

En/Gendering Representations of Childbirth in  
Fifteenth-Century Franco-Flemish  
Devotional Manuscripts

Two Volumes

Elizabeth Anne L'Estrange

VOL I

Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the  
degree of Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Leeds  
School of Fine Art, History of Art, and Cultural Studies

September 2003

The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

This copy has been supplied on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from this thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My thanks go firstly to my supervisors, Tony Hughes and Eva Frojmovic, whose encouragement and close criticisms have been very much appreciated. Their ability to see this thesis from many different perspectives has been extremely helpful. I also thank Oliver Pickering and Adrian Wilson for their time and comments, and Ian Moxon, whose assistance with Latin has been invaluable. I am grateful to the University of Leeds for their financial assistance in the form of a Research Scholarship.

My friends have been a constant source of emotional support during this project and thanks go in particular to Rhiannon Daniels and Eva De Visscher. I am also grateful to Phillippa Plock and Cathy McClive for our lively discussions. I am especially indebted to those friends with whom I have escaped to sunnier climes: Eleanor Wilson, Kate Bingham, Rachael Morris, and Caroline Braley. I also thank Shane Blanchard for his support and for his supply of cricketing anecdotes.

Finally I thank my Mum and Dad, and my brother Rob, whose continual love and encouragement allowed me to start and finish this thesis. It is dedicated to the memory of my Grandad, William Jones, who died just before its completion.

## ABSTRACT

Representations of childbirth in fifteenth-century devotional and historical manuscripts are invariably depicted as *post-partum* confinement scenes in a domestic interior. These images appear to show a 'gendered space' in which women care for each other and men are marginalized. Neglected by medieval art historians, such pictures have been uncritically used by historians of obstetric and social history to prove that childbirth was the one time when medieval women exercised power and control in an otherwise patriarchal society. However, as with all historical evidence, these images do not offer us unmediated access to the past.

This thesis brings these domestic, *post-partum* pictures of childbirth to the centre of an art historical enquiry by undertaking a survey of this iconography in some fifty fifteenth-century manuscripts and incunables. Since the occurrence of this generic iconography cannot be consistently associated with female spectators, it has been necessary to reassess in what way they might be en/gendered: how they were received by their original viewers (male and female) and how we can bring them into meaning as sources for reconstructing the lives of medieval women. To avoid equating these images with reality and reducing the female sex at large to the maternal function, I develop a methodology to show how the social viewing positions occupied by certain spectators would have rendered them sensitive to images of maternity and childbirth. Specifically, I argue that the images of childbirth in a group of fifteenth-century Books of Hours made for male and female members of the houses of Anjou and Brittany would have been seen with a 'situational eye' that was informed by the requirements of patriarchal, aristocratic families, and by the dangers surrounding childbirth. My thesis demonstrates that this situational eye can be extended beyond the field of art history to show how other sources from fifteenth-century childbearing such as charms, lying-in, and churching, can be brought into meaning for the women whose social position required them to conceive and give birth to male heirs.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## VOLUME ONE

<b>Acknowledgements</b>	p. i
<b>Abstract</b>	p. ii
<b>Table of Contents</b>	p. iii
<b>Abbreviations</b>	p. vi
<b>List of Illustrations</b>	p. vii
<b>Introduction: <i>En/Gendering Representations of Childbirth in Fifteenth-Century Franco-Flemish Devotional Manuscripts</i></b>	p. 1
<b>Chapter One: <i>Formulation of the Enquiry and Preliminary Findings</i></b>	p. 5
<i>Formulation of the Enquiry</i>	p. 5
<i>Primary Research and Preliminary Findings</i>	p. 20
<b>Chapter Two: <i>Reading the Feminine: Methodological Approaches to Images and Gender</i></b>	p. 28
<i>Late-Medieval Manuscripts and Devotional Culture</i>	p. 29
<i>Constituting Medieval Bodies</i>	p. 38
<i>Gender and the Period Eye</i>	p. 50



<b>Chapter Three: <i>Childbirth Iconography in Manuscripts Relating to the Houses of Anjou and Brittany c. 1415-1480: A Case Study</i></b>	p. 60
<i>Manuscripts for the Angevin Dynasty:     The Grandes Heures de Rohan c. 1417</i>	p. 62
<i>Manuscripts for the Angevin Dynasty:     The Paris Hours of René d'Anjou, c. 1434</i>	p. 76
<i>Manuscripts for the Angevin Dynasty:     The London Hours of René d'Anjou, c. 1410</i>	p. 79
<i>A Manuscript to Link Anjou with Brittany:     The Fitzwilliam Hours, c. 1418-31</i>	p. 83
<i>A Manuscript for the Breton Dynasty:     The Hours of Marguerite de Foix, c. 1477</i>	p. 100
<b>Chapter Four: <i>Anna peperit Mariam: Prayers and Charms for Childbirth</i></b>	p. 111
<i>Charms for Incantation</i>	p. 115
<i>Charms to be Inscribed, Ingested, or Placed on the Body</i>	p. 126
<b>Chapter Five: <i>Maternity; Ceremonies; and Material Culture</i></b>	p. 133
<i>Childbirth and Material Culture</i>	p. 134
<i>The Rite of Churching</i>	p. 146
<b>Conclusion: <i>Engendered Representations</i></b>	p. 161
<b>Appendices</b>	
<b>Appendix 1: List of Primary Sources Consulted</b>	p. 168
<b>Appendix 2: Table of Manuscripts with Birth Scenes</b>	p. 171
<b>Appendix 3: Genealogical Trees of the House of France, and of the Dukes of Anjou, Brittany, and Burgundy</b>	p. 194

<b>Appendix 4: Childbirth Prayer in the <i>Hours of Marguerite de Foix</i></b>	p. 199
<b>Appendix 5: Childbirth Prayer in a Prayer Book of Anne de Bretagne</b>	p. 203
<b>Bibliography</b>	p. 207
<b>VOLUME TWO</b>	
<b>Table of Contents</b>	p. i
<b>List of Illustrations</b>	p. 1
<b>Illustrations</b>	

## ABBREVIATIONS

<i>RS</i>	<i>Renaissance Studies</i>
<i>JEBS</i>	<i>Journal of the Early Book Society</i>
<i>JMEMS</i>	<i>Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies</i>
EETS, o.s./e.s.	Early English Text Society, original series/extra series
<i>Cat. Fitz.</i>	M. R. James, <i>A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Fitzwilliam Museum</i> (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1895)
<i>Cat. Well.</i>	S. A. J. Moorat, <i>Catalogue of Western Manuscripts on Medicine and Science in the Wellcome Historical Medical Library: MSS written before 1650 AD</i> (London: [Npub], 1962)
Avril and Reynaud	François Avril and Nicole Reynaud, <i>Manuscrits à peintures en France, 1440-1520</i> (Paris: Flammarion-Bibliothèque nationale, 1993)
<i>Rohan Hours</i>	<i>Rohan Hours: Bibliothèque nationale, Paris (ms lat. 9741)</i> , partial facsimile with introduction and commentary by Millard Meiss and Marcel Thomas (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973)
<i>CEO</i>	<i>Catholic Encyclopaedia Online</i> <a href="http://www.newadvent.org">http://www.newadvent.org</a>
<i>Signs</i>	<i>Signs: A Journal of Women in Culture and Society</i>

### Note on the Bible

English quotations from the Bible are taken from the Douai-Rheims version. Quotations in Latin are taken from the Vulgate. Both sources have been accessed from <http://www.bible.crosswalk.com>

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- Fig. 1 Domenico Ghirlandaio, *Birth of the Virgin*, Tornabuoni Chapel, Sta Maria Novella, Florence, c. 1490  
Source: Musacchio, *Ritual*, p. 124
- Fig. 2 Domenico Ghirlandaio, *Birth of St John the Baptist*, Tornabuoni Chapel, Sta Maria Novella, Florence, 1486-87
- Fig. 3 Andrea Pisano, *Birth of St John the Baptist*, Baptistery Doors, Florence, c. 1330-36  
Source: [http://www.kfki.hu/~arthp/art/p/pisano/andrea/south\\_d/3birth\\_b.jpg](http://www.kfki.hu/~arthp/art/p/pisano/andrea/south_d/3birth_b.jpg)
- Fig. 4 Rogier van der Weyden, *St John Altarpiece* (left-hand panel), c. 1450-60  
Berlin, Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen  
Source: Kemperdick, plate 114
- Fig. 5 Book of Hours, Sanctoral, *Birth of St John the Baptist*, late-fifteenth-century  
No. 13 (JRULM, Latin MS 39), f. 172v
- Fig. 6 Book of Hours, Sanctoral, *Birth of the Virgin*, late-fifteenth-century  
No. 13 (JRULM, Latin MS 39), f. 197v
- Fig. 7 Jean Wavrin, *History of England, Birth of Constantine*, fifteenth-century  
No. 39 (London, BL, Royal MS 15 E. vi), f. 72r
- Fig. 8 *Desco da parto* showing confinement scene, c. 1400  
Alberto Bruschi Collection, Florence  
Source: Musacchio, *Ritual*, p. 48
- Fig. 9 *Les Faits des romains, Birth of Julius Caesar*  
National Library of Norway, Schøyen Collection, f. 199r  
Source: Blumenfeld-Kosinski, *Caesareans*, p.71



- Fig. 10 *Commentaires de César, Birth of Julius Caesar*,  
fifteenth-century  
Oxford, Bodleian, MS Douce 208, f. 1r
- Fig. 11 Jan van Eyck (?), *Milan Hours, Birth of St John the Baptist  
and Baptism of Christ*, fifteenth-century  
Turin, Museo Civico d'Arte Antica, Inv. no. 47, f. 93v  
Source: Marrow, colour plate 2.
- Fig. 12 *Endkrist, Birth of the Antichrist*, Chiroxylographic block-book,  
c. 1450  
Collection of Otto Schäfer, Schweinfurt, Germany  
Source: Blumenfeld-Kosinski, 'Antichrist', p. 603
- Fig. 13 Pseudo-Methodius, *Opusculum divinarum revelationum*,  
edited by Sebastian Brant and printed by Michael Furter in  
Basle, 1498  
New York, Public Library, Astor, Lennox, and Tilden  
Foundations  
Source: Blumenfeld-Kosinski, 'Antichrist', p. 607
- Fig. 14 *Hours of Catherine of Cleves, Prime, Birth of the Virgin*,  
c. 1440  
New York, Guennol Collection, f. 20r  
Source: Plummer, *Hours of Catherine of Cleves*, plate 43
- Fig. 15 *Hours of Catherine of Cleves, Matins (Hours of the Dead),  
Deathbed Scene*, c. 1440  
New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, M 917, p. 180  
Source: Plummer, *Hours of Catherine of Cleves*, plate 41
- Fig. 16 Giusto de' Menabuoi, *Birth of St John the Baptist  
with female donors* (?), Baptistery, Padua, c. 1375  
Source: <http://easyweb.easynet.co.uk/giorgio.vasari/giusto/pic18.htm>
- Fig. 17 *Hours of Jacques de Châtillon, Prime, Birth of the Virgin*,  
fifteenth-century  
Paris, BN, ms n.a.l. 3231, f. 122r

- Fig. 18 *Hours of Jacques de Châtillon*, Donor portraits of Jacques and Jeanne with fictional children, fifteenth-century  
Paris, BN, ms n.a.l. 3231, f. 58v-59r
- Fig. 19 Book of Hours, Calendar (June), *Birth of St John the Baptist*, fifteenth-century  
No. 1 (London, BL, Add. 4836), f. 6v
- Fig. 20 Book of Hours, Calendar (September), *Birth of the Virgin*, fifteenth-century  
No. 1 (London, BL, Add. 4836), f. 9v
- Fig. 21 Book of Hours, Matins, *Annunciation with Birth of the Virgin* and related scenes, fifteenth-century  
No. 11 (London, BL, MS Egerton 2019), f. 30r
- Fig. 22 Bedford Workshop, Book of Hours (fragmentary), Calendar (June), *Birth of St John the Baptist*, fifteenth-century,  
No. 19 (Leeds, Brotherton Collection MS 1), f. 6v
- Fig. 23 Bedford Workshop, Book of Hours (fragmentary), Calendar (September), *Birth of the Virgin*, fifteenth century,  
No. 19 (Leeds, Brotherton Collection MS 1), f. 9r
- Fig. 24 *Officia varia*, Sanctoral, *Birth of St John the Baptist*  
No. 3 (London, BL, Add. 16998), f. 92v
- Fig. 25 *Roman de Merlin, Birth and Escape of Merlin*, fifteenth-century  
Paris, BN, ms f. fr. 91, f. 7r  
Source: Avril and Reynaud, p. 163
- Fig. 26 Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend, Birth of the Virgin*, translated and printed by Caxton, Westminster, 1497,  
No. 51 (JRULM, Inc. 12018.1), p. 84a
- Fig. 27 Book of Hours, *Salve Regina, Birth of the Virgin*, printed by Kerver in [Paris], 1498  
No. 35 (JRULM, Inc. 151444), p. F3a

- Fig. 28 Book of Hours, Matins, *Annunciation with Birth of the Virgin*, and related scenes, printed by Jehannot in [Paris], 1492/93 No. 33 (JRULM, Inc. 9607), p. C1a
- Fig. 29 Follower of the Master of St Veronica, *Holy Kinship*, c. 1420, Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, Cologne, Inv. Nr 59  
Source: Ashley and Sheingorn, eds, *Interpreting Cultural Symbols*, p. 174
- Fig. 30 Workshop of Fra Mattia della Robbia, *Dovizia*, c. 1494-1513  
Cleveland Museum of Art  
Source: Randolph, p. 166
- Fig. 31 Apollonio di Giovanni (Workshop), *Desco da parto* showing *The Triumph of Chastity*, c. 1450-60  
North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, Gift of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation  
Source: Musacchio, *Ritual*, p. 55
- Fig. 32 Bartolomeo Fruosino, *Desco da parto* showing confinement scene with visitors, dated 25 April 1428  
Private Collection  
Source: Musacchio, *Ritual*, p. 2
- Fig. 33 Bartolomeo Fruosino, *Desco da parto* (reverse) showing naked, urinating boy, dated 25 April 1428  
Private Collection  
Source: Musacchio, *Ritual*, p. 3
- Fig. 34 Osservanza Master, *Birth of the Virgin*, c. 1440  
Museo d'Arte Sacra, Asciano  
Source: Musacchio, *Ritual*, p. 11
- Fig. 35 Rohan Workshop, *Grandes Heures de Rohan*, Calendar (October), *Birth of Cain and Abel* (margin), c. 1417  
No. 31 (Paris, BN ms lat. 9471), f. 14v  
Source: *Rohan Hours*, plate 18



- Fig. 36 Rohan Workshop, *Grandes Heures de Rohan*, Hours of the Virgin, *Birth of Esau and Jacob* (margin), c. 1417  
No. 31 (Paris, BN ms lat. 9471), f. 55r (detail)
- Fig. 37 Rohan Workshop, *Grandes Heures de Rohan*, Hours of the Virgin, *Birth of Perez and Zerah* (margin), c. 1417  
No. 31 (Paris, BN ms lat. 9471), f. 67r (detail)
- Fig. 38 Rohan Workshop, *Grandes Heures de Rohan*, Litany, *Birth of the Male Children of Israel* (margin), c. 1417  
No. 31 (BN ms lat. 9471), f. 127v (detail)
- Fig. 39 Rohan Workshop, *Grandes Heures de Rohan*, Hours of the Virgin, *Ecclesia* (margin), c. 1417  
No. 31 (Paris, BN ms lat. 9471), f. 67v (detail)
- Fig. 40 Rohan Workshop, *Grandes Heures de Rohan*, Litany, *Birth of Moses* (margin), c. 1417  
No. 31 (Paris, BN ms lat. 9471), f. 129v (detail)
- Fig. 41 Rohan Workshop, *Grandes Heures de Rohan*, Litany, *Nativity of Christ* (margin), c. 1417  
No. 31 (Paris, BN ms lat. 9471), f. 130r (detail)
- Fig. 42 Rohan Workshop, *Grandes Heures de Rohan*, Vespers, *Flight into Egypt*, c. 1417  
No. 31 (Paris, BN, ms lat. 9471), f. 99r  
Source: Meiss, plate 870
- Fig. 43 Limbourg Brothers, *Belles Heures*, Calendar (July),  
Reapers, c. 1405-08  
New York, The Cloisters, f. 8r (detail)  
Source: Meiss, plate 861
- Fig. 44 Limbourg Brothers, *Belles Heures*, Calendar (October),  
Sower, c. 1405-08  
New York, The Cloisters, f. 11v (detail)  
Source: Meiss, plate 687



- Fig. 45 Rohan Workshop, *Grandes Heures de Rohan*, Calendar (September), Sower, c. 1417  
No. 31 (Paris, BN, ms lat. 9471), f. 13r (detail)  
Source: Meiss, plate 876
- Fig. 46 Rohan Workshop, *Paris Hours of René d'Anjou*, Prime, *Nativity of Christ*, c. 1434  
No. 30 (Paris, BN, ms lat. 1156A), f. 48v  
Source: Harthan, *Books of Hours*, p. 86
- Fig. 47 Rohan Workshop, *Grandes Heures de Rohan*, *O Intemerata, Virgin and Child*, c. 1417  
No. 31 (Paris, BN, ms lat. 9471), f. 33v  
Source: *Rohan Hours*, plate 36
- Fig. 48 Boucicaut Master, Book of Hours, Prime, *Nativity of Christ*, early-fifteenth-century  
No. 25 (London, V&A, Reid MS 4), f. 56v  
Source: Harthan, *Illuminated Manuscripts*, p. 26
- Fig. 49 Rohan Workshop, *Paris Hours of René d'Anjou*, Donor portrait of René, added after 1434  
No. 30 (Paris, BN, ms lat. 1156A), f. 81v  
Source: Harthan, *Books of Hours*, p. 85
- Fig. 50 Egerton Master, *London Hours of René d'Anjou*, Sext, *Adoration of the Magi*, c. 1410  
No. 10 (London, BL, Egerton MS 1070), f. 34v
- Fig. 51 Rohan Workshop, *Fitzwilliam Hours*, *Obsecro te*, Donor portrait showing Isabel Stuart presented by St Catherine, c. 1418-31, adjusted c. 1442  
No. 26 (Cam., Fitz. Museum, MS 62), f. 20r
- Fig. 52 Rohan Workshop, *Fitzwilliam Hours*, *Suscipiat pietas* prayer, *Nun (?) Kneeling Before Altar*, c. 1418-31  
No. 26 (Cam., Fitz. Museum, MS 62), f. 140r
- Fig. 53 Rohan Workshop, *Fitzwilliam Hours*, St Luke's Gospel, *St Luke*, with *Nativity of Christ*, c. 1418-31  
No. 26 (Cam., Fitz. Museum, MS 62), f. 14v

- Fig. 54 Rohan Workshop, *Fitzwilliam Hours, Seven Requests, Christ in Judgement and Christ as Man of Sorrows*, c. 1418-31  
No. 26 (Cam., Fitz. Museum, MS 62), f. 199r  
Source: Harthan, *Books of Hours*, p. 115
- Fig. 55 Rohan Workshop, *Grandes Heures de Rohan, Seven Requests, Christ in Judgement*, c. 1417  
No. 31 (Paris, BN, ms lat. 9471), f. 154r  
Source: Harthan, *Books of Hours*, p. 83
- Fig. 56 Rohan Workshop, *Fitzwilliam Hours, Matins, Annunciation with Birth of the Virgin* and related scenes, c. 1418-31  
No. 26 (Cam., Fitz. Museum, MS 62), f. 29r
- Fig. 57 Rohan Workshop, *Fitzwilliam Hours, Ave Maria, Virgin and Child*, c. 1418-31  
No. 26 (Cam., Fitz. Museum, MS 62), f. 143v
- Fig. 58 Rohan Workshop, *Fitzwilliam Hours, Suffrages, St Anne and Daughters and Cripple and St Anne with Virgin and Child*, c. 1418-31  
No. 26 (Cam., Fitz. Museum, MS 62), f. 222r
- Fig. 59 *Somme le roi*, Donor miniature showing Isabel Stuart and her daughters presented by patron saints, 1464  
Paris, BN, ff. 958, f. Fv  
Source: Avril and Reynaud, p. 178
- Fig. 60 *Missal of the Carmelites of Nantes*, François I de Bretagne with his wives, Yolande d'Anjou and Isabel Stuart, and children before an altar, c. 1455  
New York, Princeton University Library, Garrett MS 40, (folio not given)  
Source: Plummer, *Last Flowering*, plate 34a
- Fig. 61 Rohan Workshop, *Fitzwilliam Hours, O intemerata*, Donor portrait showing Marguerite de Bretagne (?), c. 1418-31, added mid-fifteenth-century  
No. 26 (Cam., Fitz. Museum, MS 62), f. 28r

- Fig. 62 *Hours of Margeurite de Foix*, Matins, *Annunciation with Birth of the Virgin* and related scenes, c. 1477  
No. 24 (London, V&A, Salting 1222), f. 33r
- Fig. 63 *Hours of Margeurite de Foix*, Lauds, *Visitation with St Anne Teaching the Virgin*, c. 1477  
No. 24 (London, V&A, Salting 1222), f. 47r
- Fig. 64 Giotto, *Lamentation*, Scrovegni Chapel, Padua, c. 1305  
Source: Gombrich, p. 203
- Fig. 65 Rogier van der Weyden, *Deposition*, before 1443  
Museo del Prado, Madrid  
Source: Harbison, p. 44
- Fig. 66 Workshop of Andrea del Verrocchio, Marble relief showing death of Francesca Tornabuoni in childbirth, 1477  
Museo Bargello, Florence  
Source: Musacchio, *Ritual*, p. 29
- Fig. 67 *Burgundy Breviary*, Sanctoral, *Birth of St John the Baptist and Birth of the Virgin*, fifteenth-century  
No. 9 (London, BL, Harley MS 2897), f. 315r; f. 385r (details)
- Fig. 68 Prayer Scroll, opening section with prayer protecting bearer against death, late-fourteenth-century  
New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, Glazier MS 39
- Fig. 69 Jean Mansel, *Fleur des histoires*, *Birth of the Virgin*, fifteenth-century  
No. 40 (London, BL, MS Royal 18 E vi), f. 8r



# INTRODUCTION

## EN/GENDERING REPRESENTATIONS OF CHILDBIRTH IN FIFTEENTH-CENTURY FRANCO-FLEMISH DEVOTIONAL MANUSCRIPTS

Late-medieval representations of the births of holy and heroic children invariably show a domestic interior with the new mother lying in bed attended by female assistants. These images thus appear to show a ‘gendered space’ in which women cared for each other and from which men were marginalized. Although they have been invoked by social and art historians, these pictures have not been adequately surveyed or problematised as a source, either for the history of art or for the history of women in the later Middle Ages. This thesis brings images of childbirth from fifteenth-century, Franco-Flemish manuscripts, to the centre of an art-historical enquiry and suggests how they can be en/gendered: how they were understood by their fifteenth-century viewers and how we can bring them into meaning to produce a feminist (art) history of late-medieval women and their viewing practices.

In the last twenty-five years, feminist historians have actively engaged in addressing – and redressing – the marginalisation and absence of women from the historical record. Scholars working on the medieval period have focused on the very different roles and positions that women occupied during this time as workers, mothers, rulers, patrons, writers and visionaries.<sup>1</sup> However, the paucity of surviving textual evidence concerning women’s lives means that visual representations of medieval women, especially in illuminated manuscripts, have been made to work hard for historians: Martha W. Driver notes that ‘[n]on-art historians especially tend to view manuscript illumination and late medieval

---

<sup>1</sup> Works on the history of women in the Middle Ages are numerous. Those works which have been particularly useful for this project are: *Women and Work in Pre-Industrial Europe*, ed. by Barbara Hanawalt (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986); *The Cultural Patronage of Medieval Women*, ed. by June Hall McCash (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996); *Medieval Women: Texts and Contexts in Late Medieval Britain: Essays for Felicity Riddy*, ed. by Arlyn Diamond, Rosalynn Voaden, and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000); *Women and the Book: Assessing the Visual Evidence*, ed. by Lesley Smith and Jane H. M. Taylor (Toronto: University of Toronto Press and the British Library, 1997).



painting, no matter what the original context, as an unequivocal rendering of reality'.<sup>2</sup> Since images, like texts, cannot offer us unmediated access to the past, a recovery of childbirth practices in the fifteenth-century through contemporary paintings is far from problematic.<sup>3</sup>

This thesis develops existing art historical work on childbirth iconography by shifting the focus away from panel paintings and Italian sources and onto manuscript studies. One of the contributions of this research to scholarship is the survey of manuscripts containing images of childbirth, tabulated in Appendix 2. By highlighting the generic format of these images and the variety of non-medical books in which they occur, this study broadens our understanding of these representations by showing how they can be used as something beyond adjuncts to obstetrical history and spaces in which to house 'fifteenth-century women'. Whereas midwifery, motherhood, and childbirth are expanding areas of research for scholars working in the field of medieval literary and social history, pictorial representations of childbirth have either been neglected or used as photographic-like evidence to provide information missing from textual sources.<sup>4</sup> Two other types of material have come to light during this

---

<sup>2</sup> Martha W. Driver, 'Mirrors of a Collective Past: Re-considering Images of Medieval Woman' in, *Women and the Book*, pp. 75-93 (p. 75).

<sup>3</sup> On the problematics of using pictures to recover women's lives see Driver and also Jeffrey F. Hamburger, *The Visual and the Visionary: Art and Female Spirituality in Late Medieval Germany* (New York: Zone Books, 1998); and Margaret Miles, *Image as Insight: Visual Understanding in Western Christianity and Secular Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985). Hamburger criticises Miles's approach to representations of women in her book. This is discussed in Chapter Two.

<sup>4</sup> Gail McMurray Gibson and Theresa Coletti, for example, have explored the performance of, and anxiety over, medieval gender roles in relation to representations of the Incarnation and childbearing in the *Book of Margery Kempe* and medieval mystery plays. See Gibson, ' "Porta haec clausa erit": Comedy, Conception, and Ezekiel's Closed Door in the *Ludus Coventriae* Play of "Joseph's Return" ', *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 8 (1978), 137-56; *The Theater of Devotion: East Anglian Drama and Society in the Late Middle Ages* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1989); 'St Anne and the Religion of Childbed: Some East Anglian Texts and Talismans', in *Interpreting Cultural Symbols: Saint Anne in Late Medieval Society* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1990), pp. 95-110; 'Scene and Obscene: Seeing and Performing Late Medieval Childbirth', *JMEMS*, 29 (1999), 7-24; and Coletti, 'Devotional Iconography in the N-Town Marian Plays', in *Drama in the Middle Ages: Comparative and Critical Essays*, ed. by Clifford Davidson, C. J. Gianakaris, John H. Stroupe (New York: AMS Press Inc, 1982), pp. 249-71; 'Purity and Danger: The Paradox of Mary's Body and the En-gendering of the Infancy Narrative in the English Mystery Cycles', in *Feminist Approaches to the Body in Medieval Literature*, ed. by Linda Lomperis and Sarah Stanbury (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press,

research: the representations of childbirth on sixteenth-century majolica bowls, or *scodelle*, and in illustrated obstetrical manuals. These visual and textual sources also contain *post-partum*, as well as *in partu*, depictions and they should be acknowledged here as an additional subject of investigation for the history of viewing practices. However, since they fall outside the chronological boundaries of this research I have not included them in this thesis.

The first two chapters discuss existing literature that relates to late-medieval representations of childbirth. Chapter One reviews the specific ways in which social, obstetrical, and art historians have used images of childbirth from across a variety of media and the meanings which have been proposed for them. This chapter also includes an overview of the results of the manuscript survey that I have carried out, and identifies the group of devotional manuscripts on which my third chapter focuses. The second chapter examines more broadly how images in fifteenth-century devotional manuscripts functioned for their contemporary spectators. In particular it explores the dangers of reducing female viewers to the biological function of childbirth. An awareness of the exigencies of fifteenth-century patriarchal society, and of medieval constructions of gender and sexuality reveals the multivalent potential of late-medieval images of childbirth. Drawing on Michael Baxandall's concept of the period eye and recent reassessments of this model in relation to contemporary gender theory, I develop a methodology for analysing how certain categories of viewer – namely, but not exclusively, aristocratic wives – responded to images of childbirth.

In the third chapter I apply this methodology to a group of manuscripts produced for lay men and women of the houses of Anjou and Brittany. These manuscripts have not previously been studied together in terms of how their texts and images would have been received by their fifteenth-century viewers. I argue that the dukes and duchesses would have seen their manuscripts with a 'situational eye' that was informed by the requirements of patriarchal, aristocratic families – specifically the need for male children – and by the personal circumstances of these viewers. The fact that two manuscripts owned

---

1993), pp. 65-93. Monica Green's analyses of medieval 'Trotula' texts, and Adrian Wilson's work on midwifery and the rite of churching in the Early Modern period are particularly strong on the reinterpretation of sources for a socio-historical recovery of aspects of women's lives: see Chapter One, nn. 1-2.



by Breton duchesses include prayers for assistance in childbearing strengthens my concept of a situational, maternal, subjectivity, for which textual as well as visual representations of holy childbirth and motherhood functioned as places for the projection of identifications and requests regarding successful parturition.

I develop this situational viewing position further in Chapters Four and Five, where I explore other aspects of fifteenth-century material and devotional culture that are connected to childbearing. The study of late-medieval charms and amulets constitutes an growing area of research in the field of interdisciplinary textual studies but specific charms for parturient women, which invoke biblical mothers, have not yet been considered in relation to the images of holy childbirth found in devotional manuscripts. The ceremonies of churching and lying-in are also increasingly being approached from the point of view of feminist obstetrical history but my thesis shows that, like the charms, the value of these ceremonies for mothers and mothers-to-be becomes much more discernible when seen in relation to the childbirth prayers and images in female-owned *horae*.

This thesis began as an art historical project and it has essentially remained so. Yet by analysing and proposing meanings for these images of childbirth this study contributes both to the broader fields of manuscript studies and to that of interdisciplinary medieval feminist scholarship.

# CHAPTER ONE

## FORMULATION OF THE ENQUIRY AND PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

This chapter defines the features of late-medieval representations of childbirth and shows how these images have been used by historians of the later Middle Ages. It identifies the short-comings of existing approaches to these images in which they have been harnessed as evidence of actual obstetrical practices. A more profitable way of understanding these images is the socio-historical approach taken by some art historians who have related the production and reception of this female-centred iconography to the interests of commissioners and spectators. However, whereas these art historical studies have set up a framework which proposes a connection between images of childbirth and an audience of female spectators, a more thorough evaluation of the occurrence of, and audience for, these pictures has been needed. Therefore, as part of this investigation into how we can use representations of childbirth as evidence for the recovery of women's lives, I have surveyed over fifty manuscripts and incunables containing birth scenes. In the second half of this chapter the results of this survey are outlined. It is evident from these findings that looking for connections between gendered images and gendered readers is problematic. However, one group of related manuscripts have come to light from this survey that require further investigation; these manuscripts constitute the case study in Chapter Three.

### *Formulation of the Enquiry*

Childbirth is one aspect of some medieval women's lives from which very little textual evidence survives. Yet as Monica Green has noted, '[i]t is a commonplace – both in histories of medicine and histories of women – that



throughout the Middle Ages “women’s health was women’s business”.<sup>1</sup> This commonplace is often sustained by reference to work on childbirth practices in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries where the rise of the professional man-midwife and the dissemination of male-authored obstetrical books have led scholars to focus on the intrusion of men and ‘history’ into the childbirth chamber.<sup>2</sup> Historians of obstetrics and gynaecology in the Middle Ages have therefore presumed – not necessarily unjustly – that prior to this intrusion of men in the course of the Early Modern period, the care of the parturient woman was in the hands of her female companions alone: men and their written records were excluded. This view is taken by Beryl Rowland in her edition of a fifteenth-century ‘Trotula’ manual, where she says that ‘[w]omen’s sicknesses were women’s business [...]. Medieval physicians were not concerned with the practical aspects of obstetrics’.<sup>3</sup>

I do not claim that the idea that childbirth in the fifteenth century was managed by women is entirely wrong: given that it is the female sex who undergoes pregnancy and birth, together with the pre-modern divisions of labour and patriarchally-constructed fears about the female body, there is much to be said for assuming a certain ‘gendering’ of obstetrical care. However, in this

---

<sup>1</sup> Monica Green, ‘Women’s Medical Practice and Health Care in Medieval Europe’, *Signs*, 14 (1989), 437-473 (p. 437). In this article Green problematises the notion of gendered healthcare and includes a detailed list of publications in the field of midwifery and gynaecology. See also her articles ‘From “Diseases of Women” to “Secrets of Women”: The Transformation of Gynecological Literature in the Late Middle Ages’, *JMEMS*, 30 (2000), 5-39; and ‘Obstetrical and Gynecological Texts in Middle English’, *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 14 (1992), 53-88. The texts published in the latter article are reprinted in her book, *Women’s Healthcare in the Medieval West* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> Adrian Wilson has comprehensively studied midwifery and childbirth in the Early Modern period and his work is useful for historians of the fifteenth century. See in particular, ‘The Ceremony of Childbirth and its Interpretation’, in *Women as Mothers in Pre-Industrial England: Essays in Memory of Dorothy McLaren*, ed. by Valerie Fildes (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 68-107; ‘Participant or Patient? Seventeenth-Century Childbirth from the Mother’s Point of View’, in *Patients and Practitioners: Lay Perceptions of Medicine in Pre-Industrial Society*, ed. by Roy Porter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 129-44; and *The Making of Man-Midwifery: Childbirth in England 1660-1770* (London: UCL Press Ltd, 1995).

<sup>3</sup> Beryl Rowland, *Medieval Woman’s Guide to Health: The First English Gynecological Handbook* (London: Croom Helm, 1981), p. xv. Anna Delva takes a similar approach in her study *Vrouwengeneeskunde in Vlaanderen tijdens de late middeleeuwen*, *Vlaamse Historische Studies* 2 (Brugge: Genootschap voor Geschiedenis, 1983). See Green, ‘Women’s Medical Practice’ for an excellent problematisation of these and other editions of pre-Modern gynaecological texts.

thesis, rather than attempting to recover what actually went on during labour, I examine how the female space of the childbirth chamber, as it is represented in late-medieval images, functioned for certain categories of fifteenth-century viewers, both male and female.

The idea that in the fifteenth century the childbirth chamber was an area solely occupied by women might appear to be easily established with reference to visual representations of childbirth from Western Europe where men are often absent or marginalized. In Domenico Ghirlandaio's late-fifteenth-century frescos of the *Birth of the Virgin* and the *Birth of St John the Baptist* in Sta Maria Novella, Florence, the newly-delivered mothers, Anne and Elizabeth, rest in bed, attended by female visitors and servants who offer food, prepare the infant's bath, and nurse the child (figs 1-2). There are no male figures present in the room.<sup>4</sup> This domestic setting is found in other late-medieval representations of the births of holy children across a variety of media. On Andrea Pisano's relief of the *Birth of St John the Baptist* from the Baptistery in Florence, and in Rogier van der Weyden's panel painting, the *St John Altarpiece*, we find the births depicted with a number of female assistants who take care of the mother and child (figs 3-4). In devotional and historical manuscripts, the births of saintly or heroic figures are also depicted in the same domestic, *post-partum* fashion (figs 5-7). On objects from Italian material culture, such as *deschi da parto* (birth trays) we again find the domestic setting with women providing food, drink, and assistance for the mother and child (fig. 8).

From these examples it is evident that late-medieval representations of childbirth consistently show a space where women care for, and are taken care of by, each other. Therefore, for historians wanting to replace women in the historical record, late-medieval images of childbirth – especially representations of the birth of St John the Baptist or of the Virgin – seem to provide evidence of an historical space where women acted by and for themselves, away from men.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> In Ghirlandaio's *Birth of the Virgin* the meeting of Joachim and Anna is shown at the top of the stairs on the left hand side of the fresco. This is a narrative device and Joachim takes no part in the scene below.

<sup>5</sup> It should be noted at this point that the Nativity of Christ, especially in the late-Middle Ages, is usually defined by the stable setting, the animals, with Mary and (often) Joseph adoring the child. This iconography differs sufficiently from the domestic scenes of the births of John, the Virgin, and other figures, and is not dealt with explicitly in this



The danger with this approach is that representations, as Gillian Beer notes, ‘rapidly become representatives – those empowered to speak on behalf of their constituency: the authentic voices of a group’.<sup>6</sup> Images of childbirth do consistently show a space inhabited by members of the female sex but I suggest that these images actually call attention to their own uniformity and thereby invite an enquiry into how they can be used as evidence for women’s lives.

It is important to remember that no representation, textual or visual, offers us an objective, unmediated access to the past. Previous analyses of representations of childbirth, such as Robert Müllerheim’s early-twentieth-century thesis, *Die Wochenstube in der Kunst*, have fallen into the trap of equating the images with real life.<sup>7</sup> Müllerheim’s work is the only existing survey of representations of childbirth and although it remains useful for its enormous number of illustrations, he assumes the images can be equated with a past reality: ‘No historian would be able to give us as clear a picture of the life and times of the different periods as these artists have done’.<sup>8</sup> Clearly of its time, Müllerheim’s thesis serves to highlight the problematic presumptions made about images by some more recent scholars, especially in the field of medieval and Early Modern obstetric and gynaecological history. For instance, in her study of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century midwives, Myriam Greilsammer states that ‘[t]he delivery room was one of the few areas where a wife escaped marital authority and expressed her *specific womanliness* [...] a glance at medieval depictions of birth strengthens this contention’.<sup>9</sup> Whilst Greilsammer is not concerned with images *per se*, in her ‘glance at medieval depictions’ – which are in fact religious birth scenes – she makes no attempt to recognise the

---

thesis. However, some representations of the birth of Christ are included, especially where they contain domestic features, such as the bathing of the child or female assistants.

<sup>6</sup> Gillian Beer, ‘Representing Women: Re-presenting the Past’, in *The Feminist Reader*, ed. by Catherine Belsey and Jane Moore (London: Macmillan, 1989), pp. 63-80 (p. 64).

<sup>7</sup> Robert Müllerheim, *Die Wochenstube in der Kunst* (Stuttgart: Ferdinand Enke, 1904). I am grateful to Dr Valerie Worth for her help in reading and summarising this thesis.

<sup>8</sup> ‘Kein Historiker wäre imstande, uns ein so klares Bild von dem Leben und Treiben in den verschiedenen Epochen zu geben, wie diese Künstler es getan haben’, Müllerheim, p. 32.

<sup>9</sup> Myriam Greilsammer, ‘The Midwife, the Priest, and the Physician: the Subjugation of Midwives in the Low Countries at the End of the Middle Ages’, *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 21 (1991), 283-329 (p. 321); emphasis mine.



problems of using pictures as evidence of actual practices. She also fails to address the wider implications of identifying childbirth with ‘specific womanliness’, an identification which will be discussed in further detail in Chapter Two. Louis Haas also invokes religious images in his study of childbearing practices in medieval Florence. He admits that ‘we know very little about what went on inside the room in which birth occurred, since our writers of *ricordanze* were kept outside’. However, he refers to ‘Renaissance paintings depicting the birth of the Virgin or St John the Baptist [which] commonly place the expectant father outside the room’ in order to emphasise that the space of childbearing belonged to women.<sup>10</sup>

Another study that uses generic images as evidence of obstetrical practices is Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski’s work on depictions of Caesarean sections in manuscript illuminations. She adheres to the commonplace, noted by Green, that ‘[t]he birth chamber was considered the exclusive domain of women, at least up until the eighteenth century’.<sup>11</sup> Blumenfeld-Kosinski rightly notes that manuscript representations offer us schematic, rather than realistic, representations of childbirth, as in paintings of Christ’s nativity. However, she does not apply the same understanding to the Caesarean images that she discusses. Instead she uses these images to argue expressly for the marginalisation of women in the field of surgery and obstetrics after the fifteenth-century. She says ‘the [visual] evidence shows [that] midwives were systematically excluded from the Caesarean operation starting about the beginning of the fifteenth century’.<sup>12</sup> Whilst these images may represent certain medical practices, it must be stressed that all but one of the paintings of Caesarean sections that Blumenfeld-Kosinski discusses are not taken from medical manuscripts but from historical narratives such as *Les Faits des Romains* and therefore all represent the birth of one figure, Julius Caesar (fig.

---

<sup>10</sup> Louis Haas, ‘Women and Childbearing in Medieval Florence’, in *Medieval Family Roles: A Book of Essays*, ed. by Cathy Jorgensen Itnyre (New York and London: Garland, 1996), pp. 87-99 (p. 91).

<sup>11</sup> Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, *Not of Woman Born: Representations of Caesarean Birth in Medieval and Renaissance Culture* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990), p. 91.

<sup>12</sup> Blumenfeld-Kosinski, *Caesareans*, p. 91

9).<sup>13</sup> Schematic images of the birth of Caesar are no less problematic as visual sources for obstetrical procedures than representations of the birth of the Virgin or St John the Baptist are for natural deliveries.

Despite the surgical aspect of Caesar's birth, it is evident from the images discussed by Blumenfeld-Kosinski that the format of these 'Caesareans' is based fundamentally on the same format as 'natural' birth scenes: the mother in bed, the furnished chamber, the female attendants, a bath, various other accoutrements (fires, bowls, food, animals) and, often, an absence of men. In Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 208 (fig. 10), for example, the room with the canopied bed, the female attendants holding linen, the view through the door at the back of the room into the town, are not dissimilar in format to representations such as the left-hand panel of Rogier's *St John Altarpiece* or the *Birth of St John* in the *Turin-Milan Hours* (figs 4;11 ). In another study, Blumenfeld-Kosinski shows how the birth of the Anti-Christ is often represented as a Caesarean operation.<sup>14</sup> Although some of the pictures show devils surrounding the bed, others are indistinguishable from the birth of Caesar, with a benign-looking child extracted from the mother, all represented in a domestic interior (figs 12-13). The desire to account for the absence of women in areas such as medicine and art history must not be done at the expense of ignoring possible disjunctions between representation and reality. Manuscript

---

<sup>13</sup> The exception is London, Wellcome Library, MS 49. The paucity of Caesarean section diagrams in medical manuscripts may well be, as Blumenfeld-Kosinski concedes, due to the 'small role obstetrics played in the university curriculum and education. The great medical and surgical handbooks concentrated on illustrating those procedures their readers were likely to perform themselves'; see Blumenfeld-Kosinski, *Caesareans*, p. 59. In fact, the Church only decreed that a child should be removed from its dead mother in the thirteenth century. This can probably explain the absence of illustrations of Caesarean sections in medical books especially since, until Rousset (who coined the phrase 'l'enfantement cesarienne' and who wrote about it in his treatise in the 1580s), it was strictly a *post-mortem* procedure. The first medical occurrence of the Caesarean would appear to be that contained in Guy de Chauliac's *Inventarium seu collectorium in parte cyrugicali medicine* written in France in 1363. I owe the information on Rousset and the caesarean operation in this footnote to a discussion I had with Dr Adrian Wilson, 15 July 2002. For references to Chauliac's original text, and for a fifteenth-century Middle English translation, see *Cyurgie of Guy de Chauliac*, ed. by Margaret S. Ogden, EETS, o.s. 265 (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1971).

<sup>14</sup> Blumenfeld-Kosinski, 'Illustration as Commentary in Late Medieval Images of Antichrist's Birth', *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, 63 (1989), 589-607.



illuminations of the birth of Caesar or the Antichrist may tell us something about medieval labour divisions and post-mortem attempts to extract a dead child. However, given that Caesarean deliveries (on live women at least) did not become medical practice until the late sixteenth century, it is extremely difficult to use these images as historical evidence. The representations that Blumenfeld-Kosinski discusses reveal more about biblical and historical narratives, the standardisation of iconography, and about how the births of certain figures were re-imagined in cultural memory, than they do about actual obstetrical practices.

The difficulty of ascribing specific meanings to standardised representations is further demonstrated when we consider that birth and death scenes were both represented in furnished domestic interiors. At the opening of Prime in the *Hours of Catherine of Cleves*, there is a miniature of the *Birth of the Virgin*.<sup>15</sup> The ceiling beams and the tiled floor give a sense of depth to the room. There is a latticed window, a fireplace with a cat seated before it. St Anne sits in a bed hung with red curtains and a woman presents her with the baby Mary (fig. 14). At the Matins in the Office of the Dead in the same manuscript, a dying man lies on a large bed in a furnished interior attended by men and women, including a physician and a man in a religious habit (fig. 15). The representation of the two rooms is based on the same format. In the death scene there is the same tiled floor, beamed ceiling, and window at the back of the room, as we find in the *Birth of the Virgin*. Although the bed is not hung all around with curtains as in the birth image, there is a curtain sack over the left side of the bed. This Book of Hours was made for a lay female reader and it is possible, as we shall see below, that the inclusion of a birth scene was related to this readership. However, it should also be noted that in the *Deathbed Scene*, as in the miniature of the *Preparation of the Corpse of the Deceased*, the dying and dead person is male. This suggests that the gender of the depicted person was not necessarily as important for the illuminator or the viewer as the recognisable schema of the event shown and it asks us to be wary of assigning meanings to images based solely on the gender of the figures depicted. In any study of the representation of women and childbirth, it is essential to open up the field of play of meanings by

---

<sup>15</sup> For a facsimile of this manuscript see John Plummer, *The Hours of Catherine of Cleves* (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1966).



remaining aware of the context in which images were found and the purposes to which they were put by different viewers.

Apart from images of Caesar's birth many fifteenth-century representations of childbirth are of religious figures, especially the births of the Virgin and of St John the Baptist. The mothers and children in these scenes are part of Christ's family, the details of which circulated through canonical and apocryphal Gospels, and sources such as the *Golden Legend*. Consideration of Christ's extended family is important for contextualising representations of childbirth and there is a substantial amount of work on textual and visual representations of St Anne and the Holy Kinship as models for family life and in particular for lay women. This is a large area of study in itself which should be acknowledged at this point but which is discussed in more detail in relation to devotional manuscripts in the following chapter.<sup>16</sup> Jacqueline Lafontaine-Dosogne's *L'Iconographie de l'enfance de la Vierge* provides a detailed account of the apocryphal sources relating to the life of St Anne, and the Virgin's conception and childhood.<sup>17</sup> However, her stylistic approach towards the history and development of certain iconographies means that her book offers little on the circumstances of the commissioning and reception of this iconography.<sup>18</sup> A consideration of social context rather than just iconographical details can help us to understand how representations of childbirth were received by their contemporary audiences.

---

<sup>16</sup> On the figure and cult of St Anne see the essays in *Interpreting Cultural Symbols*; and Ton Brandenbarg, 'St Anne and Her Family', in *Saints and She-Devils: Images of Women in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, ed. by Lène Dresen-Coenders (London: Rubicon Press, 1987), pp. 101-27.

<sup>17</sup> Jacqueline Lafontaine-Dosogne, *Iconographie de l'enfance de la Vierge dans l'empire byzantin et en occident* (Brussels: Palais des Academies, 1964).

<sup>18</sup> A recent publication that draws upon the images and textual sources in Lafontaine-Dosogne's book is David R. Cartlidge and J. Keith Elliott, *Art and the Christian Apocrypha* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001) which contains summaries of the Apocryphal Gospels and tables that compare the cycle of the life of the Virgin in the East and West. The related website *Apocicon* includes a searchable database of descriptions of images illustrating episodes from the Apocryphal writings and is thus a valuable source for finding images of the Virgin's birth. It does not list images of the birth of St John the Baptist, which is included in the canonical Gospels and, like Lafontaine-Dosogne, Cartlidge and Elliott do not analyse the circumstances in which the images were commissioned and viewed. The website address is included in the book but I have found the following link more satisfactory:

[http://faculty.maryvillecollege.edu/scripts/as\\_web4.exe?Command=First&File=Apocicon.ask](http://faculty.maryvillecollege.edu/scripts/as_web4.exe?Command=First&File=Apocicon.ask)  
 Accessed online: 11 December 2002.

Social art-historical analyses of images of childbirth have favoured Italian sources and have privileged a connection between this seemingly all-female iconography and female viewers. Such a connection is most easy to establish for those confinement scenes that decorate fifteenth-century Italian *deschi da parto* (birth trays) which were given as presents to women in childbirth. Jacqueline Marie Musacchio suggests that Italian women were encouraged to fulfil their maternal roles through the images on *deschi* that emphasised the production of healthy, male babies.<sup>19</sup> She also notes that these *deschi*, on which images of childbirth featured, were given to women as part of ‘highly politicized ritual affairs’ orchestrated by men.<sup>20</sup> Her approach to the strategies involved in the preparations for childbirth indicates how lay women’s social roles were promoted and appropriated by those men in positions of power and wealth. Musacchio raises several issues which have implications for my own work, regarding the importance of childbirth for patrician families, female spectatorship, and the power of objects and images as mediators between the public and private spaces of childbearing. Her work is discussed in more detail in Chapter Two, where I formulate a methodology of viewing, and in Chapter Four, where I discuss the material culture of childbirth.

In addition to the explicit connections between secular *deschi da parto* and female viewers, connections have also been proposed between female viewers and more monumental, religious, birth scenes. Cordelia Warr has argued that the fresco cycle of the life of St John the Baptist in the Baptistery at Padua was commissioned by a patrician wife, Fina Buzzacarini, who used it to express her thanks for the birth of her son.<sup>21</sup> Warr claims that Fina’s fourteen-year wait for a son could have led her to identify herself with the mother of St John the Baptist, the barren St Elizabeth, and that she may have manipulated the *Birth of St John* fresco to commemorate his birth some sixteen years previously.<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> Jacqueline Marie Musacchio, *The Art and Ritual of Childbirth in Renaissance Italy* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999); see also her ‘Imaginative Conceptions in Renaissance Italy’, in *Picturing Women in Renaissance and Baroque Italy*, ed. by Geraldine A. Johnson and Sara F. Mathews Grieco (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 42-60.

<sup>20</sup> Musacchio, *Ritual*, p. 46.

<sup>21</sup> Cordelia Warr, ‘Painting in Late Fourteenth-Century Padua: the Patronage of Fina Buzzacarini’, *RS*, 10 (1996), 139-155.

<sup>22</sup> Warr, p. 154.



Although the identity of Fina as the patron is not definitively established, Warr's focus on the circumstances of the proposed commissioner-viewer of these frescos shows how useful it can be to take dynastic factors as well as gender into account when proposing meanings for childbirth iconography.

