] EWHC 3030 (Fam).(2008). Retrieved from <https://www.casemine.com/judgement/uk/5a8ff76560d03e7f57eac154>
- Roberts, D. (2014). *Killing the black body: Race, reproduction, and the meaning of liberty*. Vintage.
- Rose, N. (2001). Biopolitics in the twenty first century—Notes for a research agenda. *Distinktion: Scandinavian Journal of Social Theory*, 2(3), 25-44. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1600910X.2001.9672798>
- Rose, N. (2001). The politics of life itself. *Theory, culture & society*, 18(6), 1-30. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02632760122052020>
- Saluja, Isha (2022) Regulating commercial surrogacy and international surrogacy arrangements in India. Doctoral thesis, O.P Jindal Global University. Retrieved from <https://pure.jgu.edu.in/id/eprint/6816>
- Saravanan, S. (2018). *A transnational feminist view of surrogacy biomarkets in India* (Vol. 4). Singapore: Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-6869-0>
- Schuster, J. (2023). *What is extinction? A natural and cultural history of last animals*. Fordham University Press. <https://doi.org/10.5422/fordham/9781531501648.001.0001>
- Sharma, V. K. (2023). Hawthorne’s The Scarlet Letter, A Product of Puritanism or a Reaction Against It: A 21 st-Century Critical Perspective. *World Journal of English Language*, 13(5), 475-481. <https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v13n5p475>
- Sharmila, C., & Hameed, M. S. (2022). A Journey of Emotional Tumult Life of Surrogacy in Amulya Malladi’s A House for Happy Mothers. *World Journal of English Language*, 12(8), 282-286. <https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v12n8p282>
- Spade, D. (2015). *Normal life: Administrative violence, critical trans politics, and the limits of law*. Duke University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822374794>
- Subedi, M. (2015). Contractual transaction: How renting a uterus makes the human body a commodity in Nepal. *Dhaulagiri Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, 9, 1-25. <https://doi.org/10.3126/dsaj.v9i0.14020>
- Sugamele, L. (2019). Maternità surrogata: la biopolitica del corpo. Una lettura della convergenza tra patriarcato e ideologia neoliberale. *ANNALI DI CA'FOSCARI. SERIE OCCIDENTALE*, 53, 433-448. <https://doi.org/10.30687/AnnOc/2499-1562/2019/07/033>
- Suganya, C., & Vijayakumar, M. (2022). Surrogacy: A Bio-economical Exploitation of Proletariats in Amulya Malladi’s A House for Happy Mothers. *World Journal of English Language*, 12(8), 127-132. <https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v12n8p127>
- Takács, Á. (2017). Biopolitics and biopower: The Foucauldian approach and its contemporary relevance. In *Bioethics and biopolitics: Theories, applications and connections* (pp. 3-15). Cham: Springer International Publishing.

https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-66249-7_1

The Surrogacy (Regulation) Act, 2021. Government of India. Retrieved from

<https://www.indiacode.nic.in/bitstream/123456789/17046/1/aaA2021-47.pdf>

Twine, F. W. (2012). *Outsourcing the womb: Race, class and gestational surrogacy in a global market*. Routledge.

Urías Martínez, R. (2020). *Gestational Surrogacy or Wombs for Rent? An analysis of the surrogacy debate in Spain*. Retrieved from <https://lup.lub.lu.se/student-papers/record/9003850>

Vertommen, S. (2024). Surrogacy at the Fertility Frontier: Rethinking Surrogacy in Israel/Palestine as an (Anti) Colonial Episteme. *History of the Present*, 14(1), 108-137. <https://doi.org/10.1215/21599785-10898374>

Vertommen, S., & Barbagallo, C. (2022). The in/visible wombs of the market: the dialectics of waged and unwaged reproductive labour in the global surrogacy industry. *Review of international political economy*, 29(6), 1945-1966.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/09692290.2020.1866642>