The fresco cycle in the Baptistery was executed in about 1375 by Giusto de' Menabuoi as part of the adaptation of the building into a funerary chapel for Francesco il Vecchio da Carrara, the ruler of Padua (d. 1393). Evidence for the involvement of Francesco's wife Fina in the decoration of the building is only circumstantial but she is documented as the patron of another chapel dedicated to St Louis of Toulouse at the convent of San Benedetto, Padua, where her sister was abbess.<sup>23</sup> Francesco's arms are found in several places in the Baptistery but Fina Buzzacarini's own arms decorate the altarpiece and a donatrix portrait, which may represent Fina presented to the Virgin, is found on one wall. Catherine King has suggested that Fina's association with the chapel is strengthened by testamentary evidence since in her will of 1378 Fina exercised one of her few rights as a woman – to choose both her place of burial and the disposal of the material belongings found on her at her death. She chose to be buried in the Baptistery and to leave any material belongings for the adornment of the chapel and altar.<sup>24</sup>

It is in the *Birth of St John* fresco that Fina's presence has been most strongly identified (fig. 16). Here St Elizabeth sits in bed attended by a group of six women, one of which is the Virgin, identifiable by her halo. At the right of the fresco stands a woman with three companions whom Warr suggests is Fina with her daughters. In the foreground there are three women seated on the floor, bathing the infant John. Warr notes that one of the women turns towards Fina 'in order to present the newly born John the Baptist to Fina's gaze' and that '[o]ne of Fina's female companions also gestures towards John while Fina herself acknowledges this mark of favour by raising her hand towards her heart'.<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup> Catherine King, 'Women as Patrons: Nuns, Widows, and Rulers', in *Siena, Florence and Padua: Art, Society and Religion, 1280-1400*, ed. by Diana Norman, 2 vols (New Haven and London: Yale University Press), II, 244-66 (pp. 249-50); see also her 'Medieval and Renaissance Matron, Italian Style', *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 55 (1992), 372-93.

<sup>24</sup> King, 'Women as Patrons', p. 251.

<sup>25</sup> Warr, p. 145.



Francesco il Vecchio's sovereignty was threatened by his uncle Giacomo who had tried to assassinate him. The attempt failed but without a male heir Francesco had no legitimate successor until Francesco Novello was born. Thus, although she had already given birth to three daughters, Warr shows that for Fina the birth of Francesco Novello was extremely important both in terms of her husband's dynasty and in terms of the success of her own marriage. She claims that Fina may have associated herself with the aged Elizabeth who, by the grace of God, bore St John in old age or after a period of barrenness and that the *Birth of St John* fresco 'may be seen as an appropriate thank-offering for [her son's] safe delivery and prayer for his future safety'.<sup>26</sup>

Warr's reading of the *Birth of St John* is based on the hypothesis that Fina was indeed the patron of the Baptistery's transformation and that the woman in the frescos can be identified as Fina. Another factor involved in the identification of Fina – or at least a female donor – as the patron is the privileging of biblical women such as St Anne and St Elizabeth, and the matriarchs Sarah, Rachel, and Leah, in parts of the programme. Female saints such as St Mary Magdalene, St Martha, and St Agnes take priority over normal liturgical order, being placed close to the Virgin instead of St John the Baptist and St John the Evangelist.<sup>27</sup> Thus in addition to identifying herself with the barren St Elizabeth, it is possible that Fina also acknowledged the relevance to her own situation of these women who had found grace with God – especially the Old Testament matriarchs Sarah, Rachel, and Leah who had also conceived late in life.

When researching the patronage of late-medieval women, it is always necessary to acknowledge the codes and constraints under which they operated within a patriarchal society. Jaynie Anderson has noted how female patronage allowed women to play a significant role in art production yet she also notes that (in Italy at least) although ten percent of patrons were women, 'almost all [were] widows and nuns'.<sup>28</sup> Therefore even if Fina's independent commissioning of the

---

<sup>26</sup> Warr, p. 153-54.

<sup>27</sup> King, 'Women as Patrons', p. 252. In the Litany of saints, John the Baptist and John the Evangelist are traditionally first, with the female saints towards the end.

<sup>28</sup> See Jaynie Anderson, 'Rewriting the History of Art Patronage', *RS*, 10 (1996), 129-38 (p. 131).

cycle were to be proved, it would still be difficult to distinguish between Fina's social position, the choice and manipulation of the iconography, and the building's function as a funerary chapel for her husband's family. The fact that Francesco was still alive at the time of the adaptation of the Baptistery complicates any assumption that Fina acted – if she in fact did – entirely autonomously. Thus King suggests that, with her husband's permission, 'Fina benefited at least seventeen women in her will' and claims that the privileging of biblical mothers and female saints in the cycle may have been allowed 'as long as the main function of the baptistery was clearly sustained as glorifying the Carrara dynasty'.<sup>29</sup>

Warr and King's readings of the Padua frescos underline the importance of art as a commemorative device, as a semi-public demonstration of dynastic power and, in particular, the importance of children in the safeguarding of that power. The importance of male children for patrician families, the possibilities for identifying with biblical figures, and the fears surrounding childbirth have also informed some other scholars' approaches to images related to childbearing. Julia I. Miller and Penny Howell Jolly have situated two fifteenth-century paintings in their social context where, for many families, not least those in power, the birth of children was extremely important. Jolly has suggested that the *Annunciation* on Jan van Eyck's *Ghent Altarpiece* is related to 'the late medieval *Annunciation* at SS. Annunziata, Florence, a fresco believed to have miraculous properties with regard to marriage and childbirth'.<sup>30</sup> She claims that '[b]y »copying« significant elements of that trecento fresco [...] Jan hoped to retain the apotropaic values of the Florentine cult image in his Ghent and Washington *Annunciations*, paintings intended to aid childless couples, specifically the Vyds and the Duke and Duchess of Burgundy'.<sup>31</sup>

Miller's article on Hugo van der Goes's *Portinari Altarpiece* relates the iconography of the painting to the place and people for whom it was produced – the church of S. Egidio, the chapel of the S. Maria Nuova hospital in Florence,

---

<sup>29</sup> King, 'Women as Patrons', p. 252.

<sup>30</sup> Penny Howell Jolly, 'Jan van Eyck's Italian Pilgrimage: A Miraculous Florentine *Annunciation* and the Ghent Altarpiece', *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 61 (1998), 369-94 (p. 369).

<sup>31</sup> Jolly, p. 369.



the patients of this hospital and the donor family.<sup>32</sup> She suggests that the painting's emphasis on miraculous childbirth – seen particularly in the heavily pregnant Virgin in the top of the left wing and in the figure of Saint Margaret, patron saint of childbirth – functioned as 'a powerful message of hope and solace to those afflicted with physical ailments'.<sup>33</sup> Miller also indicates how the personal, childbearing concerns of the patron could have become part of this public display. She suggests that Maria Maddalena, the wife of the donor Tommaso Portinari may have either just given birth or was pregnant when the painting was commissioned. In paintings, donors are often presented by their patron saint who usually shares the same name. In the *Portinari Altarpiece*, the placing of St Margaret (traditionally the patron saint of childbirth), rather than St Mary Magdalene, behind Maria Maddalena alludes to 'the theme of the painless and miraculous birth of Christ' and so St Margaret 'can be seen extending the protection of the patron saint of childbirth to the person most in need of it'.<sup>34</sup>

Existing interpretations of representations of holy childbirth in illuminated devotional books also consider the relationship between the subject matter and the childbearing concerns of their viewers or commissioners. Susie Nash has suggested that the cycle of images emphasising the Virgin's conception and birth in the *Hours of Jacques de Châtillon* relates to the hopes and desires of the Châtillons to have their childless marriage blessed.<sup>35</sup> The Hours of the Virgin in the manuscript is decorated throughout with scenes from the early life of Mary, including her Nativity, rather than with the more usual scenes from the Annunciation and the infancy of Christ. The opening of the hour of Prime shows the *Birth of the Virgin* in a cosy domestic interior with a cradle, cats and even a

---

<sup>32</sup> Julia I. Miller, 'Miraculous Childbirth in the Portinari Altarpiece', *Art Bulletin*, 77 (1995), 249-61 (p. 249).

<sup>33</sup> Miller, p. 258.

<sup>34</sup> Miller, p. 259. The women's patron saints have been swapped in this picture: whereas Maria Maddalena is presented by St Margaret, her daughter Margherita is presented by St Mary Magdalene.

<sup>35</sup> Susie Nash, *Between France and Flanders: Manuscript Illumination in Amiens in the Fifteenth Century* (London: The British Library and University of Toronto Press, 1999), p. 69. The manuscript is no. 31 in the catalogue. The whereabouts of the *Châtillon Hours* were unknown at the time Nash's book was published but the manuscript was recently acquired by the Bibliothèque nationale. See the article by François Avril and Sylvie Lisiecki, 'Le livre d'heures de Jacques II de Châtillon', in *Chroniques de la Bibliothèque nationale de France*, 17 (2002), 7-10. The manuscript now has the shelf mark Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, nouvelle acquisition latine, 3231.



mouse; a woman tends to the baby Mary before the fire (fig. 17). Later in the manuscript, during the Suffrages, there is a miniature of the mothers and children of the Holy Kinship: St Anne, the Virgin, and Christ, with St Elizabeth and St John the Baptist. If it is indeed the case that the Châtillon's marriage was childless at the time of the book's execution, it becomes significant that at the beginning of the manuscript there are two full-page miniatures showing Jacques and Jeanne in prayer, presented by their patron saints, and surrounded by male and female children respectively. Francois Avril and Sylvie Lisiecki have referred to these children as 'leurs descendants fictifs' – their imaginary descendants (fig. 18).<sup>36</sup> If these are hoped-for, rather than actual, children (and the sheer number alone would suggest this), the *Châtillon Hours* indicate how images in manuscripts relating to birth and pregnancy may have been used as a space for the projection of the hopes and desires of the viewer – whether male or female.

In addition to Nash's comments on the *Châtillon Hours*, which were made ostensibly for a married couple, the work of Alison Stones and Anne Rudloff Stanton has foregrounded the possibility that images of holy motherhood and childbirth in devotional manuscripts were more widely destined for a female audience – or at least for an aristocratic, lay, female audience. Stanton proposes that the iconographic programme of the early-fourteenth-century manuscript known as the *Queen Mary Psalter* suggests that it was made for a royal woman.<sup>37</sup> The manuscript is illustrated with many scenes of strong women and their children, 'ranging from Eve and Bathsheba to Mary and the mother of Thomas Becket [who] actively protect and champion their children'.<sup>38</sup> Stanton claims that the manuscript's iconographic programme, which has parallels with a Psalter made for Queen Isabella, wife of Edward II, 'may

---

<sup>36</sup> Avril and Lisiecki, p. 9; see above.

<sup>37</sup> Anne Rudloff Stanton, 'From Eve to Bathsheba and Beyond: Motherhood in the *Queen Mary Psalter*', in *Women and the Book*, pp.172-89. The patronage of the early-fourteenth-century *Queen Mary Psalter* has long been a subject of debate and there is no conclusive proof that it was originally commissioned for a woman. The *Psalter* was produced between 1310 and 1320 and only acquired the association with Queen Mary when it was presented to her in 1553; see Stanton, p. 172.

<sup>38</sup> Stanton, p. 172.

suggest that it was intended either for the use of a mother, or to emphasize the primary role of motherhood in the life of a woman'.<sup>39</sup>

Stones's reading of the images in a female-owned prayer book acknowledges the actual dangers of conception and parturition that must have been acknowledged by any woman who was, or expected to become, pregnant.<sup>40</sup> Her interpretation also highlights the need not to focus solely on matching the gender of the reader with the gender or *vitae* of the saints depicted since devotion to saints in the later Middle Ages was not always gender-specific.<sup>41</sup> Stones claims that the images in this book made for an enigmatic 'Madame Marie', including the *Meeting at the Golden Gate* and the *Birth of the Virgin*, emphasise 'themes of motherhood and family' and proposes that they 'would have presented models appropriate to a woman whose state this was'. She also says that the images of the *Circumcision*, the *Presentation of Christ*, and the two images of St Margaret 'emphasis[e] the patroness's interest in themes of motherhood'.<sup>42</sup> However, she also implies that the images of childbirth and holy matriarchs might not have been sufficiently evocative as identificatory devices for women undergoing childbirth. Female saints such as St Margaret, the Virgin, St Anne and St Elizabeth 'could not embody those fears [of conception and childbirth]' since their situations resulted in 'a positive outcome'.<sup>43</sup> In particular she claims that since 'the Virgin [...] could not be literally vested with the fears surrounding childbirth', the *Evisceration of St Vincent* scene 'might certainly

---

<sup>39</sup> Stanton, p. 184.

<sup>40</sup> Alison Stones, 'Nipples, Entrails, Severed Heads, and Skin: Devotional Images for Madame Marie', in *Image and Belief: Studies in Celebration of the Eightieth Anniversary of the Index of Christian Art*, ed. by Colum Hourihane (Princeton: Princeton University Press/ICA, 1999), pp. 47-64. The manuscript Stones discusses is Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, nouvelle acquisition française, 16251. Stones proposes that the owner of the book was Marie de Rethel, known for her commission of a French translation of Thomas de Cantimpré's *Liber de monstruosis hominibus* and for the founding of hospitals in the region of Mons; see Stones, p. 49

<sup>41</sup> Lay men and women's devotion to saints often seems to have been determined by the saint's ability to assist with a particular problem, rather than gender *per se*. On this, see Ronald C. Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims: Popular Beliefs in Medieval England* (London, Melbourne and Toronto: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1977); Susan Signe Morrison, *Women Pilgrims in Late-Medieval England: Private Piety as Public Performance* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000); and Eamon Duffy, 'Holy Maydens, Holy Wyves: The Cult of Saints in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century England', in *Women and the Church*, *Studies in Church History*, 27 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), pp. 175-96.

<sup>42</sup> Stones, p. 50.

<sup>43</sup> Stones, p. 61.



allude, in reverse, to the fear of a caesarean section'. Thus she says of this martyrdom scene that '[o]ne might see this torture inflicted on a man not only as a suffering saint for whom to feel pity and fear, but also as a reversal of the particular fears proper to a woman, and a focus for reifying them'.<sup>44</sup> Stones finds a space for the possible concerns of the owner of this manuscript amongst its iconography but she also acknowledges that generic representations of successful, holy, childbirth would not necessarily have constituted the most appropriate locus for the projection of childbearing fears.

So far in this chapter we have seen the difficulties of using images of childbirth as evidence for medical practices and women's histories since the images are generic and often represent the births of saints. We have also seen how, in some contexts, the childbearing narratives associated with saints such as St Elizabeth and St Anne seem to have been considered suitable examples with which lay women could identify and towards whom they might direct their concerns about or thanks for children. To test out whether the connections already identified between childbirth imagery and female viewers is demonstrated across a broader selection of images, I have carried out the first survey of childbirth iconography in late-medieval manuscripts and early-printed books. I chose to focus this research on manuscripts since scholars have already engaged with gender and social history as categories for analysing book patronage and ownership. However, the way images of childbirth in fifteenth-century books functioned for their readers has not yet been adequately studied. The following section provides an overview of the findings from this primary research and highlights the specific manuscripts on which the rest of this thesis focuses.

### *Primary Research and Preliminary Findings*

In my primary research I set out to assess the occurrence of images of childbirth in late-medieval manuscripts and whether, as previous scholarship has suggested, they tend to appear in books owned by lay people, especially married

---

<sup>44</sup> Stones, p. 61.



women. However, in the course of this research, the impossibility of investigating these images solely in female-owned manuscripts was immediately evident since, where they can be identified, such manuscripts do not necessarily contain representations of childbirth. In addition, looking only at female-owned manuscripts would have defeated any attempt to complicate the iconography as a popular choice for lay, female readers. Therefore the manuscripts consulted were selected by virtue of their iconography, rather than their ownership.

Appendix 2 consists of a table listing all the books that I have closely consulted and which contain birth scenes.<sup>45</sup> The material is divided into two broad groups: the first group (nos 1-36) includes devotional-liturgical books such as Books of Hours and breviaries; the second (nos 37-51) includes manuscripts of historical or religious narratives such as the *Golden Legend*. Thus the manuscripts represent a broad range of material, from large, collectively-owned monastic breviaries and antiphonals, personalised *horae* and prayer books, to impressive historical volumes such as the *Speculum historiale* and *La Fleur des Histoires*. The majority of the material dates from the late-fourteenth to early-sixteenth centuries and was produced in French and Flemish workshops for French, Flemish, or English owners.

Two primary conclusions are evident from this survey and can be noted from the descriptions in Appendix 2. The first conclusion substantiates the observation made at the beginning of this thesis that childbirth scenes are most often depicted *post-partum*, in a domestic interior, and usually with one or more female assistants. As the table shows, where there is a male figure present, this is often the father. The second conclusion relates to the intended viewers and users of these texts containing childbirth images: where they can be identified, these owners vary considerably in terms of gender and social status, from enclosed religious to lay married people.

Whereas the domestic setting and *post-partum* representation is common to the majority of these images, the births depicted and the level of articulation of the space in which the births take place varies considerably between manuscripts and between genres of manuscripts. In historical manuscripts the

---

<sup>45</sup> All the manuscripts in the table are numbered and are cross-referenced with the illustrations. When referring to manuscripts from this survey I give the number of the manuscript in parentheses.

birth scenes functioned as part of wider narrative images and were used as a visual rubric for the stories that follow. By contrast the smaller images in devotional books were intended not only as reminders of holy stories but also as stimuli to devotion and meditation.

Many of the liturgical and devotional books are profusely illustrated, sometimes on every page. As the table in Appendix 2 demonstrates, devotional and liturgical books tend to include representations of the births of St John the Baptist and the Virgin Mary since, along with Christ, these were the only two births officially celebrated by the Church. The birth scenes in devotional manuscripts often occur in the margins of the page, either accompanying larger images of the *Annunciation* in Matins, or forming border decorations in the calendar (e.g. nos 1, 11, and 19; figs 19-23). For example, in one Book of Hours of the Bedford Master Workshop (no. 19), the *Birth of St John the Baptist* and the *Birth of the Virgin* float amongst the border foliage of the months of June and September respectively (figs 22-23). These tiny figures contrast with the enclosed, defined images of the labours of the month and signs of the zodiac at the bottom of the page. The birth scenes are kept in the borders by the lines (actual and implied) that demarcate the text of the calendar but these lines are not concrete and the birth spaces are fluid: the bed clothes flow into the surrounding space threatening to merge with the acanthus leaves and disrupt the list of saints names; there is no hint of a room in which the birth is anchored. In contrast to these unsecured images, other manuscripts are illuminated with self-contained, framed miniatures that mark the start of a text, such as at the Sanctoral (e.g. no. 3; fig. 24). Two miniatures already noted, from in a Flemish Book of Hours, show the *Birth of St John* and the *Birth of the Virgin* in highly detailed domestic interiors with several female assistants performing domestic duties (no. 13; figs 5-6). The examples considered here indicate some of the different ways this generic iconography could be manifested in devotional manuscripts.

Manuscripts of historical narratives sometimes contain a much fewer number of miniatures than devotional texts (e.g. nos 38 and 40). These miniatures are used to signal the start of each chapter and the birth scenes often constitute one part of a larger miniature that relates episodes of a story within the



same frame. In the *Roman de Merlin* the birth of Merlin on the left-hand side of the image, takes place in a room in a turreted castle (no. 46; fig. 25). The side of the edifice is open to show the birth chamber. Merlin's mother lies in bed and the two women standing around her place the naked child into a wicker basket. The company of women in the birth chamber is here extended beyond the building in the gathering of the women below the window, who assist in Merlin's escape. Here the female figures play a pivotal role in the image, not only by assisting at the birth but also by mediating the child's transference from room to outside world and into the arms of the crowned male figure below. In another example from Wavrin's *History of England* there is a large miniature showing the events leading to the birth of Constantine (no. 39; fig. 7). In the background, hardly visible, we see a procession of people with three crosses held aloft, which represents Helena's finding of the True Cross. In the foreground, on the left is the marriage of Helena and Constans, Constantine's parents. On the right we see the *Birth of Constantine*. Helena lies in a canopied bed and her child is handed to her by another woman.

*Post-partum* confinement scenes also appear in early-printed *horae* and in books which were not bespoke productions but available for the (sufficiently wealthy) public to purchase. A woodcut from Caxton's translation of the *Golden Legend* printed in 1497 shows the *Birth of the Virgin* with the mother lying in bed assisted by female companions (no. 51; fig. 26). The latticed window and the fireplace with a cooking pot hint at the domestic setting. Woodcut scenes of the *Birth of the Virgin* also decorate printed *horae*. These woodcuts were continuously re-used throughout the book and were shared between publishers. As the examples in the table show, this practice meant that images of the *Birth of the Virgin* occur more frequently in printed *horae* than in their manuscript counterparts. These images also occurred at several different places throughout the same text, rather than just once, as in manuscript versions. For example, in two printed *horae* (nos 34 and 36), the same woodcut of the *Birth of the Virgin* is reprinted at least twice in each book.<sup>46</sup> In another example the birth scene occurs at five places throughout the book. The illustration printed here shows the image in the borders of the *Salve Regina* prayer (no. 35; fig. 27). St Anne sits up in bed,

---

<sup>46</sup> See Appendix 2 for list of places.



gesturing towards a woman who holds Mary wrapped in a sheet. Another woman kneels on the floor pouring water into a wooden tub. The images above and below the *Birth of the Virgin* and the text at the bottom of the page refer to the Virgin's place in salvation history. In the top right hand corner is a Jesse Tree with the Virgin and Child in the centre; at the bottom right hand side is a representation of Balaam on his way to Balak. The words at the bottom of the page are Old Testament references which accompany the images of the Jesse Tree and Balaam, taken from Isaiah and the Book of Numbers. These extracts were interpreted typologically as references to the Virgin: 'And there shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse, and a flower shall rise up out of his root'; 'a star shall rise out of Jacob and a sceptre shall spring up from Israel'.<sup>47</sup> The same border woodcuts decorate the pages of another *horae* at the opening of Matins. Here the main image is an *Annunciation* which is paired with an depiction of Gideon praying before a fleece for a sign from God (no. 33; fig. 28). The Old Testament story of Gideon and the fleece (Judges 6. 36-40) was a type of the Virgin birth. Thus in these printed *horae* the *Birth of the Virgin* appears not as part of a calendar or as part of the narrative of St Anne and St Joachim, but as a fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies. With the advent of printing therefore, one artist's decision to include the birth of the Virgin in a woodcut model and its selection by a printer means that the domestic, female-centred birth scene was frequently re-used and was available to a wide audience of both men and women.<sup>48</sup>

In addition to the various manifestations of this iconography, this survey of manuscripts demonstrates that the viewers for whom these childbirth images were intended were equally various. We saw in the previous section how existing analyses of representations of childbirth have focused on those instances where we know or can presume something of the intended recipient of the image. However, from studying the descriptions of the manuscripts in Appendix 2 it is evident that representations of childbirth as a space occupied exclusively

---

<sup>47</sup> p. F3a: 'et egredietur virga de radice Jesse et flos de radice eius ascendet' (Isaiah 11.1); and 'orietur stella ex Jacob et consurget virga de Israel' (Numbers 24. 17).

<sup>48</sup> There is also a Birth of the Virgin in the border of a printed *horae* reproduced on the cover of Peter Meredith's edition of *The Mary Play From the N. Town Manuscript* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1997). The source is a Book of Hours printed by Philippe Pigouchet in Paris in the late fifteenth century.

or mainly by women occur across a range of manuscripts for which the owner- and viewership would have varied considerably: from lay married men and women, to chaste clerics and enclosed religious. For many more of the manuscripts it is difficult to establish who their original readership was. In particular this survey shows a paucity of representations of childbirth in books we know to have been owned or used by women. Thirteen of the fifty-one manuscripts and books detailed in the table we know (or can presume) to have been written for the use of a man: these include manuscripts containing the Offices of the Mass that could only have been used by male clerics (e.g. no. 8); and manuscripts identified with particular owners, such as Abbot Islip's *Devotions* (no. 18) and the three manuscripts made for English King Edward IV (nos 38, 39, 40). Three of the manuscripts were ostensibly made for the use of a husband and wife (nos 5, 9, and 22). For only three of the manuscripts with birth scenes is it possible to establish a female ownership: the fourteenth-century *Taymouth Hours*, which appears to have been made for a noble or royal woman who is depicted in the illuminations (no. 33); the *Fitzwilliam Hours* (no. 26); and the *Hours of Marguerite de Foix* (no. 24). For two other manuscripts, a female ownership is suggested but still needs to be established (nos 28 and 29). Conversely, other manuscripts of known female ownership do not contain birth scenes.<sup>49</sup>

The relatively large number of male-owned books in this survey does complicate the thesis that this iconography was popular amongst, or deemed suitable for, female viewers. This is particularly the case when considering manuscripts and printed books that were bought off-the-shelf. For example, in devotional manuscripts, although female forms in Latin and vernacular prayers do indicate a female audience for a text (*famulam tuam* instead of *famulum tuum*, for example), the absence of female forms cannot definitively prove that the book was not made for, or used by (originally or at some later stage), a woman.<sup>50</sup>

---

<sup>49</sup> These manuscripts are: Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, fonds latin 1369, and nouvelle acquisition latine 588; Liverpool, University Library, MSS F2.7, F2.14, and F2.18; Liverpool, NMGM, MS 12020. See Appendix 1.

<sup>50</sup> For example, in the *Fitzwilliam Hours* to be discussed in greater detail below, the main prayers to the Virgin (the *Obsecro te*, and the *O intemerata*), illustrated with female donor portraits, were written with masculine forms. Only the *Creator celi* prayer,



In the case of the large historical volumes, we have already seen that some of the examples listed here are known to have been made for male patrons, such as King Edward IV. The fact that none of the historical volumes here can be associated with female owners should not mean that we dismiss them as having been seen or read by women. There is evidence to suggest that aristocratic women owned or commissioned copies of books such as the *Golden Legend*, as Anne-Marie Legaré has shown in her analysis of the library of Charlotte de Savoie.<sup>51</sup> Although men's literacy and book ownership far outweighed that of women, one must always be cautious when assuming male ownership as a default.<sup>52</sup> The class and social roles of possible readers should be taken into account along with gender when considering ownership for manuscripts.

\* \* \*

By revealing the different places in which images of childbirth occur, this manuscript survey shows that we should be wary of interpretations such as Greilsammer's which claim all-female, *post-partum*, representations as uncomplicated evidence for childbearing practices, and for the location of 'specific womanliness'. It is necessary to be aware of the possible disjunction between the audiences for whom the images of childbirth were intended, and the meanings which modern historians have ascribed to them. This outline of the findings of my manuscript survey is intended to acknowledge the broad manifestations of this iconography but, given the wide-range of texts and viewers represented in this survey, it would be impossible to investigate the function and reception of childbirth imagery in all these contexts. From this

---

later in the manuscript, has feminine endings. Prayers forms and illuminations could be altered when books changed hands.

<sup>51</sup> Anne-Marie Legaré, 'Charlotte de Savoie's Library and Illuminators', *JEBS*, 4 (2001), 32-87. The inventory of Charlotte's library shows that she owned copies of *La Fleur des Histoires*, the *Golden Legend*, and *Le Miroir historiale*, Jean de Vignay's translation of Vincent Beauvais's *Speculum historiale*. See also Legaré, 'Reassessing Women's Libraries in Late Medieval France: the Case of Jeanne de Laval', *RS*, 10 (1996), 209-29.

<sup>52</sup> On medieval women's literacy see Julia Boffey, 'Women Authors and Women's Literacy in Fourteenth- and Fifteenth-Century England', in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150-1500*, ed. by Carol M. Meale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 159-82.



group of manuscripts it was necessary to find a case study on which to focus. In particular, one group of related, bespoke manuscripts, emerged as being in need of further investigation. These manuscripts were owned by, or have strong associations with, lay men and women of the houses of Anjou and Brittany between about 1420 and 1480 (nos 10, 24, 26, 30, 31, 51).

This group of Anjou-Brittany manuscripts have not previously been studied together in terms of how their childbirth iconography related to the circumstances of their known and proposed owners. Since these manuscripts were personalised commissions for aristocratic patrons, the social status as well as the gender of these patrons will have affected their reception of the images of childbirth they contain. Through analysis of these manuscripts it has been possible to test out further the existing interpretations of childbirth iconography by scholars such as Stones, Stanton, Warr and Nash, that make connections between images of childbirth and lay aristocratic viewers – especially, but not exclusively, female viewers. The following chapter considers some of the broader methodological approaches to the reception of illuminated Books of Hours. It also explores medieval constructions of gender and spectatorship and develops a strategy for assessing the possible responses of certain categories of viewers without recourse to biological essentialism.

## CHAPTER TWO

### READING THE FEMININE: METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO IMAGES AND GENDER

In the preceding chapter I discussed existing work specifically relating to late-medieval representations of childbirth and outlined the findings from my survey of manuscripts. Since the manuscripts to be discussed in Chapter Three include two Books of Hours owned by lay women, this chapter explores the wider methodological issues involved in analysing both representations of women, and female readership, in fifteenth-century visual cultures. We saw in Chapter One how historical context and dynastic concerns, as well as gender, are important for understanding the way images of childbirth were used and received.

Therefore, the first section of this chapter considers the way in which it seems that images in Books of Hours were employed as behavioural paradigms for female viewers. It also reviews the way in which some art historians have sought to recover the responses of women to such seemingly controlling admonitions in their books. As we saw with the example of the Padua Baptistery discussed above, it is necessary to note the difficulty of unravelling ostensible meanings and possible responses in images offered to, or commissioned by, women.

In the second part of this chapter I turn to contemporary gender theory as a way of deconstructing childbearing as an essential aspect of the female gender and to explode assumptions that paintings of childbirth represent what Greilsammer calls 'specific womanliness'.<sup>1</sup> In the context of feminine spirituality, Karma Lochrie has argued that feminist critiques 'adopt positions adjacent to medieval patriarchy which has scripted and exploited the binarisms relegating women to the realm of her body, the flesh, and the literal'.<sup>2</sup> Therefore I show that to work within a binary gender system and to look for a connection between 'women' (even lay, married women) and pictures of childbirth risks ignoring the contexts in which images of childbirth occur and the cultural diversity of women. In addition, since the social exigencies of fifteenth-century

---

<sup>1</sup> Greilsammer, p. 321.

<sup>2</sup> Karma Lochrie, *Margery Kempe and Translations of the Flesh* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), p. 15



society rendered the birth of male children a necessity for aristocratic men and women, we need to note the ways in which maternity was constructed and appropriated by a patriarchal hegemony. However, whereas it is important to acknowledge that some women had little control over the images offered to them, we must be careful not to disempower female viewers entirely and deny them independent responses. In the final section I show how critics have used social expectations, particularly the need for male children, rather than biology *per se*, to analyse the response of lay female viewers to paintings and objects that were associated with the production of healthy, male children.

Drawing all these sections together, I formulate a methodology for understanding images of childbirth in devotional manuscripts owned by lay men and women through a consideration of the socially classed and gendered viewing positions occupied by their readers. This methodology is then applied to the Anjou-Brittany manuscripts discussed in Chapter Three.

### *Late-Medieval Manuscripts and Devotional Culture*

The Book of Hours was probably the most popular devotional book in Northern Europe during the fifteenth century and extant copies are frequently illuminated with scenes from the lives of the Virgin and Christ. These devotional manuscripts have been much studied by bibliographers and art historians and it is not necessary to repeat the history of the Book of Hours here.<sup>3</sup> The legacy of early- and mid-twentieth-century art historians such as Max J. Friedländer, Erwin Panofsky, and Meyer Schapiro, continues to attract debate in more recent

---

<sup>3</sup> For researchers of *horae* there is an abundance of studies, monographs, and facsimiles. See in particular: Christopher De Hamel, *A History of Illuminated Manuscripts* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1986); Roger Wieck, *Time Sanctified: The Book of Hours in Medieval Art and Life* (New York: Braziller and The Walters Art Gallery, 1988); John Plummer, *The Last Flowering: French Painting in Manuscripts, 1420-1530: From American Collections* (New York: Pierpont Morgan Library and Oxford University Press, 1982); John Harthan, *Books of Hours and Their Owners* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1977); and Harthan, *An Introduction to Illuminated Manuscripts* (London: HMSO, 1983); subsequent references to Harthan in this thesis are to *Books of Hours and their Owners*. There are many facsimile editions of well-known *horae*, such as *The Playfair Hours*, ed. by Rowan Watson (London: The Victoria and Albert Museum, 1984); and *The Hours of Catherine of Cleves* noted in Chapter One.



works on fifteenth-century manuscript painting.<sup>4</sup> The work of Panofsky and Meiss has focused on the stylistic relationship between workshops and between well-known manuscripts produced for aristocratic patrons such as the Duke of Berry. Although the connoisseurial methodology of these scholars has now been largely replaced by a socially-informed approach to art works, their iconographical analyses remain important for any project, such as this thesis, which proposes new readings of manuscripts that are connected by workshop and by patronage.

One example of the socio-historical interpretation of iconography is James H. Marrow's article on the Duke of Berry's *Très Belles Heures* (*Turin-Milan Hours*). Marrow proposes that the stylistic and liturgical contents of this manuscript offered stability and continuity to a family in troubled and disruptive times.<sup>5</sup> He notes that the Duke's manuscript was

a distinctive and highly unusual commission – not least because it contained a particularly extensive series of prayers as well as a lengthy set of masses for the principal feasts of the liturgical year, which are rare inclusions in a Book of Hours.<sup>6</sup>

These rare texts were also found in the Duke's *Petites Heures*, and in a now-lost manuscript that belonged to Jean's father, Jean le Bon. The *Très Belles Heures* and the *Petites Heures* also had textual and iconographic similarities with the *Savoy Hours* made for Blanche of Burgundy, subsequently owned by Jean de Berry's older brother King Charles V. Marrow suggests that '[t]hese continuities thus embody a particular kind of historical consciousness, one immediately bound to the time, place, patronage, and circumstances of the commissions'.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> See Erwin Panofsky, *Early Netherlandish Painting: Its Origins and Character*, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1953); Max J. Friedländer, *Early Netherlandish Painting*, trans. by Heinz Norden, 14 vols (Leyden: A. W. Sijthoff, 1967-76); and Millard Meiss, *French Painting in the Time of Jean de Berry*, 3 vols (London and New York: Thames and Hudson, 1967-74); subsequent references to Meiss are to volume 2, *The Limbourgs and their Contemporaries*.

<sup>5</sup> James H. Marrow, 'History, Historiography, and Pictorial Invention in the *Turin-Milan Hours*', in *In Detail: New Studies of Northern Renaissance Art in Honor of Walter S. Gibson*, ed. by Laurinda S. Dixon (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), pp. 1-14 (p. 2).

<sup>6</sup> Marrow, p. 2.

<sup>7</sup> Marrow, p. 2.

Marrow's approach is a useful paradigm for my own interpretation of the Books of Hours in Chapter Three. In particular I apply his idea of an 'historical consciousness' to the patronage and reception of the Anjou-Brittany manuscripts. These manuscripts are related by workshop as well as family connections and were produced for people who lived through a period where succession and inheritance were often in jeopardy. The stylistic continuities of these Anjou-Brittany manuscripts suggest that they also offered some 'stability and continuity' to their viewers.

Two of the five Anjou-Brittany *horae* to be discussed were made for lay female members of these houses. It is no doubt because of the popularity of the Book of Hours that it is the book most frequently listed as owned by upper-middle-class and aristocratic lay women, and women's book ownership in the late Middle Ages constitutes a growing area of research for feminist (art) historians.<sup>8</sup> The books of aristocratic women, which are better documented than their lower-class counterparts, reveal something of their interaction with fifteenth-century devotional and visual culture.<sup>9</sup> Susan Groag Bell and Sandra Penketh have noted that the prevalence of the Virgin Mary in the texts and iconography of Books of Hours seem to have made them particularly appealing to female readers.<sup>10</sup> As we saw in Chapter One, images of holy mothers – especially St Anne and St Elizabeth who were blessed by God in childbirth –

---

<sup>8</sup> Anne Dutton, 'Passing the Book: Testamentary Transmission of Religious Literature to and by Women in England 1350-1500', in *Women, the Book and the Godly*, ed. by Lesley Smith and Jane H. M. Taylor (Cambridge: Brewer, 1995), pp. 41-54.

<sup>9</sup> On women's book ownership see Legaré, 'Reassessing Women's Libraries'; and 'Charlotte de Savoie's Library and Illuminators'; Susan Groag Bell, 'Medieval Women Book Owners: Arbiters of Lay Piety and Ambassadors of Culture', in *Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Mary Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski (London and Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1988), pp. 149-87; and Sandra Penketh, 'Women and Books of Hours', in *Women and the Book*, pp. 266-80; Other important articles regarding lay women's reading and commissioning of books include: Felicity Riddy, 'Women Talking About the Things of God': A Late Medieval Sub-Culture', and Carol M. Meale, ' "...alle the bokes that I haue of latyn, englisch, and frensch": Laywomen and their Books in Late Medieval England', both in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150-1500*, ed. by Carol M. Meale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 104-27, and pp. 128-58 respectively. See also the articles in *Medieval Texts and Images: Studies of Manuscripts from the Middle Ages*, ed. by Margaret Manion and Bernard J. Muir (Chur: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1991); and *The Art of the Book: Its Place in Medieval Worship*, ed. by Manion and Muir (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1998).

<sup>10</sup> Bell, p. 161 and Penketh, p. 273-74; see note above.



appeared as models in images and books commissioned by or made for married lay women.

St Anne is a particularly important figure for any consideration of images of holy childbirth since she appeared in late-medieval art and literature as the matriarch of a family of miraculous births and holy children.<sup>11</sup> In order to explain biblical and apocryphal references to Christ's brothers and cousins, Anne was said to have been married three times (the *trinubium*): first to Joachim, by whom she bore Mary, and subsequently to Cleophas and Salomé by whom she bore two other children, Mary Cleophas and Mary Salomé. Paintings of the extended Holy Kinship emphasised the role of mothers in Incarnation history often to the exclusion of fathers. This is evident in a painting such as *The Holy Kinship* by the Follower of the Master of St Veronica (fig. 29). Here the husbands of the holy mothers are separated from the main foreground space, and from their wives, by a wall. In contrast to the holy mothers who are all haloed, the men have only scrolls bearing their names fluttering over their heads and this emphasises their marginal role in the narrative.

The focus on mothers in the extended family of Christ appears to have privileged the social roles of late-medieval lay women. Sheingorn claims that images of the thrice-married St Anne asserted 'the positive value of marriage and motherhood' and were used as devotional paradigms for and by married women.<sup>12</sup> Bell suggests that women may have played a significant part in 'the shaping of iconography in books, thereby offering new images of womanhood' and that as mothers, women were able to choose and commission books for the education of their children.<sup>13</sup> It seems that miniatures of St Anne teaching the Virgin to read served as models with which a mother could identify. There is a strong focus on St Anne in the *Bolton Hours*: Patricia Cullum and Jeremy

---

<sup>11</sup> On the figure of St Anne in late-medieval culture see the essays in *Interpreting Cultural Symbols* noted in Chapter One, esp. Gail McMurray Gibson, 'Saint Anne and the Religion of Childbed: Some East Anglian Texts and Talismans', pp. 95-110. See also Sheila Delany *Impolitic Bodies: Poetry, Saints, and Society in Fifteenth-Century England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

<sup>12</sup> Sheingorn, 'Appropriating the Holy Kinship: Gender and Family History', in *Interpreting Cultural Symbols*, pp. 169-98 (p. 180). See also Sheingorn, 'The Holy Kinship: Ascendancy of Matriliny in the Sacred Genealogy of the Fifteenth Century', *Thought*, 64 (1989), 268-86.

<sup>13</sup> Bell, pp. 163-67.

Goldberg have proposed that this manuscript was made for a mother and her daughters since through the images ‘the mother is able to provide her daughter with a model of piety and conduct, just as St Anne was herself [...] the very model of the modern devout mother’.<sup>14</sup> However, whereas some women certainly did have the means to purchase their own texts, we need to remember that books, including *horae*, were commissioned by men to guide and promote certain feminine behaviours. Penketh has said that although

[i]t would be too obtuse to claim that books of hours were bought by men to give their future wives as “code books of behaviour” [...] the very figure of the Virgin as the main emphasis of the book, and the attempts at identification through prayer, must have made any underlying messages concerning female character and behaviour all the more clear.<sup>15</sup>

We saw in Chapter One how Stanton has argued that the *Queen Mary Psalter*, with its images of motherhood, was commissioned for a wife or mother. Brigitte Buettner has also argued that Books of Hours given to a woman as a wedding gift could include prayers and iconography carefully selected by her bridegroom or his family as a means of encouraging her in her new role.<sup>16</sup> Thus, where images of St Anne and the Virgin occur in female-owned *horae*, it is possible that they were intended to remind a female reader of her duties as a wife and the family’s expectation of children.

The possible instructional nature of *horae* that were given to young women complicates the critic’s task of analysing how those manuscripts might have been received by their female readers. The different ways in which art historians have read the themes of sexuality and gender in female-owned manuscripts is demonstrated by two interpretations of two fourteenth-century *horae*. The case studies, by Madeleine H. Caviness and Michael Camille, do not

---

<sup>14</sup> Patricia Cullum and Jeremy Goldberg, ‘How Margaret Blackburn Taught her Daughters’, in *Medieval Women*, pp. 216-36 (p. 225; p. 231). See also Sheingorn, ‘The Wise Mother’, *Gesta*, 32 (1993), 69-80.

<sup>15</sup> Penketh, p. 275.

<sup>16</sup> Brigitte Buettner, ‘Women and the Circulation of Books’, *JEBS*, 4 (2001), 9-31 (pp. 16-17; see also Penketh, p. 276).



deal with birth scenes but they do expose some of the methodological traps that can befall attempts to recover the meaning of images for female viewers in the Middle Ages. In particular aspects of Caviness and Camille's interpretations restrict the responses of the female owners of these manuscripts, keeping them in subjugated, passive positions.

In her discussion of the iconography in a Book of Hours given to Jeanne d'Evreux by her husband, the Capetian King Charles IV, on their marriage in 1324, Caviness proposes that images in personalised books could convey personal concerns and didactic messages.<sup>17</sup> By noting the commissioning and purchasing power of their husbands, and by paying close attention to the historical context in which Jeanne married Charles IV, Caviness shows how class, as well as gender, are important categories for assessing images in the books of patrician wives. She points out that in the early fourteenth century the succession of the Capetian dynasty into which Jeanne had married was very precarious. It had already been greatly compromised by the adulterous – and much publicised – affairs of the wives of Charles and his two older brothers. When these two brothers died without surviving male children and Charles inherited the kingship, he must have been concerned to make a success of his third marriage to Jeanne. As noted at the start of this chapter, the Anjou-Brittany manuscripts to be considered below were all produced for members of a family who lived in a period where succession was as precarious as in Jeanne's own time. Like the 'historical consciousness' which Marrow suggests was signified by the Duke of Berry's manuscripts, the 'dynastic anxieties' of the Capetian Kings evoked here by Caviness are extremely important factors in trying to elicit meanings for the images in illuminated manuscripts owned by members of the patrician classes.<sup>18</sup> Therefore my own analysis of the Anjou-Brittany manuscripts in the following chapter is also informed by a close consideration of the historical and dynastic circumstances of their owners.

In addition to this historical awareness, Caviness attempts to understand how the images in Jeanne's book were received by focusing on the gender of the viewer. Importantly, she insists on the need to recognise that, when 'dealing with

---

<sup>17</sup> Madeleine H. Caviness, 'Patron or Matron? A Capetian Bride and a *Vade Mecum* for Her Marriage Bed', *Speculum*, 68 (1993), 333-62.

<sup>18</sup> Caviness, 'Patron or Matron?', p. 334.

“women’s books” [...] we should not assume the female owner/reader exercised the control we normally ascribe to a patron’.<sup>19</sup> She counters the readings, by 1950s art historians such as Meyer Schapiro and Mikhail Bakhtin, of the sexually explicit marginal grotesques in Jeanne’s *Hours* as amusing and humorous, by claiming that they are ‘essentially masculinist’.<sup>20</sup> Caviness argues that the editor of the 1957 edition of Jeanne’s *Hours* sees marginalia as the expression of the

creative genius of the (male) artist, giving him license for “self” expression that allows him to disregard the devotional function of the book and the program decided on by a theological advisor. It overlooks the reading of the imagery by a female recipient of the book, or by a modern woman reader, claiming the margins instead as a zone for the expression of male fantasy, leading to the private exchange of men’s jokes, or a metaphorical locker room.<sup>21</sup>

In trying to destabilise masculine, normalised readings of marginalia as simply humorous, Caviness also confronts Camille’s reading of the grotesque and phallic marginalia in a fourteenth-century *horae* that was possibly made for a woman called Marguerite.<sup>22</sup> In *Image on the Edge* Camille proposes that the images of ‘disordered life’ and ‘anti-incarnations’ in Marguerite’s book would not have shocked their aristocratic or bourgeois female reader ‘precisely because they articulated her world’.<sup>23</sup> Images of Marguerite, sometimes apparently pregnant, are found throughout ‘her’ book and Camille suggests that Marguerite would have seen herself ‘[p]erched between grace and garrulousness’. Through

---

<sup>19</sup> Caviness, ‘Patron or Matron?’, p. 356.

<sup>20</sup> Caviness, ‘Patron or Matron?’, p. 357-58.

<sup>21</sup> Caviness, ‘Patron or Matron?’, pp. 357-58. The 1957 edition she refers to is *The Hours of Jeanne d’Evreux Queen of France, at the Cloisters* (New York: [Npub], 1957) with an introduction by James J. Rorimer. However, see her n. 124 on the actual authorship of this introduction.

<sup>22</sup> Michael Camille, *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art* (London: Reaktion Books, 1992; repr. 1995). The manuscript in question, now in two halves, is London, British Library, Additional MS 36684 and New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M. 754.

<sup>23</sup> Camille, *Image*, pp. 50-53.



this comment Camille forges a link between masculinist, negative, and anachronistic, interpretations of the (Marguerite's) pregnant body – from St Jerome's 'revolting spectacle' to Mikhail Bakhtin's 'natural grotesqueness' – with the uncanny and weird representations of fecundity and birth in the manuscript's margins.<sup>24</sup>

Camille's strategy keeps Marguerite a passive recipient of – and vehicle for – patriarchally-driven injunctions to behave with decorum and to keep her body intact. Rather than fully addressing the possible response of Marguerite, as a lay married woman, to such images, Camille restricts her, along with her portrait, to the spaces of what he terms the 'pregnant page'.<sup>25</sup> He denies the grotesques an ability to shock Marguerite and in fact surrounds her position in his *own* text with references to dominant medieval misogynistic ideas of feminine excess. By contrast, Caviness's reading of the grotesques and hybrids in Jeanne's *Hours*, does not claim that Jeanne would have seen herself like Marguerite, as part of those margins, as an example of 'the Bakhtinian body that is "never finished, never completed"'.<sup>26</sup> Instead she proposes that the illuminations would have had the power to shock. At the opening of Matins, Caviness notes how an image of Jeanne is 'locked into the initial of the Lord [Domine] and guarded by a seneschal with a candle – also a fertility symbol – to light her midnight vigils'.<sup>27</sup> Caviness reads the spaces in which Jeanne is depicted in the manuscript as the only safe haven from the apes, hybrids and chimeras that inhabit the margins of the page.<sup>28</sup> She suggests that in the illumination of Jeanne's *Hours* there is 'a discourse of veiled sexuality that is equally detrimental to the feminine, and equally controlling' and that this 'elicit[ed] negative responses in the female viewer'. Thus she continues that the grotesques 'may well have frightened the adolescent Jeanne; everything warned her to keep her mind on her prayers and to avoid adultery'.<sup>29</sup>

Both Caviness and Camille's reading strategies define the reception of these images by their female readers: Camille makes Marguerite find the

---

<sup>24</sup> Camille, *Image*, pp. 54.

<sup>25</sup> Camille, *Image*, p. 48ff.

<sup>26</sup> Camille, *Image*, p. 54.

<sup>27</sup> Caviness, 'Patron or Matron?', p. 339; and see her fig. 8.

<sup>28</sup> Caviness, 'Patron or Matron?', p. 334.

<sup>29</sup> Caviness, 'Patron or Matron?', p. 355.

grotesques part of her own world; Caviness makes Jeanne abhor them. However, the responses of women to the images in their manuscripts – which I concede are essentially male-authored – do not have to be black and white. Images could be multivalent and it seems likely that the responses they evoked were various, and could encompass things such as humour, fear, duty and desire. Whereas Camille engages in the sort of masculinized readings that Caviness wishes to deconstruct, Caviness effectively goes to the other extreme. In particular her claim that to reveal these ideological drives one must ‘read as a woman’ is problematic since she implies that ‘woman’ is a stable category that does not alter with social or historical context.<sup>30</sup> In her latest book, Caviness acknowledges the charges of essentialism that her original approach implied and suggests that

in some circumstances [...] marginalia, as well as the more obvious sacred subjects of the pictures in the central field, participated in the ideological work of gender construction by nagging and threatening, guiding and goading pious men and women to conform to “correct” gendered behaviours’.<sup>31</sup>

The following section explores how we can understand the construction of medieval bodies and sexualities through sociological and psychoanalytical approaches to gender. I draw on the existing work of medieval feminist historians to complicate the relationship between the material conditions of women’s lives and the representation of maternity and childbirth in textual and visual cultures.

---

<sup>30</sup> Caviness, ‘Patron of Matron?’, p. 357.

<sup>31</sup> Caviness makes this summary of her previous approach in her latest book, *Reframing Medieval Art: Difference, Margins, Boundaries*, published online at [www.tufts.edu/Caviness](http://www.tufts.edu/Caviness). Accessed 13 July 2003. Since this text has been accessed electronically it is impossible to give precise page references: here the quote is from Chapter 3, ‘Shivaree of the Margins’.



*Constituting Medieval Bodies*

In the previous section we noted how manuscripts illuminated for lay women could contain pictures intended to promote and condition their behaviour as wives and mothers. It is possible to analyse further both the images and the social role of motherhood by viewing them through the work of contemporary gender theorist Judith Butler. Butler has confronted childbirth as a defining feature of womanhood and exposed maternity as a requirement of the patriarchal hegemony.<sup>32</sup> Butler's work has been used by medieval critics to show how the gender roles offered to both women *and* men by late-medieval patriarchal society were directly related to the needs of that society. By recognising the social construction of gender, we can start to liberate analyses of women's responses to images of childbirth in manuscripts from essentialist readings.

In the 1980s and 1990s Caroline Walker Bynum wrote several books that have been extremely influential in the formulation of medieval gender studies.<sup>33</sup> In her first book, *Jesus as Mother*, she noted that male monastic writings from the twelfth century 'show a great increase in devotion to female figures, in use of feminine metaphors, and in admiration for characteristics (e.g. tears, weakness, and mercy or "ethical irrationality") that people of the period stereotyped as feminine'.<sup>34</sup> In the writings of Cistercian monks such as Bernard of Clairvaux, themes of birth, maternity, and marriage proliferate as ways of talking about the Crucifixion, the salvific nature of Christ's blood, and His relationship to humankind. St Bernard for example received a vision of drinking from the breast of the Virgin and his sermons are full of metaphors that refer to the breast and lactation, labour and childbirth. Nuptial imagery also flourished in the wake of Bernard's devotion to the Song of Songs and exegetical interpretations of the spouse-lover relationship as a paradigm or type of both the soul and Christ, and

---

<sup>32</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Femininity and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990; repr. 1999).

<sup>33</sup> See Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1982); *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: the Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986); *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1991).

<sup>34</sup> Bynum, *Jesus*, p. 17.

Christ and the Virgin. In *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, Bynum notes that in the later Middle Ages this ‘feminisation’ of monastic language developed into graphic textual and visual representations of Christ as a broken and bleeding body. She claims that these representations offered women an image of themselves through which they could be empowered within a patriarchal society. Thus she proposes that women were privileged by their similarity to Christ’s crucified body:

[...] it *seems likely* that women were drawn to identify with Christ’s suffering and feeding flesh because both men and women saw the female body as food and the female nature as fleshly. Both men and women described Christ’s body in its suffering and its generativity as a birthing and lactating mother and *may at some almost unconscious level* have felt that woman’s suffering was her way of fusing with Christ because Christ’s suffering flesh was “woman”.<sup>35</sup>

Bynum’s aim in these early works is to recover the voices of late-medieval female mystics within a patriarchal society that scripted the female as imperfect, and to find some historical space for them to inhabit within a twentieth-century historiography that still marginalized ‘women’ as a field of study. However, by using phrases such as ‘seems likely’ and ‘may at some almost unconscious level’, Bynum elides the gap between the highly developed metaphors of religious language and imagery, and the varied material existences of ‘women’ in the later Middle Ages. Not all women in the late-medieval ages were, for example, mothers or Christians; many of the mystics, like the monks who wrote these ‘feminised’ texts in which she seeks to find subversive feminine voices, would (could) not have known pregnancy or motherhood.

Researchers of women’s histories need to consider how prevalent, masculine discourses worked to fix and normalise medieval gender roles. Throughout the Middle Ages theological, medical, and philosophical theories circulated in which the female sex was consistently maligned in favour of the

---

<sup>35</sup> Bynum, *Holy Feast*, pp. 260-61; emphasis mine.



male mind and male reproductive organs. By remaining aware of these discourses it becomes possible, as David Aers has proposed, to 'explore the processes, performative acts, and powers in and through which [bodies] became fixed, normative, seemingly inevitable'.<sup>36</sup> For example, in Hippocratic and Galenic humoral theory, lack of heat in the female sex was thought to render the woman an incomplete male since 'the female genitalia, including the two counterparts of the testicles, the ovaries, were believed never to have descended'.<sup>37</sup> The Aristotelian 'one-seed' theory also led to the concepts of female passivity and male activity in reproduction: women provided only the matter and men the active seed. Thus the constitution of medieval genders and sexualities were scripted and controlled by male writers. This is apparent even in those cases where bodies and genders seem to be fluid and appropriable, as in the shifting voices and subject positions in the Song of Songs and the devotional lyrics which draw upon this text.<sup>38</sup>

In her article 'Genders, Bodies, Borders', Kathleen Biddick criticises Bynum's work for the way it reduces women 'to the maternal'.<sup>39</sup> She claims that '[t]he model of gender in *Holy Feast and Holy Fast* assumes that gender is an essence that appears prior to other categories and informs them, that the feminine

---

<sup>36</sup> *The Powers of the Holy: Religion, Politics and Gender in Late Medieval Culture*, ed. by David Aers and Lynn Staley (Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press, 1996), p. 35.

<sup>37</sup> Elizabeth Robertson, 'Medieval Medical Views of Women and Female Spirituality in the *Ancrene Wisse* and Julian of Norwich's *Showings*', in *Feminist Approaches to the Body*, pp. 142-67 (p. 145). As Robertson notes, the classical medical theories of Galen and Aristotle continued to be transmitted in manuscripts in the later Middle Ages and were reinforced by the writings of later male authors such as Isidore of Seville, Vincent of Beauvais, and Thomas Aquinas. Such theories were 'synthesised with theological commentaries on Genesis' so that it is difficult to separate medical ideas about sexuality from theological ones; see Robertson, p. 142. See also Danielle Jacquart and Claude Thomasset, *Sexuality and Medicine in the Middle Ages*, trans. by Mathew Adamson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988) on whose work Robertson draws; and Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991). A useful critique of the one-sex model proposed by Laqueur is Katharine Park and Robert A. Nye, 'Destiny is Anatomy: *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* by Thomas Laqueur', *The New Republic*, 204 (1991), 53-57.

<sup>38</sup> On the different positions occupied by the subject in the Song of Songs and in literature drawing on this, particularly Marian lyrics, see Ann Astell, *The Song of Songs in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990).

<sup>39</sup> Kathleen Biddick, 'Genders, Bodies, Borders: Technologies of the Visible', *Speculum*, 68 (1993), 389-418 (p. 397).

mirrors, indeed reduces to, the female reproductive function, that the female body is the originary, foundational site of gender'.<sup>40</sup> Materialist analyses of gender, working from Marxist premises, have attempted to get beyond the idea of natural or pre-cultural sex difference by emphasising how gender roles are not predetermined by anatomy but are socially constructed by discourses and practices that serve the aims of the prevailing patriarchy. In her seminal book in the field of gender studies, *Gender Trouble*, Butler claims that '[t]here is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its results'.<sup>41</sup> She thus queries the very possibility of 'women' or 'feminism' as categories for analysis since 'gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts'.<sup>42</sup>

Drawing on the work of Butler, Stevi Jackson has argued that it is the material conditions of heteropatriarchal society that render 'anatomical differences socially and erotically significant'.<sup>43</sup> She points out that there is 'no absolute reason why the conjunction of a penis and a vagina has to be thought of as penetration, or as a process in which only one of those organs is active' and she suggests that the coercive equation sex=coitus=something men do to women 'is not the inevitable consequence of an anatomical female relation to an anatomical male, but the product of the social relations under which those bodies meet'.<sup>44</sup> Biddick, and in particular Aers, have engaged with the work of Butler to deconstruct Bynum's insistence on maternal imagery as an essence of, and empowerment for, women.<sup>45</sup> By looking more closely at Aers's use of Butler we can see how Bynum's work actually essentialises the female sex and colludes in medieval masculine discourses that saw the female sex as inferior and Other.

In *Gender Trouble*, Butler deconstructs Julia Kristeva's notion of maternity as a pre-cultural essence of women. She claims that Kristeva's 'naturalistic descriptions of the maternal body effectively reify motherhood and

---

<sup>40</sup> Biddick, p. 397.

<sup>41</sup> Butler, p. 33.

<sup>42</sup> Butler, p. 6.

<sup>43</sup> Stevi Jackson, *Heterosexuality in Question* (London: Sage, 1999), p. 3.

<sup>44</sup> Jackson, p. 132.

<sup>45</sup> Aers see esp. pp. 29-39.



preclude an analysis of its cultural construction and variability'.<sup>46</sup> Butler contends that a woman's desire to give birth, which Kristeva sees as existing prior to culture and thus as potentially disruptive to the patriarchal (cultural) hegemony, 'might attest to maternity as a social practice required and capitulated by the exigencies of kinship'.<sup>47</sup> Butler argues that Kristeva's thesis fails because she claims maternity as destiny, a claim which for Butler renders women back to patriarchal control. The implication from Butler's approach is that to 'naturalise' the condition of motherhood or maternity as a drive which exists prior to culture is to collude in the fetishisation of anatomical difference and the essentialisation of 'women'.

Whereas Butler deconstructs the notion of maternity as the essence of 'woman' by suggesting that it might actually reinforce dominant discourses, Aers uses Butler's critique to explode Bynum's simplistic equation that in the later Middle Ages women's flesh was equal to the suffering flesh of Christ. He challenges the possibility that women might have found a subversive empowerment in identifying with dominant representations of Christ by proposing that '[t]he abjections that [Bynum] explicates as subversive might be better viewed [...] as themselves a product of modes of piety designed to make their practitioners objects of control'.<sup>48</sup> Aers's critique of the short-comings of Bynum's thesis provides a paradigm for analysing other existing approaches to 'feminine' images, which have sought to recover (subversive) feminine voices through an insistence on maternity.

---

<sup>46</sup> Butler, p. 103. I would agree with Butler that motherhood and maternity have been reified in Julia Kristeva's work. See 'Stabat Mater', trans. Léon S. Roudiez, in *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. by Toril Moi (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), pp. 160-86; and 'Motherhood According to Giovanni Bellini', in *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. by Léon Roudiez, trans. by Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine, and Leon S. Roudiez (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980). In 'Stabat Mater' Kristeva's contention is, as Toril Moi points out, that with the demise in the cult of the Virgin, 'we are left without a satisfactory discourse on motherhood' and that 'the decline of religion has left women with nothing to put in its place' (p. 160). Kristeva's approach discloses a very Western, Catholic, and historically transcendent conception of motherhood that does not take into account historical context. It is necessary to ask how satisfactory a discourse Mary – as a Virgin mother – can (and did) provide on motherhood and for whom.

<sup>47</sup> Butler, p. 115.

<sup>48</sup> Aers, p. 36.

One type of ‘feminine’ image-object that has been interpreted through biological essentialism are effigies of young children which were popular amongst young women and nuns in the fifteenth-century. In a chapter entitled ‘Holy Dolls: Play and Piety in Florence in the *Quattrocento*’, Christiane Klapisch-Zuber notes how effigies of (usually) male children were placed in the wedding trousseaux of young brides and were also given to girls entering convents.<sup>49</sup> She says that (in Italy at least) ‘[t]he *bambini* were always associated with women; it is always women who appear as owners or potential users of these divine or saintly figures’ and in a secular context she suggests that these effigies may have functioned as fertility symbols to encourage young wives in their maternal role.<sup>50</sup> For female religious, Klapisch-Zuber claims that nursing, rocking, and dressing ‘dolls’

allowed the recluse her *primary social function* – the maternal function – and put her *desire and frustrations within limits* that her male confessors recognized and could accept. The child-husband allowed these women an experience that their secluded life *condemned* them never to know.<sup>51</sup>

Like Bynum’s recovery of the feminised Christ for female mystics, Klapisch-Zuber is working to reclaim the use of these child figures for a feminist history. She does not, however, note the short-comings of her suggestion that the ‘borderline between devotional practices and play activities is a narrow one’.<sup>52</sup>

The ‘maternal function’ may have been the ‘*primary social function*’ for some *lay, married* women but it was (and is) not a defining aspect of all women. To see the effigies as ‘toys’ or ‘dolls’, and to reduce the use of the Christ effigy to a substitute child is to imply that a chaste, female recluse cannot actually be a woman. Klapisch-Zuber suggests that the effigies ‘were considered a practical

---

<sup>49</sup> Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, *Women, Family and Ritual in Renaissance Italy*, trans. by Lydia Cochrane (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1985), pp. 310-329 (p. 311). Although the translation of Klapisch-Zuber’s essay uses the term doll, I resist this term here since, as I show, it reduces the use of these effigies to ‘play’.

<sup>50</sup> Klapisch-Zuber, p. 317.

<sup>51</sup> Klapisch-Zuber, p. 327; emphasis mine.

<sup>52</sup> Klapisch-Zuber, p. 310.



means to open up the way to God to women and children by exciting their imaginations'; that is, the 'dolls' were offered to those whose 'souls [were] of "weaker" and more "malleable" constitution' to allow them to access the divine more easily.<sup>53</sup>

Since the effigies are almost exclusively associated with women it is entirely possible that they may have been offered to women in the way Klapisch-Zuber suggests, to promote or maintain patriarchally-constructed roles for the female sex. However, her interpretation imposes on all women a universal maternal desire that, in the case of nuns, can only be expressed and satisfied through 'play'. Although she does not quote directly from Freud, Klapisch-Zuber's approach to the Christ Child effigies are informed by Freudian discourses of penis-envy and an innate 'maternal' desire amongst all members of the female sex, which also recalls Kristeva's 'species desire'.<sup>54</sup> More recent interpretations of the figurines, by Ulinka Rublack and Rosemary Drage Hale, have advocated against seeing them as 'dolls' or 'toys' and Rublack suggests that their use needs to be read in their specific cultural context rather than as evidence of 'mis-placed desire'.<sup>55</sup> It is necessary to acknowledge that the

---

<sup>53</sup> Klapisch-Zuber, p. 311.

<sup>54</sup> In his essay 'Femininity', Sigmund Freud claimed that girls' playing with dolls represents a return to the pre-Oedipal phase and an exclusive attachment to the Mother. He claimed that the play 'served as an identification with her mother with the intention of substituting activity for passivity. She was playing the part of her mother and the doll was herself: now she could do with the baby everything that her mother used to do to her'; see 'Femininity', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. by James Strachey, 24 vols (London: Vintage, 2001), XXII, pp. 112-135 (p. 128). A more overtly Freudian reading of the effigies is found in Kathy Lavezzo's interpretation of the 'doll' episode in *The Book of Margery Kempe*. At one point in the *Book*, an 'ymage' of Christ is passed between a group of women, and Margery is so overcome with emotion for the Christ Child that she breaks down in tears. This causes the women to shift their attention from the effigy, to Margery. Lavezzo argues, following Freud, that the 'doll' which Margery replaces is not Christ, but his mother; see Lavezzo, 'Sobs and Sighs Between Women: The Homoerotics of Compassion in *The Book of Margery Kempe*', in *Premodern Sexualities*, ed. by Louise Fradenburg and Carla Freccero (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 175-198 (esp. pp. 185-86). For Kempe's original text see *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by Sanford Brown Meech, and Hope Emily Allen, EETS, o.s. 212 (London: Oxford University Press, 1940), pp. 77-78.

<sup>55</sup> Ulinka Rublack, 'Female Spirituality and the Infant Jesus in Late Medieval Dominican Convents', *Gender and History*, 6 (1994), 37-57; and Rosemary Drage Hale, 'Rocking the Cradle: Margaretha Ebner (Be)Holds the Divine', in *Performance and Transformation: New Approaches to Late Medieval Spirituality*, ed. by Mary A. Suydam and Joanna E. Zeigler (London: Macmillan, 1999), pp. 211-39 (p. 39).

possibility that, like the effigies and images of the bleeding, feminised Christ, generic and dominant representations of childbirth also disclosed a patriarchal viewpoint designed to define and control the behaviour of female viewers. Yet approaches such as Klapisch-Zuber's, Bynum's, or Caviness's original admonition to 'read as woman', are not very helpful for assessing the response of female viewers to such late-medieval representations.

On one level at least, we can see that the production of generic images of maternity and childbirth within a patriarchal society served to script and maintain gender hierarchies. As Bynum's work has shown, male clerics engaged and identified with 'feminine' roles in their writings and devotions. Maud McInerney Burnett has argued that the maternal imagery of Cistercian writers, on which Bynum relies for her female empowerment thesis, is selective and 'functions to dissociate motherhood from the "female procreative body"', which is negated or elided.<sup>56</sup> John Carmi Parsons has also suggested that an 'emphasis on nurturant mothering' – such as we find in the monastic tropes – means that 'women's biological role [in mothering] is decentred in favor of the nurturing role' and that this 'allowed patriarchy to assert a share in the processes it could not biologically claim'.<sup>57</sup> In the same way that Aers has argued that dominant representations of Christ served as a means for male clerics to control female devotees, McInerney and Parsons's ideas can be used to suggest how the all-female space of the images of childbirth also served a number of male-defined ends.

McInerney claims that in their devotional texts, writers such as St Bernard and St Aelred 'emphasise feminine attributes, rather than a female or feminized body [...]'.<sup>58</sup> For example, although Anselm 'uses the vocabulary of childbearing [he] does so abstractly; he does not imagine the processes of labor and birth in a physical body or through particular organs. His laboring Christ

---

<sup>56</sup> Maud Burnett McInerney, 'In the Meydens Womb: Julian of Norwich and the Poetics of Enclosure', in *Medieval Mothering*, ed. by John Carmi Parsons and Bonnie Wheeler (New York and London: Garland, 1996), pp. 157-82 (p. 169).

<sup>57</sup> *Medieval Mothering*, p. xii.

<sup>58</sup> McInerney, p. 168.



does not bleed, sweat, or manifest physical symptoms of childbirth'.<sup>59</sup> Instead, she claims, these writers 'co-opt positive feminine attributes such as nourishing, without adopting negatively valued female attributes'. McInerney goes on to propose that this

does not so much blur boundaries between genders as create a distinction between anatomical sex and gender. Only the female body can lactate, but the nourishing function, once separated from that female body, is as accessible to men as to women and need not affect the sex of the body which performs it.<sup>60</sup>

Thus, the 'feminised' language and 'mothering' metaphors employed in monastic and later devotional writings allow the physiological processes of *motherhood* to remain with the imperfect female body, whilst *mothering* (or perhaps parenting) becomes a social activity that is constructed and appropriable by men.

Given the emphasis in monastic texts on caring and nurturing rather than on physiology, it is possible that in a religious context representations of the birth of Christ, and particularly of the Virgin and St John, were used as a space in which chaste viewers – male as well as female – could find identification in the maternal role. As I indicated in the Introduction and Chapter One, the most prominent features of childbirth scenes in devotional manuscripts are the provision of food, and the *post-partum* care of the mother and child. Fifteenth-century representations of childbirth seem to decentre female biology in favour of care and nurturing; the physiological processes of the woman's body are hidden beneath the clothes and sheets. We have seen how images of childbirth in manuscripts owned by young lay women, might have been intended as an encouragement or reminder to a young bride to bear children. Thus on the one hand, these *post-partum* images in comfortable domestic interiors represent a

---

<sup>59</sup> In Anselm's invocation of Christ as a mother hen who collects her chicks beneath her wings, for instance, the emphasis is only upon nurturing and protection; see McInerney, p. 168.

<sup>60</sup> McInerney, p. 169.

cosy, successful outcome where lay women fulfil their social duties as mothers and carers. On the other hand, at the same time as it calls attention to the essential role of the female sex in the birth of children, this iconography also displaces the female body and covers it up. The absence of what Sheingorn has called the 'messy, leaky bodies' of parturient women from the pictures of holy childbirth could have worked to reinforce (lay) women's difference from that audience, whilst also allowing those viewers to annex childbirth for their own purposes.<sup>61</sup> For male clerical viewers who encountered this iconography in prayer books and missals, it is possible that the images of childbirth also signified the primacy of male physiology and emphasised the superiority of chastity and spiritual, rather than carnal, love.

For lay men, there is the possibility that *post-partum* images of childbirth offered them access to the socially-constructed maternal role, a role that was advanced in devotional literature through an emphasis on the Holy Family and devotion to St Anne and St Joseph. The cult of St Joseph, which gained popularity in the later Middle Ages led to a proliferation of images of the saint as Christ's earthly father, caring for the Christ Child, feeding him, preparing swaddling clothes, and rocking the cradle.<sup>62</sup> Hale claims that his cult 'aligns with socially constructed paradigms of behavior for married laymen' and that 'attributes and elements from the powerful Marian cult are selectively appropriated and woven into the fabric of this holy male figure'.<sup>63</sup> She notes that Joseph is 'widely depicted in the "Madonna pose," standing alone embracing the Christ Child' and he is also 'depicted with the lily, an emblem of purity'. Hale refers to Joseph's role in the care of the Christ Child as his 'paternal *imitatio*

---

<sup>61</sup> Sheingorn, 'The Maternal Behaviour of God: Divine Father as Fantasy Husband', in *Medieval Mothering*, pp. 77-99 (p. 79).

<sup>62</sup> The Feast of St Joseph was introduced in 1481. On images of Joseph see Ruth Mellinkoff, *Outcasts: Signs of Otherness in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages*, 2 vols (Berkeley, Los Angeles and Oxford: University of California Press, 1993), I, esp. p. 79. For the history of the popularity of the cult, see Marjory Bolger Foster, 'The Iconography of St Joseph in Netherlandish Art, 1400-1550', (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Kansas, 1978).

<sup>62</sup> In a fifteenth-century manuscript copy of the *Legende Doree* (no. 49), a lithe and upright Joseph brings in wood for the fire while the Virgin holds Christ on her knee.

<sup>63</sup> Hale, 'Joseph as Mother: Adaptation and Appropriation in the Construction of Male Virtue', in *Medieval Mothering*, pp. 101-116 (p. 102).



*Mariae*'.<sup>64</sup> This term in itself indicates the apparently different levels of gender performance: Joseph imitates the (female) mothering role at the same time as he remains within the male (father) gender. He does not actually usurp Mary's role as Christ's mother – as Hale notes, 'Joseph could not nurse Him' – but his 'behaviour taught the male worshipper that he was obligated to care for and nurture the infant in imitation of Mary' and he 'provided men access to an identification with what was regarded as the maternal role'.<sup>65</sup>

The readings offered here of *post-partum* representations of childbirth are intended to complicate the female space which these pictures ostensibly represent. Butler's critique of Kristeva, as used by Aers, has exposed the dangers of ignoring the way cultural discourses – textual and visual – construct genders and sexualities. Beyond Aers' critique, Butler's work has a further resonance for this project since she has proposed that maternity and the apparent need or desire to give birth can be seen as a social construction required by the 'exigencies of kinship'. Kinship – specifically the production of male heirs – was essential to a fifteenth-century patriarchal hegemony to retain its position and strength. Therefore, although it is possible that female readers identified with images of St Anne and the Holy Kinship, and with representations of childbirth, the level of 'empowerment' these images offered must always be problematised. Representations of holy childbirth could work to reinforce gender and sexual hierarchies in the same way that Aers has claimed for the dominant representations of Christ as a bleeding and broken body. If we propose that in those cases where they did encounter these representations, late-medieval women (lay women but also nuns) identified with motherhood, we risk forcing those women into the same disempowered position as Bynum's mystics whose abjections supposedly parallel Christ's. However, this (dis)empowerment approach offers little potential for the feminist critic investigating the possible responses of lay women and men to those instances where they either requested, or were offered, these representations of childbirth.

It is dangerous to frame or deny the value of a certain image for any particular social group: to adopt a position whereby any cultural artefact

---

<sup>64</sup> Hale, 'Joseph as Mother', p. 102; p. 106.

<sup>65</sup> Hale, p. 106.

produced within a patriarchal society will inevitably function to (re)assert and maintain the power of those in control does not sufficiently take into account the way in which people of the fifteenth-century viewed themselves and others as gendered and classed bodies in relation to those artefacts. By focusing on the ‘historical consciousness’ noted by Marrow, on the ‘dynastic anxieties’ highlighted by Caviness, and on Butler’s ‘exigencies of kinship’, it is possible to consider how particular *social roles* – for example, fatherhood, motherhood, rulership – rather than biological capacity *per se*, will have affected the way images of childbirth functioned for different viewers. Thus the extent to which *post-partum* confinement scenes were invested with meaning would have varied with the individual and collective viewing positions occupied by those spectators.

It is therefore necessary to develop a way of assessing the value of images of childbirth for female (and male) viewers, without recourse to physiology. From the point of view of contemporary theory Jackson has claimed that ‘[t]o argue that the power hierarchy of gender is structural does not mean that it is exercised uniformly and evenly’ and that there is room for manoeuvre within the constraints of patriarchy. To deny this, she says, ‘is to deny heterosexual women any agency, to see us as doomed to submit to men’s desires whether as unwilling victims or misguided dupes’.<sup>66</sup> Hamburger has employed a similar approach to late-medieval images, evident in his criticism of statements such as that made by Miles, that ‘not a single image of any woman [...] was designed or created by a woman’.<sup>67</sup> Hamburger claims that such statements ‘easily become self-fulfilling prophecies if they are allowed to sanction turning a deaf ear or a blind eye to the materials that, no matter how mediated, might tell something of how medieval women shaped, viewed and responded to their own culture’.<sup>68</sup> Hamburger’s point is well-made. However, Miles in fact suggests that some fourteenth-century women turned to a life of virginity and enclosure as an escape from the perils of family life. She implies that women resisted men’s prescription of a chaste silent life by actually choosing the enclosed life, and this seems to counter Hamburger’s interpretation of her work (although it

---

<sup>66</sup> Jackson, p. 133.

<sup>67</sup> Miles, p. 64; see Introduction.

<sup>68</sup> Hamburger, p. 16; see Introduction.



simultaneously raises the question of whether such lifestyle choices, like abject identifications, only served to keep women under male control). Therefore we need to be extremely wary of simply reducing women's responses to those designated for them by men.

The following section outlines a theory of social viewing positions informed by both the materialist gender theory discussed here, and recent interpretations of fifteenth-century works of art from Italy that were intended for the domestic sphere. Although the Italian *deschi da parto* and *Dovizie* statuettes diverge from this thesis's focus on Northern European manuscripts, current approaches to these objects which were associated with maternity, birth, and fertility provide a way of insisting on the situational and multivalent meanings of images of childbirth iconography within the late Middle Ages and in the context of late-medieval patrician families. By relating images to the social positions occupied by their viewers, rather than to their physical sex, we can find a way of bringing in different viewers – including female viewers – in non-essentialist and non-universal ways.

### *Gender and the Period Eye*

A social approach to viewing and reception is not new to medieval and Renaissance art historical studies but it has only recently begun to be gendered. Michael Baxandall's work on fifteenth-century viewing practices has been particularly criticised by scholars such as Adrian W. B. Randolph who seek to understand the responses of female viewers to visual cultures. In *Painting and Experience* and *The Limewood Sculptors of Germany*, Baxandall formulated the concept of 'the period eye', or Quattrocento cognitive style. By this he means 'the equipment that the fifteenth-century painter's public brought to complex visual stimulations like pictures'.<sup>69</sup> Baxandall admits that he is effectively only talking about

---

<sup>69</sup> Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972, repr. 1986), p. 38; *The Limewood Sculptors of Renaissance Germany* (London: Yale University Press, 1980).

a small proportion of the population: mercantile and professional men, acting as members of confraternities or as individuals, princes and their courtiers, the senior members of religious houses. The peasants and the urban poor play a very small part in the Renaissance culture that most interests us now.<sup>70</sup>

In the light of this acknowledgement it is not difficult to conclude that the agent of ‘the period eye’ is, as Randolph has described it, ‘humanistic, mercantile’, and ‘overwhelmingly male’.<sup>71</sup> Baxandall’s concept is also problematic in another way since he suggests that fifteenth-century painters and sculptors responded to sensitivities in the period eye, implying that these craftsmen shared the same education and lifestyle as their patrons: ‘his [the painter’s] public’s visual capacity must be his medium [...], he is himself a member of the society he works for and shares in its visual experience and habit’.<sup>72</sup> Since painters and sculptors were not of the same class or means as their patrons, Baxandall’s claim renders the relationship between choices made by artists, and the viewing practices of their mercantile and patrician spectators, ambiguous.

Baxandall identifies a subset of the period eye through which a person’s response to a picture would vary depending on their training or profession. For example, he says that ‘[f]ifteenth-century medicine trained a physician to observe the relations of member to member of the human body as a means to diagnosis, and a doctor was alert and equipped to notice matters of proportion in painting too’.<sup>73</sup> Although he does not comment on it specifically, the type of sensitivity proposed by Baxandall according to role or status indicates the multivalency of images in relation to the situation of the viewer. It is the period eye as a viewer’s ‘situational eye’, and the resulting multivalency of images, that are central to the methodology I develop here.

---

<sup>70</sup> Baxandall, *Painting*, pp. 38-39.

<sup>71</sup> Adrian W. B. Randolph, ‘Renaissance Household Goddesses: Fertility, Politics, and the Gendering of Spectatorship’, in *The Material Culture of Sex, Procreation, and Marriage in Premodern Europe*, ed. by Anne L. McClanan and Karen Rosoff Encarnación (New York: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 163-89 (p. 173).

<sup>72</sup> Baxandall, *Painting*, p. 40.

<sup>73</sup> Baxandall, *Painting*, p. 39



Recently Randolph and Paolo Berdini have considered the implications of Baxandall's failure to address gender in the 'period eye' concept.<sup>74</sup> In his article 'Women under the Gaze', Berdini criticizes the period eye by claiming that these male regimes of viewing with which Baxandall engages in his book assign women a passive role whereby they must be represented with 'downcast eyes and tilted head'.<sup>75</sup> He refers to the writings of several contemporary artists that refer to the need to represent women in this way. Leonardo, for example, wrote that '[w]omen should be represented with demure actions, their legs tightly closed, their arms held together, their heads lowered and inclined to one side'.<sup>76</sup> Berdini claims that since 'women are not agents of the word, their role in narrative painting is limited and their gestures embody a different physiognomics, a distinctively feminine one, partial and thereby sufficient to preclude the universality of "the period eye"'.<sup>77</sup> The implied universality of Baxandall's period eye certainly needs to be redressed. Randolph however sees Berdini's re-assessment as 'caught within a disempowering and anachronistic psychoanalytical frame, in which [...] the male gaze transfixes and objectifies the female form'. He goes on to say that '[w]ithin this imbalanced paradigm, the female spectator seems trapped and reified under a consuming, postmodern, and very masculine scopic regime'.<sup>78</sup> Randolph has, instead, argued for the possibility of a 'feminine period eye' that might compliment Baxandall's masculine spectator and which could be located in the reception of 'visual cultural materials seemingly directed at female patrons, especially the ceremonial objects associated with marriage and birth'.<sup>79</sup>

In the previous section we saw the dangers of assessing the responses of members of the female sex to visual cultures within a normalised binary gender system. Like Butler, Randolph considers gender – and thus viewing positions – to be socially-constructed and not tied to biological givens. He seeks to avoid the

---

<sup>74</sup> Paolo Berdini, 'Women under the Gaze: A Renaissance Genealogy', *Art History*, 21 (1998), 565-90.

<sup>75</sup> Berdini, p. 568.

<sup>76</sup> This is taken from Leonardo's notes in the margins of his study of female heads. See Berdini, p. 567.

<sup>77</sup> Berdini, p. 566.

<sup>78</sup> Randolph, p. 172.

<sup>79</sup> Randolph, p. 172.

automatic disempowerment of female spectators by recognising the formation of their viewing positions within a hierarchical, patriarchal society. He claims his concept of the feminine period eye is an alternative to the ‘masculine scopic regime’ into which Berdini cast female spectators.<sup>80</sup> Randolph admits that whilst

[t]his type of explanation might characterize a particular form of female spectatorship, [...] it might just as easily be taken as expressing a misogynist ideal of appropriate feminine automatic response, short-circuiting for the female viewer even the possibility of contemplation, desire, and intellection.<sup>81</sup>

He is therefore aware of the dangers of making women unquestioning recipients of imagery that served patriarchal ends but he claims that ‘the theory of “proximate viewing” as characteristic of women’s reception [which] has emerged [...] from feminist and psychoanalytical models [...] poses the threat of “confounding” desire and disqualifying women from agency in relation to their material cultural context’.<sup>82</sup> Randolph’s methodology and sources go some way towards formulating a strategy for reading *post-partum* representations of successful and holy childbirth as spaces in which the wished-for outcome of pregnancy for some female – and indeed male – viewers, could be imagined. However, his concept of a ‘feminine period eye’ risks being as essentialist as Baxandall’s ‘universal’ or ‘masculine period eye’ which he sets out to complicate. By combining aspects of Randolph’s gendered period eye with the situational eye hinted at in Baxandall’s original thesis, we can come closer to a formula for reconstructing the viewing positions of the owners of the Anjou-Brittany manuscripts, and for assessing their responses to the images of childbirth contained therein.

Randolph’s essay focuses on the small, glazed terracotta, statuettes of women holding baskets of fruit that were produced in large numbers by the della Robbia workshop in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (fig. 30). These

---

<sup>80</sup> Randolph, p. 172.

<sup>81</sup> Randolph, p. 174.

<sup>82</sup> Randolph, pp. 174-75.



statuettes were loosely based on a *Dovizia* by Donatello, now lost, that once stood in the Mercato Vecchio in Florence. The della Robbia statuettes were made for display in the home and some of them are painted with the words ‘glory and wealth be in your house’, which recall directly the words of Psalm 112, ‘in which the “blessed man” is promised “wealth and riches in his house”’.<sup>83</sup> Randolph suggests that the terracotta statuettes were a symbol of consumerism, wealth, and profit: he claims that they ‘might be seen as giving concrete form to the money expended on decorating the home’ and notes that the ‘addressee of the inscription can be read as the *paterfamilias* in whose house the statuette was to be found’.<sup>84</sup> He thus proposes that:

this household goddess and her healthy-looking offspring seem to wish upon the male spectator the good things promised to the “blessed man” of Psalm 112: comestibles, the wealth to purchase them, and fertility itself. [...] [T]hese figurines might, therefore, be seen to produce and perpetuate the notion of an ideal heterosexual family unit. The male spectator can be posited as completing the group, aligning within his paternal, fraternal, and filial gaze the female personification that combines riches with sustenance and procreation.<sup>85</sup>

Nevertheless, Randolph notes that ‘given the gendering of urban domains and the coding of domestic spaces as particularly feminine, the configuration that posits a male viewer alone seems facile’.<sup>86</sup> By relating the production and display of the statuettes to the private and public concerns of patriarchal fifteenth-century Florence – procreation as a conjugal as well as civic duty – Randolph proposes that ‘the Florentine patrician bride and mother might have understood them as mediating between motherhood and civic structures’.<sup>87</sup> He develops his understanding of the *Dovizie* in relation to Musacchio’s analysis of

---

<sup>83</sup> Randolph, p. 163. The statues are inscribed: ‘GLORIA ET DIVITIE IN DOMO TVA’.

<sup>84</sup> Randolph, p. 171.

<sup>85</sup> Randolph, p. 172.

<sup>86</sup> Randolph, p. 172.

<sup>87</sup> Randolph, p. 182.

*deschi da parto* (referred to in Chapter One), that were used and viewed by fifteenth-century patrician women and men. In her study of the trays and other objects associated with childbirth, Musacchio stresses the value of healthy male children for Florentine families and highlights the often elaborate preparations that were made for patrician women during childbirth.

*Deschi* are large round wooden trays decorated with images of childbirth, young children, and episodes from classical narrative (figs 8; 31-33). The confinement scenes on extant *deschi* are of the same format that we find in representations in manuscripts and on panel paintings and frescos: the mother in bed, the visiting female friends, the provision of food, the bathing of the infant. *Deschi* were given as gifts to parturient women and were used to bring food and drink into the childbirth chamber. Musacchio notes that these trays could be present in a home ‘pre-, post-, and even in-place-of-partum’ since there is evidence ‘that childless couples owned birth objects’ and that many retained a place in the household even after birth, displayed on the wall or used as game boards.<sup>88</sup>

In her study of the trays, Musacchio seeks to equate the images on *deschi* with the actual preparations for childbirth in fifteenth-century Italy. She claims that ‘veracity was an important feature of these images, as part of their function was encouragement and commemoration’.<sup>89</sup> Referring to the objects listed in inventories and accounts of purchases made for confinements, she suggests that the scene represented on the birth tray in figure 8 ‘represents a typical confinement room’. Another tray, painted by Masaccio shows trumpeters heralding the arrival of (male) visitors bearing gifts. Since we know *deschi da parto*, unlike many manuscripts, to be definitively associated with childbearing, I would suggest that the scenes on the *deschi* depict not a material situation in the way that Musacchio suggests, so much as a desired reality – in terms of the opulence of the rooms and expense, and in terms of the successful outcome – for both male and female viewers. This desired reality that these images represented would have been heightened by the similarity of the childbirth scenes found on *deschi* to sacred scenes from other media, resulting in an interplay of

---

<sup>88</sup> Musacchio, ‘Imaginative Conceptions’, p. 45 and n. 14.

<sup>89</sup> Musacchio, *Ritual*, p. 47.



signification whereby secular scenes could be invested with religious overtones and vice versa. We have already seen how images of St Anne and the Holy Kinship were popular with married lay women and how a woman such as Fina Buzzacarini could have identified herself with St Elizabeth and other biblical matriarchs. Therefore the idealised images on birth trays, represented in the same way as images of *Birth of the Virgin* and *St John the Baptist*, which were probably familiar to some lay people from paintings such as those by Ghirlandaio or the Osservanza Master, could have led the viewers of this iconography – especially barren or older couples – to draw associations between their own circumstances and the stories of the holy families (figs 1-2; 34). The parity of sacred representations of childbirth and those on secular *deschi* is demonstrated in a drawing by Lorenzo Monaco of *The Birth and Naming of John the Baptist* which has evidently been adapted by Bartolomeo di Fruosino for the decoration of the birth tray shown in figure 32.<sup>90</sup>

From extant sources it appears that the reverse of many birth trays were decorated with paintings of baby boys. Musacchio proposes that this ‘can be seen as indirect evidence of the Renaissance belief in the power of sympathetic magic in childbirth’.<sup>91</sup> During pregnancy, a woman’s imagination was thought to be particularly susceptible to visual influences. If a woman looked upon, or imagined, deformed or horrific images, there was a fear that the child might take on this form whilst still in the womb. The idea of a ‘maternal imagination’ that could seriously affect the outcome of the pregnancy is a product of those same Aristotelian and Galenic discourses, noted above, that also scripted the female body as inferior to the male.<sup>92</sup> Musacchio acknowledges that the *deschi* were

---

<sup>90</sup> Musacchio notes that ‘Bartolomeo was an active member of Lorenzo’s workshop’; see Musacchio, *Ritual*, p. 70; for Lorenzo’s drawing, see *Ritual*, p. 71.

<sup>91</sup> Musacchio, ‘Imaginative Conceptions’, p. 48.

<sup>92</sup> In trying to mitigate the possibility of undesirable offspring, Leon Battista Alberti suggested that bedrooms should contain ‘nothing [...] but the most comely and beautiful faces; which we are told may be of no small consequence to the conception of the Lady, and the beauty of the children’. From Alberti’s 1452 treatise *De re aedificatoria*, quoted in Geraldine A. Johnson, ‘Beautiful Brides and Model Mothers: the Devotional and Talismanic Functions of Early Modern Marian Reliefs’, in *The Material Culture of Sex, Procreation, and Marriage*, pp. 135-61 (pp. 150-51; and n. 73). Marsilio Ficino advocated ‘controlling the imaginative parameters of potential parents by presenting desirable images, in important locations, at key moments’. As Musacchio notes, Ficino ‘extended the power of imagination to the father as well as the mother’ but it generally

designed to ‘stimulate [...] the imagination of the Renaissance woman, emphatically encouraging her to fulfil her societally prescribed maternal role’.<sup>93</sup> However, she also remains aware of how this role, together with the dangers of childbearing, means that for women undergoing pregnancy and birth ‘these painted representations [of childbirth etc.] would have provided positive reinforcement’.<sup>94</sup> Geraldine A. Johnson has claimed that in addition to the *deschi* noted by Musacchio and the *Dovizie* statuettes noted by Randolph, terracotta Marian reliefs which decorated Florentine homes in the fifteenth century were also viewed as talismanic objects designed to encourage successful procreation.<sup>95</sup> She proposes that the ‘dynastic concerns’ of fifteenth-century Italian society were articulated through the ‘Marian reliefs that were displayed in the symbolic heart of the household, the marital *camera*’.<sup>96</sup> The ostensible meaning of these Italian domestic objects associated with the family and childbirth was to encourage the conception of healthy male babies for a patriarchal society, by giving the woman, if not the man, something on which to focus. These visual representations can be seen, as Caviness has claimed for the images in Book of Hours, as constructing, promoting, and maintaining specific gendered behaviours for men and women. However, as noted previously, a need to recognise the construction of gender within and by a patriarchal society should not mean that we focus solely on reading *post-partum* images of childbirth as controlling or disempowering women through the maternal role.

To return to Randolph’s analysis of the *Dovizie* statuettes, by recognising the expectations placed upon, and dangers undergone by, married women for a fifteenth-century Italian society concerned with family and offspring, he shows how art objects could have been received by patrician brides. In relation to the bespoke, devotional manuscripts made for aristocratic patrons, which are the focus of the following chapter, the dynastic concerns of these people could also have resulted in a particular viewing of the ‘female space’ in images of childbirth which differs, say, from the appropriated maternity of the monastic

---

seems that it is the ‘maternal’ imagination that was credited with the ability to affect the outcome of a pregnancy; see ‘Imaginative Conceptions’, p. 48.

<sup>93</sup> Musacchio, ‘Imaginative Conceptions’, p. 59.

<sup>94</sup> Musacchio, ‘Imaginative Conceptions’, p. 47.

<sup>95</sup> See Johnson, above.

<sup>96</sup> Johnson, p. 149.



tropes. Therefore Randolph's notion of a feminine or gendered period eye allows for the possibility that art objects and iconographies were decoded in a particular way through particular viewing positions. However, the term feminine period eye is problematic – even if we concede that that 'feminine' viewing position was socially constructed – since it risks defining something essential or homogeneous not only in the spectatorship of women but also in the construction of the female gender. Since objects such as *deschi* and *Dovizie* were intended to encourage procreation and motherhood we might refer to this type of viewing as maternal, or even parental. Yet this too is problematic since it not only overlooks the appropriable and fluid aspects of medieval gender roles, but it also fails to take social status and class into account. I suggest that the term 'situational eye' is a more appropriate way of defining the type of lens through which images were viewed, en/gendered, brought into a particular meaning.

The situational eye that I apply to the Anjou-Brittany manuscripts in the following chapter was broadly informed by the dynastic concerns – those exigencies of kinship – within fifteenth-century aristocratic, patriarchal families. The sensitivity of this situational eye to the images of childbirth would, however, have varied according to the circumstances of the viewer. It is feasible that female patrons commissioned images of holy childbirth from an ostensibly patriarchal viewpoint: to promote or celebrate maternity for the exigencies of the society in which they operated. Conversely, it is conceivable that some men, concerned not only about their own succession but also for their wife's health for instance, could have temporarily occupied a viewing position akin to that of a woman undergoing pregnancy and birth. Musacchio's indication that *deschi* were owned by childless couples strengthens the idea that men as well as women could see childbirth-related iconography from a 'maternal' position. As noted above, however, Butler has pointed out that the construction of gender varies between historical contexts.<sup>97</sup> Since medical and theological writings circulating in the late-Middle Ages often tied the female gender to the imperfection of female physiology, and because it is the female sex which gives birth, it is possible that young wives would have been particularly receptive to images of childbirth in their Books of Hours. Whether or not they saw themselves as

---

<sup>97</sup> Butler, p. 6.

subjugated to men in their need to produce children, late-medieval lay women must have experienced a great deal of fear and pain with every pregnancy. For pregnant women or women in labour, images of childbirth could have functioned simultaneously on different levels: not only as reminders of their ‘maternal’ duties but also as a space for the projection of anxieties about the birth itself, and the importance of its outcome – for themselves, for the child, and for the family at large.

Therefore it is necessary to see images of childbirth as multivalent: the meaning of the all-female, *post-partum*, domestic space shifted with the individual and collective viewing positions of the spectators. Whereas we can define collective viewing positions in a similar way to Baxandall’s viewing ‘by groups’ (as physicians, and thus for example as sovereigns, as parents, as nuns), individual positions – such as an imprisoned duke, a Dauphin, a second wife of a childless duke – require individual analysis. In so doing, the nuances and multivalency of *post-partum* paintings of the *Birth of the Virgin* and the *Birth of John the Baptist* in fifteenth-century devotional manuscripts can be revealed.

In the following chapter we turn to the group of manuscripts made for members of the houses of Anjou and Brittany during the fifteenth century. Using the concept of the situational eye formulated here in conjunction with a consideration of the socio-historical context in which the manuscripts were produced and read, we can analyse how certain images of maternity and childbirth were received by their contemporary, aristocratic, viewers.



## CHAPTER THREE

### MANUSCRIPTS RELATING TO THE HOUSES OF ANJOU AND BRITTANY C. 1415-1480: A CASE STUDY

Having laid the conceptual and methodological groundwork for an analysis of late-medieval representations of childbirth, we can now turn to a case study of Books of Hours from French aristocratic houses. Between them the group of manuscripts considered here contain a number of birth scenes and they can all be related by workshop and familial connections with houses of Anjou and Brittany, between about 1417 and 1480. In addition, two of them were intended for female owners. These manuscripts have not yet been studied together in terms of how their illuminations, in particular the images of childbirth, may have been viewed by their known and proposed owners and they thus warrant further investigation. The manuscripts are the *Grandes Heures de Rohan* (no. 31), the *London and Paris Hours of René d'Anjou* (nos 10 and 30), the *Fitzwilliam Hours* (no 26), and the *Hours of Marguerite de Foix* (no. 24). The last two were made for female owners. The *Hours of Marguerite de Foix* also contains a little-known prayer relating to childbirth which has been misread in the past. The prayer, which I print and reconsider here, is an important factor in understanding how aristocratic, lay, female viewers engaged with images and narratives of holy childbirth.

I use the concept of the situational eye outlined in the preceding chapter to propose how class, gender, and personal circumstances rendered the images of childbirth significant for the viewers of these manuscripts. The aristocratic owners of the books would have been acutely aware of the expectations – not least parenthood – placed on them by the social circles they inhabited. Marrow suggested that the Duke of Berry's *Turin-Milan Hours* and related manuscripts would have functioned as a symbol of stability for a family in troubled times. Given the precarious hereditary context of fifteenth-century France it is likely that the images in these related Anjou-Brittany manuscripts – including the images of childbirth – also functioned as part of broader bibliographic interests and commissions that were intended to strengthen the resolve of the dynasty and

to provide some symbolic coherence for the families. The texts and iconographies of these manuscripts would have been viewed with a situational eye; that is, they would have posited viewers aware of their own historical place in patriarchal, politically-important families. The sensitivity of this situational eye to images of childbirth would have varied with the personal circumstances of the viewer. It is likely that the female readers of two of these manuscripts, the *Fitzwilliam Hours* and the *Hours of Marguerite de Foix*, viewed the birth scenes and other pictures of motherhood in their books from their positions as young duchesses. The fact that these women were expected to produce male heirs for their husbands and for the state would have added to the significance of these images for these female viewers. We saw in the previous chapter the problematics of proposing responses for female viewers without falling into the trap of making maternity a pre-cultural essence of the entire female sex. By considering the situational eye of these aristocratic viewers via their social roles and personal circumstances it is possible to see how the performance of gender roles and an awareness of their own historical context, rather than a 'species desire', informed these women's reading of the images of childbirth in their manuscripts.

The houses of Brittany and Anjou were important and influential dynastic families in Europe in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and were great patrons of the visual arts. The family genealogies in Appendix 3 show how the Angevin dynasty was related to the house of France (Valois-Orléans-Angoulême), the Dukes of Berry and the Dukes of Burgundy through their common ancestor Jean II, King of France (1319-64). Jean's second son Louis I (1339-84) not only ruled the Duchy of Anjou but he was also the titular King of Sicily. His son, Louis II (1377-1417) married Yolande d'Anjou (1379-1442) in 1400 and they had five children including René d'Anjou (1409-80) who was a great bibliophile and a writer in his own right. René added to the titles of his father and grandfather, becoming Titular King of Jerusalem, Hungary, and Aragon as well as Sicily, and inheriting the duchy of Lorraine and Bar through his first marriage to Isabel de Lorraine. Louis and Yolande's eldest daughter Marie married the future King of France, Charles VII, and their youngest daughter Yolande d'Anjou (1412-40) united the house of Anjou with that of



Brittany through her marriage to Duke François I (1414-50) in 1431. François's cousin François II de Bretagne (1435-88) would succeed him. His daughter Anne de Bretagne (1477-1514), by his second wife Marguerite de Foix (d. 1486), would eventually unite Brittany with the French throne. The succession of these dukes and duchesses, kings and queens, in a period where individual campaigns were played out against and through the on-going Hundred Years War between France and England, was precarious and open to challenge. For the male members of these houses it was a time of war and imprisonment; for the women it was a time in which the need to bear legitimate male children was paramount. In looking at the manuscripts related to these houses, and at the historical context in which they were produced, my thesis demonstrates that these books could have functioned as places where personal and public fears over succession and inheritance found expression, in particular through the images of childbirth.

*Manuscripts for the Angevin Dynasty: The Grandes Heures de Rohan, c. 1417*

Three of the five manuscripts discussed in this chapter were produced by the workshop of the Rohan Master which was active in France during the first half of the fifteenth century (c. 1410-1440). The name of this atelier is taken from its contribution to a large, profusely illustrated, Book of Hours that bears the arms of the Rohan family, and which is now known as the *Grandes Heures de Rohan* (no. 31). This manuscript forms part of the following discussion. There are a number of extant manuscripts produced by the Rohan Workshop and these have been grouped together and discussed in terms of their style and patronage by several scholars most notably Meiss and Adelheid Heimann.<sup>1</sup> Meiss has

---

<sup>1</sup> See the part-facsimile *Rohan Hours*; Meiss, pp. 256-77, and pp. 401-404; Adelheid Heimann, 'Der Meister der "Grandes Heures de Rohan" und seine Werkstatt', *Städte Jahrbuch*, 7-8 (1932), 1-61; see also Panofsky, 'Reintegration of a Book of Hours Executed in the Workshop of the "Maître des Grandes Heures de Rohan" ', in *Medieval Studies in Memory of A. Kingsley Porter*, ed. by Wilhelm R. W. Koehler, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1939), II, pp. 479-99. Some of the Rohan workshop manuscripts are included in Grete Ring, *A Century of French Painting* (London: Phaidon, 1949) and more recently the workshop has been discussed by Avril and Reynaud, pp. 25-29.

proposed that the workshop was working in Paris c. 1414-16, where they came under the influence of the Boucicaut Master, and that some production may also have been carried out in Troyes since the majority of the Books of Hours that came from the atelier were either for the Use of Troyes or for the Use of Paris.<sup>2</sup>

Following an initial suggestion by Paul Durrieu, Jean Porcher has proposed that the Rohan workshop was patronised by the Anjou family.<sup>3</sup> This is because one of the extant Rohan manuscripts can definitely be related to an Angevin duke (probably Yolande d'Aragon's son, René) and because the *Grandes Heures* themselves show a reliance on two other manuscripts associated with the Angevin household. These are the Duke of Berry's *Très Belles Heures* which were purchased after the Duke's death in 1416 by Yolande d'Aragon, and a French copy of the *Bible moralisée* copied in Naples and which may have been brought back with an Angevin campaign returning from that region.<sup>4</sup> A connection between the Anjou family and the Rohan Workshop has been reiterated by a number of other scholars including Meiss, Avril and Reynaud, and Camille.<sup>5</sup> Meiss, and Avril and Reynaud suggest that the mature work of the Rohan workshop was carried out in Angers, under the patronage of Yolande d'Aragon who was resident in the Angers region from about 1418-23. Porcher has also proposed that the arms of Rohan, which now decorate the manuscript, may be another indication of the *Grandes Heures*'s connection with the house of Anjou, since the family of René's wife, Isabel de Lorraine, married into the Rohan family in the second quarter of the fifteenth century.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Meiss, p. 262.

<sup>3</sup> Paul Durrieu 'Le Maître des "Grandes Heures de Rohan" et les Lescurier d'Angers', *Revue de l'art ancien et moderne*, 2 (1912), 81-98 and 161-88; Jean Porcher, 'Two Models for the "Heures de Rohan"', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 8 (1945), 1-6; Porcher, *The Rohan Book of Hours* (London and New York: [NPub], 1959); and Porcher, *French Miniatures from Illuminated Manuscripts* (London and New York: [NPub], 1960), p. 69.

<sup>4</sup> Porcher, 'Grandes Heures', pp. 1-2.

<sup>5</sup> Meiss, pp. 263-269; *Rohan Hours*, p. 13; Avril and Reynaud, pp. 25-29; Camille, 'The Illustrated Manuscripts of Guillaume de Deguileville's "Pèlerinages" 1330-1426' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Cambridge, 1985), pp. 227-30.

<sup>6</sup> Porcher proposes: 'If [...] it is accepted that [the *Grandes Heures*] were executed for a member of the house of Anjou, it is easy to explain how they could have passed to that of Rohan, for on the death of his father-in-law, Charles II, Duke of Lorraine in 1431, René of Anjou [Yolande's son], his heir, found his inheritance of the duchy disputed by Antoine de Vaudémont, nephew of Charles, who took him prisoner on July 2nd at Bulgnéville. The gold ground of the unfinished female side of the arms belongs to Marie



Whilst bearing in mind that some of the attributions of patronage and ownership made in art-historical literature are hypothetical, there appears to be enough evidence to work from the premise that the *Grandes Heures de Rohan*, and two other manuscripts central to this enquiry, the *Paris Hours of René d'Anjou* and the *Fitzwilliam Hours*, were originally executed by the Rohan Workshop for members of the Anjou family, possibly at the request of Yolande d'Aragon. The following section looks at the birth scenes in the *Grandes Heures*, considering these illuminations in relation to the manuscript as a whole, and in the context of related manuscripts, keeping in mind the history of the Anjou family in the early fifteenth century.

The *Grandes Heures de Rohan*, although now missing several folios, once contained the major texts found in many fifteenth-century Books of Hours.<sup>7</sup> As such, its liturgical contents are not particularly unusual. However, in addition to illuminations often found at the beginning of the main sections in *horae*, such as the openings of the Hours of the Virgin, the *Grandes Heures de Rohan* are profusely illustrated with a series of marginal illustrations taken from the *Bible moralisée*, of which several are birth scenes. These scenes show a striking iconographic dependence on a fourteenth-century copy of the *Bible moralisée* (no. 51), and this is one of the manuscripts which Meiss and Porcher claim provides another strong indication of the connection between the *Grandes Heures* and the Angevin dynasty.<sup>8</sup> Meiss suggests that the *Bible moralisée* was probably executed in Naples, 'capital of the kingdom which Duke Louis spent much of his life in a vain effort to reclaim' and Porcher proposes that it may have been 'brought from Italy by a prince of Anjou, King of Sicily'.<sup>9</sup> Porcher

---

de Lorraine, daughter of Antoine de Vaudémont, and second wife of Alain IX, vicomte de Rohan. The Heures could have formed part of the ransom which René had to pay to his captor [...]. Antoine could then have given them to his daughter. The gold ground could also serve for the arms of Yolande de Laval, married in 1443 to Alain de Porhoët, heir presumptive of the viscounty of Rohan, son of the first marriage of Alain IX and of Marie de Bretagne, who died in 1428; but this makes no difference, Alain IX would have had them in either case from his second wife, Marie de Lorraine.' See Porcher, 'Grandes Heures', pp. 2-3.

<sup>7</sup> A full catalogue description of the *Grandes Heures* can be found in Victor Leroquais, *Les Livres d'heures manuscrits de la Bibliothèque nationale*, 3 vols (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale, 1927), I, pp. 281-90.

<sup>8</sup> The parity of the two series of images was established by Heimann, pp. 27-28.

<sup>9</sup> *Rohan Hours*, p. 13; Porcher, 'Grandes Heures', p. 4.

notes that the Bible, 'was written by a Frenchman of the south, or by an Italian writing in French; it was illustrated by Italians as is shown, apart from the style, by notes in Italian which are still visible, concerning some of the paintings'.<sup>10</sup> The Rohan workshop copied exactly into the *Grandes Heures de Rohan* cycle a faint note in the Italian *Bible moralisée*. This has led Porcher to conclude that there was no intermediary manuscript. He claims 'it was in fact this *Bible historiée* which was then with the house of Anjou, as were the *Belles Heures*, and these with the Bible provided [...] models for the Rohan atelier'.<sup>11</sup> Having consulted both manuscripts, the compositional similarity between the miniatures in the Neapolitan manuscript and those in the *Bible moralisée* of the *Grandes Heures de Rohan* is unmistakable and I agree that the Rohan workshop must have had access to this manuscript in the execution of the *Grandes Heures*.<sup>12</sup>

Late-medieval manuscripts of the *Bible moralisée* were profusely illustrated with thousands of images. Two early thirteenth-century *Bibles moralisées*, one Latin, the other in French, have been linked to the Capetian rulers of the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries.<sup>13</sup> The *Bible moralisée* was therefore primarily a luxury picture book, which was associated with the highest nobility. Gerald B. Guest notes that 'moralized Bibles in general have been seen as illustrated examples of the *Mirror of Princes* or *Speculum principis* genre of writings, a class of texts which sought to advise lay rulers on the proper ways of governing'.<sup>14</sup> Given the royal associations of the *Bible moralisée* and

<sup>10</sup> Porcher, 'Grandes Heures', p. 4.

<sup>11</sup> Porcher, 'Grandes Heures', p. 4.

<sup>12</sup> Due to restrictions at the BN I was only able to consult these manuscripts on microfilm. According to Meiss, the Neapolitan copy of the *Bible moralisée* (no. 51) discussed here and cited in literature on the *Grandes Heures* was not the one found in Louis's inventory and he proposes that its 'most likely owner in metropolitan France was a Duke of Anjou'; see *Rohan Hours*, p. 13. Avril and Reynaud claim that another fourteenth-century *Bible moralisée* (France, Bibliothèque nationale, f. fr. 166) was known at the Angevin court; see Avril and Reynaud, p. 115. Meiss has suggested that this BN f. fr. 166 might be an early work of the Limbourg Brothers commissioned by Philippe le Hardi; see Meiss, p. 81ff.

<sup>13</sup> Sara Lipton, *Images of Intolerance: The Representation of Jews and Judaism in the Bible moralisée* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of Paris, 1999), p. 5. The thirteenth-century manuscripts in question are: Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek cod. 1179; and Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek cod. 2554.

<sup>14</sup> Gerald B. Guest, *Bible Moralisée: Codex Vindobonensis 2554, Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek* (London: Harvey Miller, 1995), p. 26.



the costliness of such prolific illumination, the choice of a marginal *Bible moralisée* in the margins of the *Grandes Heures de Rohan* would not have been a casual choice on the part of the commissioner. By including this cycle in the manuscript it is conceivable that the (Angevin) patron of the *Grandes Heures* was aligning their own commission with the luxurious patronage of the French royal household.

The format of *Bibles moralisées* – miniatures with explicatory rubrics – were designed to show the relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament, and how this related to contemporary church history. A. de Laborde describes them as having ‘verses borrowed literally from the Vulgate [...] and followed by an explanation having as its object to establish a rapprochement [...] between one part taken from sacred history and another from the Gospels’.<sup>15</sup> Guest adds that ‘a moralized Bible is “read” by viewing/reading a biblical image with its corresponding commentary caption and then by viewing/reading a corresponding commentary image and caption; the commentary is designed to uncover the contemporary meaning, often moralizing in character, of the biblical event for the contemporary medieval viewer/reader’.<sup>16</sup> Lipton notes that the texts included in extant versions of the *Bible moralisée* are not homogeneous and do not include all the books of the Old Testament.<sup>17</sup> The marginal series in the *Grandes Heures* is a partial *Bible moralisée* which tells the story of the Creation in Genesis to chapter twenty-five in the Book of Numbers.<sup>18</sup> This cycle features many birth scenes drawn from Old Testament stories which are paired with New Testament and typological birth scenes.

The first birth scene in the *Grandes Heures* occurs in the calendar page for October (f. 14v). The main image of this page shows the making of wine (fig. 35) and the marginal image the *Birth of Cain and Abel*. The rubric beneath the image refers to the birth of Cain and Abel, to the labour of Adam and Eve, and Adam’s favouring of Abel over Cain.<sup>19</sup> In the background there is a rustic

<sup>15</sup> A. de Laborde, *La Bible moralisée illustrée conservée à Oxford, Paris, et Londres*, 4 vols (Paris: [Npub], 1911-27), quoted in *Rohan Hours*, p. 21.

<sup>16</sup> Guest, p. 3.

<sup>17</sup> Lipton, p. 9

<sup>18</sup> Guest, p. 4.

<sup>19</sup> ‘Ici est la nativité de Cayn et d’Abel et yci laboure et travaillent et Adam retint Abel et mist Caym anssus de lui’. I am grateful to Dr Rosalind Brown-Grant at the University

nativity scene. Here Eve has the manner and garb of the Virgin Mary as she sits holding one of her sons. To the side is another woman holding a child. In the foreground Adam and Eve are shown chopping and spinning respectively. Since Cain and Abel were not twins it is plausible that the painter has collapsed the separate births into one scene. Meiss suggests that the second female figure is Eve clad differently holding her other son.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, whereas it is conceivable that both these figures represent Eve, it should be noted that in other birth miniatures in this manuscript there is often another woman present who is described as the *ventrière* or midwife.

The next birth scene, the *Birth of Esau and Jacob*, occurs in the margins of the Hours of the Virgin (fol. 55r; fig. 36). The scene is an outdoor setting. Rebecca, the mother of Esau and Jacob, and another woman sit beneath a pitched roof and picket fences. Rebecca is seated on a stool and the other woman sits on the grass. Unlike the *post-partum* representations of childbirth that have been considered so far, this miniature shows the children being born. Rebecca is naked from the waist up, her hands clasped in prayer over her chest. The twins Esau and Jacob, one following on the heels of the other, appear from under the blanket around Rebecca's waist. The second woman pulls them forth. This *in partu* way of representing the birth recalls the biblical text which says that as Jacob was born he 'took hold on Esau's heel'.<sup>21</sup> To the right of the image is a male figure holding a bow. The rubric says 'Here is Isaac with Rebecca. Here Rebecca has two children, Esau and Jacob. Here Esau goes into the woods to hunt animals and he quarrels with his household and his mother and Jacob stays with his mother and does her bidding'.<sup>22</sup> On the verso of this folio is a miniature of Christians, Jews, and unbelievers. The typological interpretation of this episode is that Rebecca stands for the Holy Church, who gives birth to two types of people. Jacob, who remains with his mother, stands for the Christians who do

---

of Leeds for assistance in translating some of the Old French rubrics in the *Grandes Heures de Rohan*.

<sup>20</sup> *Rohan Hours*, commentary for pl. 18.

<sup>21</sup> Genesis 25. 26.

<sup>22</sup> 'Icy est ysaac avec rebecaa yci a rebequa ij enfans Esau et iacob. Icy va esau au boys traire aux bestes et gueroie tous jours son hostel et la mere et iacob revient avec la mere et fait sa volente'. C.f. Genesis 25. 27-34.



the will of the Holy Church; by contrast Esau represents those miscreants who abandon Holy Church.

The *in partu* way of showing the *Birth of Esau and Jacob* is used in subsequent birth scenes in the *Grandes Heures*. On f. 67r in the Hours of the Virgin is a miniature of the *Birth of Perez and Zerah*, (fig. 37).<sup>23</sup> Tamar, the wife of Er, sits on a stool and behind her is a blue sky with tiny gold clouds, a stylistic device found in other miniatures in this manuscript (e.g. figs 35; 38). Tamar leans forward slightly with her left arm stretched out in front of her. Although she has a hood over her head, she is naked from the waist upwards like the figure of Rebecca. The two children emerge from her lap, beneath her cloak and another woman pulls them forth. There is a red thread attached to the head of the first child. The rubric for this image explains that Tamar gave birth to two children and that the midwife tied a red thread to the first child who then retreated into the womb letting the other child be born first.<sup>24</sup> When we turn to the verso side of this folio (f. 67v) we find another birth scene which, almost the same in composition, demonstrates the typological significance of the preceding Old Testament scene. In this miniature, as in the preceding one of Tamar, two children emerge from a woman's lap, beneath her cloak. Another woman kneels on the floor at the right holding a spherical object towards the children who reach out for it. Unlike Tamar, however, this woman is crowned and she wears a blue and gold cloak which covers her entire body (fig. 39). The rubric beneath this figure explains how the child with the red thread shown in the preceding image is a symbol for Christians who are marked as being responsible for holy church and matrimony.<sup>25</sup> The crowned and cloaked figure can thus be interpreted as a representation of Ecclesia, or the mother church. Whereas the compositional similarity between the two images indicates their typological relationship, the fact that the second woman is richly clothed and crowned serves to distinguish

---

<sup>23</sup> Genesis 38. 27-30.

<sup>24</sup> 'Et puis prist une aultre fame qui out nom thamar dont il ot ij enfans lun le monstra avant a la ventriere et elle le signa dun fil rouge et le retrait avers et ly autres nasqui avant'. This refers to the story in Genesis 38. 28-30, where the midwife ties a scarlet thread around the hand of the first twin to appear. This child then retreats into the womb and his brother is then born first.

<sup>25</sup> 'Ce que le premiere des enfans sen issi avant et fut signes du fil rouge senefie les christiens qui sont seigneurz responsalle de sainte esglise et de mariage'.

the Jewish, Old Testament narrative of Tamar from its New Testament and contemporary antitype, the Christian Church.

In the *Bible moralisée* manuscript which was the source for the *Grandes Heures* cycle, as in other extant *Bibles*, the type and anti-type image are positioned close to each other on the same page. Since the cycle in the *Grandes Heures* has been transferred to the margins of the manuscript, the relationship between the Old and New Testament episodes cannot always be taken in at one glance. Porcher has noted that in some places the verso-recto page layout, which allows for an explicit relationship between episodes, is disrupted by 'the interpolations of the large whole-page illustrations of the Offices'.<sup>26</sup> This is the case with the images of Tamar and Ecclesia because they occur on the recto and verso of one folio. In some instances however, the type and antitype miniatures are paired across a verso-recto page layout and where this happens, the typological relationship between the images becomes more explicit, especially where they are compositionally similar.

The next birth scenes occurs in the margins of in the litany of the saints (f. 127v). Leroquais and Meiss have identified this as the *Birth of the Male Children of Israel* (fig. 38). The rubric beneath the image says that here women raise their all male children and do not kill them.<sup>27</sup> A woman pulls a child forth from his mother whose modesty is, as in the images of Rebecca and Tamar, only just maintained by a blue blanket. Behind the mother stands another woman with both her hands raised. To the right stands a man looking onto the scene. The birth takes place in a setting reminiscent of the *Birth of Cain and Abel* with the wattle fences and the dark sky peppered with tiny clouds. The antitype of this birth scene is found on the opposite folio (f. 128r). This is a miniature of *Synagoga* and *Ecclesia* personified. The legend explains that as the (Israelite) women raise their male children and do not kill them so the Holy Church raises all the male children who are the fruits of the Gospels.<sup>28</sup> Here, and in the

<sup>26</sup> Porcher, 'Grandes Heures', p. 5.

<sup>27</sup> 'Icy nourrissent les femmes tous leurs enfans masles et nem occisent nul'.

<sup>28</sup> 'Ce que les fame nourrissent leurs enfans et nen occisent nul senefie que sainte eglise nourist tous les masles [se] sont les bons de la flour de levuangile et la viez loy des flours des commandemens de dieu'.



previous examples, the birth scenes are used as a way of demonstrating the relationship between the old covenant and that of the new.

Two folios later, in the litany of saints, the births of Moses and Christ are paired across two folios (ff. 129v-30r). On f. 129v the mother of Moses sits in a large bed hung with curtains and a canopy (fig. 40). Her position is like that of Rebecca in the *Birth of Esau and Jacob*. A blanket covers her legs and a woman delivers Moses from beneath the blanket. Moses' father stands behind looking on and the rubric claims that he 'wracks his brains as to what to do about him'.<sup>29</sup> On the opposite folio is the *Nativity of Christ* (fig. 41) which takes place in an outdoor setting which recalls the births of Esau and Jacob or Cain and Abel. The Virgin is shown in the same attitude as Moses' mother but, like the image of Ecclesia on f. 67v, she is fully dressed, and she is also haloed. Christ, with a cruciform halo, is delivered by another woman from underneath the covers over the Virgin's body. Behind the midwife stands Joseph with his hands raised. The rubric explains that the nativity of Moses signifies the nativity of Christ and that the midwife who received Moses from his mother signifies the young girl St Anastasie who received Christ from the Virgin.<sup>30</sup> Further parallels between Moses and Christ continue on the next open folio sequence. Moses being placed in a wicker basket is paired with Christ, placed in the manger and adored by the shepherds.<sup>31</sup>

The compositional similarity of the Moses and Christ scenes clearly indicates the typological relationship between the births even without the benefit of the rubrics. However, specific features of these images render this relationship more complex than one of type and anti-type. The canopied bed in the *Birth of Moses* gives this birth an air of estate which contrasts with the poorer, outside stable setting of the *Nativity of Christ*. Yet conversely, the richness of the blue and gold fabrics in the Nativity, and the haloes of the Virgin and Christ, single out the special nature of Christ's birth. The presence of St Anastasie in the *Bible*

<sup>29</sup> 'Icy naist moyses du ventre sa mere et la ventriere le recoit et le pere se demente quil empura faire'.

<sup>30</sup> 'La nativite moyse senefie la nativite nostre seigneur. Ce que la ventriere le recoit senefie la pucelle sainte anastaise qui receut nostre seigneur'.

<sup>31</sup> On f. 130v the rubric reads: 'Icy prennent lenfant et le mettent en ung bersseul de verges'; on f. 131r it reads 'Ce que Moyse est ou bersseul de verges. Senefie ihesu crist qui fut mis en la crache aux beufs'.

*moralisée* miniature, does more than simply match the *ventrière* in the *Birth of Moses*.<sup>32</sup> The inclusion of this midwife-type figure – an apocryphal addition – has the effect of normalising Christ’s birth by applying to it the conventions of ordinary births. This normalising is actually heightened, on one level at least, by the use of the *in partu* schema. Radically different from Nativity scenes that show Mary and Joseph adoring Christ, this mode of representation makes Christ’s birth more human. On another level, this *in partu* representation comes dangerously close to contradicting the uniqueness of the Virgin birth.<sup>33</sup>

In Chapters One and Two we saw how images of *post-partum* childbirth in devotional manuscripts have previously been interpreted as encouragements or admonitions to procreate and to fulfil social roles. Often this has been done in relation to the known or supposed ownership of the manuscript, such as the *Hours of Jacques de Châtillon*. Like the *Châtillon Hours*, the *Grandes Heures* was also a bespoke production. However, the fact that its original ownership is undetermined, and because the mode of representing the births differs so much from the domestic, *post-partum* scenes discussed previously, it is difficult simply to apply existing readings of childbirth imagery to this manuscript. However, if we accept that the manuscript was commissioned for a member of the Anjou family, the history of this family becomes an important factor for the interpretation of the manuscript’s unusual visual contents.

When Yolande d’Aragon married Louis II d’Anjou in 1400, their marriage was intended as a means of resolving the on-going dispute over the kingdom of Naples between the houses of Anjou and Aragon.<sup>34</sup> As Duchess of Anjou, Yolande played an active part in the politics of the Duchy and, in 1413, her nine-year-old daughter Marie was betrothed to the ten-year-old Charles de Ponthieu, third son of Charles VI de Valois, King of France. This alliance was

---

<sup>32</sup> According to the *CEO*, St Anastasie was an early Christian martyr beheaded in Sirmium in the time of Diocletian (second or third century BCE). Although this Saint is not credited with being present at the Nativity, her feast day falls on 25 December, which does link her with the time of Christ’s birth.

<sup>33</sup> Female assistants and midwives at the Nativity are found in apocryphal sources such as the Proto-Evangelium of James, as well as in other late-medieval retellings of the Nativity. In the Middle English N-Town play for example, Joseph seeks midwives to assist Mary. See the Book of James, or Protoevangelium, in *The Apocryphal New Testament*, trans. by M. R. James (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924), pp. 46-47; Gibson, ‘Scene and Obscene’.

<sup>34</sup> <http://xenophongroup.com/montjoie/yolande.htm> Accessed: 12 June 2003.



intended 'to link the large and much-ramified Angevin house to the Crown'.<sup>35</sup> Charles spent a great deal of time in the care of Yolande, accompanying her and Marie to Provence in 1415. Meiss notes that Yolande became Charles's 'principal protectress and counselor' and he had a close association with Yolande's second son René d'Anjou.<sup>36</sup>

During the 1410s, Charles de Ponthieu's own family, the Valois dynasty, was under threat due to the mental ill-health of his father Charles VI and because of the civil war raging between the Burgundians and the Armagnacs. Vale says that Louis II d'Anjou 'had broken off an alliance with his cousin John the Fearless of Burgundy' and that '[t]he Armagnac victory over the Burgundians at Paris in the summer of 1413 may have served to convince the house of Anjou that its fortunes lay with the faction led by the families of Armagnac and Orléans'.<sup>37</sup> The Burgundians, however, formed an alliance with the English after Henry V's victory at Agincourt and several important allies of the Valois family were imprisoned in England. Charles's family was therefore in a precarious situation: his father was mentally ill and after the deaths, in quick succession, of his two elder brothers Louis (d. 1416) and Jean (d. 1417) Charles suddenly found himself Dauphin. In 1420 Charles VI disinherited his son, thus strengthening Henry V of England's claim to the French throne.<sup>38</sup> Charles's mother, Isabel of Bavaria, who had engaged in extra-marital liaisons with her husband's brother, Louis d'Orléans, also sided with the Anglo-Burgundian alliance against her son and Charles became isolated from his own family.<sup>39</sup> Thus Vale describes how 'Charles became the symbolic, as well as the tangible, alternative to the coalition which was forming between Burgundy and Henry V of England'.<sup>40</sup> His counsellors and supporters became those of the Anjou court, including Yolande d'Aragon.<sup>41</sup> From 1418, when he fled Paris, 'the power-centre from which Charles was to operate lay along the Loire and the Cher – at

---

<sup>35</sup> M. G. A. Vale, *Charles VII* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1974), p. 22.

<sup>36</sup> *Rohan Hours*, p. 13; Vale, p. 23.

<sup>37</sup> Vale, p. 22.

<sup>38</sup> Vale, p. 31.

<sup>39</sup> Vale, p. 21; and <http://xenophongroup.com/montjoie/yolande.htm>.

<sup>40</sup> Vale, p. 25.

<sup>41</sup> Vale, p. 23.

Bourges, Melun and Tours'; Yolande's own castle at Saumur was situated in the same region as Charles's new court.<sup>42</sup>

The likelihood that the *Grandes Heures de Rohan* were executed for a member of the Angevin family has been based on the relationship between this manuscript and two other manuscripts associated with the house of Anjou. One of these manuscripts is the *Bible moralisée* discussed above as the iconographical source of the *Grandes Heures*'s marginal illustrations. The other manuscript is the Duke of Berry's *Belles Heures*, purchased by Yolande d'Aragon in 1416. Yolande's purchase of the manuscript is recorded in a note in the inventory of the Duke of Berry's estate.<sup>43</sup> The Rohan Workshop's borrowings from the *Belles Heures* can be seen, for example, in the *Grandes Heures*'s *Flight into Egypt* (f. 99r; fig. 42) where the figure of the peasant lying on a sheaf of grain is modelled on that of the *Belles Heures*'s miniature for July (f. 8r; fig. 43). The sower from October in the *Belles Heures* (f. 11v; fig. 44) also appears in the miniature for September in the *Grandes Heures* (f. 13r; fig. 45).<sup>44</sup> In addition to succeeding his brothers as Dauphin, Yolande's future son-in-law Charles also inherited the Duchy of Berry in 1417. Given the stylistic influence of the old Duke's *Belles Heures* on the *Grandes Heures de Rohan*, and because of the masculine prayer forms in the *Grandes Heures* as well as her involvement in Charles's political career, Meiss has proposed that Yolande may have

---

<sup>42</sup> Vale, p. 25; Meiss, p. 269.

<sup>43</sup> Porcher prints this note which reads: 'Lesquelles heures la royne de Secille a envoyé querir et demander...à messeigneurs les executeurs, et lesquelles mes dis seigneurs lui on envoiées pour icelles veoir et retenir, s'il lui plaisoit, en payant la somme de 700 livres parisis, ou telle autre somme d'argent, à la dicte execucion, comme bon lui sembleroit, affin qu'elle eust envers son mari, principal executeur de testament, et autrement, le fait de la dicte execucion pour recommandé; laquelle dicte royne, apres ce qu'elle ot longuement veues et advisees icelles heures, a retenu ycelles par devers elle et païé à la dicte execucion seulement la somme de 300 livres tournois'. See Porcher, 'Grandes Heures', p. 1, n. 3. The original source is Léopold Delisle, *Mélanges de paléographie et de bibliographie* (Paris: Champion, 1880), pp. 284, n. 1.

<sup>44</sup> The *Grandes Heures* borrowings from the *Belles Heures* are compared in *Rohan Hours*, p. 13; Meiss, pp. 268-69; and in Porcher, 'Grandes Heures', pp. 1-3. Meiss also notes that the manuscript shows a dependence on the Duke of Berry's *Très Riches Heures* painted by the Limbourg brothers around 1415; see *Rohan Hours*, p. 12. Buettner suggests that Yolande d'Aragon might have acquired the *Très Riches Heures*, in addition to the *Belles Heures* although she provides no reference source for this claim; see Buettner, p. 15. Porcher does not exclude the possibility that the *Très Riches Heures* were offered to Yolande d'Aragon at the settlement of the Duke of Berry's estate; see Porcher, 'Grandes Heures', pp. 3-4.



commissioned the *Grandes Heures* 'for this very youth, her protégé [*sic*] and her daughter's fiancé'.<sup>45</sup> I am cautious of Meiss's point here about the masculine prayer forms since, as noted above, these should not automatically exclude the possibility that the manuscript was made for a woman or perhaps a couple. However, the connections discussed earlier between the *Bible moralisée* and French kings, do strengthen the possibility that this manuscript with its marginal cycle was destined for a royal, male owner. Thus Meiss proposes that:

If the *Grandes Heures de Rohan* was made for Charles, Duke of Berry and from October 1422 King of France, the abundance of quotations from the *Belles Heures*, altogether exceptional in the work of the Rohan Master, probably reflect the political and cultural circumstances of the patron.<sup>46</sup>

Following Meiss, it is possible that if the *Grandes Heures* were commissioned for Charles (perhaps for his marriage to Marie in 1422), the allusions to his great uncle's *Belles Heures* would have been seen as a strengthening symbol of the new generation of the Valois and Angevin dynasties, through the union of Marie and Charles. Since, like many aristocratic marriages in the fifteenth century, Yolande's own marriage had had a political intent, it is possible that she saw her own daughter's engagement to Charles in the same light. Thus, if Yolande were the commissioner of the *Grandes Heures*, the Rohan Workshop's borrowings from the Duke of Berry's *Belles Heures*, which Yolande had recently acquired, could conceivably have been intended as a way of embodying, in a gift, a sense of family history and historical consciousness.

As we have seen, most of the images of childbirth in the *Grandes Heures* are not the comfortable, domestic, *post-partum* scenes that appear in other devotional manuscripts. Since the birth scenes are integral to the *Bible moralisée* we cannot single them out as being unusual inclusions in themselves, although the marginal cycle itself is unique for a *horae*. The *Bible moralisée* pictures, including the *in partu* birth scenes, emphasise how the old covenant was superseded by the new. In some of the images, such as the *Birth of Perez and*

---

<sup>45</sup> *Rohan Hours*, pp. 13-14.

<sup>46</sup> *Rohan Hours*, p. 14.

*Zerah* and its corresponding miniature of Ecclesia, there is an emphasis on the Christian's responsibility for the Church and for matrimony (ff. 67r-v). Given the *Bible moralisée*'s status as a royal picture book, the inclusion of the partial cycle in the *Grandes Heures* means it is conceivable that this manuscript was intended for a future king of France. If Charles were the intended recipient, the marginal images would have functioned not only as reminders of his religious and moral obligations as the divinely-appointed king of France, but also served to boost his claim to that position.

Nevertheless, if we accept an Angevin connection for the *Grandes Heures*, Charles is but one possibility for their intended ownership. The relationship between the *Grandes Heures*, the *Belles Heures*, and the Neapolitan *Bible moralisée* means that the *Grandes Heures* could have appealed to other viewers with a personal interest in the Anjou family's dynastic history and contemporary responsibilities. Avril and Reynaud propose that Yolande commissioned the *Grandes Heures de Rohan* for the projected marriage of her youngest son Charles d'Anjou, Comte de Maine, to a daughter of Alain de Rohan.<sup>47</sup> The marriage never took place. Meiss suggests that Yolande's eldest son Louis III d'Anjou was another intended recipient. To support this he focuses specifically on the relationship between the manuscript and the Neapolitan *Bible moralisée*. After the death of her husband in 1417, Yolande was involved in raising funds for Louis III's attempts to reclaim the kingdom of Naples.<sup>48</sup> Meiss claims that the quotations from the Neapolitan *Bible moralisée* 'alluded to the Angevin past, artistic and religious as well as dynastic' and that the *Grandes Heures*' relationship with the Bible (but not with the *Belles Heures*) would have retained its special meaning if the *Rohan Hours* had been produced [for Louis

---

<sup>47</sup> Avril and Reynaud, p. 25.

<sup>48</sup> *Rohan Hours*, p. 14. Vale also notes that Yolande 'engineered the marriage of her son, Louis III [...] to Isabella, daughter of Jean V of Brittany; see Vale, p. 36. Vale does not say whether the marriage took place and other sources show that Louis married Margaret Stuart (the sister of Isabel Stuart, one of the owners of the *Fitzwilliam Hours*, to be discussed below) and then Marguerite de Savoie. There also appears to be some confusion in secondary sources over the numbering of the 'Jean' Dukes of Brittany. Jean IV de Montfort (1341-65) was never crowned: he was succeeded by his son Jean (1340-99) who is thus sometimes referred to as Jean IV, sometimes as Jean V. Here and in the Appendices I will use the following numbers: Jean V (1340-99) succeeded by his son Jean VI (1390-1442), subsequently succeeded by his son François I of Brittany (1414-50).



III]'.<sup>49</sup> In contrast to Meiss we can see that the allusions to the *Belles Heures* need not be meaningless if the manuscript had been intended for Louis III. In fact, it is plausible that the quotations from the *Belles Heures* were read by Louis, as by the Dauphin Charles, as a symbolic connection between different branches of the same family: although Charles became the new Duke of Berry, Louis and Charles were actually second cousins and were both great nephews of Jean, the original commissioner of the *Belles Heures* (see Appendix 3).

The inclusion of the *Bible moralisée* cycle infers a royal, male recipient. But, since it is difficult to associate the manuscript definitively with a particular owner, I propose that the manuscript as a whole, viewed with an Angevin situational eye, would have functioned as a tangible symbol that embodied the past, present, and future of the Anjou family. In particular the *Bible moralisée* cycle, whether or not it was intended for Charles, certainly connotes royal aspirations and pretensions for the family who commissioned it. If we accept Yolande d'Aragon as the original commissioner of the *Grandes Heures* (and also of her son's *Paris Hours*, and of the *Fitzwilliam Hours*, probably owned by her daughter, discussed below) her evident involvement in the dynastically-orientated marriage arrangements for her children indicates that her artistic commissions were informed by dynastic anxieties, and a sense of family history.<sup>50</sup> It is therefore possible that this dynastic, situational eye – as a socially-constructed viewing position – was occupied by both male and female viewers. It is the same situational eye through which I suggest that René d'Anjou viewed his own Books of Hours and the birth scenes contained within them.

*Manuscripts for the Angevin Dynasty: The Paris Hours of René d'Anjou, c. 1434*

René d'Anjou (1409-1480) was the second son of Louis II and Yolande d'Aragon. When his elder brother Louis III died in 1434 without any children René succeeded him as King of Aragon, Naples, Sicily, Hungary and Jerusalem.

---

<sup>49</sup> *Rohan Hours*, p. 14.

<sup>50</sup> This thesis might be strengthened if it could be shown that Yolande was also involved in the betrothal of her other children, especially Yolande's marriage to François I de Bretagne.

A *horae* from the Rohan workshop, now in Paris (no. 30), that at some stage, if not originally, belonged to René d'Anjou has, like the *Grandes Heures de Rohan*, been accorded several dates of execution. Part of the confusion over the dating of René's *Paris Hours* has arisen because of the inclusion of a portrait of René's father Louis II in the manuscript and because of the 'puzzling arms' (of Jerusalem, *Anjou ancien*, and *Anjou moderne*) in certain of the initials which Meiss claims 'cannot yet be connected definitively with any member of the [Anjou] family'. The portrait of Louis occurs before a prayer to St René during the Hours of the Virgin. Meiss notes that it may indicate that 'the manuscript was illuminated after the death of Louis II, as its style seems to indicate, for his oldest son Louis III, but in honor, so to speak, of his father'.<sup>51</sup> Nevertheless, he dismisses this possibility on the basis of the eagles with patriarchal crosses, and the motto 'en dieu en soit', which occur on every single page of the manuscript and which he believes 'belong to the original campaign': this motto was used by René alone from about 1434 onwards.<sup>52</sup> Meiss thus proposes that the manuscript was probably commissioned for René d'Anjou by his mother, Yolande d'Aragon, in about 1434.<sup>53</sup>

There are no representations of the birth of the Virgin or of John the Baptist in René's *Paris Hours* but there is a full-page *Nativity of Christ* at the opening of Prime (fig. 46). Although the Holy Family are shown in a stable setting, this miniature departs from the more conventional representation of Mary and Joseph adoring the child since it shows a female servant preparing a bath; Mary places her hand in the water as if to test the temperature. Joseph looks on, leaning on his staff, and in the background, behind the wattle and picket fences, the ox and the ass watch the scene. On the right a tiny red-winged angel peers over the fence with his hands clasped in prayer. Since this is a product of the Rohan Workshop it is not surprising that the style and features of

---

<sup>51</sup> Meiss, p. 346.

<sup>52</sup> Meiss, p. 266; p. 346. Harthan (p. 88) dates the manuscript to between 1410 and 1420 but gives no basis for this. Durrieu, cited in Ring, has proposed that the book dates from after René's imprisonment in Italy [*sic*, for Dijon?] (1431-37) since the manuscript also contains a portrait of René 'dressed after the Italian fashion and with Italian haircut and beard'; see Ring, p. 203. The reference she gives is Durrieu, 'Les armoires du Bon Roi René', *Comptes-rendus des Séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres*, [no vol.] (1908), 102-114.

<sup>53</sup> Meiss, p. 346.



this Nativity scene recall those in the *Grandes Heures* in the outside stable setting with the characteristic wattle and spike-post fences, the dark blue sky peppered with tiny gold clouds, the female assistant, and the father looking on. In addition we can also compare the figure of the Virgin suckling Christ in René's *Paris Hours* with the large miniature of the Virgin and Child at the *O Intemerata* prayer in the *Grandes Heures* (fig. 47): the attitude of the Virgin's head as she holds the child in the crook of her arm is similar and the decorations on the haloes of Mary and Christ are identical across both manuscripts. The way in which this birth scene, like those in the *Grandes Heures*, departs from traditional representations of the Nativity, serves to bring Christ's birth more in line with conventional birth practices. As in images of the *Birth of the Virgin* and the *Birth of St John the Baptist*, this Nativity scene emphasises *post-partum* care and nurturing, rather than miraculous birth. The inclusion of the female assistant and the preparation of the bath indicates a certain level of care afforded this new mother. The stable setting and the animals are rendered almost two-dimensional and are pushed to the background of the image whereas the foreground is dominated by the opulence of the Virgin's blue cloak and the gold of the haloes. This representational method acknowledges both the poverty of Christ's birth and also the richness of His kingly status. For an aristocratic viewer such as René, this normalising of the Nativity could have had the effect of bringing the birth of Christ closer to the birth practices of his own social milieu. It is possible that this both mitigated the expense and opulence of this class and whilst also allowing aristocratic viewers to draw parallels between the divinity of Christ and the God-given appointments of their own dynasties.

The picture of the Virgin reaching out to test the bath prepared by a female assistant in René's *Paris Hours* also shares similarities with a Nativity miniature by the Boucicaut Master in a Book of Hours now in the Victoria and Albert Museum (no. 25; fig. 48). As indicated above, Meiss has suggested that the Rohan Workshop was influenced by the work of the Boucicaut Master who always seems to have worked in collaboration with the Egerton Master (as in no. 25). It is important to note that both the Boucicaut and Egerton Workshops were under royal patronage, being employed by the Duke of Berry, the commissioner of the *Belles Heures*. On the one hand, the stable setting of the Boucicaut

miniature is very different to that in René's *Paris Hours*, being more three-dimensional, and with the figure of Joseph absent. However, in the Boucicaut *Nativity* the blue sky is filled with gold stars which evoke the dark skies and gold clouds in the Rohan Workshop images. In addition, the pitched roof and the wattle fences, together with the pink of the assistant's dress, recall those in the *Grandes Heures* and, as we shall see, the *Fitzwilliam Hours*. If the *Grandes Heures* were with a member of René's family, the fact that his own Rohan-produced Book of Hours bore stylistic and compositional similarities not only to this manuscript but also to manuscripts produced by other workshops under royal patronage, would have been evident to René, whose own book collection was extensive.<sup>54</sup> When, on his brother's death in 1434 and whilst still in prison, René inherited the Dukedom, it is likely that he was acutely aware of his need to return home to his family to govern both the Anjou dynasty and his other realms. In the next section, by turning to another Book of Hours owned by René, we can see how stylistic relationships, including those between the Rohan, Boucicaut, and Egerton Workshops, become even more significant as markers of dynastic duties and the Angevin situational eye.

*Manuscripts for the Angevin Dynasty: The London Hours of René d'Anjou, c. 1410*

According to Meiss three miniatures were added to René's *Paris Hours* after 1434. These show four angels holding the host, a portrait of René d'Anjou (fig. 49), and Death as a crowned skeleton.<sup>55</sup> The picture of the Host and of the *roi-mort* skeleton are particularly relevant for this discussion since similar miniatures were added to another Book of Hours owned by René (no. 10). This manuscript, now in London, was not originally commissioned for René. Harthan notes that the manuscript's calendar, litany and suffrages point to a connection with the Valois court and the relics housed in the Sainte-Chapelle in Paris. An ecclesiastic, rather than lay, use for the text is also indicated in the liturgical

<sup>54</sup> Details of some of the books owned, written, and commissioned by René can be found in Avril and Reynaud, pp. 233-37.

<sup>55</sup> Meiss, p. 346. They are on ff. 22r, 81v, and 113v respectively.



arrangement, and vast number, of Offices and Suffrages in the manuscript.<sup>56</sup> Avril and Reynaud suggest that the *London Hours* were originally commissioned for a member of the Anjou family in about 1410.<sup>57</sup> Regardless of who the original owner was, Avril and Reynaud have argued that René's pictorial additions to the *London Hours*, together with various prayers and marginal decorations, were intended to assert the presence of the new owner and his current preoccupations.<sup>58</sup> Indeed one of the prayers added to the *London Hours* alludes to René's imprisonment in Dijon at the hands of his Burgundian cousin Philip the Good in the mid 1430s.<sup>59</sup>

There are two birth scenes in René's *London Hours*, both in the suffrages of saints, the *Birth of the Virgin* (f. 101v) and the Nativity of Christ (f. 82r). Like the *Paris Hours*, the *Nativity of Christ* in this manuscript also differs from canonical representations. Here, instead of the more usual stable setting, the *Nativity* is shown like the *Birth of the Virgin*. In both instances the mother lies in bed and another woman stands at the side holding the swaddled child. The effect of this, as suggested above for the *Nativity* miniature in René's *Paris Hours*, serves both to normalise Christ's birth and to render it more aristocratic. The unconventional representation of Christ's birth also links together those manuscripts owned or commissioned by the Angevin household. Thus for René, the *London Hours*, with their previous Angevin or Valois connections, could

---

<sup>56</sup> Harthan, p. 92-93.

<sup>57</sup> Avril and Reynaud, p. 227.

<sup>58</sup> Avril and Reynaud, p. 226: 'Cinq remarquables miniatures, insérées à différents emplacements du volume, ainsi qu'un abondant décor emblématique ajouté dans les marges, font allusion à la personne du nouveau propriétaire et à ses préoccupations du moment'. In contrast to Pächt (see below), Reynaud dates the additions to the *London Hours* to c. 1442-44. See Avril and Reynaud, p. 227.

<sup>59</sup> According to Otto Pächt the five miniatures in the *London Hours* were added by René himself during his last years in prison: see Otto Pächt, 'René d'Anjou et les Van Eyck', *Cahiers de l'Association internationale des études françaises*, 8 (1956), 41-67. Pächt's rather romantic view is summed up in Avril and Reynaud (pp. 226-27): 'pour [Pächt], les cinq images faisaient partie d'un programme mûrement réfléchi et illustrant les sentiments de René pendant les dernières années de sa captivité dijonnaise. [...] Toute ces oeuvres, en harmonie profonde avec la pensée intime du roi René, étaient dues au pinceau d'un même artiste qui ne pouvait être, toujours selon Pächt, que le souverain lui-même, dont une ancienne et persistante tradition affirmait qu'il pratiquait la peinture'. Avril and Reynaud attribute the miniature to Barthélemy van Eyck, see pp. 226-27 and 233. Harthan bases his interpretation of René's *London Hours* on Pächt's idea that these *Hours* were René's 'prison' hours'; see Harthan, p. 93. He notes that the manuscript includes a prayer asking for René's release from captivity: 'Libera Renatu[m] de omnibus angustiis. Libera me Renatum'; see Harthan, p. 93.

have functioned as an object which spoke to him of his own historical position. This is further strengthened when we consider that the miniature for Prime in this manuscript, the *Adoration of the Magi*, was painted by the Egerton Master (fig. 50). Here the Virgin's dress, and the bed on which she sits, are reflected in the Boucicaut *Nativity* miniature discussed above. The proposed Angevin patronage of the Rohan Workshop would have indicated to other members of the aristocracy the family's interest in literature and devotion, as well their ability to purchase luxury items, and it is possible that, for the Anjou themselves – especially René – such purchases and commissions were intended to imitate the cultural benefaction of their relation, the Duke of Berry. René's possession of manuscripts illuminated by the Boucicaut and Egerton Workshops would have reinforced this allusion, if not pretension, to royal patronage.

Therefore, however he acquired both his *London* and *Paris Hours*, it is probable that René, like the original commissioner or owner of the *Grandes Heures de Rohan*, viewed the birth scenes in his manuscripts with a situational eye informed by family patronage and dynastic heritage. In particular, René's deliberate personalising of both his *London* and *Paris Hours* at dates later than their execution and with similar images would have served to link the two Books of Hours together as his property.<sup>60</sup> That René saw his books as a place in which to make his personal and dynastic interests evident is suggested by a later Book of Hours made for René about 1459-60.<sup>61</sup> In this manuscript the initials of René and his second wife Jeanne de Laval are intertwined in the borders and, as Avril and Reynaud note, their marriage is the last event in the Angevin family chronology recorded in the calendar.<sup>62</sup> Thus the new campaigns of illumination in René's two *horae* discussed here may have been undertaken as a means of

---

<sup>60</sup> It seems worth retaining the possibility that, the motto 'en dieu en soit' notwithstanding, the ambiguous arms and portrait of Louis means that the *Paris Hours* were not originally commissioned for René and that, like the *London Hours*, the later additions were part of a campaign to definitively assert his ownership of the manuscript.

<sup>61</sup> See Avril and Reynaud, cat. no. 126, *Heures de René d'Anjou*, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, ms lat. 17332 (pp. 233-34).

<sup>62</sup> Avril and Reynaud state, 'les armoires peintes dans le manuscrit sont celles que le souverain utilisa du 1453 à 1466, et l'on datait jusqu'ici le volume vers 1454, année du remariage avec Jeanne de Laval, dernier événement de la chronique familiale angevine enregistré dans le calendrier'; see Avril and Reynaud, p. 233.



providing some symbolic coherence and stability to René's life as unexpected king and ruler of a family plagued by war, contested lands, and untimely deaths.

So far, the images of childbirth in the three manuscripts discussed here, have been related to the historical context of the manuscripts themselves and in relation to the dynastic, patriarchal interests of the Angevin household. Because of the problems of determining original ownership and dates of execution, it has been difficult to make concrete connections between the birth scenes in these manuscripts and the particular circumstances of their viewers. Nevertheless, we can see that these images functioned as part of a broader manuscript tradition and that for a viewer occupying an Angevin situational eye these books reminded them of their responsibilities towards the House of Anjou and its current preoccupations, such as its support of the Dauphin Charles. In the following section we turn to two other manuscripts which were owned by female members of the Anjou and Brittany families. For patrician wives, the same dynastic responsibilities, of which men like René and the Dauphin Charles were conscious, were combined with the particular social expectations that were placed on them as child bearers. These female agents of the situational eye would have been particularly sensitive to the images of motherhood and maternity in the *Fitzwilliam Hours* and the *Hours of Marguerite de Foix*; that is, the images would have taken on additional meanings from their social position as wives and mothers-to-be. Whereas the images of childbirth in these manuscripts should not be automatically considered historical spaces in which to house fifteenth century 'women', reading them through the lens of the lives of their owners shows the possible ways in which, together with other illuminations and certain prayers, representations of childbirth came into sharper focus for these fifteenth-century duchesses.

*A Manuscript to Link Anjou with Brittany: The Fitzwilliam Hours, c. 1418-31*

The *Fitzwilliam Hours* (no. 26) is a Book of Hours now in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.<sup>63</sup> Like the *Grandes Heures de Rohan* it was profusely illuminated by the Rohan workshop and, also like the *Grandes Heures*, the date and original ownership of the manuscript is open to question. We know from the female forms in at least one of the prayers in the *Fitzwilliam Hours* that its original intended owner would have been a woman. Whereas the initial prayers to the Virgin, the *Obsecro te* and the *O Intemerata* have masculine forms, the *Creator celi* prayer towards the end of the manuscript contains many feminine forms, for example ‘que ego peccatrix non sum digna nominare nec corde cogitare’ (f. 137r).<sup>64</sup> We also know from internal heraldic evidence that the manuscript was definitely once in the possession of Isabel Stuart (1427-1494), daughter of James I of Scotland and Lady Joan Beaufort, who married François I, Duke of Brittany (1414-50) in 1442.<sup>65</sup> However, it is evident from examining the book that the arms of Isabel Stuart found in many of the borders are later additions which were painted over the border foliage, as we find at the opening of the *Obsecro te* (f. 20r; fig. 51). As well as the addition of Isabel’s arms, a subsequent owner has also made his own marks in the manuscript in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century. The last leaves of the manuscript contain a family register (1578-1619) of the Isamberts, including references to children’s births and baptisms. The manuscript thus had a function beyond that of a personal prayer book becoming a space for a family. We may even say that the manuscript passes from the female sphere of its original owner(s) to the patriarchal, but collective, family sphere, for it is the husband-father Isambert

---

<sup>63</sup> The manuscript is sometimes referred to in scholarship as the *Hours of Isabel Stuart*. Since it was not originally owned by her, I will refer to the manuscript here as the *Fitzwilliam Hours*. I am grateful to the curators Stella Panayotova and Nicholas Robinson at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, for allowing me to visit the collection of manuscripts during a period of refurbishment at the museum, and for their comments on the manuscript itself.

<sup>64</sup> Other feminine forms include: ‘Et in omnibus in quibus ego fragilis peccatrix peccare potui’; ‘ne despicias me quia famula et serva tua sum ego’; and ‘Ergo recognoste domine creaturam tuam’; see ff. 137r-139r.

<sup>65</sup> See genealogical trees in Appendix 3



who writes his family register in the *Hours* and presumably who wrote 'Heures a Moy appartenans (Isambert...)' on the fly-leaf.<sup>66</sup>

Since the *Fitzwilliam Hours* certainly date from some time before Isabel's marriage and ownership, and because they are a product of the Rohan workshop, Avril and Reynaud have suggested that they were originally a marriage gift for Yolande d'Anjou, daughter of Yolande d'Aragon, and François I's first wife, whom he married in 1431.<sup>67</sup> Other scholars have proposed earlier dates for the manuscript's execution of around 1415-18.<sup>68</sup> Working on the basis of a date of c. 1417, Camille proposed in his doctoral thesis that Yolande d'Aragon was herself the original owner of the manuscript, that it passed to her daughter on her marriage, and subsequently to Isabel.<sup>69</sup> Camille argues that

[i]n the case of the important prayer *Obsecro te*, the portrait of the original owner has been removed and Isabella and St Catherine have been added in a skilful imitation of the Rohan style. This kneeling figure may originally have represented none other than Yolande of Aragon [...]. Evidence that the MS originally belonged to the Queen exists in the special attention given to the royal saint, Radegonde (variations include Aragone), in seven scenes from her life as well as extensive prayers on ff. 224r and 226v. Yolande's identification with, and attraction to this saint is also suggested in four marginal scenes showing her as a nun in black [...], representing perhaps the book's owner who became

---

<sup>66</sup> The hand is difficult to read but there were several entries which record the births of children, such as that found on f. 232v-233r: '[...] Le Dimanche vii jour doctobre [...] ma femme accoucha dune fille a deux heures du matin qui fut baptise [...] a St [Sulpice] [...]'; see *Cat. Fitz.*, p. 157.

<sup>67</sup> Avril and Reynaud, p. 25; p. 178. Panayotova at the Fitzwilliam Museum also dates the manuscript to around 1430 and thus in the latter part of the Rohan workshop's output (private correspondence, 10 January 2003). In the catalogue James suggests a date of 1445-50 for the manuscript but also confusingly states that 'it is not clear that these arms [of Isabel] were not inserted after the book had been bought by or for Isabel; see *Cat. Fitz.* p. 157. Given the number of arguments for the manuscript's production around or prior to the 1430s, James's dating can be considered erroneous.

<sup>68</sup> See Harthan, p. 117; Ring, p. 204; Heimann, p. 10; and *Rohan Hours*, p. 14. In his thesis Camille places the manuscript to c. 1417 and Legaré has indicated to me that she is in agreement with Camille over this date (private correspondence, 23 July 2003).

<sup>69</sup> Camille, 'Pèlerinage', p. 227-28.

a widow in April, 1417.<sup>70</sup>

Like Camille, Legaré believes that the woman dressed in a dark religious habit towards the end of the manuscript represents Yolande d'Aragon in her widowhood (fig. 52).<sup>71</sup> Other proposals have been put forward for the original owner but have not been taken up elsewhere. Referring to the nun portraits, Durrieu suggests that Marie de Bretagne (d. 1477), the daughter of Richard, Comte d'Estampes, may have been the owner, since she became Abbess of Fontevrault in the diocese of Angers in 1457. Margaret R. Toynbee dismisses this interpretation claiming that 'the nun's figure hardly seems sufficiently prominent to warrant such an inference'.<sup>72</sup> Meiss suggests the manuscript may be that bought by Marie d'Anjou with the 200 écus given to her in 1418 by her father-in-law, Charles VI, for the purchase of a Book of Hours.<sup>73</sup>

Whereas it is possible to place the *Fitzwilliam Hours* with Yolande d'Anjou and certainly with Isabel Stuart, it is worthwhile maintaining an open mind about whether the original owner of the manuscript was Yolande d'Aragon. That the later, fifteenth-century, readers of this manuscript were female is the most important point for this discussion. In this section I show how the situational eye of the known and proposed owners of this manuscript, wives of Dukes desperate to father a male heir, would have been especially receptive to the maternal imagery, donor portraits, and female-orientated prayers in this Book of Hours.

The *Fitzwilliam Hours* is illustrated with a series of miniatures on every page which 'form four continuous series of illustrations taken from the "Three Pilgrimages" (of Jesus Christ, of Man's Life, and of the Soul) of Guillaume

<sup>70</sup> Camille, 'Pèlerinages', p. 228;

<sup>71</sup> See Legaré, 'La reception du *Pèlerinage*', p. 545; reiterated in private correspondence, 16 May 2003.

<sup>72</sup> Durrieu, 'Les Lescuier d'Angers', p. 177; and Margaret R. Toynbee, 'The Portraiture of Isabella Stuart, Duchess of Brittany (c. 1427-after 1494)', *Burlington Magazine*, 88 (1946), 300-306 (pp. 303-4).

<sup>73</sup> *Rohan Hours*, p. 14. This suggestion was dismissed by Camille in his thesis on the basis that Marie would only have been five years old in 1417 [*sic*]; see Camille, 'Pèlerinages', p. 256; n. 35. Camille's dismissal is erroneous since Marie was born in 1404 and thus would have been fourteen years old in 1418. It may be that Camille has confused this Marie with Marie de Bretagne whom Durrieu suggested may have been the original owner; see note above.



Deguileville [*sic*] (1350, monk of Chaalis) and from the Apocalypse of S. John'.<sup>74</sup> In addition to its execution by the Rohan Workshop it is this border cycle which scholars have suggested creates another connection between this manuscript and the Angevin court. Not only does this marginal series recall that found in the *Grandes Heures de Rohan* but, as Legaré has shown, Guillaume Deguileville's *Pèlerinage* series were very popular amongst members of the Angevin court, especially amongst female readers.<sup>75</sup> The four brothers, King Charles V, Jean, the Duke of Berry, Louis I d'Anjou, and Philippe, Duke of Burgundy, all owned copies of Deguileville's text. Louis's copy, which was adorned with his, and his wife's, arms passed into the hands of Marguerite de Savoie, wife of Louis III d'Anjou, Louis's grandson, and son of Yolande d'Aragon.<sup>76</sup> Legaré notes that Yolande's daughter Marie also owned a copy of Deguileville's poem and she follows Camille's suggestion that René d'Anjou's daughter Marguerite was also an admirer of the work, perhaps taking copies with her to England on her marriage to Henry VI.<sup>77</sup> Three manuscript copies of the *Pèlerinage de Vie humaine* were listed in the library of Charlotte de Savoie, second wife of Marie and Charles's son, Louis XI, and in 1465 Jeanne de Laval, second wife of René d'Anjou commissioned a prose copy of the poem.<sup>78</sup>

---

<sup>74</sup> *Cat. Fitz.*, p. 157.

<sup>75</sup> See Legaré, 'La réception du *Pèlerinage de Vie humaine* de Guillaume de Digulleville dans le milieu angevin d'après les sources et les manuscrits conservés', in *Religion et mentalités au Moyen Âge: Mélanges en l'honneur d'Hervé Martin* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2003), pp. 543-52 (pp. 543-44). Camille also notes that the text was popular amongst female readers: see Camille, 'Pèlerinage', p. 227.

<sup>76</sup> Legaré, 'La réception du *Pèlerinage*', p. 543-44: 'Il a alimenté les lectures de Louis Ier d'Anjou [...], et celles de ces frères: le roi Charles V dont cinq exemplaires contenant les Pèlerinages ne semblent pas avoir été enluminés; le duc Jean de Berry, avec ses trois copies richement illustrées et enfin Philippe le Hardi, possesseur lui aussi de trois manuscrits. Mais c'est dans le milieu angevin que, semble-t-il, s'est manifesté plus qu'ailleurs un intérêt soutenu pour Guillaume Digulleville et plus particulièrement pour son *Pèlerinage de Vie humaine*'.

<sup>77</sup> Legaré states: 'C'est peut-être Marguerite qui apporta les poèmes du *Pèlerinage de Vie humaine* et du *Pèlerinage de l'Âme* à la cour anglaise après son mariage avec Henri VI d'Angleterre en 1444. Cette hypothèse avancée par M. Camille s'appuie sur un superbe manuscrit de la traduction en prose du *Pèlerinage de l'Âme* montrant des parallèles avec certains manuscrits français du même texte en vers.' Legaré, 'La réception du *Pèlerinage*', p. 546; and see n. 17.

<sup>78</sup> Legaré, 'La réception du *Pèlerinage*', p. 547; p. 544. Legaré notes that Jeanne's commission constituted the first rendering of the text into prose. Legaré also shows that the text was popular amongst other aristocrats connected with the court of Anjou. For instance, a secretary of Yolande d'Aragon, and a 'conseiller and chambellan' of René



Together with the marginal *Pèlerinage* series the *Fitzwilliam Hours* also contains an *Apocalypse* cycle. Margaret Connolly has discussed the popularity of *Apocalypse* cycles in medieval women's book ownership.<sup>79</sup> The two marginal cycles in the *Fitzwilliam Hours* enhance the sense of a female owner of this manuscript and reinforce my contention that the female viewers would have been sensitive to the other iconographic programmes in the manuscript.

As we have seen, the *Grandes Heures de Rohan* were illustrated with scenes from the *Bible moralisée* enclosed in oblong frames in the margins. The miniatures in the *Fitzwilliam Hours* of scenes from Deguileville's *Pèlerinage* series are, by contrast, enclosed in roundels. However, the presence of a continuous marginal series in both manuscripts forges a strong visual connection between them. In addition, the format of composition and the gestures of the figures in the *Fitzwilliam Hours*, in both the margins and elsewhere, often recalls those in the *Grandes Heures*. The *Nativity* scene in the *Fitzwilliam Hours* (f. 14v; fig. 53) has the same wattle fence and pitched roof structure which, as we have already noted, constitute features of the birth scenes in the *Grandes Heures*, in the *Nativity* scene in René's *Paris Hours*, and in the Boucicaut *Nativity* miniature. In the *Fitzwilliam Hours*'s *Nativity* Joseph and another woman stand behind the fence and both extend their hands: Joseph towards the woman and the woman towards the Christ Child. The bearded figure of Joseph recalls the figure of Adam in the *Grandes Heures*'s *Birth of Cain and Abel*. The outstretched hands of the female assistant in the *Fitzwilliam Hours*'s *Nativity* also recall those of the woman standing behind the Israelite mother in the *Grandes Heures*'s *Birth of the Male Children of Israel*. The figures in the *Fitzwilliam Hours*'s *Nativity* are also dressed in garments decorated with horizontal gold stripes, a design which is also found on the clothes of maidservant in René's *Paris Hours*, and on the figures in the *Grandes Heures de Rohan*. Elsewhere in the *Fitzwilliam Hours*, the miniatures of *Christ in Judgement* and (in the margins) *Christ as Man*

---

both owned copies. A copy was also owned by Jacques d'Armagnac, possibly commissioned for him by Jeanne de Laval. Jacques was linked to Anjou family by marriage in 1462 to Louise d'Anjou, niece of René, daughter of his brother Charles and Isabeau de Luxembourg; see Legaré, 'La reception du *Pèlerinage*' pp. 545-46; p. 551.

<sup>79</sup> Margaret Connolly, 'Talking of the Apocalypse': Women Owners and Readers of Apocalypse Books in Late Medieval England', paper presented at the Early Book Society Conference, Glasgow, July 1999.



*of Sorrows* that illustrate the opening of the *Seven Requests* prayer, echo the opening of the same prayer in the *Grandes Heures* with the same long-limbed, scrawny Christ dominating the page (figs 54-55). Whilst being features of the Rohan Workshop style and thus also present in other non-Angevin Rohan manuscripts, the stylistic continuities noted here between these Angevin manuscripts would have served to link them together for any viewer, male or female, familiar with the House of Anjou's patronage. If the *Fitzwilliam Hours* were owned by, if not made expressly for, Yolande d'Anjou, the manuscript's execution by the Rohan Workshop and the inclusion of the marginal *Pèlerinage* so popular amongst Angevin readers, means that Yolande d'Anjou would have seen her manuscript in direct relation to those other manuscripts commissioned by, or circulating at, the Angevin court.<sup>80</sup> The images of childbirth in these manuscripts could function on a variety of levels since the sensitivity of the situational eye occupied by their aristocratic patrons was fluid and would have varied according to the gender, age, status, and circumstances of the particular viewer. However, it is likely that the young female owners of the *Fitzwilliam Hours* were particularly receptive to the contents of this manuscript. The circumstances under which these women married, tried to conceive, and gave birth, suggests that their manuscripts could have offered a place in which their very personal concerns over childbearing found expression. We will see how this reading becomes even more probable when we turn to the *horae* of another Breton duchess, Marguerite de Foix, towards the end of this chapter.

The first birth scene in the *Fitzwilliam Hours* occurs in the margins of the opening of the Gospel of St Luke, illustrated with a main miniature of the Evangelist. It is part of the *Pèlerinage* cycle discussed above (fig. 53). Camille notes that the *Fitzwilliam Hours*'s *Pèlerinage* cycle omits some of the 'less easily recognizable scenes' of Deguileville's text and that this 'is probably the result of the synchronization of the series with the text of the Sequences of the Gospels which focus on the early life of Christ'.<sup>81</sup> Such a seemingly deliberate

---

<sup>80</sup> Camille has also proposed that the 'picture-book-like quality of the *Belles Heures*', which had five pictorial cycles added after the book's completion, 'could have been a stimulus' to the *Fitzwilliam Hours*. He does not, however, expand upon this point. See Camille, 'Pèlerinage', pp. 228-3.

<sup>81</sup> Camille, 'Pèlerinage', pp. 232-33.

omission to coincide the marginal *Nativity* with the opening of Luke's Gospel, which tells of the Annunciation and Incarnation, implies that the reader could have been expected to make a connection between these two aspects of the page. The Nativity scene thus appears to illustrate the text of St Luke's Gospel. The result is a double emphasis on the theme of birth on this one page, at one of the first main sections of the book.

Childbirth and motherhood are also evident themes at the opening of Matins which is illustrated with an *Annunciation* and scenes from the early life of the Virgin (f. 29r; fig. 56). Although an *Annunciation* is not unusual for the opening of Matins, especially in manuscripts produced on the continent, the surrounding scenes from the life of the Virgin are less common in extant *horae*.<sup>82</sup> Beneath the main miniature are the opening words of Matins: 'Domine labia mea aperies; [...]'. The interior of the initial of 'Domine' is painted with Isabel's arms. The *Annunciation* takes place in a 'vaulted lantern-like building with starry sky seen through'.<sup>83</sup> The Virgin stands or kneels in front of a chair, her hand resting on an open book; she has the words 'marie' inscribed on her blue dress. The Angel Gabriel approaches from the left, holding a scroll with 'Ave maria g[ratia] plena dominus te[cum]'. Around the *Annunciation*, in the borders, are scenes from the life of the Virgin.

At the top left hand side of the folio there is an image of God the Father who sends the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove on golden rays toward the Virgin in the *Annunciation* scene. Below Him is the refusal of Joachim's offering: Anne and Joachim kneel at the altar in the temple. Below this, at the bottom of the page, are three interconnected roundels, their frames formed by the acanthus leaves of the border decoration. In the first, on the left, is the *Meeting at the Golden Gate*; in the second, in the centre, the *Birth of the Virgin* with Anne in a canopied bed, presented with the swaddled Mary by another woman; in the third, on the right, the *Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple*. On the right-hand side of the folio is the *Betrothal of the Virgin* with several figures

---

<sup>82</sup> This is witnessed in the Table of Manuscripts (Appendix 2) where the number of birth scenes in Books of Hours that occur at Matins (or indeed at Lauds, where the Visitation to Elizabeth is commonly represented) is outweighed by their occurrence in other places such as calendars and in the suffrages.

<sup>83</sup> *Cat. Fitz.*, p. 159.



standing in front of the temple. Above this, in a roundel, is the *Virgin Weaving in the Temple*; an angel brings her food. The way the three roundels at the bottom of the folio are connected by foliage encourages a reading of these three episodes as a narrative but the scenes are also separate for individual contemplation. This type of device is found in other manuscripts, for instance in a late-fifteenth-century, French Book of Hours in the British Library (no. 11). Here, at the opening of the Hours of the Virgin, there are four historiated roundels in the borders of the main *Annunciation* which show the *Annunciation to Joachim*, the *Annunciation to Anne*, the *Meeting at the Golden Gate*, and the *Birth of the Virgin* (fig. 21). This format of presenting narrative episodes offered the viewer of the manuscript both a context in which to situate the main *Annunciation* image, and individual images through which they could meditate on specific events leading to the birth of Christ.

There are further images of holy motherhood in the *Fitzwilliam Hours*. In the borders of the five *Gaudia* there is a series of miniatures of the Virgin and Child (f. 143v; fig. 57). In the borders to the *Doulce Dame* prayer there are scenes of the *Virgin Weaving in the Temple*, the *Visitation to Elizabeth*, and the *Finding of Christ with the Doctors*. In the suffrages there is a prayer to St Anne which is illustrated with a miniature of *St Anne with her Three Daughters* (fig. 58). On the following page there is a prayer to St Anne's daughters St Mary Jacobi and St Mary Salome accompanied by miniatures of these two women and their children.<sup>84</sup> In general, St Anne seems to have been a popular saint in the litany and suffrages of fifteenth-century *horae*, but the inclusion of her two daughters is a less usual occurrence. St Anne's presence in the *Fitzwilliam Hours* may be related to the status of her cult in France and Northern Europe but, given the popularity noted above of this saint as an identificatory figure for lay women and mothers, the prayers to and images of St Anne and her daughters in this manuscript suggest a connection with its intended lay female ownership.

We noted in Chapter Two how upper-middle class and aristocratic women gave, bequeathed, inherited and commissioned books to their relatives and friends. In particular, as Buettner has shown, it appears that some mothers

---

<sup>84</sup> James describes these: 'S. Mary Jacobi with two sons, one has a scrip, the other palm'; and 'S. Mary (Cleophas) with four sons, one has a scrip, one palm, the others nothing'; see *Cat. Fitz.*, p. 173.

could commission books for their daughters as wedding gifts. The proposed owners of the *Fitzwilliam Hours*, Yolande d'Anjou and Isabel Stuart, if not also Yolande d'Aragon and perhaps Isabel's daughter Marguerite, all fit the example of the aristocratic women for whom manuscripts could have been a way of celebrating marriage, of presenting oneself to others, for personalising devotional practices, of acknowledging marital duty, and for the instruction of one's children.<sup>85</sup> If the *Fitzwilliam Hours* were commissioned for or given to Yolande d'Anjou by her mother they would bear out Bell's contention that late-medieval women's book ownership 'reveals a linear transmission of Christian culture and the development of a mother-daughter or matrilineal literary tradition'.<sup>86</sup> The offering and recycling of manuscripts between female family members means that those manuscripts could have taken on additional meanings that enhanced, complemented or even contradicted any official or original intent. Such multivalency was the result of a certain fluidity in the situational eye, tied both to gender and to personal experience.

Yolande d'Anjou married François I of Brittany in 1431. Like her mother, her sister Marie had already made a politically-motivated alliance, in her marriage to Charles VII of France. Yolande's marriage to François would no doubt have strengthened the house of Anjou and it may also, indirectly, have benefited the Valois dynasty against English claims to the French throne.<sup>87</sup> It is conceivable therefore, if the *Fitzwilliam Hours* manuscript were given to Yolande, perhaps on the occasion of her marriage, that the manuscript became a material link between her and her mother, and between herself and other family members. The images of childbirth and saintly mothers that decorate the

---

<sup>85</sup> In addition to her ownership of the *Fitzwilliam Hours* Isabel was herself a commissioner of books. Her manuscripts not only provide evidence of the transmission of books between aristocratic women but also of the way miniatures in manuscripts could be used to demonstrate one's piety and present oneself to others. Isabel's books are discussed below.

<sup>86</sup> Bell, p. 179.

<sup>87</sup> In the late 1440s, after Yolande's death, Charles VII and Henry VI of England vied for the allegiance of François I. Charles wanted to establish sovereignty over the duchy of Brittany, doubtless to unite it to the French crown. Presumably the death of Yolande and thus the break between Anjou (to whom Charles was allied through his marriage to Marie) and Brittany helped François and Brittany to retain some independence. Brittany would retain its sovereignty until the sixteenth century when the Duchess Anne de Bretagne also became the Queen of France. See Vale, pp. 116-18.



manuscript may have been intended as signs of her intended role as wife of a Duke and her duty to bear him children. The *Pèlerinage* and *Apocalypse* series, like that of the *Bible moralisée* in the *Grandes Heures de Rohan*, also provided a visual and moralistic guide to devotion and government. In particular, the *Apocalypse* series in the Hours of the Virgin, popular at the Angevin court, may also have emphasised the need for Yolande to attend to her prayers, and to produce the male child that would ensure the survival of the dynasty. Rather than simply accepting these images and any didactic intent she may have discerned in them at face value, Yolande would have made these readings from her social position as the Duke of Brittany's new wife. Thus these images could have evoked feelings not only of duty, but also of fear, comfort, status, or even loss of control over one's own body.

Sometime during the nine years of their marriage, Yolande bore her husband an heir, Rohan. It is plausible that Yolande used the images of childbirth and motherhood in her prayer book as a means to focus her energies towards giving her husband a male heir: as we saw above, the 'maternal imagination' was considered susceptible to influence from images. She may also have used the images to pray for a successful recovery for herself, as well as the child, from the birth, and as a space in which she could look forward to her own *post-partum* lying-in. It is not clear how long her son lived. Some sources simply indicate that he pre-deceased his father, who died in 1450. However, the fact that François remarried after Yolande's demise suggests that he was in need of securing another male heir – even if Rohan was still alive at this time. It is the circumstances of François's second wife, Isabel Stuart, about whom we know a little more than Yolande, that reinforce the suggestion that the situational eye of these aristocratic wives was especially attuned to maternal imagery.

In 1442, two years after Yolande's death, François married Isabel Stuart. In taking up the role of François's wife, it appears that Isabel also took up the manuscript that belonged to Yolande. Like the additions made to the *Hours of René d'Anjou* and to the *Rohan Hours*, the coats of arms of Brittany and Scotland which were added to the manuscript asserted Isabel's ownership of the *Fitzwilliam Hours* and offered a possible way that she could imagine herself at her devotions. The major donor portrait at the opening of the *Obsecro te* now

shows Isabel, on the left-hand side of the miniature, presented by St Catherine, to the Virgin and Child (fig. 51). Isabel wears a heraldic skirt with the arms of Brittany and Scotland (ermine and a lion rampant). A scroll with the words 'O mater Dei memento mei' extends from the tip of Isabel's hands and is caught by the Christ child, whose other hand grasps a rosary. The folio is framed by four shields bearing Isabel's arms. The border around the miniature is decorated with stylised foliage and on the right-hand side there is a roundel from the *Pèlerinage* series, which James identifies as 'Christ (child and pilgrim) led into desert by nimbed man, who is the Spirit. The Devil meets them, holding a horn or club'.<sup>88</sup>

Scholars such as Penketh and Naughton have noted the popularity of donor portraits – especially female donors – in Annunciation scenes and at prayers to the Virgin. Joan Naughton suggests that such portraits of the patron at prayer 'are both a means to devotion and the visualisation of its result'.<sup>89</sup> The *Obsecro te* folio in the *Fitzwilliam Hours* operates in this way. The figures on this folio occupy separate visual and spatial planes: St Catherine and Isabel, restricted to the corner of the framed image and much smaller than the giant Virgin, look to the right, across the open space towards the edge of the miniature and beyond. The scroll however, which is caught by the Christ Child, serves as a device to link the two groups. The surface of the folio that Isabel held in her hands shows her own coat of arms and beyond this surface and inside the miniature, Isabel saw herself re-presented. The heraldry on her skirt formed a visual connection between the interior miniature, the surface of the page, and the woman actually holding the book. Thus for Isabel this folio was a complex representation of the desired state of personal prayer.

That Isabel had an intimate relationship with this Book of Hours and saw it as a means to focus her devotions is suggested by other manuscripts commissioned by her in which she asserts her position as a wife, a mother, and as a Duchess of Brittany.<sup>90</sup> Two *horae*, now in Paris, show devotional portraits

---

<sup>88</sup> *Cat. Fitz.*, p. 159.

<sup>89</sup> Joan Naughton, 'A Minimally-Intrusive Presence: Portraits in Illustrations for Prayers to the Virgin', in *Medieval Texts and Images*, pp. 111-25 (p. 113).

<sup>90</sup> Isabel's manuscripts are discussed in Toynbee. They are Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, fonds latin, 1369 (*horae*), Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, nouvelle acquisition latine, 588 (*horae*), Cambridge, Fitzwilliam MS 62 (*horae*), Princeton University Library, NJ, Garrett MS. 40 (Manuscripts Division, Department of Rare Books and



of Isabel, dressed in the arms of Scotland and Brittany, and coats of arms painted in the borders of many folios. One of these *horae*, Bibliothèque nationale, fonds français 1369, contains a verso-recto double portrait of Isabel and her husband François but, as Leroquais notes, the inclusion of St Vincent Ferrer in the Calendar (canonised in 1455) makes this is a posthumous portrait of François, who died in 1450.<sup>91</sup> Isabel has also written her name at the bottom of several folios throughout the book. Towards the end of the manuscript another scribe has written an account of the death, in 1444 of her sister, the Dauphine, Margaret Stuart (1424-1445).<sup>92</sup>

In 1436 at the age of 12, Margaret Stuart married Yolande d'Anjou's nephew, the Dauphin and future Louis XI, son of Marie d'Anjou and Charles VII. According to Vale, the marriage was not a happy one, having been arranged without Louis's consent, by his father, Charles VII. Margaret died in 1445 at the age of 21 without bearing Louis any children. Her sister's Scottish-Anjou alliance, and the fact that it was still childless when Isabel died, may well have reinforced Isabel's awareness of the political intent of her own marriage and the hopes invested in it. Louis XI's subsequent marriage to Charlotte de Savoie eventually resulted in fourteen children, although his father had objected to the union because, at twelve years of age, Charlotte 'could not give heirs to the house of Valois'.<sup>93</sup> The objection of Charles VII to Charlotte on the basis of her

---

Special Collections, *Missal of the Carmelites of Nantes*), Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, fonds français, 958 (*Somme le Roi*). The manuscript of *Somme le Roi* is discussed in Avril and Reynaud, catalogue no. 95, pp. 178-79. I am grateful to Don C. Skemer at Princeton University Library for sending me information on the *Missal of the Carmelites of Nantes*.

<sup>91</sup> Leroquais, p. 118. Vincent Ferrer was a Breton saint, championed by three Dukes of Brittany: see Harthan, p. 121. Toynbee has also said that she is 'practically certain that after Isabella's death [her Paris Hours, BnF, f. fr. 1369] passed into the possession of her younger and only surviving daughter, Mary, wife of John II, Vicomte de Rohan' (p. 303). On f. Bv of this manuscript an inscription in a later hand describes the provenance of the hours and also says 'Ces heures sont à Renée de Rohan, c'estoit Renée de Rohan femme de Jean de Coetquen comte de Combour issue par plusieurs degréz de Jean II vicomte de Rohan et de Marie de Bretagne, fille de François I du nom Duc de Bretagne, et d'Isabelle Stuart'. On the last folio are also the words 'Ces heures sont a renee de rohan'. For the genealogy that relates Renée de Rohan to Marie and Isabel see Toynbee, p. 303.

<sup>92</sup> The account of her sister appears on pp. 446-50. 'ysabeau' appears at pp. 299, 301, 303, 305, 307, 312, 316, 318, 320, 346, 348, 382. The manuscript is not foliated and the numbering given here follows the pagination in the manuscript, used by Leroquais.

<sup>93</sup> Vale, p. 165.

childbearing capabilities indicates how the situational eye could vary according to gender and social position. For example, Charles's view of potential wives was clearly conditioned by the exigencies of kinship, by his needs as a male ruler of the house of France wanting to ensure his succession. This attitude may also have conditioned his response to any images of childbirth that he saw in devotional manuscripts. By comparison, a young wife like Charlotte was surely not only aware of the expectations placed upon her, but also fearful of the dangers and complications associated with childbearing, especially since she was so young: if she were offered images of holy childbirth in a manuscript for instance, her response would no doubt have been conditioned by any personal fears, as well as by dynastic expectations.

Two other manuscripts show Isabel Stuart in her official capacities as a wife, a Breton Duchess, and a mother. The copy of *Somme le roi*, which has a large frontispiece of Isabel and her daughters presented by saints to a *Pietà*, has an inscription which dates the manuscript to 1464 and which says it was written out at the request of Isabel (fig. 59).<sup>94</sup> Another manuscript, the *Missal of the Carmelites of Nantes* was not commissioned by Isabel but it does contain an image of Isabel as François's second wife (fig. 60). The Missal was made for the Carmelites in Nantes but it also functions as a marker of the devotion and patronage of the Duchy itself. Toynbee notes that the Dukes of Brittany were 'great patrons of this convent' and that the manuscript depicts 'incidents in the story of the ducal house from the days of John IV (1364-99) to Francis II (1458-88), executed at various dates and by different hands during a period of roughly thirty years (1445?-1476)'.<sup>95</sup> In this visual account of the duchy, Isabel and her daughters, wearing heraldic skirts, take their place on the right of the miniature, behind François I, depicted as Duke. On the left, Francis has been depicted as

---

<sup>94</sup> The inscription, on the final page, reads 'Ysabeau aisnee fille de Roy descoce duchesse de bretagne contesse de montfort et de Richemond fist faire ce livre qui le trouvera le luy rende et le fist escrire a sa devotion de la main de Jehan Hubert en lan mil quatre cent soixante quatre'. The manuscript is not clearly foliated but Toynbee gives the folio reference as f. 122v.

<sup>95</sup> Toynbee, p. 304.



heir to the duchy, accompanied by Yolande d'Anjou and their young son Rohan.<sup>96</sup>

Isabel had her presence in the house of Brittany inscribed into several manuscripts that served as both personal prayer books and as more public statements of her position and piety. Her apparent devotion to her husband is witnessed in his posthumous portrait in one Book of Hours and her place in the history of the Dukes of Brittany has been added to the Carmelite Missal.<sup>97</sup> However, in (re)placing her own body in the *Fitzwilliam Hours*, in Yolande d'Anjou's manuscript, through the addition of her coats of arms, it is clear that Isabel's real body was under pressure to succeed where Yolande's had failed, by producing heirs for the Duke. Through her possession of the dead wife's manuscript, Isabel would have felt the weight of this previous marriage, the child of which was perhaps also already dead. Thus, in addition to any original meaning that the manuscript and its images had for Yolande d'Anjou (and even for her mother), Isabel would have seen the whole manuscript, and in particular the Nativity scenes and other maternal images, from her position as François's second wife and potential mother to the heirs of the duchy. The viewing of a manuscript second- or third-hand could bring the images into play in different, or additional ways, for the book's new owner.

Isabel did bear two children – two daughters Marguerite (d. 1469) and Marie (d. 1507) – in the eight years of her marriage to François. It is likely that for Isabel, as for Yolande, the maternal imagery in the *Fitzwilliam Hours* functioned differently at different times during her childbearing years. The *Birth of the Virgin* in the borders of the opening of Matins representing a successful, *post-partum* birth, may have functioned as a wished-for outcome for Isabel

---

<sup>96</sup> Toynbee claims that on the basis of Marie's heraldic skirt, which shows Brittany alone, the miniature must have been painted before 1455, the date of her marriage contract to John, Viscount Rohan (although the marriage was not accomplished until 1461); see Toynbee, p. 304.

<sup>97</sup> In her two Paris *horae*, Isabel is presented by St Francis of Assisi, as she also is in the *Somme le Roi* manuscript, and St Francis also presides over both sides of the Carmelite Missal. That she had a particular devotion to St Francis, who must have been her husband's namesake, has been suggested by Toynbee who notes that in the *Somme le roi* manuscript she wears 'the knotted Franciscan cord [...] round her waist', and that its 'presence proves beyond a doubt that not only had she a special devotion to the Poverello but that she was a member of the Third Order of St Francis'. See Toynbee, p. 305.

before and during her two pregnancies; it may also have been used as a stimulus through which, possibly like Fina Buzzacarini, she gave thanks for the birth of her children. However, the two daughters she bore would not ensure François's direct and legitimate succession. The Treaty of Guérande, passed in 1365, had recognised Jean de Montfort's descendants as Brittany's rulers, but altered the possibility of the Duchy of Brittany passing through the female line.<sup>98</sup> The treaty stated that the duchy should not pass to a woman whilst there was a male heir of the house of Brittany.<sup>99</sup> Thus Isabel could also have seen the maternal imagery in the manuscript not only as comforting devotional models with which to identify or through which to give thanks, but also as continual reminders of her need to bear the Duke a son who could succeed him. After eight years of marriage the Duke died without a male heir. Because of the Treaty of Guérande, François I and Isabel's daughter Marguerite could not inherit. Instead the Duchy passed first to François's brother, Pierre II (1418-57), and on his death to their cousin, François II (1435-88), son of Richard, Comte d'Estampes and Marguerite of Orléans. It was to François II that Isabel's daughter Marguerite was married in 1455 and it was possibly into her possession that the *Fitzwilliam Hours* then passed. In considering Marguerite's ownership of this book, we can see further evidence of the sensitivity of the situational eye and the multivalent potential of the images in the *Fitzwilliam Hours*.

In the *O Intemerata prayer*, on f. 28r of the *Fitzwilliam Hours*, there is a portrait of a woman kneeling at a prie-dieu before the Virgin and Child (fig. 61). The style of this miniature suggests that it was added to the manuscript later than either the original campaign, or the adaptations for Isabel Stuart. This, together with the fact that the prie-dieu is draped with the arms of Brittany alone, has led Toynbee and Legaré to propose that this figure represents not Isabel but her daughter Marguerite.<sup>100</sup> Recently Legaré claims to have found this manuscript

<sup>98</sup> For the information here I have drawn on the explanation of the events leading to the succession of Anne of Brittany, daughter of François II by his second wife Marguerite de Foix, contained in George Minois, *Anne de Bretagne* (Lille: Fayard, 1999), esp. pp. 18-24.

<sup>99</sup> My paraphrase of the French original, printed in Minois, p. 18: 'Ainsi sera ordonné pour le temps à venir, que la succession dudit duché ne viendra point à femme tant qu'il y ait hoir masle descendant de la lignée de Bretagne'.

<sup>100</sup> That the portrait is a later addition is noted in the *Cat. Fitz.*, p. 159. On proposals that it might be Isabel's daughter, see Toynbee, p. 303; more recently this view has been



mentioned in an inventory relating to Marguerite's book collection.<sup>101</sup> The arms of Brittany were those of both Isabel's daughters before marriage, but also the arms of Marguerite after her marriage to François II. Marguerite is shown wearing Brittany alone in Isabel's copy of *Somme le Roi*, discussed above (fig. 59).<sup>102</sup>

Marguerite's time as the Duchess of Brittany does not appear to have been a happy or successful one. As noted above, her husband had not been destined for the Dukedom and had only succeeded via the Treaty of Guérande which had forbidden Marguerite's own succession. Before his marriage to Marguerite, François II had fathered a number of illegitimate children, four of them, including a son, with his mistress Antoinette de Maignelais.<sup>103</sup> However, as next in line to the Duchy, François was in need of a legitimate male heir. His political alliance to Marguerite de Bretagne, undertaken when François was twenty and his bride only twelve years old, allowed François to silence supporters of the ancient Breton inheritance laws by uniting Marguerite, whom they saw as the rightful heir, to the now legitimate heir under the Treaty of Guérande. The marriage also provided him with the opportunity to father a legitimate son who would be essential to ensure his own succession.<sup>104</sup>

If the *Fitzwilliam Hours* can be shown to have been in Marguerite's possession, the addition of her own donor miniature in her mother's prayer book offered Marguerite the opportunity to see herself, like her mother, at prayer in front of the Virgin. However, since the arms and portrait of Isabel were not altered, Marguerite would also have been confronted, on the very next folio, with her mother's portrait and arms. Naughton notes that a personalised donor

---

endorsed by Legaré, 'La réception du *Pèlerinage*'. Marguerite de Bretagne's possible ownership is discussed below.

<sup>101</sup> This study is still work in progress at the time of writing and I am grateful to Prof. Legaré for sharing this information with me.

<sup>102</sup> It is of course possible that, depending on the date of this miniature, it could represent either of Isabel's daughters before marriage. The identity of this figure should be clarified further with the results from Legaré's research on the inventory of Marguerite's books.

<sup>103</sup> Minois, p. 21.

<sup>104</sup> Minois, p. 21: 'Ce mariage permettait de faire taire d'éventuels partisans de l'ancien droit successoral – Marguerite aurait été l'héritière du duché s'il n'y avait eu le traité de Guérande. C'est pourquoi on n'avait pas fait trainer les choses: François avait vingt ans, et Marguerite, douze.'

miniature ‘can still function, in association with the text, as an uninterrupted stimulus to all future contemplation whether undertaken by the patron or other users of the book’.<sup>105</sup> Marguerite’s encounter with her mother’s portrait means that the meaning of this miniature could have altered under her gaze. For Marguerite, the miniature may have worked to stimulate not only Marguerite’s devotions, but also to allow her to see herself symbolically and literally within the history of the house of Brittany, the house into which her mother had married, and which her marriage to François II had no doubt been intended to strengthen.

If it is indeed the case that Marguerite owned the *Fitzwilliam Hours*, the sensitivity of her situational eye to the paintings in the manuscript would have been conditioned by her own circumstances, and also those of its previous owners. Minois states that the Duke’s mistress Antoinette retained her position at court after his marriage to Marguerite. According to one chronicler, Antoinette tried to turn the Duke away from Marguerite and prevent him from having children with her.<sup>106</sup> The presence of Antoinette and the on-going dispute over the inheritance of the Duchy means that Marguerite would have been acutely aware of her need to provide the Duke with male children. As the property of two previous Breton Duchesses, it seems likely that this book embodied for her, as it also did for its previous owners, a complex set of facts and emotions. These emotions would have been evoked by the marks of previous owners, their failure to bear (surviving) male children, the dangers of pregnancy, mortality, the political importance of marriage, duty to one’s husband and to the state, the joy or relief of conception and successful birth. Therefore, on the one hand Yolande, Isabel, and possibly Marguerite looked at the *Fitzwilliam Hours* from a collective situational eye, as Breton duchesses; on the other, this situational eye would have varied with their individual circumstances and thus images in the manuscript would also have varied and shifted in significance.

François II de Bretagne and Marguerite de Bretagne did eventually have one child together, a boy born in 1463 who lived only one year. After the child’s

---

<sup>105</sup> Naughton, p. 114.

<sup>106</sup> Minois, p. 21: ‘Marguerite dut supporter la présence dominatrice d’Antoinette de Maignelais, qui détournait d’elle le duc “ et l’empeschoit d’avoir des enfants de la duchesse, ce qui pouvait être la ruine du pays” ’.



death François offered 2.9 kilos of gold to the Carmelites at Nantes, the weight of a dead baby but his grief was short lived.<sup>107</sup> Marguerite died in 1469 apparently bearing no more children. Two years later, François, like his father, remarried: it is to the Book of Hours belonging to this second wife, Marguerite de Foix, that we now turn. In the contents of this book there is further evidence to support the idea of viewing positions for the images of childbirth and related iconographies that were informed by social and personal circumstances, as well as gender.

*A Manuscript for the Breton Dynasty: The Hours of Marguerite de Foix, c. 1477*

In 1471 at the age of forty-two, François II de Bretagne, married for a second time, presumably in another attempt to father a legitimate male child. In a twist of fate, the Treaty of Guérande, which had allowed François II to succeed to the Duchy in the first place, would also threaten his own lineage. His second wife, Marguerite de Foix (d. 1487) was the daughter of Gaston IV, Count of Foix and Viscount of Béarn. This marriage, like François's previous one, had a political goal. It was designed to unite Marguerite's father, the Count of Foix, with the Dukes of Armagnac and Guienne, Charles the Rash of Burgundy, the King of Aragon and some Italian allies against Louis XI of France.<sup>108</sup> Marguerite de Foix's Book of Hours is now preserved in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London (no. 24). Her ownership of the manuscript is established by some now almost-erased coats of arms which have been identified as those of Brittany impaled with those of Foix, and a personalised prayer, added at the end of the manuscript.<sup>109</sup>

---

<sup>107</sup> Minois, p. 21.

<sup>108</sup> Harthan, p. 135.

<sup>109</sup> The prayer appears on ff. 223r-225v. The erased arms appear on ff. 21v, 47r, and 222r. A detailed description of the manuscript was kindly supplied by Rowan Watson at the Victoria and Albert Museum. These notes say that the arms were identified as Brittany and Foix when the manuscript was displayed in 1908 at the Burlington Fine Arts Club exhibition. Rowan Watson at the V&A has written that '[n]either ultra-violet nor infra-red light is of help in reconstructing the arms. The dexter side may well have been of ermine, the ducal arms of Brittany, and it does seem likely that the sinister side, evidently quite a complicated coat of arms, included an element made up of thin vertical

The circumstances in which Marguerite de Foix married François II were not dissimilar to those in which Isabel Stuart had married François I: like Isabel, Marguerite was the second wife of a Breton duke desperately in need of a legitimate son to ensure his succession. The expectation of an heir from this alliance is witnessed in the final prayer which refers to Marguerite's hopes regarding children.<sup>110</sup> This prayer, which has not yet been published or adequately studied, can be used in conjunction with the images in Marguerite's book, as a further indication of how the situational eye of young, aristocratic women was especially receptive to representations of the *Birth of the Virgin* and to other stories and images of holy childbirth.

The opening of Matins in Marguerite's Book of Hours is illustrated with an *Annunciation* surrounded by a series of panels (f. 33r; fig. 62). On the left-hand side is the marriage of St Joachim and St Anne; in the right-hand upper panel, is the *Annunciation to Joachim*, who is standing amongst a group of shepherds; in the lower right-hand panel is the *Meeting at the Golden Gate*; in the *bas-de-page* is the *Birth of the Virgin*. St Anne lies in bed, turned away from the people that have crowded into the room. Behind the bed stand three women and St Joachim. In the foreground a woman kneels on the floor, bathing the Virgin Mary, who wears a crown, over a shallow tub. In the birth scenes discussed previously we have seen how in some representations of Christ's birth, features such as the bathing of the child and the presence of a female attendant, could have served to normalise the birth and bring it closer to aristocratic practices. In addition to the bath and the number of visitors, the representation of the baby Mary with a crown indicates the special status of this child, and perhaps alludes to her future titles as queen of heaven. The crown also functions as a sign of nobility, a sign to which an aristocratic viewer could have been particularly receptive, so forging a link between this biblical birth, and the births of earthly, but divinely-appointed, rulers.

---

red stripes on a gold ground, the Foix arms'. See Watson, 'The Marguerite de Foix Book of Hours', *The V&A Album*, 2 (1983), 45-60. See also the entry in Harthan, p. 124.

<sup>110</sup> See Appendix 4 for my transcription of this prayer and a translation. This translation and my understanding of the Latin was greatly assisted by Mr Ian Moxon. Harthan notes that an unpublished transcription of the prayer by F. C. Eeles is included in the typescript catalogue of the Manuscripts of the Victoria and Albert Museum Library. I have been unable to consult this.



As noted previously, the *Annunciation* is a standard illumination for the opening of Matins, but the surrounding images of scenes from the early life of the Virgin are more unusual and bring the story of her parents into the history of Christ's conception. Given Marguerite's personal circumstances, it seems probable that the story of St Joachim and St Anne had a particular significance for her. Marguerite and François married in 1471 but they had to wait until 1477 for the birth of their first daughter Anne de Bretagne. At the time of his marriage, the Duke was, at forty-two, not a young man and although he had several illegitimate children, including a son, he had not fathered any surviving children within the sanctity of marriage. Following Matins, the hour of Lauds in Marguerite's prayer book opens with a miniature of the *Visitation* (f. 47r; fig. 63). Like *Annunciation* at Matins, the *Visitation* is a standard illumination for the opening of this hour. However, Marguerite was likely to have been particularly interested in the representation of these two pregnant women, and the images of St Anne at Matins, since she explicitly identified herself with barren biblical matriarchs in the prayer at the end of her book. The fact that the opening of Lauds is illustrated in the lower margin with an image of *St Anne Teaching the Virgin* reinforces the female collective of the Matins page and the *Visitation* miniature. The Virgin, who sits at the feet of her mother, is also crowned in this image. This feature reinforces the Virgin, as a noble figure and a mother, with whom young aristocratic women could identify.

Since the coats of arms in the manuscript are now almost obliterated, it is the prayer which provides us with the most evidence for the book's ownership. This prayer has long been considered a plea for the end to the sterility of the Duke and Duchess but here I show how this reading should be altered in the light of the wording of the prayer. It was written by a different scribe but in the same style (*lettre bâtarde*) as the rest of the manuscript.<sup>111</sup> The prayer is spoken in the first person by a female voice and it also refers expressly to 'Francis, duke of the Bretons and his wife Marguerite'. This evidence allows us to place the book and the prayer firmly in Marguerite's possession. The manuscript is also in its original fifteenth-century binding and it has therefore been assumed that the

---

<sup>111</sup> Watson notes that the parchment is of a different quality and that 'the prayer was written separately in a different workshop and handed to the binder to be bound in with a book bought "off the shelf" '; see Watson, p. 45.

manuscript was bound sometime from the marriage of Marguerite and François, in 1471, onwards. Watson notes that the prayer was bound with the rest of the manuscript and on this basis a *terminus ante quem* for prayer has been proposed of 1477, the year in which their daughter Anne de Bretagne was born.

Watson notes that the prayer asks God ‘to end the sterility of Francis and Margaret, and to provide off-spring’.<sup>112</sup> The notes provided by the V&A doubt the argument in the Burlington Catalogue that the prayer, ‘in asking for a male child, assumes that Anne de Bretagne had already been born’ and claims that ‘the plea is for an end to sterility in general’.<sup>113</sup> Harthan must be following this earlier claim when he says ‘the wording [of the prayer] implies that their daughter Anne [...] was already born but that they hoped for a son to safeguard the independence of the Duchy’.<sup>114</sup> However, the prayer is a complex plea which casts an element of doubt on both these previous readings. Its wording, together with the fact that Marguerite bore another child, Isabeau, a year after she gave birth to Anne does complicate any attempt to date the manuscript as precisely as 1477.<sup>115</sup>

The prayer begins by invoking a God who has created the world out of nothing and who has not failed anyone who prays to Him. It then continues with a list of barren women whom God made fertile (‘steriles fecundas fecisti’, ll. 4-8): Sarah, the mother of Isaac, Hannah the mother of the prophet Samuel, Manoah’s wife and mother of Samson, and the aged Elizabeth, mother of John the Baptist. A parallel is drawn between Jeremiah and John the Baptist whom God sanctified in the womb (‘in utero sanctificasti’, ll. 8-9); the text then refers to the pre-ordination of Mary as both virgin and Christ’s mother (‘et quod in oculis cunctorum mirabile, Mariam Christi, matrem et virginem predestinasti’, ll. 9-10). There follows a reference to Moses’ liberation of the people of Israel (l.

---

<sup>112</sup> Watson, p. 45

<sup>113</sup> An (unpublished) description of the manuscript was kindly provided by Watson at the V&A.

<sup>114</sup> Harthan, p. 124: he therefore claims that ‘the prayer must have been added at some time between 1477, when Anne was born, and 1486, when her mother died’. Harthan does not give a reference from the prayer to support this, although he does list the *Burlington Catalogue* in his notes; see Harthan, p. 182.

<sup>115</sup> Isabeau died in 1490: she is acknowledged at various stages in Minois’ discussion of Anne’s life and inheritance. Currently the binding only allows us to date the manuscript to the second half of the fifteenth century. Further work would need to be carried out on the binding to date it more precisely; see Watson, p. 45.



10) and, finally, the words: you have taken away from me, your servant, the disgrace of barrenness (ll. 11-12). It is important to note here both the female speaking voice, and the tense of this phrase: ‘nobisque *famule tue* obprobrium sterilitatis *abstulisti*’. Marguerite includes herself at the end of a list of women who have been made fertile and the perfect tense ‘abstulisti’ means that she expressly says that God has *taken away* the shame of sterility from her. We could read this past tense as indicating that Marguerite has already had a child and it is plausible, as Harthan suggests, that Marguerite had given birth to Anne (and even, we may add, Isabeau). However, I believe it is also possible that since she says she has been relieved of the shame of sterility, this was Marguerite’s first pregnancy.

The object of Marguerite’s plea, which she makes in the first person (‘humilii deprecor parte’, l. 12) is a son (‘natum’, l. 28). This is apparent at the end of the prayer in the clause beginning ‘quatinus’ (l. 26). Here she says ‘<I earnestly pray> that, in the name of the same Lord our Jesus Christ your son who lives and reigns with you for ever and ever, you grant to us, François duke of the Bretons and Marguerite his wife, a son’ (ll. 26-31). In the historical context a male child would be the desired outcome of any pregnancy and, as we have seen, a male heir was essential for the succession of Breton Dukes. It is not necessarily the case that, because she asks for a boy, Marguerite had definitely given birth to Anne or Isabeau. Her supplication for a son is interrupted by a tangential section that begins ‘Fateor te futura’ (l. 12). Here Marguerite says that as a living creature she is ignorant of God’s will (ll. 13-14) but she acknowledges God’s omniscience, and this could be taken as a reference to His knowledge of the outcome of her pregnancy. Because Marguerite includes herself at the end of a list of women who have had the disgrace of sterility taken away (and who have been appointed sons) it may indicate that she has finally become pregnant after six years of marriage and that, as well as giving thanks, she also entreats God that the child she carries will be a boy. It may be possible to confirm this reading of the prayer with further study of the binding of the manuscript which has so far only been dated to the second half of the fifteenth century. I would, however, insist that the interpretation given by Watson that the prayer asks ‘to *end* the sterility of Francis and his wife Margaret, and to provide offspring’ should be

replaced with the reading made here, that the disgrace of sterility has been taken away.<sup>116</sup>

Whatever the actual date and circumstances of the prayer, it is evident that Marguerite, as the heir-less Duke's second wife, was acutely aware of her need to bear a legitimate son. This awareness must have been heightened, as it was for her predecessor, by the continuing presence at court of the Duke's mistress Antoinette de Maignelais, who had already given the Duke a son. The prayer and the iconography in Marguerite's manuscript, strengthens the idea that some young aristocratic wives saw the pictures of motherhood in their prayer book as images resonant with duty, expectation, fear, and wished-for outcome. The scenes from the life of St Joachim and St Anne in Marguerite's manuscript tell the story of their infertility; St Elizabeth's pregnancy in her old age, depicted at Lauds, was sent by God as a sign of the truth of Christ's conception. The *Visitation* scene with St Elizabeth and the Virgin, both pregnant and members of the same family, form a complement to the company of women shown in the birth scene at Matins. Marguerite's placing of herself at the end of a line of barren women, suggest that she would also have looked towards the images of female companionship and family in her prayer book and found a space for her own childbearing concerns.

Marguerite's prayer for a son was not answered. In the year of her death, François effectively reversed the Treaty of Guérande by making his daughters sole heirs of the Duchy of Brittany. His illegitimate son by Antoinette de Maignelais had declared that he was not interested in inheriting the Dukedom.<sup>117</sup> On François II's death in 1488 his daughter Anne de Bretagne (1477-1514) became Duchess of Brittany. She was not yet twelve years old but marriage and children almost immediately became part of her life.

In 1490 at the age of thirteen, Anne was married by proxy to the widowed Emperor Maximilian of Austria. The marriage was never consummated. Harthan notes that the Treaty of Vergers (1488) 'expressly prohibited the heiress of Brittany from marrying without the knowledge or

---

<sup>116</sup> Watson, p. 45.

<sup>117</sup> See Minois, pp. 99-101.



consent of the French King'.<sup>118</sup> When knowledge of Anne's proxy marriage to Maximilian reached the French king Charles VIII (grandson of Charles VII and Marie d'Anjou) he responded by invading Brittany. In order to resolve the situation and to try to safeguard Brittany, Anne agreed to marry Charles. Her marriage to Maximilian was annulled and in 1491 she became Queen of France. This marriage effectively united Brittany with the French crown but it was a short-lived union, Charles dying suddenly in 1498.<sup>119</sup> By the time Charles died, Anne had given birth to five children but not one of them had survived. Part of Anne's marriage contract had stated that if Charles should die before her, any remarriage should be to the King of France or his heir.<sup>120</sup> Anne did in fact marry Charles's successor, Louis XII d'Orléans, in 1499, although both Minois and Harthan suggest this was out of choice rather than coercion.<sup>121</sup> Through this marriage, Anne was crowned Queen of France for a second time. Also for a second time, the future of the houses of France and Brittany lay with her and her ability to provide a male heir. Evidence of the centrality of childbearing in the life of Anne de Bretagne is found a prayer in one of her devotional manuscripts.

Anne de Bretagne was a great bibliophile and patroness of illuminated manuscripts, most famously the *Grandes Heures* illuminated for her by Jean de Bourdichon at the beginning of the sixteenth century.<sup>122</sup> Another prayer book made for Anne, dating after her marriage to Louis XII in 1499, is now housed in the Newberry Library, Chicago.<sup>123</sup> This is not a Book of Hours but a series of

---

<sup>118</sup> Harthan, p. 129.

<sup>119</sup> On the terms of the union of Brittany and France through this marriage, see Minois, pp. 326-28.

<sup>120</sup> Minois, who prints part of this contract, claims that there was a loop-hole in this clause: 'it is certainly said that she should marry the future King of France "if it pleases her and she is able", which is open to any number of interpretations': 'L'obligation n'est pourtant absolue, car le texte laisse à Anne une échappatoire qui n'est pas assez relevée par les historiens: il est bien dit qu'elle épousera le future roi "s'il lui plaist et faire se peut", ce qui laisse la porte ouverte à toutes les interpretations'; see Minois, p. 327.

<sup>121</sup> Minois, p. 327. Louis had visited Anne in the months following Charles's death. Harthan states that she had known Louis 'since childhood and may well have had personal as well as political reason for welcoming him has a suitor'. See Harthan, p. 129.

<sup>122</sup> Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, fonds latin, 9474.

<sup>123</sup> Chicago, Newberry Library, MS 83. The dating of the manuscript after the marriage of Anne and Louis, on 7 January 1499, is proposed by Paul Saengar, *A Catalogue of the Pre-1500 Western Manuscripts at the Newberry Library* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989), pp. 155-57.

prayers which Kathleen Kamerick has grouped into five parts including a 'sequence concerning the Virgin Mary, conception, and childbirth'.<sup>124</sup> The manuscript is not profusely illuminated, containing only three miniatures, of King David, Christ displaying his wounds, and a *Crucifixion*. Kamerick suggests that the collation of texts in this book can be read through the 'events in Anne of Brittany's life'.<sup>125</sup> In particular the contents of the manuscript can be closely related to her position as a mother to the potential heirs of the house of France. St Anne, the Virgin's mother, has a strong presence in this book as Anne de Bretagne's patron saint. The saint's name appears in red in the litany and the suffrages, as does that of St Louis (King Louis IX of France).<sup>126</sup> Kamerick also notes that '[i]n two prayers the speaker is named as Anne' and that 'the name of St Margaret in the Litany is distinguished from other saints' names by the capitalization and decoration of the initial letter. St Margaret would have been the patron of Anne's mother, Marguerite de Foix'.<sup>127</sup> The rubrics to three other prayers in the manuscript 'promise [...] help in childbirth, freedom from a bad death, and the presence of the Virgin Mary before death'.<sup>128</sup> Even though this manuscript does not contain birth scenes, the special attention given to prayers and saints efficacious in childbirth, in particular the inclusion of a prayer for a French queen for assistance in childbirth, strengthens the possibility that the situational eye of aristocratic women was responsive to representations of holy childbirth and of biblical matriarchs.

The childbirth prayer (ff. 49v-52v), transcribed and translated in Appendix 5, was attributed to the blessed Leonard, who freed a Queen of France from a difficult childbirth.<sup>129</sup> The queen in question was the fifth-century wife of Clovis, and the blessed Leonard is St Leonard of Limousin, who founded a monastery at Limoges and to whom many miracles were attributed.<sup>130</sup> We read that the Queen of France was in great difficulty in childbirth (l. 2) and that this

---

<sup>124</sup> Kathleen Kamerick, 'Patronage and Devotion in the Prayer Book of Anne of Brittany, Newberry Library MS 83', *Manuscripta*, 39 (1995), 40-50 (p. 45).

<sup>125</sup> Kamerick, p. 40.

<sup>126</sup> Kamerick, p. 40; Saengar, p. 157.

<sup>127</sup> Kamerick, pp. 40-41.

<sup>128</sup> Kamerick, p. 46.

<sup>129</sup> I am grateful to Mr Sean Daily at the Newberry Library for sending me a print-out of this prayer from the microfilm.

<sup>130</sup> His feast day is 6 November. *CEO*: accessed: 30 August 2003.



prayer is 'of very great power whenever it is read piously and listened to attentively when a woman is in course of bearing children' (l. 3-4). Like the prayer in Marguerite de Foix's Book of Hours, the prayer of St Leonard invokes an omnipotent God who has created everything out of nothing (l. 4-5). It then refers to the wonders of creation (ll. 5-12) and describes how Adam was formed 'from the clay of the earth and how a woman was made for him as a helper' (ll. 13-15). The prayer notes how God joined them in lawful marriage 'for the purpose of engendering descendents' (l. 15). It continues with the example of Sarah and Abraham whom God 'made fertile with the strange phenomenon of un-hoped for offspring' even though they were 'well advanced in a rather old age' (ll. 18-19). As we saw above, Sarah is also one of the barren matriarchs listed in the prayer in Marguerite de Foix's manuscript. The miracle of God being made man in the womb of the Virgin is then invoked (ll. 20-21). The prayer concludes with a supplication that the assistance of God 'may come upon this woman who is groaning because of the difficulty of giving birth in order that she, having been released from immediate danger, may be able, along with us, to praise your name' (ll. 31-36).

Like her mother Marguerite de Foix, Anne de Bretagne was in desperate need of providing an heir for her husband. She had already lost five children in her previous marriage and we can see the inclusion of this prayer in a manuscript relating to her second marriage as a means of asking for future births to be successful. The features of the prayer noted here, like those in Marguerite de Foix's prayer, offer examples and circumstances in relation to which she could situate herself: the creation of the world by an omnipotent God, the sanctity of marriage and the birth of legitimate children, the blessing of barren couples, the miracle of Christ's conception and birth. Kamerick also notes that in the light of this prayer the emphasis given to St Margaret in the litany also comes into sharper focus, since St Margaret was not only her mother's patron saint but a patron saint of women in childbirth. In the manuscript, St Leonard's prayer is not only followed by the suffrage to St Margaret (f. 52v) but it is also preceded by a prayer commemorating the Virgin's conception (ff. 49r-v). The Queen of France's childbirth prayer is thus framed by other prayers and saints that relate to childbearing.

That the prayer had been expressly said on behalf of a previous Queen of France meant that Anne de Bretagne could situate herself in an historical line going back centuries to the time of the conversion of the Franks to Christianity. The prayer was both personalised and it also had the added benefit of already having been effective. Kamerick thus suggests that the prayer ‘takes on the character of a charm, working in a quasi-magical way’. She continues that ‘many late medieval prayer-charms are simply more generic’ and ‘are usually not gender-specific’.<sup>131</sup> Whilst pregnancy is often included amongst charms that protected against dangerous circumstances, there are in fact many charms that were specifically for use in childbirth and which invoke biblical matriarchs and the mothers of the Holy Kinship. In the following chapter we see how the prayers in the manuscripts of Marguerite de Foix and Anne de Bretagne relate to these charms and to other remedies for assisting women in labour. This additional evidence shows how representations, both textual and visual, of biblical childbearing could be particularly relevant to young, aristocratic wives.

Anne de Bretagne did not bear the wished-for male heir: like her mother she bore two surviving daughters. The eldest of these, Claude, was also destined for a political marriage. The lack of a male heir to succeed Louis XII allowed the heir presumptive, François d’Angoulême, to inherit the throne on Louis’s death in 1515.<sup>132</sup> Wishing Brittany to retain an independence from the Crown, Anne was opposed to any marriage between her daughter Claude and this distant cousin. However, just over a year after Anne’s death in 1514, this marriage took place, uniting Brittany and France permanently.

\* \* \*

The manuscripts considered in this chapter have not previously been analysed in terms of their childbirth iconography or in the light of the importance of children for their known and proposed owners. Here we have seen how the precarious historical context of these aristocratic owners would have affected the way they viewed the representations of maternity and childbirth in their devotional

---

<sup>131</sup> Kamerick, p. 45.

<sup>132</sup> Harthan, p. 129



manuscripts. We noted in Chapters One and Two the difficulties and problematics of assigning late-medieval representations of holy childbirth one exclusive meaning – for example as either ‘feminine’, ‘empowering’ or ‘prescriptive’. Instead, as demonstrated here, these images must be seen as multivalent and as having several different, but not necessarily exclusive, meanings at any one time. Broadly speaking, these meanings are always contingent on factors such as the historical, class, and gender specificity of the viewer. The situational eye with which male *and* female members of the houses of Anjou and Brittany regarded the images in their books was informed primarily by the need to maintain the aristocratic, patriarchal, hegemony through the production of male heirs. However, this situational eye was also fluid: although the viewer’s sensitivity to the images of childbirth could alter with their gender, it is the specific circumstances of that gendered viewer (for example as a husband, a wife (whether first or second), a ruler) that really affected the way the representations signified. We have seen how it is likely that the images of maternity and *post-partum* confinement in all the manuscripts considered here functioned variously as symbols of family history, of cultural patronage and prestige, of dynastic anxieties over succession, and as admonitions to procreate. In particular the emphasis given to maternity in the *Fitzwilliam Hours* and the *Hours of Marguerite de Foix* suggests that images of childbirth and holy motherhood served as zones for the projection of anxieties, duties, hopes, and thanks, for women whose social position required them to procreate. That the duchesses of Brittany considered here viewed their manuscripts with a situational eye that was modified by gender and especially by motherhood – either the need for it or the failure of it – is further strengthened by the prayers in Marguerite de Foix’s Hours and Anne de Bretagne’s prayer book. By relating these prayers to charms for childbirth in the following chapter, it becomes possible to reconstruct a situational viewing position for late-medieval patrician wives and mothers.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### *ANNA PEPERIT MARIAM: PRAYERS AND CHARMS FOR CHILDBIRTH*

The preceding chapter proposed how young men and, predominately, young women from the houses of Anjou and Brittany in the fifteenth century viewed the all-female, *post-partum*, miniatures of childbirth in their manuscripts. In particular, I suggested that from the point of view of patrician wives, such as Isabel Stuart and Marguerite de Foix, images of holy childbirth functioned as spaces that could be invested with the duty, expectations, and fears surrounding their own childbearing. The assistance offered by the childbirth prayers in Marguerite de Foix and Anne de Bretagne's manuscripts was personalised and related to these women's roles as duchesses and queen. By looking at the charms and prayers for childbirth found in late-medieval medical and commonplace collections, it is evident that other, less privileged, women were also able to turn to prayers and charms for their own difficulties in parturition. These charms included references to the biblical mothers who are represented in the manuscripts discussed in Chapter Three. This chapter shows how charms provided figures with whom the parturient woman could identify as well as offering a way for women to retain some control over the physical processes of childbirth. Highlighting the intersection between the visual sources of the devotional manuscripts, the childbirth prayers, and the charms reveals a complexity of inter-textualities and –visualities through which we can begin to understand the value that all these sources had for those people occupying a maternally-informed situational eye.<sup>1</sup>

During the later Middle Ages a number of remedies were available to women who were pregnant or who wished to become so, and for those who were suffering in childbirth. For instance, to hasten or ease delivery, to guarantee a

---

<sup>1</sup> Fiona Harris Stoerz has argued that 'a concern for women's suffering in and survival in childbirth is evidenced both by the many remedies proposed for obstetrical problems and by the role and identity of the care givers who assisted at births'; see Stoerz, 'Suffering and Survival in Medieval English Childbirth', in *Medieval Family Roles*, pp. 101-20 (p. 103).



child of a particular sex, and to prevent or even reverse maternal or infant death in childbirth, both men and women went on pilgrimage, prayed to certain saints, and touched relics. They also performed charms, wore amulets, prepared medicinal recipes, and called on the midwife. The areas highlighted here are large fields of study in their own right. Ronald C. Finucane and Susan Signe Morrison have discussed pilgrimage and miracles in relation to conception and childbearing, while the historical view of the midwife as witch is finally being redressed by scholars such as Merry E. Wiesner.<sup>2</sup> Existing work on late-medieval charms includes those remedies for conception and parturition. These charms invoke those biblical mothers, most frequently St Anne, St Elizabeth, and the Virgin, who were blessed by God in childbirth. The pertinence of these mothers for childbearing concerns has already been noted in the separate fields of art-historical and charm studies. However, images of childbirth and charms for parturition have not previously been considered together, nor have the contents of popular charms been seen in relation to the prayers found in the manuscripts of Marguerite de Foix and Anne de Bretagne.

Modern scholars have commented on the complexity of defining what fifteenth-century writers understood by the terms 'charms', 'amulets' and 'talismans'. Susan Eastman Sheldon and Douglas Gray have noted the difficulty of separating charms from simple prayers.<sup>3</sup> Sheldon's thesis provides a comprehensive discussion of the generic differences between charms, amulets and talismans. She claims that the powers of an amulet work continually and the object is worn about the person; a talisman performs one task and is simply in the possession of the person.<sup>4</sup> Charms she finds more difficult to define and suggests that their first meaning was verbal incantation. She claims that '*charmte* is a generic term that encompasses superstitious rituals, incantations, prayers,

---

<sup>2</sup> See Morrison and Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims*, noted in Chapter One; and Finucane, *The Rescue of the Innocents: Endangered Children in Medieval Miracles* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1997); and Merry E. Wiesner, 'Early Modern Midwifery: A Case Study', in *Women and Work*, pp. 94-113; see also the articles on midwifery by Greilsammer and Green, Chapter One.

<sup>3</sup> Douglas Gray, 'Notes on Some Middle English Charms', *Chaucer and Middle English Studies in Honour of Rossell Hope Robbins*, ed. by Beryl Rowland (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1974), pp. 56-71; and Susan Eastman Sheldon, 'Middle English and Latin Charms, Amulets and Talismans from Vernacular Manuscripts' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Tulane, 1978).

<sup>4</sup> Sheldon, pp. 30-31

spells, amulets and talismans'.<sup>5</sup> The charms discussed here are mainly from fourteenth- and fifteenth-century sources and consist of words intended for incantation over the parturient woman, or for inscription and placing on, or in, her body.<sup>6</sup> Charms, amulets and talismans existed for a variety of situations from toothache to the catching of thieves. In addition, the varied contents of manuscripts containing charms demonstrates that the distinctions we make today between religion, medicine, and magic, are not necessarily applicable to the later Middle Ages. London, British Library Royal MS 17 A viii for example, consists of various medical and veterinary recipes and charms in English, Latin and French. There are charms to staunch blood, to prevent the death of chickens, and to help childbirth delivery, amongst many others.<sup>7</sup> In another manuscript, London, British Library, Royal MS 12 B xxv, charms for childbirth are found alongside those against thunder, against conception, and against thieves. These in turn sit alongside treatises on the bodily humours, astrology and even the making of fireworks.<sup>8</sup>

The fact that charms were copied out by scribes into new texts suggests that the remedies were widely used by many people. The contents of Royal 12 B xxv were copied by a scribe into another manuscript, London, British Library, Sloane MS 282. Certain sections of the Thornton Manuscript from Lincoln Cathedral are also found in Royal 17 A viii.<sup>9</sup> The way some charms appear as

---

<sup>5</sup> Sheldon, p. 28.

<sup>6</sup> In addition to the literature on charms (discussed below), there is also a number of studies on talismans and amulets for childbirth which I do not have space to discuss in detail here. Many of these studies are now dated and could be profitably reassessed. See for example Curt F. Bühler, 'Prayers and Charms in Certain Middle English Scrolls', *Speculum*, 39 (1964), 270-78; and two articles written about a life of St Margaret found in a birthing bag: Clovis Brunel, 'Une Nouvelle vie de Sainte Marguerite en vers provençaux', *Annales du Midi*, 38 (1926), 385-401; and A. Aymar, 'Le sachet accoucheur et ses mystères: Contribution à l'étude du folklore de la Haute-Auvergne', *Annales du Midi*, 38 (1926), 273-347. See also Jacques Gélis, *A History of Childbirth: Fertility, Pregnancy, and Birth in Early Modern Europe* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1991).

<sup>7</sup> London, British Library MS Royal 17 A. viii. See esp. ff. 45v-75v.

<sup>8</sup> London, British Library Royal MS 12 B xxv. This manuscript is discussed by Lea Olsan, 'Latin Charms in British Library MS Royal 12 B. XXV', *Manuscripta*, 33 (1989), 119-28.

<sup>9</sup> Part of the Thornton Manuscript has been printed by Margaret S. Ogden, *The Liber de Diversis Medicinis in the Thornton Manuscript*, EETS, o.s. 207 (London: Oxford University Press, 1938). In addition to the *Liber de diversis medicinis* section that Ogden had edited, the manuscript also contains 'various romances, sermons, mystical



rough additions on the pages of manuscripts suggests that they were collected and were thus intended for use. For instance, a childbirth charm was scribbled onto the bottom of f. 129v in London, British Library, MS Sloane 3160. Elsewhere, charms are marked with red ink, with crosses, or with pointing fingers, 'indicating that the entry has special significance'.<sup>10</sup> In other manuscript examples charms are part of the original contents, listed amongst the other material in prefatory pages.

The charms analysed in this chapter are broadly contemporaneous with the manuscripts discussed in the preceding chapter. As noted above, the frequency with which they are found suggests that they would have been widely known.<sup>11</sup> Gray claims that 'charms were the stock in trade of practising physicians, cunning men, charmers, and wise women, as well as being available for private use' and that 'they are practical recipes, meant to be used'.<sup>12</sup> Lea Olsan has suggested that the medical receipts and charms in Royal 12 B xxv indicate that it 'would have been useful to a doctor, or to some less formally trained healer'.<sup>13</sup> From the prayers in Marguerite de Foix's Hours and Anne de Bretagne's prayer book we know that assistance from prayers was sought by aristocratic women in childbirth. The charm-prayers discussed here indicate that remedies for childbirth were also available to a wider social class of mothers and mothers-to-be. However, the ownership of bespoke manuscripts, as well as the need to produce legitimate male heirs, was a particular feature of the lives of upper-class women. Therefore, although the widespread occurrence of childbirth charms demonstrates the possibility of reconstructing a viewing position for

---

writings, and religious lyrics'; see Ogden, p. viii; n. 3. She does not note Royal 17 A viii as a parallel text.

<sup>10</sup> Sheldon, p. 28. Crosses and pointing fingers appear in the borders of the charms in Sloane 3160, ff. 129v -41v.

<sup>11</sup> That charms for childbirth were of a generic formula and popular across Europe is indicated by the occurrence of an Italian version of the *peperit / exi* charm to be discussed below. This charm is found in MS Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale II II 82, which is made up of two manuscripts from the Strozzi library. The charm is in the second manuscript, which was originally a miscellany of twelve fifteenth-century pieces, on fol. 5v according to the fifteenth-century foliation: '[A]Nna peperit Maria et Maria peperit Jesum Et elixabet peperit Iouannez. O creatura esei foras quiam christus te vochatur. E leggi tre volte come detto e di sopra, col pater nostro e lavemaria'. I am grateful to Rhiannon Daniels who found this charm and transcribed it for me.

<sup>12</sup> Gray, p. 59.

<sup>13</sup> Olsan, 'Latin Charms', p. 119, see above.

parturient women across a broader cross-section of fifteenth-century society, we should be cautious of collapsing all lay women under one subjectivity. Instead, whilst recognising that these charms were probably available to middle and lower-class women, here I suggest how they reinforce the situational eye of the aristocratic women discussed in Chapter Three.

### *Charms for Incantation*

In the preceding chapters we have seen how the mothers of the Holy Kinship and biblical matriarchs were employed as encouragements for women in their duties as wives and mothers, or as a support in the execution of those duties. The following example shows how these holy women also appeared in charms intended to ease delivery:

Beata anna [peper]it sanctam mariam matrem domini  
 nostri ihesu Christi et sancta maria genuit christum filium dei  
 annunciante Gabriele archangelo, per ipsam nativitatem  
 credo ego quia omnis Christianus a morte et ab vi omni  
 periculo potest esse liberatus. Sancta maria dei genetrix  
 et omnes sancti apostoli et omnes sancti martires et omnes  
 sancti confessores et omnes sancte virgines intercedant pro  
 famula dei. A. amen.<sup>14</sup>

The invocation of St Anne and the Virgin in a childbirth charm provides the parturient woman (and her companions) with biblical precedents, just as the prayer and images in Marguerite's *horae* also provided her with holy examples – Hannah, Sarah, Elizabeth, the Virgin – with which to associate herself. Whereas Marguerite's prayer was personalised to create a link between her and the

---

<sup>14</sup> BL Royal MS 17 A viii ff. 47v-48r: 'Blessed Anna bore holy Mary, the mother of our Lord Jesus Christ and holy Mary bore Christ, <with> the archangel announcing <the birth> <to her>. By that birth I believe that every Christian can be freed from death and from violence, <and> all danger. Let holy Mary the mother of God and all the holy apostles and all the holy martyrs and all the holy confessors and all the holy virgins intercede on behalf of the servant girl of God [insert name]. Amen'; my translation. I am grateful to Ian Moxon for help with translating the charms in this chapter.



biblical mothers, this charm could also be personalised with the insertion of the woman's name after 'pro famula dei'.

The charm discussed above is an example of the so-called *peperit* charm and Marianne Elsackers notes that in this formula 'analogous miracle stories or *historiolae* are repeated [and] the list of miraculous births [...] can be shortened and expanded'.<sup>15</sup> Thus whereas in this charm there is only reference to St Anne and the Virgin, other examples expand the *peperit* (or *genuit*) formula to include other holy births:

Pro dolore partus dic ad mulierum: Anna peperit Samuelem,  
Elisabet genuit Iohannem, Anna genuit Mariam, Maria genuit  
Christum. Infans, siue masculus siue femina, exi foras. Te uocat  
saluator ad lucem. Sancta Maria peperit saluatorem, peperit sine  
dolore. Christus natus est de uirgine. Christus te uocat, ut nascaris  
Exinanite. Exinanite. Exinanite. Postea ter Pater noster.<sup>16</sup>

Here, in addition to St Anne and the Virgin, we find St Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, and Hannah, the mother of Samuel. These women are also found in the images and prayers in Marguerite de Foix's Book of Hours; St Anne, St Elizabeth, and the Virgin appear in the images in the *Fitzwilliam Hours*; and another biblical mother, Sarah, is invoked in the prayer book of Anne de Bretagne. The presence of these women in charms and prayers implies that the parturient woman and the women assisting her understood the company of

---

<sup>15</sup> Marianne Elsackers, 'In Pain You Shall Bear Children: Medieval Prayers for a Safe Delivery', *Studies in the History of Religions*, ed. by Anne-Marie Korte, (Boston, Leiden, and Cologne: Brill, 2001), pp. 179-209 (p. 185).

<sup>16</sup> Elsackers, pp. 182-83; n. 11. The source is Vienna, Hofbibliothek, CVP 1064, fol. 17; printed in Adolph Franz's *Die kirchlichen Benediktionen im Mittelalter*, 2 vols (Freiburg: Herder, 1909; repr., Graz: Akademischer Druck U.-Verlaganstalt, 1960), II, p. 200, no. 6. I have altered the layout of the text and added to the punctuation. 'For suffering in childbirth, say to the mother: [H]annah bore Samuel, Elizabeth brought forth John the Baptist, Anna brought forth Mary, Mary brought forth Christ. Child, whether you <be> male or female, come forth. The saviour calls you to the light. Holy Mary bore the saviour, she bore <him> without pain. Christ was born of a virgin. Christ calls you so that you may be born. Make empty <the mother's womb>. <Say> afterwards three times Pater Noster.' My translation. Exinanite is a plural imperative. Elsackers does not note this and it is not clear from her article whom she supposes the audience or speakers of the prayer to be.

female saints and matriarchs as echoing their own company and as positive examples on which to focus during a difficult time.

In addition to those biblical mothers found in the Books of Hours, some charms refer to another mother 'Cilinia' or Caecilia, and her son Remigius, as in an example from a fifteenth-century manuscript now in Paris:

**Quant femme enfante len doit dire ceste priere**  
 Ana peperit mariam Maria Christum Elizabeth Iohannem  
 baptistam Cilinia sanctum remigium. Beata virgo maria  
 peperit Christum sine dolore. Christus natus est de  
 virgine. Christus infans imperat ut tu cito nascaris sive  
 masculus sive femina sis, et exeas in lucem sine periculo  
 matris et [erasure] recipias gratiam baptismati in remissionem  
 peccatorum. In nomine patris + et filij + et spiritu sancti. Amen.<sup>17</sup>

Elsackers notes that '*Cilina* may be St Caecilia, the mother of St Remigius, the archbishop of Rheims who baptised Clovis in 497'.<sup>18</sup> The inclusion of St Caecilia and St Remigius (also known as St Remy) in a childbirth charm is extremely important. The childbirth prayer in Anne de Bretagne's manuscript was said by St Leonard to assist the Queen of France, the wife of Clovis. According to the eleventh-century *vita* of St Leonard, St Remigius was St Leonard's godfather. The two saints, therefore, were not only linked by historical narrative but they were both seen to be efficacious for obtaining

<sup>17</sup> Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, ms fonds français 1802. 'When a woman is in labour, one should say this prayer: Anna bore Mary, Mary bore Christ, Elizabeth bore John the Baptist, Cilinia bore Remigius. Blessed Mary bore Christ without pain. Christ is born of a virgin. <O> child, Christ commands that you be born immediately, whether you be male or whether you be female, and that you come out into the light without danger to <your> mother and that you receive the gift of baptism for the forgiveness of sins. In the name of the Father and of the son and of the holy spirit. Amen.'

<sup>18</sup> See Elsackers, p. 185, n. 15. St Remigius is mentioned again in other manuscripts, sometimes with his mother's name as 'Cecilia', amongst the names of St Anne, St Elizabeth, and the Virgin. See for example London, British Library, MS Sloane 3561, ff. 55v-56v, printed below, and London, British Library, MS Sloane, 3160: 'Sancta Maria peperit Christum, Sancta Anna peperit Mariam, Sancta Elizabeth peperit Iohannem, Sancta Cecilia peperit Reonigium [corr. Remigium]' (f. 169r); both are included in Tony Hunt, *Popular Medicine in Thirteenth-Century England: Introduction and Texts* (Woodbridge: Brewer, 1990), pp. 92 and 97. The formula also occurs in London, British Library, MS Royal, 17 A. iii, f. 103r, see Olsan, 'Latin Charms', p. 123.



assistance in childbirth. Further research must be undertaken to establish whether the prayer in Anne de Bretagne's manuscript was also available to other women but, given the inclusion of this prayer in her manuscript, it seems likely that other charm-prayers, like those discussed here, would have reached Anne de Bretagne during her many pregnancies. St Caecilia and St Remigius not only reinforced the group of holy mothers and their children found in other charms but for Anne de Bretagne specifically they would also have formed a connection between the biblical mothers and the more tangible history of the Frankish queen.

The above charm which refers to St Remigius, is also an example of the *exi*, or *veni foras* formula that is often found in conjunction with the *peperit* formula. As the examples already discussed here show, the *peperit* section lists a series of holy births which may vary in length. Elsackers notes that in some cases 'the formula comprises several lines and gives several examples of miraculous births' but that 'sometimes it is reduced to a mere line: Santa Maria peperit, or fragment of a line: Santa Maria, libera ancilla tuam N. and virgo Maria natabit'.<sup>19</sup> The *exi* formula consists of an adjuration to the child to be born immediately, whether male or female, dead or alive, sometimes with an admonition not to harm the mother. In using these charms to try to recover something of the voices in the childbirth chamber, Elsackers has argued that childbirth charms are analogous to a 'work song' and that the different rhythms of the text can accommodate the different stages of labour.<sup>20</sup>

Elsackers proposal is important since it reads the charms from the point of view of the women in the birth chamber, as encouragement and as assistance. She proposes that the two parts of the charm, 'the slow, narrative sections' of the *peperit* formula, and 'the faster and louder imperative sections' of the *exi* formula, 'may have constituted a rhythmic mnemonic device, a reminder of how to breathe' during, and in-between, contractions.<sup>21</sup> If Elsackers is correct, it suggests that women used the charms as a way of managing what could become a very difficult situation. Furthermore, childbirth charms, like any other charms, were context-specific, and these invocations to holy mothers only made sense

<sup>19</sup> The source she cites for these is Franz, II, pp. 201-2, no. 1.

<sup>20</sup> Elsackers, p. 203-4; n. 79.

<sup>21</sup> Elsackers, p. 204.

within the context of childbirth: their meaning is constituted for and by the women in the birth chamber. Viewed with the situational eye of the women actually involved in the birth, the holy mothers invoked in childbirth charms, like those represented in Books of Hours belonging to lay women, functioned as figures through which the pregnant woman – and also her companions – could focus their expectations and their physical experiences.

The biblical origin of the words of the *exi* formula suggest that certain charms paralleled the all-female space of childbirth in another way. Several scholars, including Olsan have pointed out that in the *exi* formula ‘the unborn child is called forth by Christ with the same words that bring Lazarus out of the tomb in the Gospel [...]: “Haec cum dixisset, voce magna clamavit: Lazare, veni foras” ’.<sup>22</sup> In one charm there is a full reference to the Lazarus story:

**Wip wif bearn eacenu: Maria virgo peperit Christum, Elisabet sterilis peperit Iohannem baptistam. Adiuro te, infans, si es masculus an femina, per Patrem et Filium et Spiritum sanctum, ut exeas et recedes, et ultra ei non noceas neque insipientiam illi facias. Amen. Videns dominus flentes sorores Lazari ad monumentum lacrimatus est coram Iudeis et clamabat: Lazarus veni foras. Et prodiit ligatis manibus et pedibus qui fuerat quatruiduanus mortuus. Writ dis on wexe ðe næfre ne com to nanen wyrce, and bind under hire swiðran fot.**<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Olsan, ‘Latin Charms’, p. 123. John 11. 43: ‘And when he had said these things, he cried with a loud voice: Lazarus, come forth’.

<sup>23</sup> London, British Library, Junius MS 85. This version is taken from that printed in G. Storms, *Anglo-Saxon Magic* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1948), p. 283, where the folio reference is given as p. 17. Also printed, without the English rubrics, in L. M. C. Weston, ‘Women’s Medicine, Women’s Magic: The Old English Metrical Childbirth Charms’, *Modern Philology*, 92 (1994-95), 279-93 (p. 292). Translated it reads: ‘For a woman big with child: “The Virgin Mary gave birth to Christ, the sterile Elizabeth gave birth to John the Baptist. I command you, O child, whether you be male or female, through the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, that you that you come forth and go away, and that you do no further harm to her [i.e. to the mother] and that you cause no further damage to her. Amen. The Lord, seeing the weeping sisters of Lazarus at the tomb, wept in the presence of the Jews and cried out: Lazarus come forth. And he who had been dead for four days came forth with his hands and feet bound.” Write this on wax that has never been used for any purpose, and bind it under her right foot.’ My translation of the Latin; translation of the Anglo-Saxon taken from Storms, p. 283.



Weston has compared this charm in which the *child* is spoken to, to an earlier, vernacular, Anglo-Saxon charm from *Lacnunga* in which the parturient woman speaks *for herself*.<sup>24</sup> Weston suggests that in the later charm the mother

has become more a vessel than a participant [...]. Far from actively managing the birth, the women around the mother become, like sisters of Lazarus, audience rather than actors. Only the Lord acts: His words, inscribed by His vicar on the talisman, accomplish the miracle.<sup>25</sup>

As Weston notes, the Lazarus reference also renders the mother's womb a tomb for her child, explicitly bringing death and mourning into the process of giving birth. In the early Middle Ages women occupied the role of mourners, a role that Juliana Schiesari and Diane Owen Hughes have claimed, for Italy at least, was suppressed in the later period.<sup>26</sup> These roles were, however, still depicted, if only symbolically, in late-medieval paintings. In an image such as Giotto's early-fourteenth-century *Lamentation* from the Arena Chapel, Padua, or in Rogier van der Weyden's *Deposition*, women have been depicted lamenting the loss and tending Christ's broken body (figs 64-65).<sup>27</sup> The actual proximity of birth and

---

<sup>24</sup> See Weston, esp. p. 289. *Lacnunga* is British Library Harley MS 585. This vernacular charm is also discussed by Marie Nelson, 'A Woman's Charm', *Studia Neophilologica*, 57 (1985), 3-8. A recent publication on this manuscript is *Lacnunga Polyglot: Anglo-Saxon Remedies, Charms, and Prayers from British Library MS Harley 585: the Lacnunga*, ed. and trans. by Edward Pettit (New York: E. Mellen Press, 2001). I have been unable to consult this.

<sup>25</sup> Weston, p. 292.

<sup>26</sup> Drawing on the work of Diane Owen Hughes, Juliana Schiesari has argued that in fifteenth-century Italy female mourners gradually became excluded from the increasingly masculinized public sphere. Hughes claims that in [medieval] Italy '[t]he ordering of the commune, an exclusively male corporation whose earliest laws not only excluded women from membership but also sought to limit their dominance in the private sphere, restrict[ed] those marriage festivities, mourning ceremonies and birth celebrations that had accorded women a central role'. See Hughes, 'Invisible Madonnas? The Italian Historiographic Tradition and the Women of Medieval Italy', in *Women in Medieval History and Historiography*, ed. by Susan Mosher Stuard (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1987), p. 31.; quoted in Schiesari, *The Gendering of Melancholia: Feminism, Psychoanalysis, and the Symbolics of Loss in Renaissance Literature* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 165; n. 9; see also pp. 164-166.

<sup>27</sup> On mourning gestures see Moshe Barasch, *Gestures of Despair in Medieval and Early Renaissance Art* (New York: New York University Press, 1976).

death is depicted in the fifteenth-century marble relief of the tomb of Francesca Tornabuoni (fig. 66). This relief, by the workshop of Andrea del Verrocchio, shows the moment of Francesca's death in childbirth. Women gather around her bed – one supports her from behind, another holds her arm. Others rush into the scene with their mouths open in grief. One figure at the front of the scene is reminiscent of what Erwin Panofsky has called the 'huddled mourners' of Giotto's *Lamentation*.<sup>28</sup>

The representation of mourning practices that were suppressed in reality might have served as part of that suppression, by keeping them at the level of artifice. However, the references to the mourning sisters of Lazarus in the childbirth charm, may have been viewed by those women as a subversion of that suppression and a restitution of their social roles as they enacted the performance of the charm in the childbirth chamber. It seems likely that parturient women would have recognised the womb-tomb nexus established by the reference to Lazarus. Thus she and her companions may have understood the reference to the mourning sisters of Lazarus in another way – as parallel to the active, all-female collective of the birth chamber. In that the women spoke the words that Christ spoke to Lazarus, the charm also indicated their powerful role in bringing forth a live child. Elsackers also attempts a more positive interpretation of the Lazarus reference and of the late-medieval *peperit/exi* formula as a whole. She claims that these charms were oral texts 'meant to be used during childbirth and that active participation of those attending the woman in labor is required'.<sup>29</sup> Thus we can see that although female care-givers at childbirth acted out their socially-designated roles, these roles and practices could serve to benefit the parturient woman and her companions.

Another type of charm associated with childbearing is the *Arcus* charm, which alludes to the matriarch Hannah, the mother of Samuel.<sup>30</sup> Two examples of the *Arcus* charm are found in Royal 17 A viii and in the Thornton Manuscript:

---

<sup>28</sup> Quoted in Barasch, p. 69.

<sup>29</sup> Elsackers, p. 194.

<sup>30</sup> Lea Olsan, 'The Arcus Charms and Christian Magic', *Neophilologus*, 73 (1989), 438-447. The debates about the original meaning of the Arcus charm are too complex to warrant inclusion here but it has been used to interpret and reconstruct an Old English version of the charm which appears in BL Harley MS 585; see Olsan, 'Arcus', and



Here bygynnes a charme for trauelyng of childe. In nomine patris & filij & spiritus sancti. Amen. Arcus forcium super nos sedebit, virgo Maria natabit, lux & hora sedule sedebit rubus rebus rarantibus natus nator natoribus saxo. Scilicet memor esto vt sit puer vt puella. Eius exijt foras mater, quum christus natus est, nullum dolorem passa est. Venit homo, fugit dolor. Christus adiutor, adiuro te virga per Patrem & Filium & Spiritum Sanctum vt habeas potestatem coniungendi. Say this charm thris & scho sal sone bere childe, if it be hir tyme.<sup>31</sup>

Olsan notes that the line ‘Arcus fortium super nos sedebit’ recalls a line from Hannah’s song of thanksgiving for the birth of Samuel, ‘Arcus fortium superatus est’.<sup>32</sup> She claims that ‘[t]he verbal similarity between [the two lines] seems more than coincidental, because of the similarity of context’.<sup>33</sup> I would also point out, as Olsan does not, that Hannah’s song is also a type of the Virgin’s *Magnificat*, the words she speaks after the Annunciation, when she is greeted by

---

W. L. Braekman, ‘Notes on Old English Charms II’, *Neophilologus*, 67 (1983), 605-610. Further manuscripts and editions containing the *Arcus* are listed in *Works of Science and Information*, ed. by George R. Keiser (New Haven: The Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1998), p. 3874.

<sup>31</sup> As noted above, the Thornton MS is very similar to Royal 17 A viii but since the charm has been edited and punctuated in Ogden’s edition of the Thornton manuscript I print this edition here; see Ogden, *Liber Diversis*, p. 56. Olsan’s translation reads: ‘The bow of the mighty will preside over us. The Virgin Mary will swim. The day and the hour are set ready. rubus rebus rarantibus/natus nator natoribus saxo scilicet. Let this be remembered so that her boy or girl comes forth. A Man came. Pain fled. Christ is our Help: I adjure you rod, through the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, that you have the power to bring forth water.’; see Olsan ‘Arcus’, p. 439 and n. 14. Her final reading ‘comningendi’ conflicts with my and Ogden’s expansion of ‘coniungendi’ from ‘coiugendi’ (contractions over the ‘o’ and ‘u’). With this reading we might translate ‘ut habeas potestatem coniungendi’ as ‘that you should have the power of joining [i.e. performing intercourse, penetrating]’. This also takes into account the play on virga (rod/penis) and virgo (virgin) in the previous line.

<sup>32</sup> ‘The bow of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength’; see I Samuel 2. 4; and Olsan, ‘Arcus’, p. 440.

<sup>33</sup> Olsan, ‘Arcus’, p. 440. Olsan goes on to suggest that ‘although Hannah’s victory song seems likely to be the original for the first line in the charms, the meaning of *Arcus fortium* apparently shifted from “the bow of the mighty” overcome to a different *Arcus fortium* that sits, reigns, and presides (*sedebit*) above those (in the charm, *nos*) in need during birth’. She continues ‘[t]he images of the later Latin charms associate the desired easy and propitious birth with waters: *maria*, Mary, but also the sea; *natabit*, literally “will swim,” also echoing the verb “to be born”; *nator*, similarly ambiguous; *potestatem comningendi*, the power of bringing forth water, in this case, “giving birth” ’; see Olsan, ‘Arcus’, p. 440.

Elizabeth.<sup>34</sup> If the parturient woman were aware of this allusion to Hannah's song, it would have reinforced Hannah's typological relationship to the Virgin, who is also invoked in the charm. Given the direct references to biblical mothers in other charms, it is possible that the allusion to Hannah in the Arcus charm was evident to the listeners and performers and that it would also have strengthened the company of women in the childbirth chamber. When we return to the prayer in Marguerite de Foix's Book of Hours in the light of the charms considered here, I propose that Marguerite would have read her charm-prayer as her own *Magnificat*.

There are two other references, to Jeremiah and St John the Baptist, in one childbirth charm that has opened up another relationship to the texts and images in Books of Hours. I noted above that St Caecilia often appears in charms as the mother of St Remigius. In Royal 12 B xxv, however, we find 'Jeremiah was born of Celica':

**Carmen ad faciendum mulieres parere:** Nesciens mater virgo  
virum peperit sine dolore salvatorem mundi fontem naturae  
creaturam huius creature christus natus fuit de virgine Maria.  
Maria de Anna, Iohannes de Elizabeth, Ieremias Celica. Adiuro  
te infans per patrem et filium et spiritum sanctum puer sive puella  
sis, Christus te advocat veni foras. Post partum virgo ni[m]io  
Dei genetrix.<sup>35</sup>

Although Celica seems to be a corruption of Caecilia, Olsan notes that 'a female "Celica" seems to have been substituted for the Vulgate's "Helcia," subverting the patriarchal lineage of the Prophet in Jeremiah 1:1'.<sup>36</sup> She continues that

<sup>34</sup> Compare Luke 1. 46-55, especially verse 51: 'fecit potentiam in bracio suo dispersit superbos mente cordis sui'.

<sup>35</sup> Royal MS 12 B xxv, ff. 61v-62r. Following the version printed by Olsan, I have expanded *mxlk:r:s pbrsi* in the manuscript to *mulieres parere*: 'Charm for causing women to give birth: A virgin, a mother not knowing, gave birth without pain to a male, the saviour of the world, the source of nature, the living creature of this living creature. Christ was born from the Virgin Mary; Mary was born from Anna, John from Elizabeth, Jeremiah from Celica. I urge you, O child, in the name of the father and the son and the holy spirit, be you boy or girl, Christ is summoning you. come forth. After the birth the virgin <is> the mother of God.'; my translation. Olsan reads *nimio* for *ninio* in the manuscript but I have been unable to translate either word satisfactorily; see Olsan, 'Latin Charms', p. 122.



the occurrence of Jeremiah in a charm for childbirth is fitting, both by virtue of the propitiousness of a prophet's birth and by virtue of Jeremiah's vocation from God:  
 "Priusquam te formarem in utero, novi te; Et antequam exires de vulva, sanctificavi te, Et prophetam in gentibus dedi te".<sup>37</sup>

However, it has not yet been remarked that these words from Jeremiah are also used in the Sanctoral for the feast of the Nativity of John the Baptist.

The text for the feast of St John the Baptist, which is a conflation of Old and New Testament writings from Isaiah, Jeremiah, John, Luke and Matthew, contains a number of texts with allusions to childbirth. The following extract from the opening of the Office of St John the Baptist is reconstructed from a range of Breviaries I have consulted:

Audite insulae et attendite populi de longe Dominus ab utero vocavit me de ventre matris meae recordatus est nominis mei et posuit os meum quasi gladium acutum in umbra manus suae protexit me et posuit me sicut sagittam electam in faretra sua abscondit me. Priusquam te formarem in utero novi te et antequam exires de ventre sanctificavi te. Et prophetam in gentibus dedi te; Dico enim vobis maior inter natos mulierum propheta Iohanne Baptista nemo est qui autem minor est in regno Dei maior est illo. Amen dico vobis non surrexit inter natos mulierum maior iohanne baptista qui autem est in regno caelorum maior est illo. Fuit homo missus a deo cui nomen iohannes erat.<sup>38</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> Olsan, 'Latin Charms'. p. 123

<sup>37</sup> Olsan, 'Latin Charms', p. 123. Jeremiah 1. 4-5. 'Before I formed thee in the bowels of thy mother, I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb, I sanctified thee, and made thee a prophet unto the nations'.

<sup>38</sup> Isaiah 49, 1-2: Give ear, ye islands, and hearken, ye people from afar. The Lord hath called me from the womb, from the bowels of my mother he hath been mindful of my name. And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword: in the shadow of his hand he hath protected me, and hath made me as a chosen arrow: in his quiver he hath hidden me. Jeremiah 1, 5: Before I formed thee in the bowels of thy mother, I knew thee: and before thou camest forth out of the womb, I sanctified thee, and made thee a prophet unto the nations; Luke 7, 28: For I say to you: Amongst those that are born of men, there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist. But he that is the lesser in the kingdom of God is greater than he; Matt. 11, 11: Amen I say to you, there hath not risen among them that are born of women a greater than John the Baptist: yet he that is the

The prayer in the *Hours of Marguerite de Foix* also mentions Jeremiah and John the Baptist as being made holy in their mothers' wombs: 'Jeremiam et Joannem in utero sanctificasti' (ll. 8-9). The inclusion of Jeremiah and John in Marguerite's prayer forges a connection between her own prayer, the childbirth charms, and the church's official liturgy. The feast of John's nativity was one of the most important feasts of the liturgical year and one of only three births celebrated by the church. As already noted, the inclusion of the Sanctoral is unusual in *horae*.<sup>39</sup> However, as demonstrated in my sample of manuscripts, it does sometimes occur, accompanied by representations of John's birth. For example, figure 5, from a Flemish Book of Hours shows the *Birth of St John the Baptist* in a detailed domestic interior (no. 13). In the *Turin-Milan Hours* a full-page miniature of John's birth illustrates the opening of the Office (fig. 11). There is also a representation of the *Birth of St John the Baptist* in the *Burgundy Breviary* which was made for Jean sans Peur and his wife Marguerite (no. 9, fig. 67).

Here I have highlighted two instances of Jeremiah in connection with childbirth charms and prayers. If further research revealed that Jeremiah occurred more frequently in extant prayers for childbirth it would add another dimension to the images of St John's birth in Books of Hours owned or used by women. It therefore appears likely that a woman expected to bear children who saw images of childbirth at the Office of St John (as Marguerite would have done in the case of the *Burgundy Breviary*), would have found that the image and text of the liturgy evoked the words of childbirth charms. The references in childbirth charms to Jeremiah and St John the Baptist, as well as to other holy mothers and children, strengthen the likelihood that the situational eye of a wife or mother was also receptive to the representation of those figures in the devotional manuscripts that she encountered. Just as the images in the *Fitzwilliam Hours* and the *Hours of Marguerite de Foix* were resonant with a number of co-existent meanings, so too could the charms be multivalent. Like the pictures, the charms could have functioned as places through which personal and familial needs were given expression. In that both the charms and the images looked towards or embodied a successful birth, it is possible that these texts and

---

lesser in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. [John 1, 6]. There was a man sent by God whose name was John.

<sup>39</sup> Marrow, p. 2.



images operated as what Randolph has termed 'psychic safety zones' for the parturient woman and her companions.<sup>40</sup>

*Charms to be Inscribed, Ingested, or Placed on the Body*

The charms considered so far in this chapter were intended to be recited aloud during the labour. Other forms of these childbirth charms, for inscription and ingestion, were recorded in manuscripts. These, like the oral charms and the lying-in ritual (described in the following chapter), also offered practical and sympathetic help for the mother. For instance, a charm in Royal 12 B xxv advocates writing the Lazarus charm on an apple:

[...] divide pomum in iij partes, scribe in prima parte lazare,  
In 2a parte veni foras, in 3a vocat christus te ad vitam, et da  
mulieri partes per ordinem ad comedendum et sine dubio pariet  
ante horam nonam.<sup>41</sup>

Another charm advocates writing words on pieces of bread, cheese or apple:

Scribe in pane vel in caseo 'Ogor Secor Vago, Exi foras,  
in nomine Patris, etc.'. Item aliud: Ecrivez en une poume, si li  
donez a manger: 'De virga virgine ubi oritur radix Jesse. Anna  
peperit Mariam, Maria Salvatorem. In nomine domini Jesu Cristi,  
infans, exi foras, sive sis masculus sive femina. Pater Noster et  
Ave Maria et Credo. In nomine Patris etc. Sicut vere credimus  
quod beata Maria peperit infantem, unum verum deum et hominem.  
Item et tu, ancilla Cristi, pare infantem. In nomine Patris etc.'.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Randolph, private correspondence, 29 April 2003.

<sup>41</sup> Royal 12 B xxv, f. 61: 'Divide an apple into three parts. On the first piece write 'Lazarus'; on the second piece, write 'come forth'; on the third piece, 'Christ calls you to life'; and give them one after the other to the woman to eat and without doubt she will give birth before the ninth hour'; my translation. A charm in Sloane MS 3564 ff. 55r-v advocates writing the words 'Ogor Secor Vagor. Exi foras, in nomine Patris etc.' on a piece of bread, or the words 'De virga virgine ubi oritur radix Jesse. Anna peperit Mariam [etc.]' on an apple and giving it to the woman to eat. The charm is printed in Hunt, p. 93; n. 135.

The physical power of the inscribed charm – which effectively becomes an amulet – is based on its proximity to the afflicted body and through a sympathetic association between the text and the area of pain or suffering. By ingesting the written word of the charm, a woman internalised the charm’s potency. Elsackers wonders whether this may be another way for the charms to help the mothers: ‘Is this a way to guarantee that the woman [...] will not forget [the prayer] when labour pains start, and she is really in need of it?’<sup>43</sup> In this example the text is to be bound to the woman’s stomach or thigh:

Ecrivez in parchemyn ‘Sancta Maria peperit et mater illa non doluit, Christum regem genuit qui nos sanguine suo redemit’. Ceste chose lyez entour le destre flank de la femme. Et deceste mesmes escrivez en un foille ‘Quia puer cest [vrs] “iam nova progenies celo dimittitur alto” + Christus + Maria + Johannes + Elizabet + Remigius + Celina, Lazare veni foras, adjuro te, creatura Dei utrum sis puer an puella, in nomine Patris etc. exi de utero. Christus te appellat qui te creavit et redemit et in seculum judicabit, amen’. Ceste lyez entre le destre dedeys et tantost istera l’enfant vif u mort.<sup>44</sup>

Here the words must be written down and laid against the woman’s right side (‘le destre flank’, ‘le destre dedeys’), the side associated with strength and

---

<sup>42</sup> Sloane MS 3564 ff. 55r-v. The charm is printed in Hunt, p. 93, n. 135. ‘Write on bread or on cheese “Ogor Secor Vagor, come forth, in the name of the father”. Another one: Write on an apple, give it to her to eat: “From the rod, the Virgin, where springs the root of Jesse. Anna bore Mary, Mary <bore> the Saviour. <O> child, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, come forth, whether you be male or female. Our Father and Ave Maria and Credo. In the name of the Father, etc. Thus we truly believe that the blessed Mary bore a child, truly both God and man. And so too you, servant of Christ, <will> bear a child. In the name of the Father etc.” ’; my translation.

<sup>43</sup> Elsackers, p. 195.

<sup>44</sup> Sloane 3564, ff. 55v-56v. I follow Hunt’s transcription of this, p. 92. ‘Write in parchment: “Holy Mary gave birth and this mother did not suffer; <she> bore Christ the King who saved us with his blood”. Bind this against the woman’s right side. And similarly write on a sheet “Because it is a boy a new generation is sent down from heaven on high, Christ, Mary, John, Elizabeth, Remigius, Celina, Lazarus come forth, I adjure you, creature of God, whether you be a boy or a girl, in the name of the Father etc., come out of the womb. Christ calls you, <Christ> who created you, and who redeems you, and who will judge you at the end of time”. Bind this around the woman’s right side and the child will come out shortly, alive or dead’; my translation.



virtue. In another example from the Thornton manuscript, the parchment on which the words of the charm are written should be bound to the woman's stomach:

Tak & write þis in parchemyn of velym & bynd it at stomake:  
 Sancta Maria peperit & matrix eius no[n] doluit. Christum genuit  
 qui nos sanguine suo redemit.<sup>45</sup>

If, as Elsackers and Gray have argued, charms were actually used by women, it should not automatically be assumed, as Weston does, that the need for certain charms to be read out loud or written down requires the presence of a man.<sup>46</sup> In one charm rubricated in French, the instructions do state the need for a literate priest or cleric to perform the charm: 'acun prestre u acun cleric'.<sup>47</sup> However, this is an unusual indication amongst the charms I have consulted and it is probable that the priest's capacity to act as an agent of God, rather than his ability to read or write, was required here.

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, in towns and cities at least, midwifery was a responsible and regulated position and it seems likely that some midwives would have had some basic level of literacy.<sup>48</sup> In addition, John Mirk in his *Instructions for Parish Priests*, stated the necessity of teaching the midwife to baptise infants should they be in immediate danger of dying.<sup>49</sup> According to Mirk it did not matter if the words were said in English or in Latin: as long as 'they contain the first syllable'.<sup>50</sup> Thus he claimed that even 'in

---

<sup>45</sup> Thornton MS, ff. 303v-304r, printed in Ogden, p. 57: 'Take vellum parchment and write this on it, and bind it to the woman's stomach: Holy Mary gave birth and her womb did not suffer. She bore Christ who redeemed us by his blood.'; my translation. The remedy following this one, to deliver a dead child, does not include extracts of holy scripture but still recommends lying scalded leeks against 'hir nauelle & alle a-bout the wambe' in order to 'caste out þe dede childe'; see Ogden, p. 57.

<sup>46</sup> See Weston, p. 291-92.

<sup>47</sup> London, British Library, Harley 273, f. 213v. This charm is printed in Hunt, p. 90.

<sup>48</sup> See the literature on midwifery by Green, Greilsammer, and Wiesner already cited.

<sup>49</sup> John Mirk, *Instructions for Parish Priests*, ed. by Edward Peacock, EETS, o.s. 31 (London: Oxford University Press, 1902).

<sup>50</sup> '[þ]ey holde þe fyrste sylabul, þe folghþe ys gode wythouten fabul'. See Mirk, *Instructions*, p. 18.

nomina patria & filia & spiritus sanctia' is acceptable since even corrupt Latin does harm the actual meaning.<sup>51</sup>

The charms, with their references to the Virgin's pain-free birth, the blessing of biblical mothers, perhaps together with practical breathing advice and sympathetic ingestions, would have offered the parturient woman something on which to focus during a painful and uncertain time. Sometimes prayers that protected against sudden death and death in childbirth were inscribed on rolls or girdles that could be worn or carried about the person. Some of these rolls purported to be related to the length of Christ's body; others claimed to represent the Virgin's girdle. The reproduction of the exact measurements, or measurements to scale, of holy relics was common in devotional books and that reproduction became imbued with the special qualities worthy of the original. For example a devotee, gazing upon an image purporting to be an accurate replica of the wound in Christ's side was actually beholding the real wound. The collapse of the representation into the thing itself, of the signifier into the signified, is evident in the text relating to a picture of the nails of the Passion on a roll in the British Library:

And thys ys the very lenth[t] of Cristiz naylis which most  
be *holdyn as relekys & worshipid deuoutly* with saying of v  
Pater Noster & v Auez & a Crede.<sup>52</sup>

Some of these rolls offered protection to the bearer against a variety of eventualities. For example, a roll in the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York, offered protection to anyone who looked upon it from death in battle, from death by fire and water, and from death without the sacrament (fig. 68).<sup>53</sup> If a woman in labour placed the roll over her womb it would also ensure a successful delivery:

And if a woman trawell of childe, take þis crose and lay it

---

<sup>51</sup> Mirk, *Instructions*, p. 18.

<sup>52</sup> London, British Library, Harley Rotulus T11. Printed by Bühler, p. 276. 'And this is the true length of Christ's nails which *must be held as relics and worshipped devoutly* by saying five Our Fathers and five Ave Marias and a Creed'; emphasis mine.

<sup>53</sup> New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, Glazier MS 39; printed in Bühler, p. 273.



one hyr wome and she shalbe hastely be delyuerde with joy  
with-ouen perell, the childe to haue Cristendom and þe moder  
purificacion of Haly Kirk. For Seynt Cerice and Seynt Julite, his  
moder, desired thes of almighty Gode, the wich He grauntede  
þame. This is registrede at Rome in Seynt John Laternece.<sup>54</sup>

The Saints 'Julite' and 'Cerice' or Julitta and Quiricus, were another holy mother-son pair which fitted in with the biblical and holy mothers found in the other charms considered here. St Julitta fled from persecution in Lycaonia with her three-month-old son, Quiricus. They were martyred in Tarsus under the emperor Diocletian (3-2 BCE), St Julitta watching her son killed before her eyes.<sup>55</sup> The two saints occur again, in a very similar text, on a scroll in the Wellcome Library in London. Like the Glazier manuscript, this scroll offers protection against all evils and for safe delivery in childbirth.<sup>56</sup> Much of the text on this scroll is faded but on the verso side the text reads 'Thys parchement ys oure lady seynt mary sengter'.<sup>57</sup> The catalogue suggests that 'sengter' may mean 'cincture', that it is a version of the Virgin's girdle and that its bad condition 'probably indicates that it has been frequently used as a 'Birth-girdle'.<sup>58</sup>

In the late Middle Ages many relics of the Virgin's girdle were housed in churches and these, like their manuscript counterparts, could also be used by women in childbirth. In his article 'Mothers of Florence', Brendan Cassidy discusses the legend of the Sacra Cintola, or holy girdle, of the Virgin which was venerated in the town of Prato in the late-fourteenth century.<sup>59</sup> Florentine *trecento* paintings of the *Madonna del Parto* show her holding a belt or girdle and Cassidy proposes that this feature was related to the Florentines' interest in

---

<sup>54</sup> Bühler, p. 275. 'And if a woman labours in childbirth, take this cross and lie it over her womb and she shall quickly be delivered with joy and without danger; the child will be baptised and the mother will be purified by the Holy Church. For Saint Quiricus and Saint Julitta his mother desired his of almighty God, and he granted it to them. This is recorded at Saint John Lateran in Rome'; my translation.

<sup>55</sup> *CEO*. Accessed 30 July 2003. Their feast day is 16 June.

<sup>56</sup> London, Wellcome Library, MS 632.

<sup>57</sup> About 19cm down. Printed in the *Cat. Well.*, p. 492.

<sup>58</sup> *Cat. Well.*, p. 493. Other types of manuscripts were considered efficacious in childbirth, such as the French life of St Margaret found in a birthing bag and discussed by Brunel and Aymar. See note at beginning of chapter.

<sup>59</sup> Brendan Cassidy, 'A Relic, Some Pictures and the Mothers of Florence in the Late Fourteenth Century', *Gesta*, 30 (1991), 91-99 (p. 93; p. 97).

the relic after they took control of Prato in about 1350.<sup>60</sup> The *Madonna del Parto* paintings themselves were made 'to accompany the devotional practices of fairly ordinary (if sufficiently wealthy) lay people' and Cassidy suggests that they were images 'to which expectant mothers and their families might direct their prayers to ease the travails of childbirth and for the safe delivery of a child'.<sup>61</sup> Relics of the Virgin's girdle also existed elsewhere in Europe. Cassidy notes one in Constantinople, three in France, one in Assisi and one at Westminster Abbey in England.<sup>62</sup> Extant evidence shows that these relics were requested by women of the nobility for assistance in childbirth. Stoerz notes that Henry III's wife, Eleanor 'when her time approached, is said to have sent for the girdle of the Virgin, which was kept at St Peter's, Westminster'.<sup>63</sup> Henry VII's wife Elizabeth of York 'paid 6s. 8d. to a monk for a girdle of Our Lady for use in childbirth'.<sup>64</sup> One instance of a royal borrowing of the Virgin's girdle brings us back to the house of Brittany: Legaré notes that 'Anne de Bretagne borrowed the Virgin's belt [from the Church of Puy-Notre-Dame, near Saumur], in September 1495, in order to enhance the fertility of her union with Charles VIII'.<sup>65</sup>

\* \* \*

This chapter has argued that, where some young wives and mothers encountered representations of childbirth, the interconnections between official liturgical texts, biblical narratives, and childbirth charms, would have influenced their reception of these images, and vice versa. Situating the charms in relation to the visual material already discussed has allowed us to propose a context in which fifteenth-century women viewed their own childbearing. Whereas the charms and images offered biblical precedents that may have been intended to condition women's identifications and promote the birth of male heirs, it also seems

---

<sup>60</sup> Cassidy, p. 91.

<sup>61</sup> Cassidy, p. 93; p. 97.

<sup>62</sup> In France the girdles were at Notre-Dame de Mont-Serrat, and at Notre-Dame in Paris and Chartres. See Cassidy, n. 17.

<sup>63</sup> Stoerz, p. 106.

<sup>64</sup> Thomas, p. 31. See also Bühler, p. 274; and W. J. Dilling, 'Girdles: Their Origin and Development, Particularly with Regard to their Use as Charms in Medicine, Marriage, and Midwifery', *Caledonian Medical Journal*, 9 (1912), 337-57 and 403-425 (p. 421).

<sup>65</sup> Legaré, 'Charlotte de Savoie's Library', p. 39.



probable that that young, married women, used textual and visual representations of childbirth as a way of gaining some control over the social positions which they were obliged to occupy by a patriarchal hegemony which had appropriated their lives and their bodies.

It is particularly important to note that the prayers of Marguerite de Foix and Anne de Bretagne list the same holy mothers as we find in both the childbirth charms and in the *post-partum* representations of childbirth in Books of Hours. The continual occurrence of these figures in the wider context of generic charms, coupled with the popularity of relics such as the Virgin's girdle, supports the likelihood that people occupying a viewing position informed by pregnancy, motherhood, birth, and death were particularly responsive to representations of childbirth. Anne and Marguerite's prayers were intensely personal, but the charms and remedies considered in this chapter show that similar strategies were available to other, not necessarily aristocratic, women for assistance in childbirth. Although as I noted at the start of this chapter it would be dangerous to homogenise all categories of female lay viewers, we can still acknowledge that the dangers of parturition, as well as the wish for a male child, must have conditioned the viewing position of pregnant woman and also of all the people – most likely other lay women – immediately involved in the birth.

In the following chapter we turn to evidence for the celebrations which followed childbirth – the lying-in period and the rite of churching. These ceremonies provided the new mother and her companions with an opportunity to recover from a birth and, where possible, to celebrate its success. A consideration of the emphasis on *post-partum* celebration and the benefits that it held for the new mother, can help us to understand further the *post-partum* images of childbirth in female-owned manuscripts, and how they could have signified a temporary reorganisation of gender roles.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### MATERNITY; CEREMONIES; AND MATERIAL CULTURE

In this thesis I have brought representations of childbirth from fifteenth-century devotional manuscripts to the centre of an art-historical enquiry, and also situated them in relation to evidence from the field of charm and prayer scholarship. This chapter offers a further contribution to interdisciplinary medieval studies by analysing how the visual and textual material already discussed relates to the *post-partum* preparations for, and celebrations associated with, childbirth in the fifteenth century. The ceremonies of lying-in and churching, which followed childbirth, provided respite from normalised gender roles and in some cases they actually seem to have destabilised those roles. When considered in the light of these practices, we can see further the possible meanings that *post-partum* images of childbirth had for their female viewers, by serving as signifiers of respite, successful birth, and the temporary renegotiation of gender roles that a birth entailed.

The first part of this chapter discusses the arrangements made for the lying-in of aristocratic women. Like the prayers and pictures examined previously, it is possible that the confinement of the new mother with its elaborate preparations were aimed at controlling or framing women's behaviour for the benefit of a patriarchal society. From the point of view of the pregnant woman and her companions, however, the lying-in period provided the mother with physical benefits, and for the company of women involved in the birth, it offered them a way of gaining some control within their social roles. Evidence for the furnishings which decorated the birth chamber of Isabelle de Bourbon, described in a treatise by Alienor of Poitiers, elucidates not only the furnished, domestic, interiors predominant on *deschi da parto* and in illuminated manuscripts, but it also helps to reveal more of the practical function of these visual objects for their female users. The second part of this chapter considers the rite of churching. This ceremony has often been understood by modern historians as a purification rite which subjugated the mother to misogynistic



rituals. However, viewed through the situational eye of young wives and mothers, churching, like lying-in, appears to have been a ceremony which had a special significance for women since it recognised the dangers of childbearing and, in its exclusive focus on the mother, made her childbearing body the centre of a liturgical rite.

### *Childbirth and Material Culture*

Extant evidence from the late Middle Ages and the Early Modern period indicates that there were a number of special preparations and rituals associated with childbearing. These included the seclusion of the pregnant woman before and during the birth, the lying-in period and its different stages that followed the birth, and the conclusion of this time with the rite of churching. In his work on childbirth in the Early Modern period, Wilson referred to these rituals and practices as the 'ceremony of childbirth'.<sup>1</sup> Although I would be wary of mapping the post-Reformation ceremony of childbirth proposed by Wilson, along with its historiographic debates, directly onto the fifteenth century, it is probable, from extant pre-Reformation sources, that practices such as lying-in and churching existed in a recognisable form in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

It is possible to gain some idea of how childbirth and churching were prepared for and celebrated at least amongst the upper echelons of fifteenth-century society, through the emphasis given to the furnishing of the birth chamber. Medieval furnishings and furniture have been discussed by Penelope Eames.<sup>2</sup> The evidence she has examined centres largely on the furnishings of French and English royal households and is particularly relevant here given this thesis's focus on the royal houses of Anjou and Brittany.<sup>3</sup> For example, in 1420

---

<sup>1</sup> Wilson, 'Participant or Patient?'; 'The Ceremony of Childbirth and its Interpretation'; and *The Making of Man-midwifery*; see Chapter One.

<sup>2</sup> Penelope Eames, *Furniture in England, France and the Netherlands from the Twelfth to the Fifteenth Century* (London: Furniture History Society, 1977).

<sup>3</sup> For the seventeenth century Wilson notes that the 'childbirth ritual in its more elaborate form was observed particularly among the upper classes' but that '[t]he humbler cottager's wife did not have the physical space for a separate room, probably

a purchase was made on behalf of Philippe, the Duke of Burgundy, from Thomas de Chalons: 'a pavilion of cloth of Rennes and various other pavilions and sparvers, together with various cushions and other things [...] by order of the Duke as much as the Duchess herself being brought to bed and also leaving her bed due to the birth of M. John, their son [John the Fearless]'.<sup>4</sup> An inventory of 1423 from the court of Henry V included one 'tent bed of gold brocade, made for the Queen's lying in, with 2 panes of scarlet furred with ermine, and with all the accessories thereto, value £100'.<sup>5</sup>

One of the best surviving accounts of the material preparations for royal and aristocratic births and baptisms is the treatise by Alienor of Poitiers *Les Honneurs de la cour*, written between 1484 and 1491.<sup>6</sup> Alienor was the daughter of Jean de Poitiers and Isabeau de Souse, 'a lady descended from the Portuguese royal line who came to Burgundy in 1429 in the train of Isabelle of Portugal [wife of Philippe le Bon]'.<sup>7</sup> In her account Alienor indicates how the furnishings of rooms for births were governed by the degrees of estate and she describes 'the furnishings permitted for ladies of the nobility ranking second and third below the degree of princess'.<sup>8</sup> In considering Alienor's descriptions, we can return to Baxandall's original formulation of the 'period eye', noted in Chapter Two. Baxandall says that 'Renaissance people were [...] on their mettle before a picture, because of an expectation that cultivated people should be able to make discriminations about the interest of pictures'.<sup>9</sup> In a similar way, but in front of different material, a viewer like Alienor was also 'on her mettle'. From her position at the Burgundian court she was highly attuned to the permitted

---

could not have recruited help about the house for a month's lying-in, and may indeed have had to go back to work out of doors'; see Wilson, 'Participant or Patient?', p. 139. However, he does suggest that there was 'much scope for flexibility' and that '[w]hat little indication we have of the observance of the ritual, limited and indirect as it is, does suggest well-nigh universal acceptance of some form or other of lying-in'; see Wilson, 'Participant or Patient?', p. 139.

<sup>4</sup> Eames, p. 84.

<sup>5</sup> Eames, p. 84.

<sup>6</sup> Other, very brief, references to royal births appear in M. J. Tucker, 'The Child as Beginning and End: Fifteenth and Sixteenth Century Childhood', in *The History of Childhood*, ed. by Lloyd de Mause (Norwich: Psychohistory Press, 1974), pp. 229-257; and Phillis Cunnington and Catherine Lucas, *Costume for Births, Marriages and Deaths* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1972).

<sup>7</sup> Eames, p. 257.

<sup>8</sup> Eames, p. 257.

<sup>9</sup> Baxandall, *Painting*, p. 37.



furnishings for the appropriate estate. This is evidenced not only in her comparison of Isabelle de Bourbon's lying-in with that of the French queen, but also in the close details she gives of the colours, materials, fabrics, and furniture employed in the birth chamber.

In part of her account, Alienor described the preparations for the birth of Marie de Bourgogne, daughter of Charles, Duke of Burgundy and Isabelle de Bourbon, in 1456.<sup>10</sup> She noted how three types of chambers were prepared for this birth: the *Chambre de Parement*, the *Chambre de Madame*, and the *Chambre de l'Enfant*. The *Chambre de Madame*, where Marie's mother, Isabelle de Bourbon, lay, is portrayed thus:

The room of my lady was big and there were two large beds standing near one another, and between the beds there was an alleyway, of about four or five feet wide. [...] The three curtains, which I have mentioned here, are called *traversines*; and I should say that when the queen of France gave birth she had an additional curtain of this kind which hung across the chamber; but neither the Duchess of Burgundy [Isabelle of Portugal] nor her daughter-in-law Madame de Charrolais [Isabelle of Burgundy] had more than three, as described here. The room was hung with nothing but green silk and the floor was covered with a carpet of rich fabric right up to the door, between the two beds, and everywhere else. The two large beds and the couch were covered in ermine, and underneath these covers was a fine violet cloth and on top of this was another sheet; and when they were on the beds, these two cloths reached down to the floor and trailed along it for a yard and a half. Beneath these covers there were two beautiful sheets of fine gauze, which were longer than the covers, and the couch was covered in the same way as the beds, and both beds were arranged for sleeping. Also, there was always a large fire in the room, which was lit according to the weather since it was not a mark of estate.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> See Appendix 3 for genealogical tree of the Duchy of Burgundy.

<sup>11</sup> My translation is loosely based on Eames's, but I have rearranged the English to match the original; see Eames, pp. 257-68; pp. 268-71. 'La Chambre de maditte Dame

Whereas the scale of the preparations made for Isabel at the birth of Marie de Bourgogne is clearly an exceptional case, Alienor's description of the room does evoke the rooms depicted in the *post-partum* images of childbirth discussed above. In many examples of the *Birth of the Virgin* or the *Birth of St John the Baptist*, and even in some instances of the Nativity of Christ (in René d'Anjou's *London Hours*), the holy mothers lie in large beds, often with richly coloured covers and canopies. For example in the *Birth of the Virgin* in the *Fitzwilliam Hours*, St Anne's bed is hung with blue fabric decorated with gold patterns. In the *Birth of the Virgin* miniature in Jean Mansel's *Fleur des histoires*, St Anne's bed is hung with dark green curtains and covers; behind the bed is a rich blue panel decorated with gold (no. 40; fig. 69). In the two birth scenes in a late-fifteenth-century *horae* (no. 13), seats, cushions, and plates furnish the interiors; in one image sheets are warmed before the fire (figs 5-6).

It is probable that the aristocratic female owners of the manuscripts discussed in the previous chapter also gave birth in the sort of settings described by Alienor and that they would have visited other women in the same circumstances. In the same way as Alienor was attuned to the furnishings in Isabelle's room, women such as Marguerite de Foix or Isabel Stuart would also have been conscious of the importance of the furnishings and preparations used in the childbirth chambers they saw. That disapproval could be levied against those who went above their station in the furnishings of estate is evidenced in Christine de Pizan's *Livre des Trois Vertus* where she notes the case of a merchant's wife 'whose lying-in with three beds, rivalled that of the French

---

estoit grande & y avoit deux grands lits l'un emprez l'autre d'un rang, & au milieu des deux lits y avoit une allée, bien de quatre ou cinq pieds de large (ll. 27-32). Ces trois courtines dont j'ay icy parlé on les appelle traversaines; & ay ouy dire que quand la Royne de France gist, elle en a une plus, & est au travers de la chambre: mais Madame la Duchesse de Bourgogne ne Madame de Charrolois sa belle-fille n'en avoient que trois, comme cy dessus est escript. (ll. 78-86). La chambre autour n'estoit tendue que de soye verde; & au bas toute tapisée de tapis velus jusques à l'huis, & entre les deux grands lits & tout par tout. Les deux grands lits & la couchette estoient couverts d'ermes arminées, & dedans desdicts couverts estoit de fin drap violet; & passoit le drap violet bien trois quartiers la panne; & quand ils estoient sur les lits, la panne & le drap pendoient bien à terre aulne & demie [...]. Dessus ces couverts il y avoit deux beaux draps de fin couvre-chief de crespé empresé, qui traînoient plus long que les couverts, & la couchette estoit couverte comme les grands lits, & estoient tous les lits rebrassez comme pour s'y coucher (ll. 99- 121). Item, en laditte chambre y avoit tousjours grand feu, mais cela se fait selon le temps, car ce n'est point d'état. (ll. 193-94)'.



queen, who had five beds'.<sup>12</sup> Since the images of childbirth in devotional manuscripts allude to the rich furnishings described by Alienor, these representations may well have reminded the viewer of their own lying-in – either expected or already experienced.

The preparations and furnishings described by Alienor at the Burgundian court evidently relate to the degrees of estate and to paternal wealth and dynastic ambition. Kay Staniland has suggested that the fifteenth-century rituals that accompanied royal births 'not only offered opportunities for lavish displays and rituals consolidating his hard won position, but gave the king the additional power of assigning prestigious roles in those rituals to supporters [...] in his new court'.<sup>13</sup> For a King such as Henry VII of England, Staniland notes that 'the birth of his first son was a fortuitous achievement which contributed to the establishment of the Tudor dynasty'.<sup>14</sup> The public celebration of the birth of a royal child was an occasion which the king could appropriate for his own political ends. Similarly the arrangements for visiting the new mother could also be directed or appropriated by the male sovereign to stress the importance of the birth. From Alienor's description of the furnishing of Isabelle's *Chambre de Parement* we learn that the birth chamber is full of symbols of the family into which Isabelle has married. Alienor notes that the large dresser in the room 'was covered with linen and bore quantities of precious plate, including vessels of solid gold, vessels set with jewels and all the richest vessels owned by Duke Philip'.<sup>15</sup> Over the dresser on which this plate was displayed, was a fringed pelmet. This, Alienor notes, was embroidered in fine gold with the heraldic device of Philippe le Bon.<sup>16</sup> Isabelle's husband Charles was Philippe's only son

---

<sup>12</sup> Quoted in Kay Staniland, 'Royal Entry into the World', *England in the Fifteenth Century: Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. (1987), pp. 297-313 (p. 312).

<sup>13</sup> Staniland, p. 312.

<sup>14</sup> Staniland, p. 312.

<sup>15</sup> Eames, p. 270: 'En laditte Chambre il y avoit ung grand dresseoir, sur lequel y avoit quatre beaux degrez, aussi longs que le dresseoir estoit large, & tout couvert de nappes, ledit dresseoir & les degrez estoient tous chargez de vaisselles de cristalle garnies d'or & de pierreries & sy en y avoit de fin or; car toute la plus riche vaisselle du Ducq Philippe y estoit, tant de pots de tasses, comme de coupes de fin or.' Eames, p. 259; ll. 134-45.

<sup>16</sup> Eames, p. 259; ll. 153-57: 'Sur ledit dresseoir estoit tendu un dorsset de drap d'or cramoisy bordée de velour noir, & sur le velour noir estoit bordée de fin or la devise de Monseigneur le Ducq Philippe, qui estoit le fusil [gun]'.

and Isabelle was Charles's second wife.<sup>17</sup> As she gave birth amongst the objects of her father-in-law's wealth and dynasty, Isabelle must have been very aware of these symbols and of the family's expectation of a successful, male, birth. In fact, Marie de Bourgogne was Isabelle and Charles's only child and Charles was the last Duke of Burgundy.

The symbols of patriarchy in Isabelle's birth chamber asserted a masculine presence in a room from which men were excluded, at least for part of the time. Such symbols were also intended to appeal to spectators, both male and female, who would have been aware of the expectation of the birth for the future of the dynasty. In her account Alienor reveals that visitors were expected to Isabelle de Bourbon:

In a corner of the room, near the buffet, was a little low table. Here were placed the jugs and drinking cups for serving those who visited the Countess, after they had first partaken of the delicacies in the spice plates kept on the buffet.<sup>18</sup>

The new mother, Isabelle de Bourbon, was on display to her visitors and her childbearing body was surrounded, in the chamber, by personalised coats of arms embodying family status. The *Fitzwilliam Hours* and the *Hours of Marguerite de Foix* were also personalised with the joint arms of their own and their husband's families. Thus, where the heraldic devices of Philippe le Bon literally framed Isabelle's lying-in if not her giving birth, so too the heraldic devices in the manuscripts framed Isabel's and Marguerite's prayers for children.

That childbearing and the spaces belonging to it were appropriated and mediated for patriarchal ends is also evident in the sources for childbearing in fifteenth-century Italy. Musacchio has proposed that the special purchases made for the birth chamber, the visiting of the new mother, and the giving and

---

<sup>17</sup> His previous marriage, without issue, had been to Catherine de Valois (1428-46), daughter of Marie d'Anjou and Charles VII. After Isabelle's death in 1465, Charles married Margeret of York in 1468, the sister of Edward IV of England but this marriage too was childless.

<sup>18</sup> Eames's translation, p. 271, ll. 185-93: 'Auprès du dressoir à ung coing, il y avoit une petite tablette basse, là où l'on mettoit les pots & tasses pour donner à boire à ceux qui venoient veoir Madame, après qu'on leur avoit donné de la drangée; mais le drageoir estoit sur le dressoir'.



receiving of gifts was part of the 'politicized nature of childbirth'.<sup>19</sup> She notes that women 'may have received the gifts, but they were determined by lineal, political, and social ties, and they were paid for by men'.<sup>20</sup> However, when we consider the pressures placed on patrician women to procreate, together with the physical dangers of childbearing, it is evident that items which may have been for patriarchal display and impression, such as the various beds, the purchasing of special linens, foods and drinks, and the arrangements for visitors could, conversely, serve to convey a great deal of care and attention towards the mother and child. Thus as patrician wives *and* mothers or mothers-to-be, women such as Marguerite de Foix could have seen in the images of childbirth and in the rituals associated with their pregnancies, a variety of relevancies, not least comfort, for their own childbearing.

The pressure on aristocratic women to give birth to male heirs meant that childbearing was a central part of their lives. We saw in Chapter Three how Marguerite de Foix had difficulty getting pregnant and providing a male heir. Although we might expect women of the nobility to fare better than their lower-class counterparts, women in the French royal houses were often continually pregnant. Bonne of Luxembourg, mother of Charles V of France bore ten children in the space of seventeen years; Marie d'Anjou, wife of Charles VII, gave birth to fourteen children over a period of twenty-four years. Both queens were therefore undergoing childbirth more than once in every two years. Losing children either at birth or in the early years of life was very much a reality in the fifteenth century: only two children from eight of Anne de Bretagne's pregnancies survived into adulthood, neither of them a son. Therefore, although it is extremely difficult to assess the numbers of women and children who died in childbirth in the fifteenth century (and perhaps easy to overestimate the number of mortalities), death due to childbirth still posed a much greater threat in then than it does today. Greilsammer has pointed out that death during and after childbearing did not dramatically decrease in France 'until the end of the nineteenth century, or even later' and she estimates that maternal

---

<sup>19</sup> Musacchio, *Ritual*, p. 46.

<sup>20</sup> Musacchio, *Ritual*, p. 46.

mortality was at between one and seven percent in the Early Modern period.<sup>21</sup> Klapisch-Zuber and David Herlihy have 'concluded that close to a fifth of the recorded deaths of young, married women in early fifteenth-century Florence were associated in some way with childbearing'.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, viewed through the situational eye of young wives, the arrangements made for women in childbirth were not only indicative of a dominant patriarchy interested in the production of male heirs but they also signified an acknowledgement of the dangers of parturition, and offered respite and care for the mother. In Chapter Three we noted the specific need for Isabel Stuart, Marguerite de Foix, and Anne de Bretagne to provide male heirs. These women probably approached the end of each pregnancy with some trepidation, mindful of the complications associated with birth and the need for a male child. Thus the elaborate lying-in period which these women were in the privileged position to be able to undertake, signified a time and a space in which they could rest and recover. As we shall see in the following section, lying-in also offered the opportunity for the subversion of normalised gender roles.

That the lying-in period offered a period of respite for the mother has been argued by Wilson for the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Although Wilson is dealing with evidence for childbearing some two centuries later than the period discussed here, his interpretations are also applicable to fifteenth-century practices. He claims that the 'ceremony of childbirth was created by women, and its customs are intelligible in the context of women's lives'.<sup>23</sup> Drawing on the work of Natalie Zemon-Davis, Wilson argues that in the 'reversal of the normal power-relations between wife and husband [the]

---

<sup>21</sup> Greilsammer, p. 287; and n. 6. She is drawing on the work of Mireille Laget, *Naissances: L'accouchement avant l'âge de la clinique* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1982). Mary Martin McLaughlin has suggested that for the ninth to thirteenth centuries, one or two children in every three would die during birth. See Mary Martin McLaughlin, 'Survivors and Surrogates: Children and Parents from the Ninth to the Thirteenth Centuries', in *The History of Childhood*, pp. 101-81 (p. 111). Wilson suggests that one in thirty births became obstructed but that nearly ninety-eight percent of births in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England were normal; see Wilson, 'Patient or Participant', p. 137; and *Man-Midwifery*, p. 33; and n. 76.

<sup>22</sup> Quoted in Musacchio, *Ritual*, p. 25. The source is David Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Tuscans and their Families: A Study of the Florentine Catasto of 1427* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985, p. 277.

<sup>23</sup> Wilson, *Man-Midwifery*, p. 29.



ceremony of childbirth placed the woman “on top” amidst all families’.<sup>24</sup> In her article, ‘Women On Top’, Zemon-Davis countered the view of some feminists by suggesting that ‘the image of the disorderly woman did not always function to keep women in their place. On the contrary it was a multivalent image’.<sup>25</sup> Thus Wilson claims that the the seclusion of the woman during childbirth, ‘inverted the normal pattern of conjugal relations: the wife’s bodily energies and sexuality now, for the space of ‘the month’, belonged to her; what marriage had taken away from her, the ceremony of childbirth temporarily restored’.<sup>26</sup> Therefore for the period of their lying-in, the expectations placed upon a woman – in the late Middle Ages as well as the Early Modern period –were momentarily suspended: she neither had to carry a child; nor was she expected to have sex with her husband.

In Chapter Four we saw how charms for parturition probably helped the woman during labour. Aspects of the lying-in ceremony also created an encouraging environment for the new mother. In her treatise Alienor noted how the room of Isabelle de Bourbon had a fire that was lit according to the weather rather than being a mark of estate; this implies that keeping the room warm was a primary concern in the care of the parturient woman and the new-born child. She also remarked that the room was lit with two candles since ‘a full fifteen days had to elapse [after the birth] before the shutters were opened’.<sup>27</sup> Wilson has noted that shutting daylight out of the room had a practical foundation in preventing eclampsia. Furthermore, other practices, such as the swaddling of the child also had practical benefits since swaddling tends to send children to sleep, so preventing them from crying. In these arrangements, Wilson claims that ‘women had worked out what was best for them’.<sup>28</sup>

Musacchio and Wilson both note that food was an important aspect of the childbirth ceremony and certain specially prepared foods were the privilege of the female attendants and visitors to the parturient woman. Alienor refers to the delicacies provided for the visitors to Isabelle and for the sixteenth century

---

<sup>24</sup> Wilson, ‘Ceremony’, p. 86.

<sup>25</sup> Natalie Zemon-Davis, ‘Women on Top’, in *Society and Culture in Early-Modern France* (London: Duckworth, 1975), pp. 124-51 (p. 131).

<sup>26</sup> Wilson, ‘Ceremony’, p. 87.

<sup>27</sup> Eames, p. 259; for the French see p. 271; ll. 176-84.

<sup>28</sup> Wilson, *Man-Midwifery*, pp. 26-29.

Wilson notes that the caudle was a 'special drink associated with childbirth, consisting of ale or wine, warmed with sugar and spices'.<sup>29</sup> It may well be this drink, the 'good cawdel', that the fifteenth-century Margery Kempe prepares for the Virgin in her vision of the Crucifixion.<sup>30</sup> Wilson claims that the caudle was not only a nourishment for the mother, but that it also served a 'ceremonial and social function' since it was also drunk by the women visiting the new mother.<sup>31</sup> For fifteenth-century Italy Musacchio indicates that the 'food and drink consumed by the visiting women was well documented, and the expenses they generated were carefully tracked'.<sup>32</sup> She also notes that there was a strong 'association between poultry and childbirth' and that sweetmeats, cake and wine were also brought to new mothers.<sup>33</sup> Poultry is found in sacred paintings such as the altarpiece of the *Birth of St John the Baptist* painted by Giusto de' Menabuoi for the Padua Baptistery, and in his fresco of the *Birth of St John*, discussed in Chapter One (fig. 16). In the same way that representations of holy births in the Anjou-Brittany manuscripts were made more aristocratic by the addition of rich details, this representation of contemporary practices in sacred images also links wealthy and aristocratic rituals to the practices of the saints, so reinforcing the idea that sacred images could function as zones in which wished-for outcomes were given expression.

Here we have seen how the arrangements made for royal births, viewed from the position of the mother-to-be, evoked not only the duty to one's husband and state, but were also seen as a suitable response to, and practical support for, the execution of those duties. Another way to evaluate the meaning of the ceremony of childbirth and the representations of childbirth in manuscripts is through further consideration of Zemon-Davis's interpretation of the subversive iconography on *deschi da parto*. As part of her original formulation of the 'women-on-top' theory, Zemon-Davis claimed that representations of Phyllis riding Aristotle show how the subjection of women in marriage 'might be

---

<sup>29</sup> Wilson, *Man-Midwifery*, p. 26.

<sup>30</sup> In her vision Margery 'mad for owr Lady a good cawdel & browt it hir to comfortyn hir'. See *The Book of Margery Kempe*, p. 195.

<sup>31</sup> See Wilson, 'Participant or Patient?', pp. 135-38.

<sup>32</sup> Musacchio, *Ritual*, p. 43; see also pp. 42; 50-52.

<sup>33</sup> Musacchio, *Ritual*, pp. 40-41.



reversed temporarily during the lying-in period'.<sup>34</sup> Zemon-Davis's theory has affinities with Randolph's interpretation of the *Dovizie* statuettes and my own formulation of a situational eye informed by maternity, since it acknowledges the multivalency of images brought about by the different gender and social roles of the viewer.

We noted in previous chapters how *deschi da parto* were decorated with scenes of childbirth and images from classical narratives. One tray discussed by Musacchio from the workshop of Apollonio di Giovanni is decorated with two naked boys playing with poppy seed capsules; the other side is decorated with a painting illustrating Petrarch's *Triumph of Chastity* (fig. 31). The reverses of two other birth trays in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, are painted with another scene, from Petrarch's *Triumph of Love*. These *Triumph* scenes show what Zemon-Davis has called 'women-on-top' motifs: for example, Phyllis riding Aristotle and Delilah cutting Samson's hair. Although in her analysis of *deschi da parto* iconography Musacchio draws our attention to these scenes, she fails to explore fully the possible meanings of these inversion scenes. She comments that the image of the poppy seed capsules on the Apollonio tray were symbols of fertility and that the reverse scene of the *Triumph of Chastity*, 'in the context of childbirth [...] must have been intended as a warning to the pregnant woman to remain chaste in her marriage and ensure the paternity of her children'.<sup>35</sup> Following Zemon-Davis and Wilson, I argue that the *Triumph of Chastity* scenes represent not just an admonition to chastity or fidelity, as Musacchio claims (and which they may well have been) but that they also allude to, or constitute an allegory of, the woman's lying-in. In figure 31, winged Love, the only male figure in the scene, is processed on a cart with his hands tied behind his back, his head and eyes downcast, in the manner Berdini claimed women were supposed to be represented by fifteenth-century artists.<sup>36</sup> The rest of the scene is populated solely by women who, dressed in their finery, seem to be engaged in conversations and take no notice of the disempowered Cupid. To read the topsy-turvy iconography as subversive rather than, or as well as, prescriptive, is to read it from the position of the mothers themselves, with a

<sup>34</sup> Zemon-Davis, p. 145; n. 37.

<sup>35</sup> Musacchio, *Ritual*, p. 55; text accompanying fig. 39; and p. 130.

<sup>36</sup> See Chapter Two.

situational eye attuned to dangers and expectations of motherhood, and the benefits of the lying-in ceremony. We can see how the *deschi* reinforced the positive seclusion of the woman during lying-in, both in their representation of that space, and by being designed specifically to mediate that space.<sup>37</sup> Whereas *post-partum* scenes on *deschi* literally recreated that space, the *Triumph* iconographies, represented that space in a different way, by showing the reversal of gender roles that childbearing entailed.

It is necessary to be careful in using *deschi* to understand the manuscript images since there remains a disjunction between the disruptive potential of the *Triumph* iconography on some of the *deschi*, and those other more straightforward images and objects associated with mothers and childbirth. *Post-partum* images of childbirth in devotional manuscripts, or the terracotta *Dovizie* discussed by Randolph, do not have a reverse side or a subtext offering the possibility for disruption. However, Zemon-Davis's and Wilson's reading of the lying-in ritual as a beneficial period for the mother, reinforces my contention that from the point of view of the people – predominantly the mothers – involved in childbearing, the *post-partum* representations of childbirth in devotional manuscripts, as well as the actual preparations for the birth, provided practical support, comfort and reassurance. Through the prayer in her Book of Hours, we know that Marguerite de Foix acknowledged the importance of her pregnancies, as Breton Duchess, for her husband's duchy. Although the images in Marguerite's book, and in the *Fitzwilliam Hours*, are generic like those in manuscripts owned by lay men and monks, it is possible that in their own particular circumstances these images functioned as spaces onto which these women could project their expectations for a successful birth; in them they found a representation of the care and attention that they would receive – not only from a company of surrounding women, but also from the patriarchal court.

In the following section we turn to the rite of churching as another ceremony which made the new mother the centre of attention and offered a further opportunity for the subversion of traditional gender roles. Together with

---

<sup>37</sup> Gibson has noted that the trays link the enclosed (female) space of the childbirth room to the outside (male) world; see Gibson, 'Scene and Obscene', p. 11, noted in the Introduction.



the lying-in ceremony, this *post-partum* event brings another context to the interpretation of images of childbirth by lay women.

### *The Rite of Churching*

The churching ceremony concluded the mother's lying-in period and it was the only liturgical rite that the medieval Church provided solely for a mother – for a secular, sexually active, married woman, who had given birth and who had survived. Historians of churching in the Early Modern period have often debated the rite from the point of view of purification. These approaches have been unhelpful since they risk seeing the ritual and the women who took part in it only in terms of patriarchal prescriptions. A recent interpretation of medieval churching by Paula M. Rieder argues that although the rite has its origins in Jewish purification laws, the rite offered a way for women to celebrate the successful outcome of their pregnancies and to destabilise normalised gender roles.<sup>38</sup> The multivalency of the rite of churching, as identified by Rieder, also supports the multivalency of the *post-partum* images of childbirth in late-medieval manuscripts for which I have argued. Rieder's approach shares similarities with that of Wilson who sees the continuation of churching in the Early Modern period as part of the ceremony of childbirth, which as we have seen had benefits for women. Using interpretations of churching by Rieder, Wilson and others, we can see how this ritual, like the arrangements for childbirth, were en/gendered differently through the different situational eyes of mothers and priests.

The rite of churching became established in the eleventh century and has its origins in Old Testament blood taboos and notions of impurity drawn from Leviticus. These taboos were carried over into the early Christian church: very early sources such as the fourth-century *Canons of Hippolytus* refer to the purification of women after childbirth and to the separation of the parturient

---

<sup>38</sup> Paula M. Rieder, 'Insecure Borders: Symbols of Clerical Privilege and Gender Ambiguity in the Liturgy of churching', in *The Material Culture of Sex*, pp. 93-113

woman from the Church and from communion.<sup>39</sup> Like the statements found in Leviticus, the canon states that the woman should remain outside the 'holy place' and not take communion for forty or eighty days depending on the sex of her child.<sup>40</sup> A woman who does enter the church should be seated with the catechumens. The canon also says that the midwife must also be purified after a delivery: she too should not take communion and must sit with the catechumens although the midwife's term of purification is half that of the mother.<sup>41</sup> Therefore the seclusion of the woman during the period just before and just following the birth of her child included her separation from the patriarchal world of the church, and from community worship. The newly-delivered mother was seen to occupy a liminal, possibly dangerous, space. The churching ceremony, whether interpreted as a purification or a thanksgiving, is primarily one of reintegration into the community.<sup>42</sup>

Our access to late-medieval churching is, like that of the lying-in ceremony, often reliant on post-Reformation sources. Becky R. Lee explores some of the medieval sources for the rite in her article 'The Purification of Women after Childbirth' but like other medieval scholars working in this field she bases her interpretation of the ceremony – as a ritual that both subverted and reinscribed medieval gender roles – on the work of Early Modern scholars such as Wilson and David Cressy.<sup>43</sup> We can certainly surmise a fair deal about fifteenth- and early-sixteenth-century churching practices from post-Reformation sources although as with the ceremony of childbirth it is important that we do

---

<sup>39</sup> Joanne M. Pierce, '“Green Women” and Blood Pollution: Some Medieval Rituals for the Churching of Women after Childbirth', *Studia Liturgica*, 29 (1999), 191-215 (p. 194). Pierce's quotes from Canon 18 come from *The Canons of Hippolytus*, ed. by Paul F. Bradshaw, trans. by Carol Bebawi, Alcuin Liturgical Study 2 (Nottingham: Grove Books, 1987).

<sup>40</sup> Leviticus 12. 2-5.

<sup>41</sup> Pierce, pp. 194-95. I have not come across any evidence of the purification rule applying to midwives in the late middle ages.

<sup>42</sup> Wilson has analysed the process in terms of Arnold van Gennep's *rites de passage*, with its three distinct phases of separation, transition, and reincorporation. See Wilson, 'Participant or Patient?', p. 141; and 'Ceremony', pp. 84-85.

<sup>43</sup> Becky R. Lee, 'The Purification of Women After Childbirth: A Window onto Medieval Perceptions of Women', *Florilegium*, 14 (1995-96), 43-55. See also her, 'A Company of Women and Men: Men's Recollections of Childbirth', *Journal of Family History*, 27 (2002), 92-100; and David Cressy, 'Purification, Thanksgiving and the Churching of Women in Post-Reformation England', *Past and Present*, 141 (1993), 106-46.



not map the dislikes of the (male) proponents of the new Protestant religion – and the debates it has generated in contemporary historiography – directly onto the earlier period. Much of the scholarship on Early Modern churching tends to rehearse the positive/negative binaries that characterised debate over the ceremony in the sixteenth century. Given the theological upheavals of the sixteenth century, as well as the increased number of historical records, it is not surprising that scholars have focused on the rather anomalous survival of this ‘medieval’ or Catholic rite well into the eighteenth century.<sup>44</sup> For William Coster the ceremony indicates ‘a very low general opinion of sex, childbirth, and women in early modern England. The rite, its trappings and focus were almost penitential’.<sup>45</sup> He adheres to Keith Thomas’s view that ‘for the people at large churching was indubitably a ritual of purification, closely linked to its Jewish predecessor’.<sup>46</sup> Coster is unable to see the ceremony as anything more than a misogynistic Judaeo-Christian purification rite that subjugated the woman by making her wear a veil and by insisting on her kneeling at the altar and bringing offerings. He even claims that the ceremony was imbued with ‘[a]n element of magic’ in the use of Psalm 121 ‘with its strange, perhaps even magical chant that, “the sun shall not burn you by day, neither the moon by night”’.<sup>47</sup> Cressy proposes a less negative interpretation of the ritual, suggesting that ‘women normally looked forward to churching as an occasion of female social activity, in which the notion of “purification” was uncontentious, minimal or missing’.<sup>48</sup>

A more feminist interpretation of the rite is that of Wilson, who sees churching in the post-Reformation era, like that of the lying-in ceremony, as part of ‘women’s resistance to patriarchal power’ and he claims that the *post-partum*

---

<sup>44</sup> In addition to those articles on churching already listed see Duffy, ‘Holy Maydens, Holy Wyfes’; Natalie Knödel, *The Thanksgiving of Women after Childbirth, commonly called The Churching of Women* <http://users.ox.ac.uk/~mikef/church.html> Accessed: 3 May 2001. Many studies on churching refer to the principal analysis of the rite in Adolph Franz’s *Die kirchlichen Benediktionen im Mittelalter*, 2 vols (Friburg: Herder, 1909; repr., Graz: Akademischer Druck U.-Verlaganstalt, 1960).

<sup>45</sup> William Coster, ‘Purity, Profanity, and Puritanism: the churching of Women, 1500-1700’, *Woman and the Church*, Studies in Church History, 27 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 377-387 (p. 384).

<sup>46</sup> Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (London: Penguin, 1973; repr. 1991), p. 43; and quoted in Coster, p. 384.

<sup>47</sup> Coster, p. 384.

<sup>48</sup> Cressy, ‘Purification’, p. 110.

rite could have been enjoyed as a social occasion rather than ‘an imposition from without, as a male and clerical burden laid upon mothers’.<sup>49</sup> Wilson notes how there was a ‘gender-division of responses’ to Early Modern churching.<sup>50</sup> Whilst Puritans criticised the ceremony for its Catholic origins, women continued to seek out the ritual. Importantly for this thesis, Wilson implies that the ceremony could be interpreted from different viewing positions:

[T]he [male Puritan] eye which sees in order to denounce is no key to the origins. [...] [T]he regular presence in the churching procession of the company of women links the ecclesiastical ritual firmly with the lay ceremony of childbirth – hence the popularity of churching. Women liked it because it was a women’s ritual.<sup>51</sup>

In addition to its connection to the Catholic faith, it is possibly the relationship of churching to the ceremony of childbirth, which Zemon-Davis and Wilson claim disrupted normalised gender roles and household spaces, that may have been behind masculine, post-Reformation, criticisms of the rite of churching.<sup>52</sup>

For the later Middle Ages we can indirectly gain some idea of the importance of churching and attitudes towards it from sermons and plays relating to the feast of Candlemas. Candlemas was the celebration of the Virgin’s purification in the Temple after the birth of Christ. The Candlemas festival allowed the whole community, men, women and children, to re-enact the biblical event and thus re-affirm their Christian faith. Despite its significance as a

---

<sup>49</sup> Wilson, ‘Ceremony’, p. 79. This is especially true of interpretations of Early Modern churching where the ceremony appears to have been requested and maintained by women despite ecclesiastical dislike of the ‘popish’ ceremony. On this, see in particular Wilson, ‘Ceremony’, esp. pp. 85-93.

<sup>50</sup> Wilson, ‘Ceremony’, p. 91.

<sup>51</sup> Wilson, ‘Ceremony’, p. 92

<sup>52</sup> Wilson claims that childbirth could have caused a considerable amount of disruption to the routine of a household, whatever its degree of estate. He says that ‘if a separate room could not be found in the house, the delivery might take place at the mother’s mother’s house, or perhaps at the house of a friend; or else the bed alone might be curtained off, creating so to speak a lying-in ‘space’ within a family room’. Wilson, ‘Participant or Patient?’, p. 139. Cressy has argued that a husband might be expected to play a greater role in the running of the household while his wife was recovering from childbirth. See Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 44.



community event, Gibson notes that scholars have failed to ‘comment at all upon the curious fact that the corporate procession of believers in the Candlemas ritual theater was also the liturgical type of a female gynecological rite re-enacted in the private calendar ritual of each new mother’s childbirth’.<sup>53</sup> Sources such as the *Purification in the Temple* episodes from the fifteenth-century *York Plays* are examples of how the Virgin’s purification ‘was transformed from sacred history into symbol of the corporate body of parish believers’ as all members of the community carried lighted candles through their streets or church.<sup>54</sup> Mirk described the feast’s pagan connections to a Roman festival celebrating Februa, the mother of Mars. He detailed how the worship of Mars and Februa with torches and burning candles was christianised by one Pope Sergius who decided to turn the custom to the worship of God and the Virgin by commanding Christian men and women to bring a candle to church on that day, as if they came with the Virgin to church.<sup>55</sup> Mirk reinforced this link between the Candlemas festival and the Virgin’s own churching when he claimed that the fourth reason for her purification was to provide an example to Christian women that they should come to church after giving birth in order to give thanks to God for a successful delivery.<sup>56</sup> Although his initial stress was on the fulfilment of Levitical law, Mirk made the Virgin’s purification an exemplar for the churching of contemporary women. He recognises the physical perils of childbirth and indicated that the ceremony is a way for women to give thanks to God for ‘scapyng’ a near-death experience. This recognition of the dangers of childbearing and the woman’s deliverance from it would have invested the

---

<sup>53</sup> Gibson, ‘Blessing from Sun and Moon: Churching as Women’s Theater’, in *Bodies and Disciplines: Intersections of Literature and History in Fifteenth-Century England*, ed. by Barbara A. Hanawalt, and David Wallace (London and Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), pp. 139-54 (p. 143).

<sup>54</sup> Gibson, ‘Blessing’, p. 141; *The York Plays*, ed. by Richard Beadle (Edward Arnold: London, 1982).

<sup>55</sup> Mirk, *Festial*, ed. by Theodor Erbe, Early English Texts Society, e.s. 96 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1905), no. 14, *De Purificacione Beate Marie et Eius Solempnitate*, p. 59. The Roman origins of the feast are also glossed in the *Legenda Aurea* and are cited by Gibson, ‘Blessing’, p. 140.

<sup>56</sup> Mirk, *Festial*, p. 58: The fourth reason was ‘to ensampull to all cristen woymen þat þay schuld come to þe chyrche aftyr hor burth, and þonke God heghly þat had saued hom hole and sonde yn hor trauayle; for þer is non euel þat goþe so nygh þe deþe wyth scapyng as doth hit’.

churching ceremony, if not also Candlemas, with a great deal of significance for the women and mothers of the parish.<sup>57</sup>

For women who could afford to lie-in, the churching ceremony took place some three to four weeks after the birth of the child. Baptism however took place much more quickly after birth and it thus seems that upper class women at least would not have been present at the baptism of their child. Alienor of Poitiers's treatise indicates that aristocratic women were absent from the baptism of their children.<sup>58</sup> Staniland also notes that English royal mothers and even fathers were not present at these elaborate baptism rituals which were 'led by two hundred squires or men-at-arms [...] followed by the kings of arms and heralds, the Chapel Royal, and other knights and squires'.<sup>59</sup> After these people came the godparents,

preceding the royal infant who was carried beneath an ornate canopy by a princess or duchess [...]. Immediately behind the royal infant another duchess bore the chrysom cloth [...]. The procession was completed by the ladies and gentlewomen attendant upon the queen.<sup>60</sup>

As we noted in the first part of this chapter, the birth of a royal child signified the continuing strength of a dynasty and the baptism of royal children provided an opportunity for public display. In some cases this display was extended to the churching ceremonies arranged for aristocratic women. An eye-witness account of the churching, in 1465, of Elizabeth Woodville, mother of Elizabeth of York (wife of Henry VII) is included in *The Travels of Leo Rozmital*. Like Alienor of Poitiers, the writer was attuned to the display and formalities of the event. He even notes the number of people included in the different parts of the procession:

---

<sup>57</sup> There is not space here to consider the relationship between Candlemas celebrations, the ceremony of churching, and representations of the Virgin's purification. However, as another *post-partum* iconography, in which the Virgin is sometimes shown accompanied by female assistants who carry her offerings, images of the Purification would also benefit from an analysis in terms of the situational eye of lay women.

<sup>58</sup> See Eames, p. 266; esp. ll. 822-57.

<sup>59</sup> Staniland, p. 305.

<sup>60</sup> Staniland, p. 305



One day the King summoned us to the court. The Queen left her child-bed that morning and went to church in stately order, accompanied by many priests bearing relics and by many scholars singing and carrying lights. There followed a great company of ladies and maidens [...]. Then came a great company of trumpeters, pipers, and players of stringed instruments. The king's choir followed, forty-two of them, who sang excellently. Then came twenty-four heralds and pursuivants, followed by sixty counts and knights. At last came the Queen escorted by two dukes. Above her was a canopy. Behind her were her mother and maidens and ladies to the number of sixty.<sup>61</sup>

After her arrival at the church, the writer describes how the queen heard 'the singing of an Office' and then returned to the palace 'in procession as before'.<sup>62</sup> A large feast followed at the palace but the king was absent and was represented by an Earl; the queen ate in a separate chamber with her mother and the king's sister.<sup>63</sup> Although this account of Elizabeth Woodville's churching indicates a high level of celebration and customs of estate, Staniland proposes that the churching of English queens 'was quite straightforward and offered rather fewer opportunities for display and embellishment than had been the case with baptismal ritual'.<sup>64</sup> The churching ritual as described by Staniland focused on the mother who made offerings along with her female companions. She states that the queen 'took up her position in a rich and impressive state bed [...] shortly before the great mass of the day'. She continues:

Two duchesses first approached the bed to draw back its curtains and coverlet, followed by two dukes who raised the queen from the bed. Then an elaborate candelabrum holding

---

<sup>61</sup> *The Travels of Leo Rozmital: Through Germany, Flanders, England, France, Spain, Portugal, and Italy, 1465-1467*, trans. and ed. by Malcom Letts, Hakluyt Society, second series CVIII for 1955 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), pp. 45-46.

<sup>62</sup> Rozmital, p. 46.

<sup>63</sup> Rozmital, pp. 46-47.

<sup>64</sup> Staniland, p. 308.

five or seven candles was presented to her and carried before her by a duke in the procession to the church; the infant's chrismal-cloth was carried behind her in this procession. [...] [T]here were special prayers and blessings at the church door before the procession could enter the church. During the course of the Mass the queen offered the candelabrum, gold, and the chrismal-cloth at the altar, and other offerings were made by her ladies. The Mass concluded, the procession reassembled and returned to the queen's chamber where her reinstatement in the mainstream of court life was celebrated with feasting, the queen presiding under a cloth of estate.<sup>65</sup>

Alienor of Poitier's account of the churching of princesses and certain 'Dames d'Estat' indicates that in late-medieval France the churching ceremony was certainly more private than the processions of people, torches, and fireworks, which accompanied the baptisms of children of women of estate, and the baptism of Philippe, son of Marie de Bourgogne and Maximilian, Archduke of Austria.<sup>66</sup> She described how, when the woman ended her confinement, it must be in the morning and according to the custom of the diocese. She says that there must not be many people and that it must be carried out in the place of residence, without going to the church.<sup>67</sup> She goes on to note how the princess offered a candle enclosing some gold or silver, a loaf of bread wrapped in a cloth, and a flask of wine. These offerings were carried by three women walking behind the princess. When the princess was kneeling in front of the priest, she would kiss the pax three times.<sup>68</sup>

---

<sup>65</sup> Staniland, p. 308.

<sup>66</sup> Eames, pp. 262-63; p. 266.

<sup>67</sup> My translation of the text printed in Eames, p. 267; ll. 915-22: 'A la relevée de toutes Princesses, Dames d'Estat, & Banneresses, ne doit avoir guaires de gens, & se doibt faire bien matin selon les lieux là où on est, & selond la coustume des Eveschez, & se doibt faire dans l'hostel sans aller à l'Eglise.'

<sup>68</sup> My translation of the text in Eames, p. 267, ll. 923-37: 'Les Princesses le font selon la coustume de la Cour, qui est toute telle que les autres, excepté qu'à l'offrande l'accouchée offre une chandelle & une pièce d'or ou d'argent dedans, & un pain envelope dans une serviette, & un pot plain de vin, & ces trois offrandes, portent trois femmes après elle: & quant l'accouchée est à genouil devant le Prestre pour offrir, chascune des trois femmes lui baille ce que'elle a apporté, & à chascune fois l'accouchée baise la paix que le Prestre tient [...]'.



The evidence from aristocratic churchings, together with that from less elaborate post-Reformation accounts, indicates that new mothers from across the social classes made their way to a church or, according to Alienor to another suitable place, surrounded by her female friends, relations, and the midwife who had assisted at the birth.<sup>69</sup> Although in some cases such as Elizabeth Woodville's churching the procession was a semi-public affair with male members of the royal household, the woman's body was always central to both the procession to the church and to the liturgies of late-medieval churching.

At the beginning of this section we noted how the churching ritual had its origins in a Jewish purification ceremony. Certain factors suggest that, officially at least, the woman was seen as being in an unclean and dangerous state: the rite was intended to lead her back from the margins, back into the body of the church, back into the body of the congregation, and back into her marriage as sexual object. This impurity was emphasised in the texts that appear in several European rites from the eleventh to fifteenth centuries and which include references to 'purification from sin'.<sup>70</sup> Two Psalms, *Miserere mei* (no. 50) and *Levavi oculos* (no. 120) were particularly popular in several rites. Psalm 50 asks for mercy and 120 asks for cleansing from sin and restoration to the joy of salvation. Gibson has suggested that 'the awesome Latin psalms and blessings, the holy water and burning candles, sanctified not only the body of the new mother, but the entire body of attending women'.<sup>71</sup>

In English and French rites the woman was met at the door of the church by the priest where she was sprinkled with holy water.<sup>72</sup> In the Sarum and York rites, specific reference was made to the woman's survival from the dangers of childbirth. Before sprinkling her with holy water, the priest began saying, 'O God, you who have set this woman free from the danger of giving birth, cause

---

<sup>69</sup> See Wilson, *Man-Midwifery*, p. 27; and 'Participant or Patient?', p. 139; Cressy, 'Purification', p. 112-13; and Gibson, 'Blessing', p. 149.

<sup>70</sup> Pierce, pp. 198-99.

<sup>71</sup> Gibson, 'Blessing', p. 149.

<sup>72</sup> For example one source printed by Rieder says: "Tunc aspergatur aqua benedicta super eam et postea introducatur in ecclesiam." (Then blessed water was sprinkled over her and thereafter she was led into the church); Rieder, p. 95; n. 8. The source is B. M. Boulogne-sur-Mer, ms 85, f. 305. For an analysis of English and German rites, see Pierce, esp. 197-202.

her to be committed to yourself, in service to you [*etc.*].<sup>73</sup> According to Mirk's homily, the holy water was used to 'cleansed her' and during the ceremony itself the priest gives the woman permission to come to church and to go to her husband's bed.<sup>74</sup>

This symbolic cleansing complete, the priest then led the woman inside and Rieder notes that the woman's procession into the church not only emphasised her re-incorporation but it also 'acted out the proper social order with a member of the laity following the guidance of the pastor'. She goes on to suggest that since the act was always gendered, the texts and acts involved in churching, particularly the priest's meeting of the woman at the door, also 'confirmed the correct gender hierarchy as well: women securely placed under proper male authority'.<sup>75</sup> In some late-medieval French churching rites Rieder notes that the woman held the priest's stole as she entered the church. This, she says, 'called attention to and exaggerated the distance between the two actors. [...]'.<sup>76</sup> The stole, the privileged garment of the priesthood, 'acted both as a bridge and as a defender' between chaste cleric and the sexually active woman.<sup>77</sup> Rieder says that the woman's supposed sexual pollution 'was necessary to the priest' since without it 'the purity of the celibate priesthood would lose its power'.<sup>78</sup> The *post-partum* woman was not only 'a temptation to celibate purity and something to be avoided, she was also the necessary logic that shaped male celibate identity'.<sup>79</sup>

On one level then, the rite seems to posit a patriarchal spectator who colludes in the subjugation of the female sex, in particular the secular, sexually active woman. Reading churching through the work of Butler and Aers discussed in Chapter Two, it is easy to see the rite as founded in and by a patriarchal hegemony that sought negatively to control and define the female

---

<sup>73</sup> 'Deus, qui hanc feminam de pariendi periculo liberasti, in servitio tuo tibi fac eam esse devotam, [*etc.*]'. *Manuale et processionale ad usum insignis ecclesiae eboracensis*, ed. by W. G. Henderson, Surtees Society 63, (London: Whittaker and Co, 1875), p. 213.

<sup>74</sup> Mirk, *Festial*, p. 59: the priests grants her 'leve to come to þe chyrche, and to goo to hur husbondys bed'.

<sup>75</sup> Rieder, p. 97.

<sup>76</sup> Rieder, pp. 97-98.

<sup>77</sup> Rieder, p. 98.

<sup>78</sup> Rieder, p. 99.

<sup>79</sup> Rieder, p. 100.



sex. Therefore, any attempt by women in either the fifteenth or the twenty-first century to (re)claim churching for a female audience or for a feminist history becomes problematic. However, in the same way that Randolph proposed that positing only a male spectator for the *Dovizie* statuettes was 'facile', so we also need to see the rite of churching, like the images of *post-partum* childbirth in Books of Hours, from the point of view of the wives and mothers who encountered them. Therefore whereas Rieder has described late-medieval churching 'as a ritual performance of gender' she has also claimed that particular aspects of the rite 'singl[ed] the woman out for special attention' in a way that suggests that women felt a particular privilege or significance in what was effectively their own ceremony.<sup>80</sup>

Rieder's analysis of churching strengthens the idea that some women could occupy a particular viewing position that was related to their status as mothers. Given that churching, like the use of charms, was not exclusive to the aristocracy, it is possible that this viewing position was occupied by wives and mothers across the social classes. Whether or not the psalms and texts of the rite were actually misogynist in intent, the use of Psalm 120 with its references to the lifting up of one's eyes and to the Lord being one's shade (which Coster described as a 'magical' addition to the rite), were probably particularly significant if the woman had come to the church veiled, the veil itself signifying a continuation of the enclosed birth chamber, and perhaps also appropriate to having been 'looked after' by both the company of women and by God.<sup>81</sup> During the ceremony, the woman was led up to the altar by the priest. Thus, on her own, rather than as part of a collective body (e.g. the parish, for communion, or with her husband, for marriage), the mother was brought into one of the most sacred parts of the church, the sanctuary, 'generally prohibited to the laity, especially to

---

<sup>80</sup> Rieder, p. 93; p. 101.

<sup>81</sup> The opening verses of the Gospel of St John appear to have been popular at churching ceremonies. This is noted by Pierce p. 199; and by Rieder, pp. 100-01. Rieder has suggested that this text would have 'bristled with meanings and associations for the woman being churchied and her parish community' since it was a popular text that appeared not only in funeral and baptism rites, but also in many prayers against illness and plague, for fertility of the land, and for protection against evil spirits. Rieder, p. 101. Duffy claims that this Gospel was 'one of the most numinous texts used in the late medieval Church'; see Duffy, *Altars*, pp. 214-16.

women'.<sup>82</sup> Here she received blessed bread, or *pain bénit*, from the priest, and it is this part of the ritual that, whilst still ostensibly an affirmation of gender hierarchy, Rieder suggests offers the possibility for gender roles to be upset, and for symbols to become multivalent, since some mothers apparently interpreted the *pain bénit* as the consecrated host.

The receiving of blessed bread at churching is found in French and English rites. Rieder says that in France the *pain bénit* was received by the laity 'at the end of Sunday Mass [...] as a substitute for the reception of communion'.<sup>83</sup> In ordinary Masses, the bread, which had been made by parishioners, was blessed, 'broken into pieces [...] and distributed to people as they left church'.<sup>84</sup> Several statutes were issued between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries regarding the distribution of *pain bénit* which indicate that some women were receiving the blessed bread as they might the communion wafer, as the body of Christ.<sup>85</sup> It is the interpretation of the *pain bénit* as the host which I suggest indicates an instance of the situational eye informed by the social and physical experience of childbirth. Rieder notes that 'although the blessing and offering of the bread served as an assertion of male authority, the woman's presence in the sanctuary complicates the image'.<sup>86</sup> Not only is the act symbolic of the priest's authority but, Rieder suggests, it might have been read by the woman, who temporarily stood above other men, as a privileged position 'not only granted her by the clergy, but one she had earned by risking her life'.<sup>87</sup> Rieder admits that she is 'speaking for these medieval woman and ascribing to them emotions and thoughts' but she puts forward evidence that women who were being churched gave a special significance to the *pain bénit* they received,

---

<sup>82</sup> Rieder, p. 104. The York rite says: 'Deinde praecedat Episcopus cum ministris suis mulierem sic introductam usque ad altare, ubi Missa sollemniter debet celebrari' (Then the Bishop, with his servants, precedes the woman thus brought in, up to the altar where a solemn mass should be celebrated); see *Manuale*, p. 213-14.

<sup>83</sup> Rieder, p. 103.

<sup>84</sup> Rieder, p. 104. Pierce has noted that one nineteenth-century critic has interpreted the use of unconsecrated bread in the York rite as 'supply[ing] the outward signs of communion to those members of the Church who, from whatever cause, were prevented from partaking of the holy eucharist'. Pierce, p. 203; the references she gives is *Monumenta Ritualia Ecclesiae Anglicanae*, ed. by William Maskell (London: William Pickering, 1846), cclvii-ccli.

<sup>85</sup> Rieder, p. 105.

<sup>86</sup> Rieder, p. 104.

<sup>87</sup> Rieder, p. 104.



and that they thus probably ascribed a particular significance to the rite as a whole.<sup>88</sup> Rieder quotes one statute from Chartres in the mid-fourteenth century which ‘warned women taking bread after their purification not to fall to their knees before it, nor strike their breasts and say “confiteor” as they received it’.<sup>89</sup> In other statute from 1403, Bishop Simon de Boucy, of Soissons said ‘the priests are ordered to tell [the women] that they are giving them only plain bread; otherwise, they would allow them to commit idolatry’.<sup>90</sup> Rieder proposes that

[a] woman’s belief that she was being given the Eucharist on the day of her churching, that she was brought forth from the congregation, by herself, to receive it from the priest, suggests that she understood her own position in that liturgy to be one of special honor [and that] [w]hile medieval women and men would never have described the subversion of gender roles and identities as an alternative meaning of churching, they could surely have perceived the possibilities inherent in the flexibility of the ritual actions and objects used in the rite.<sup>91</sup>

When we consider churching from the point of view of the mother, it is possible to see how her interpretation of the ritual would have been closely related to her

---

<sup>88</sup> Rieder, p. 104.

<sup>89</sup> Rieder, p. 105.

<sup>90</sup> Rieder, p. 105 and n. 27. The Latin source printed by Rieder reads: ‘Praeceptum ... Insuper quia in nostra diocesi consuetum est in pluribus loci quod quando mulieribus quae post partum ad ecclesiam propter purificationem veniunt, post missam hostia non consecrata a presbyteris tribuitur, simplices genua flectunt, ac si daretur eis corpus Christi, nuntient eis presbyteri nihil dare nisi panem purum, aliter facerent eas idolatrare’. Her translation reads: ‘Moreover, since in our diocese it is the custom in several places that when women come for purification after childbirth unconsecrated hosts are distributed to them after mass by the priest [and] the simple women genuflect as if the body of Christ was being given to them, the priests are ordered to tell [the women] that they are being given only plain bread; otherwise they would allow them to commit idolatry.’ The reference she gives for the Latin is *Les Actes de la Province Ecclesiastiques de Reims*, ed. by Thomas Gousset 2 vols (Reims: L. Jacquet, 1843), 2: 629. Another possible meaning for the blessed bread has been proposed by Gélis for Early Modern France. He claims that from the seventeenth century the woman to be churching would bring two rolls or pieces of bread, one for the priest or sanctuary, the other shared ‘among the village women of childbearing age, especially those who were still childless’; quoted in Pierce, p. 203, but see also Gélis, p. 161; p. 171, noted in Chapter Four.

<sup>91</sup> Rieder, p. 105; p. 108.

status as a (new) mother. In the preceding chapters we saw how images of childbirth in devotional manuscripts, and charms for assistance during labour, may have functioned as encouragements or reminders not only for a pregnant woman but also for women who hoped to get pregnant or who were assisting with a birth. From their position, churching was a ceremony that privileged women who had undergone pregnancy and childbirth, and who had survived. It is therefore likely that secular women who were not yet mothers, such as Marguerite de Foix during her period of sterility, saw churching as a ceremony which privileged women who underwent pregnancy and birth. This is likely because they probably attended other women's births and, especially, because one day they anticipated experiencing the rite themselves.

\* \* \*

The arrangements for *post-partum* care and celebration discussed in this chapter form a field of study in themselves. Yet by invoking them in relation to the images of childbirth in devotional manuscripts they also help us better to understand how those *post-partum* representations functioned for their female viewers. Like the images of childbirth, these ceremonials were multivalent and could encapsulate a number of meanings which may or may not have been perceived or taken up by the people involved in them. These rituals were not necessarily the preserve of the upper classes and existed in less elaborate formats for lower-class women. Thus, as we saw with the charms and prayers discussed in Chapter Four, less well-off women could also have viewed lying-in and churching through a situational eye informed by the experience – either expected or actual – of maternity. They too could participate in practices that focused exclusively on mothers and which gave adequate acknowledgment to the dangers and difficulties associated with pregnancy and birth. If further research showed that images of childbirth were available to these women – as my research suggests that they were through the cheaper, more widely available printed *horae* – it would be possible to extend a version of the maternally-informed situational eye across the class boundaries.



The pressure on some fifteenth-century women to bear children – specifically those women from the houses of Anjou and Brittany discussed in Chapter Three – suggests that they would have regarded lying-in and the rite of churching as beneficial to their well-being in that they offered them *post-partum* care and respite from their conjugal debt. Thus we can see how it is possible that these women saw *post-partum* scenes of the *Birth of the Virgin* or the *Birth of St John the Baptist*, in which attention is focused on the mother as well as the child, as allegorical versions of their own *post-partum* celebrations that would be the result of a successful pregnancy and birth.

## CONCLUSION

### ENGENDERED REPRESENTATIONS

This study of images of childbirth in fifteenth-century Northern manuscripts has made several contributions to art-historical scholarship and medieval gender studies. The main focus of this thesis has been the group of devotional manuscripts owned by members of the houses of Anjou and Brittany in the fifteenth century. I have also embraced an interdisciplinary approach by situating these manuscripts in relation to other sources from textual and material culture. While this project set out to assess how we can use *post-partum* confinement scenes to produce a feminist (art) history of fifteenth-century lay women, I have also been cautious to avoid a simplistic historical recovery of women's lives through gendered images. We noted in Chapter One the difficulties of using generic images of the birth of saints and heroic figures to reconstruct obstetrical practices. We also saw how, although existing art-historical research on late-medieval representations of childbirth has indicated a connection between images of the births of saints and the childbearing experiences of female viewers, the possibility of applying these connections across a broader range of images required further investigation and problematisation.

An exploration into the way all-female images of childbirth were received by fifteenth-century viewers – especially female viewers – lent itself well to the field of manuscript studies. As I indicated in Chapter Two, a strong area of research on late-medieval gender studies and female book ownership already exists, but the occurrence and function of images of childbirth in fifteenth-century manuscripts had not been fully examined. The survey of manuscripts and early-printed books that I carried out in the course of this research is itself a major new resource for future work on images of childbirth since it contains a list of books in which this iconography occurs together with descriptions of the scenes, the places at which the images occur, and details of ownership. The volume of illustrations also provides a number of unpublished images.



From this survey I identified a group of manuscripts on which to focus: these were Books of Hours owned by dukes and duchesses of the related dynasties of Anjou and Brittany. However, the varied ownership of the fifty-odd books in the sample open up other areas of research. For example, the large number of books in this survey with known or assumed male ownership has required us to be extremely wary of equating these images of *post-partum* confinement either with actual fifteenth-century practices or with female viewers. In Chapter Two I showed how scholars have already proposed that the metaphors of birth in monastic texts allowed men to access a role from which they were biologically excluded. From this I further suggested that the monastic appropriation of maternal metaphors would have influenced the reception of images of childbirth by male religious. Since, as my survey indicates, there are many images of childbirth in texts owned by chaste, religious men, an exploration of the way these images of *post-partum* nurturing related to their male viewers and the devotional writings which they encountered, is one area which would benefit from further research.

One of the important contributions of this thesis to art-historical studies is the methodology of viewing practices formulated in Chapter Two for analysing the reception of images of childbirth by lay, female viewers. Studies of female-owned manuscripts have acknowledged the way in which iconographic programmes that include images of St Anne and scenes of the Virgin's birth were designed to promote the roles of wife and motherhood for their readers. Thus, on one level, pictures of holy childbirth can be understood as serving the needs of the patriarchal hegemony by encouraging the birth of legitimate, male, children. The work of Butler and Aers on the construction and performance of gender suggests that to identify any empowerment or subversion for women through maternity and childbirth ignores the way their biological capabilities have been appropriated by a patriarchal hegemony for its own benefit. Therefore seeking an exclusive connection between female viewers – even all lay, married viewers – and childbirth iconography reduces women to their biological function. Yet, despite the relative paucity of evidence for female patronage and ownership of manuscripts containing images of childbirth, there is evidence that lay, married women did encounter this iconography, not only in devotional

books but also on panel paintings and on *deschi da parto*. One of the requirements of this project was to find a way of unravelling the double bind of official, intended meanings and the way these meanings were received and understood; to explore the meaning of childbirth iconography for those women who did encounter these scenes of successful childbirth without recourse to biological essentialism.

The cultural analyses of Butler and Aers stress the construction of genders by and within a patriarchal society. Whereas I have shown this to be helpful for understanding the constraints under which medieval bodies and responses were formulated, it does not help evaluate responses made within that society by people who conformed to gendered and classed roles. I have suggested that an insistence on the socially-constructed positions from which images of childbirth were viewed can help to liberate interpretations of women's responses from charges of essentialism. This methodology was developed from the work of Baxandall and Randolph on fifteenth-century regimes of viewing. In his concept of the period eye Baxandall claimed that certain viewers were sensitive to particular features of *quattrocento* paintings. Since this concept only took into account male, mercantile and aristocratic viewers, it has been criticised for its failure to accommodate female spectators. By looking at the way certain objects would have functioned in the home for patrician brides, Randolph proposed a feminine or gendered period eye to complement Baxandall's original formulation. Whereas Randolph's reformulated concept was a very useful starting point for my own consideration of female-owned manuscripts, I found it necessary to define the feminine period eye even further to avoid collapsing all female lay viewers into one category characterised solely by maternity. As existing literature on female-owned manuscripts indicates, social class and individual situation as well as gender are important for understanding the meanings images would have held. The Anjou-Brittany manuscripts discussed in Chapter Three were all produced for aristocratic patrons – men and women – who ruled parts of France in the fifteenth-century. I therefore proposed the term 'situational eye' as the lens, informed (to varying degrees) by gender, social class, and personal circumstances, through which images of childbirth were brought into meaning by their original viewers. By considering the particular



constraints and expectations placed upon the Breton duchesses, it has been possible to see how images of childbirth functioned for these readers.

In the case of the *Grandes Heures de Rohan* and the two *Hours of René d'Anjou*, we have seen how, as Marrow has suggested for the *Très Belles Heures*, the stylistic similarities between the manuscripts would have worked to link them together as signs of Angevin patronage and leadership. I suggested that the childbirth images in these male-owned manuscripts were viewed with a situational eye that was informed by the family's wider artistic patronage and by contemporary fears about inheritance and succession. Thus I proposed that René d'Anjou would have seen the images of childbirth in his *Paris* and *London Hours* as evocative of his own family and his duties to them as the new Duke of Anjou. The *Grandes Heures*, with their marginal *Bible moralisée* cycle, suggest a quasi-royal ownership: it thus seems likely that the proposed commissioner of this manuscript, Yolande d'Aragon, was operating from an ostensibly patriarchal viewpoint, promoting family connections to royalty and expectations of the unions of her children.

That young, married, aristocratic women were particularly sensitive to images of childbirth in devotional books has been demonstrated by the visual and textual contents of the *Fitzwilliam Hours* and the *Hours of Marguerite de Foix*, and the circumstances of the women with whom these manuscripts are associated. These two Books of Hours have not been the subjects of major studies in themselves, nor have they been considered together as the devotional books of Breton duchesses. We do not know the exact circumstances under which these manuscripts were commissioned, or whether the childbirth iconography was part of an original programme specifically to emphasise motherhood. However, by considering the circumstances under which Yolande d'Anjou, Isabel Stuart, Marguerite de Bretagne, and Marguerite de Foix, became Breton duchesses, and the need for them to bear surviving male children, it seems likely that the images of maternity and childbirth in their manuscripts were complexly resonant with the dangers of parturition, the successful outcome of pregnancy, a sense of these women's roles as duchesses, and the political status of their (husband's) realms. The sensitivity of the situational eye of the proposed and known owners of the *Fitzwilliam Hours* and the *Hours of*

*Marguerite de Foix* is strengthened by the prayer for childbearing, which invokes biblical mothers, found in the latter manuscript, and another childbirth prayer found in a manuscript belonging to Marguerite de Foix's daughter, Anne de Bretagne. In this thesis I have printed these prayers together for the first time and offered new interpretations of them which take into account the specific circumstances of the women who would have said them.

By focusing on the political and personal situations in which these duchesses found themselves, I have stressed that we must not simply see these women as passively accepting the images in their manuscripts as admonitions to procreate. In the same way that Randolph, in his analysis of the *Dovizie* statuettes, was cautious of 'short-circuiting for the female viewer even the possibility of contemplation, desire, and intellection', I have also argued that these Breton Duchesses would have responded to their manuscripts acutely aware of their roles as members of the ruling classes, as wives, and as the expected mothers of future dukes.<sup>1</sup>

This thesis has made a neglected iconography the centre of an art-historical enquiry but more precisely it has also reconsidered a specific group of manuscripts associated with the Rohan Workshop in a way that goes beyond existing, broadly stylistic, analyses of their relationship. My analysis of this group of manuscripts also demonstrates the validity of the concept of the situational eye which I formulated in Chapter Two, indicating that we can also apply it to other manuscripts for whom details of the commissioners and owners are known. It is evident that the material I have treated in this thesis – most particularly the manuscripts – is exceptional and relates only to a small part of the fifteenth-century population. Here the interpretations are based on a knowledge of, or presumption about, the specific circumstances of the manuscripts' owners. The types of owners we have considered were not only aristocratic patrons but also second wives, only sons, contenders to a position of power. Therefore it is difficult to apply the concept of the situational eye which I have developed here across a broader selection of manuscripts, such as those included in my sample of manuscripts. However, this remains a valid methodology for interpreting other manuscripts known to have been made for

---

<sup>1</sup> Randolph, p. 174



women or for young married couples. For example, as Nash has already pointed out, the *Châtillon Hours*, with its unusual cycle of images emphasising miraculous conception, were made for the childless Jacques and Jeanne de Châtillon. Two other examples that might be studied in terms of the relationship between iconography and social and dynastic status are the *Burgundy Breviary* (no. 9) made for Jean sans Peur, Duke of Burgundy and his wife Marguerite; and the *Heures dites de Neville* (no. 22) made for Ralph Neville and his wife, both of whom are shown in miniatures with their children.

In Chapters Four and Five we saw how a combination of textual and material sources, combined with the images from Chapter Three, allow us to go one stage further in reconstructing a context for the subject viewing positions of people – primarily the women – involved in childbirth in the fifteenth century. In Chapter Four, I discussed late-medieval charms which invoke holy mothers for assistance during labour. In the *exilpeperit* charms the names of Hannah, St Anne, St Elizabeth, and the Virgin, and their children were invoked to help ensure a safe delivery for mother and child. The presence of these same mothers blessed in childbirth in the childbirth prayer in Marguerite de Foix's Book of Hours strongly suggests that they provided role models for a woman such as Marguerite who wished to conceive. Furthermore, the convergence of the subject matter of charms, official liturgy, and the representations in devotional books implies that the images themselves were viewed as visual complements to, or versions of, those oral/textual invocations. Thus, far from being received solely as prescriptive encouragements to conform to gendered behaviours, I argued that, viewed with a situational, maternally-informed eye, both the charms and the manuscript illuminations offered a way for fifteenth-century lay women in a patriarchal society to maintain some control over the demands on their devotions and their bodies.

In Chapter Five I showed how evidence for *post-partum* ceremonies of childbearing bring another context to the *post-partum* confinement images in Books of Hours, for both their contemporary viewers and for modern historians. We saw how the preparations for the lying-in of aristocratic women – such as the attention given to the mother and child, the quality of the furnishings in the room, and the food for visitors – were alluded to in the *post-partum* images from

devotional manuscripts, such as the *Birth of the Virgin* miniature in Marguerite's *horae*. Following the work of Wilson, I suggested that the care afforded the new mother through these preparations not only benefited her physically but that it involved a suspension of normalised gender roles.

The rite of churching is another example of a *post-partum* ceremony provided solely for a new mother and which offered a further opportunity for the destabilising of traditional roles. Rieder has argued for the multivalency of this ceremony, proposing that it would have been viewed differently by the priest taking the ceremony and the woman undergoing it. Whereas for the priest, churching was probably seen as a ritual of purification, for the mother herself this ceremony focused on her sexually-active body and provided a means through which she could give thanks for having survived a dangerous and painful event. Thus the material preparations made for a woman post-delivery rendered her the centre of attention, acknowledged the physical effort of childbearing, and provided a means through which gender roles could be (momentarily) renegotiated. Seen in the light of the lying-in and churching rituals, it seems highly plausible that for aristocratic lay women, images of childbirth in devotional manuscripts evoked not only a successful birth, but also the *post-partum* celebrations which accompanied them, and the benefits for themselves of those ceremonies.

The images of all-female, *post-partum* confinement in fifteenth-century manuscripts do not offer a direct window onto to late-medieval childbearing practices. As this thesis has demonstrated, these images were multivalent and functioned for enclosed religious men and women as well as for lay viewers across different social strata. Yet for a small group of aristocratic female viewers we have seen that representations of the *Birth of the Virgin* and the *Birth of St John the Baptist* were en/gendered in a particular way. Through the situational eye of the Breton Duchesses discussed here, I have suggested how these images were viewed not only as depictions of patriarchally-scripted gendered roles but also as zones in which maternal concerns over childbearing were given expression, and as spaces through which gender roles were temporarily redefined.



## APPENDIX 1

### LIST OF PRIMARY SOURCES CONSULTED<sup>1</sup>

#### Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum

MS 62, *Hours of Isabel Stuart [Fitzwilliam Hours]* [26]  
 MS 63, *Horae* [27]  
 MS 74, *Horae* [28]  
 MS 96, *Horae* [29]

#### Leeds, University of Leeds Library

Brotherton Collection MS1 *Horae* (fragmentary) [19]  
 Special Collection INC KER, *Horae* [37]

#### Liverpool, National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside (Walker Art Gallery)

NMGM MS 12020, *Horae*  
 NMGM MS 12022, *Horae* [20]  
 NMGM MS 12024, *Horae*

#### Liverpool, University of Liverpool Library

MS F2.7, *Horae*  
 MS F2.14, *Horae*  
 MS F2.18, *Horae*

#### London, British Library

Additional MS 4836, *Horae* [1]  
 Additional MS 15813, *Missal* [2]  
 Additional MS 16998, *Officia varia* [3]  
 Additional MS 18850, *Bedford Hours* [5]  
 Additional MS 19897, *Ordo missalis* [4]  
 Additional MS 29434, *Life of Mary* [37]  
 Additional MS 30014, *Hymnarium* [6]

---

<sup>1</sup> Numbers in square brackets refer to number of the manuscript in following tables and in the main text.

Additional MS 35311, *Burgundy Breviary* (originally one volume with Harley MS 2897)

Additional MS 34111, Medical Miscellany in English

Egerton MS 1070, *Hours of René d'Anjou* [10]

Egerton MS 2019, *Horae* [11]

Harley MS 2449, *Orationes* [7]

Harley MS 2891, Missal [8]

Harley MS 2897, *Burgundy Breviary* (originally one volume with Add. 35311) [9]

Harley MS 3240, *Speculum humanae salvationis* [42]

Harley MS 4996, Vincent de Beauvais, *Speculum humanae salvationis* [43]

Royal MS 12 B xii, Medical Tracts in Latin

Royal MS 14 E i, Vincent de Beauvais, *Speculum historiale* [38]

Royal MS 15 E iv, Wavrin, *History of England* [39]

Royal MS 17 A viii, Medical Collection in English

Royal MS 18 E vi, Jean Mansel, *Fleur des histories* [40]

Royal MS 19 B xvii, Jacobus de Voragine, *Legende doree* [41]

Sloane MS 249, [Medical Collection]

Sloane MS 961, Breviary [12]

Sloane MS 1311, [Medical Receipts]

Sloane MS 2463, [Medical Collection]

Sloane MS 3160, Homilies and Medical Recipes

Sloane MS 3564, [Medical Receipts]

Yates-Thompson MS 13, *Taymouth Hours* [32]

### **London, The Wellcome Trust, Wellcome Library**

MS 49, *Apocalypse* etc.

MS 405, Leechbook in English

MS 425, Johann Lichtenberger et al.

MS 517, *Miscellanea Alchemica XII*

MS 632, Scroll

EPB 5513/B, Thomas Raynalde, *The Birth of Mankynde* 1565

EPB 7091/B Eucharius Rösslin, *Der Swangeren Frawen und Hebammen Rosengarten*, 1529

EPB 5508/A, Eucharius Rösslin, *Des Diuers trauauls*, 1536



**London, National Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum**

Salting MS 1222, L. 2385-1910, *Hours of Marguerite de Foix* [24]

Reid MS 4, A. L. 1646-1902, *Horae* [25]

**Manchester, John Rylands University Library of Manchester**

Latin MS 18, *Arbor caritatis* [44]

Latin MS 39, *Horae* [13]

Latin MS 74, Antiphonal [14]

Latin MS 95, Psalter [15]

Latin MS 123, Psalter [16]

Latin MS 136, Breviary [17]

Latin MS 165, *Abbot Islip's Devotions* [18]

Arabic MS 680 [677], Makamahs

Parkinson 2049, Eucharius Rösslin, *De partu hominis*, 1535

Parkinson 2051, Eucharius Rösslin, *Des diuers trauaulx*, 1536

Parkinson 2054, Eucharius Rösslin, *Der Swangern frawen und hebammen rosgarten*, 1513

Parkinson 2105, Jakob Rueff, *The Expert Midwife*, 1637

INC 3469, Vincent de Beauvais, *Myrrour of the World*, 1480

INC 12018, Jacobus de Voragine, trans. Caxton, *Golden Legend*, 1497 [51]

INC 9607, *Horae*, 1492/93 [33]

INC 10793, *Horae*, 1497 [34]

INC 151444, *Horae*, 1498 [35]

**Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France**

Fonds français 52, Vincent de Beauvais, *Miroir historiale* [45]

Fonds français 91, *L'histoire de Merlin de Robert de Boron* [46]

Fonds français 166, *Bible moralisée*

Fonds français 242, Jacobus de Voragine, *Legende dorée* [47]

Fonds français 244-45, Jacobus de Voragine, *Legende dorée* [48]

Fonds français 316, Vincent de Beauvais, *Miroir historiale* [49]

Fonds français 958, *Somme le roi*

Fonds français 1327, Medical Miscellany

Fonds français 1802, *Receuil d'oraisons et pièces devotes*

Fonds français 9561, *Bible moralisée* [50]

Fonds latin 746A, Breviary [21]

Fonds latin 1156A, *Hours of René d'Anjou* [30]

Fonds latin 1158, *Horae (Heures dites de Neville)* [22]

Fonds latin 1369, *Hours of Isabel Stuart*

Fonds latin 9471, *Grandes Heures de Rohan* [31]

Fonds latin 9473, *Horae* [23]

Fonds nouvelle acquisition latine 588, *Hours of Isabel Stuart*



## APPENDIX 2

### TABLE OF MANUSCRIPTS WITH BIRTH SCENES

The following table details fifty-one manuscripts and incunables that contain birth scenes: these are drawn from the books in Appendix 1. The manuscripts in the table have been numbered and a brief version of the shelf mark is given in the reference column. In the thesis, these manuscripts are referred to by the number or common name from the table, rather than by shelf mark. The subject of the scene is indicated in the third column, where John refers to St John the Baptist and Mary to the Virgin, and so on. The presence of men and women in the scene is detailed in the fourth and fifth columns. Where the father is included in the scenes of the birth of the Virgin, of St John the Baptist, and of Christ, this is indicated in the following way: Jm for Joachim, Jp for Joseph, and Z for Zacharias. In the next two columns a brief description of the birth scene is given, and details of folio number, position of image, and details of surrounding text. Information on ownership, date, and use are given where this has been possible. The final column cross-references entries with illustrations in the main text.

No	Reference	Birth of	Women	Men	Brief Description	Folio/Text	Ownership/date etc. (where known)	Illust. X-Ref
1a	<i>Horae</i> Add. 4836	John	1	Z	Elizabeth in canopied bed, holding John, Zacharias seated, writing.	f. 6v, Calendar border: feast of the Nativity of John	Late XVc French, Use of Rome.	Fig. 19
1b		Mary	2		Anne in canopied bed, woman kneeling with Mary before bath/towel, another adjusting bed.	f. 9v, Calendar border: feast of the Nativity of Virgin.		Fig. 20
2	<i>Missal</i> Add. 15813	Mary	2		Anne in bed; two women offer the child to her.	f. 256v, Sanctoral: historiated initial S, 'Salve sancta parens [...]'	Italian, for monastery of St Justina, Padua, illuminated by Benedetto Bordoni of Padua.	
3	<i>Officia varia</i> Add. 16998	John	2	Z	Elizabeth in canopied bed, one of women presents John to Elizabeth. Zacharias at end of bed holding scroll.	f. 92v, Sanctoral: office of St John, framed miniature. 'De ventre matris mee [...]'	ff. 2r-88r c. 1405-10; ff. 8r-95v c. 1470. Partly illuminated by an English artist. Inscribed 'hermannus scherre me fecit' f. 37r.	Fig. 24
4a	<i>Ordo missalis</i> Add. 19897	John	1	Z	Elizabeth in canopied bed. Woman holding child out to Zacharias who holds up tablet.	f. 233r, Sanctoral: historiated initial D. office of St John 'De ventris matris mee [...]'	Use of Rome.	



No	Reference	Birth of	women	men	Brief Description	Folio/Text	Ownership/date etc. (where known)	Illust. X-Ref
4b		Mary	1		Anne in canopied bed. Woman bathing Mary who stands upright in wooden tub, crowned and with halo.	f. 252v, Sanctoral: historiated initial S. office of the Virgin 'Salve sancta parens [...]']		
5a	<i>Horae</i> Add. 18850	Mary	1		Anne in canopied bed, woman handing Mary to her; cradle, chair by bed.	f. 39r, Matins, border roundel to <i>Annunciation</i> . 'Domine labia mea aperies'	<i>Bedford Hours</i> , Illuminated by Bedford Master for John, Duke of Bedford, for his marriage to Anne, daughter of Duke of Berry in 1432; f. 257v shows Duchess in prayer in front of Virgin and Christ.	
5b		John	1		Elizabeth in bed, holding John, woman holds out covered hands	f. 54v, Lauds: border roundel to <i>Visitation</i> , with commentary: 'Comment la benoite vierge marie ala visiter ma dame sainte helysabeth [...]']		
6	<i>Hymnarium</i> Add. 30014	John	3		Elizabeth in sitting in bed. One woman at foot of bed, another leaning over table preparing chicken with knife. Another woman outside initial carrying hens a basket of flowers on her head.	f. 112v, Historiated initial A. 'In nativitate sancti iohannis baptiste [...]'] Atque [...]']	Early XVc. Italian (Siena).	

No	Reference	Birth of	women	men	Brief Description	Folio/Text	Ownership/date etc. (where known)	Illust. X-Ref
7	<i>Orationes</i> Harley 2449	Mary	1		Anne sitting in bed. Woman stands holding child who is crowned and haloed.	f. 243r, Sanctoral: historiated initial <i>H</i> . 'In nativitate sancte mariae [...] Hec est [r]egina virginum [...]'	XIVc (?)	
8	<i>Missal</i> Harley 2891	John	2		Elizabeth in bed, turned away from other women and child. One woman holds John; the other reaches out towards him. This woman holds skirt up over stomach as if pregnant: could be the Virgin.	f. 264r, Sanctoral historiated initial <i>D</i> . 'De ventre matris mee vocantur [...]'	XIVc. Use of Paris	
9a	<i>Psalterium</i> etc. Harley 2897	John	1	Z	Elizabeth in bed, framed by architectural setting. She is bare-breasted. Woman (VM?) holds John. Zacharias at foot of bed.	f. 315r, Sanctoral: framed miniature '[...] Priusquem te formarem in utero'.	<i>Burgundy Breviary</i> , c. 1413-17. Originally one volume with BL MS Add. 35311, the Burgundy Breviary. Made for Jean sans Peur, Duke of Burgundy and his wife Marguerite.	Fig. 67
9b		Mary	3		Anne in bed, one woman attending to her pillow. Another woman bathing Mary in foreground, a third bringing in pails of water. Seat by bed, exterior architectural setting visible.	f. 385r, Sanctoral: framed miniature 'Osculetur me osculo oris sui qui meloria sunt ubero vino flagracia [...]'		



No	Reference	Birth of	women	men	Brief Description	Folio/Text	Ownership/date etc. (where known)	Fig. X-Ref
10a	<i>Horae</i> Eg. 1070	Mary	1		Anne in canopied bed, woman holds Mary.	f. 101v, Suffrages: framed miniature. 'Nativitas tua dei genetrix virgo [...]'. f. 82r, Suffrages: framed miniature. 'Memoire de la nativite de nostre seigneur'.	<i>London Hours of René d'Anjou</i> , c. 1410. Use of Sainte-Chappelle, Paris. Frontispiece shows the coat of arm used by René between 1434 and 1453.	
10b		Christ	1		Mary in canopied bed, turned away. Woman holds Jesus who has cruciform halo. Architectural frame.	f. 30r, Matins: border roundel to <i>Annunciation</i> . f. 13r, Matins: framed border image of <i>Annunciation</i> .	XVc. French, use of Paris.	Fig. 21
11	<i>Horae</i> BVM Eg. 2019	Mary	1	Jm	Anne in bed breast-feeding Mary. Joachim on left, woman on right filling wooden tub from jug.	f. 172v, Sanctoral: framed miniature. '[...] In nativitate sancti iohannis... Priusquem te formarem in utero novi te [...]'].	Late XVc Flemish, possibly owned by an Austin canon. Use of Paris.	
12	<i>Breviarum</i> Sloane 961	Christ	2		Mary sits up bed, hands clasped in prayer. One woman holds Jesus in a towel, the other kneels on the floor by the bath.			
13a	<i>Horae</i> JR L 39	John	2		Detailed domestic interior Elizabeth in canopied bed being handed John by woman; another woman in foreground washing towel in tub. Domestic details inc. jugs/plates on walls, window, fireplace, seat.			

No	Reference	Birth of	women	men	Brief Description	Folio/Text	Ownership/date etc. (where known)	Illust. X-Ref
13b		Mary	3		Sim composition to f. 172v. Detailed domestic interior. Anne in bed, being handed Mary by woman. Another woman sweeps floor and a third warms sheet in front of fireplace. Tub in foreground: chair, cushion, table; plate on wall.	f. 197v, Sanctoral: framed miniature. 'In nativitate beate marie [...] Qui est ista que progreditur quasi aurora consurgens [...]'].		
14	<i>Antiphoner</i> JR MS 74	Mary	2		On two levels. Below, Anne in bed. Above two women hold Mary, who is lying down, between them.	f. 185r, Historiated initial <i>H</i> . 'Ecce tu pulchra es amica mea...Hodie nata est beata virgo [...]'].	Late XIIIc. Italian (Emilia). Made for Cistercian house of St Prosper then owned by Sta Cecilia in Trastevere, Rome.	
15a	<i>Psalter</i> JR MS 95	Mary	1		Anne in bed holding Mary. Woman beside her gesturing at Mary. No domestic details apart from bed covers.	f. 4r, Full page miniature, no text.	Early XIVc. German, diocese of Constance (?)	
15b		Christ	2		Appears to be moment just after birth? One woman behind Mary, who lies back; another woman holds up Jesus who is half swaddled.	f. 4v, Full page miniature, no text.		
16	<i>Psalter</i> JR L123	Mary	2		Anne sitting upright in bed, two women - one holding out Mary, the other holding jug/bowl. Tub on floor in foreground.	f. 272v, Sanctoral: historiated initial <i>G</i> . 'Gaudeamus omnes in domino'.	Early XIVc. Made in N. Italy (Padua?) for house of Carmelite order.	



No	Reference	Birth of	women	men	Brief Description	Folio/Text	Ownership/date etc. (where known)	Illust. X-Ref
17a	<i>Breviary</i> JR L 136	John	1		Elizabeth in bed, woman holds child. No domestic details, stylised background.	f. 194v, Sanctoral: framed miniature. 'Iam dominio propria ante fraters [...] Fuit homo missus [...]'. f. 307r, Historiated initial. Sanctoral, 'Approba te consuetudinis est apud christianos sanctorum patrum dies natalicos observare diligenter [...]'. f. 66v, Framed miniature: prayer (?) 'Ave cuius concepicio [...]'. f. 6v, Calendar border: June; feast of John's Nativity (no frame). f. 9r, Calendar border: November; feast of the Virgin's Nativity (no frame).	Early XVc. Use of Paris.	
17b		Mary	1		Anne in bed, one woman holds Mary. Much as f. 194v. No domestic details, stylised background.			
18	<i>Prayers</i> JR L 165	Mary	2		Anne prostrate in bed. One woman holds Mary wrapped in sheet towards woman who pours water into tub.		<i>Abbot Islip Devotions</i> Late XVc English: owned/written by Abbot Islip for Henry VII (?)	
19a	<i>Horae</i> , Leeds, Brotherton MS1	John	1	Z	Anne in canopied bed; Zacharias with writing tablet. A woman in blue holds swaddled John.		Fragmentary, French, XVc. Illuminated by the Bedford Master group.	Fig. 22
19b		Mary	1		Woman holds swaddled child; Anne lies in bed.			Fig. 23

No	Reference	Birth of	women	men	Brief Description	Folio/Text	Ownership/date etc. (where known)	Illust. X-Ref
20	<i>Horae</i> Liverpool, NMG 12022	Christ	1	Jp	Mary lies on bed/couch. Woman stands behind holding swaddled child. Joseph seated on floor in foreground.	f. 109r, Prime: framed miniature, 'Deus in adjutorium meum intende [...]'. f. 307v, Sanctoral: historiated initial <i>F</i> . 'Fuit homo missus a deo cui nomen iohannes erat [...]'. f. 364r, Sanctoral: historiated initial <i>B</i> . 'Beata ergo domini mater et perpetua virgo maria [...]'. f. 41r, Matins: border to <i>Annunciation</i> . f. 63v, Lauds: border to <i>Visitation</i> .	Early XVc. French, use of Paris.	
21a	<i>Breviarium</i> BN lat. 746a	John	3	Z	Elizabeth in canopied bed. Two women prepare to bathe child. Another stands behind bed attending Elizabeth who has her hands clasped in prayer. Zacharias writing in his book.			
21b		Mary	3	Jm	Anne in canopied bed. Two women enter room from left. Woman prepares to bathe child. Joachim overlooks the scene. Anne, Mary and Joachim have hands together in prayer.			
22a	<i>Horae</i> BN lat. 1158	Christ		Jp	Mary in bed; simple stable setting, Joseph head on hands, sleeping? Mary holds Jesus, possibly breast- feeding.		<i>Heures dites de Neville</i> XVc. Use of Paris. Owned by Ralph Neville who is shown in miniatures with his children (f. 27v) and his second wife and daughters (f. 34v).	
22b		John			Elizabeth in canopied bed, holds John. No indication of room/architecture: bed placed amongst foliage of the border.			



No	Reference	Birth of	women	men	Brief Description	Folio/Text	Ownership/date etc. (where known)	Illust. X-Ref
22c		Christ	1	Jp	Simple domestic interior with exterior details. Female attendant kneeling on the floor, gestures towards fire, holds Jesus over her shoulder. He reaches out towards Mary, in bed behind. Joseph overlooks the scene next to the bed.	f. 74v, Prime: main image.		
22d		Christ	1		Top right: Mary seated in stable with Christ on lap. Female attendant hands her a towel. Bottom right: preparation of bath by woman; bottom left: Virgin, seated on wooden stool, bathing Christ	f. 80r, Tierce Borders to <i>Annunciation</i> to Shepherds.		
23a	<i>Horae</i> BN lat. 9473	John	1	2 inc. Z	Domestic interior with furniture/pots etc.; Elizabeth secluded in curtained bed. Woman in foreground holds child.	f. 8v, Calendar: June, border roundel.	Hours of Louis de Savoie c. 1450-1475	
23b		Mary	Several men and women unclear from microfilm how many.		Domestic interior, Anne partly secluded in curtained bed, being presented with child. Figures group around bed -	f. 11r, Calendar: September. Border roundel, feast of Mary's Nativity.		

No	Reference	Birth of	women	men	Brief Description	Folio/Text	Ownership/date etc. (where known)	Illust. X-Ref
24	<i>Horae</i> V&A Salting 1222	Mary	4	Z	Anne lies in bed, turned to one side. Three women behind bed, and Zacharias. In foreground woman bathes Mary (crowned) over a shallow tub.	f. 33r, Matins: border image to <i>Annunciation</i>	1471 onwards. Use of Paris. <i>Hours of Marguerite de Foix</i> , second wife of François II d'Anjou.	Fig. 62
25	<i>Horae</i> V&A Reid 4	Christ			Preparation of bath for Christ. Mary (haloed) seated on end of large bed; Christ naked and haloed. Mary reaches out hand to water poured into wooden bath by a woman (haloed). Stable with pitched roof, ox and ass.	f. 56v, Prime: main image.	1400-10 Nine miniatures in the manuscript by the Boucicaut Master; one by the Egerton Master.	
26	<i>Horae</i> Fitz. 62	Mary	1		Anne sits in canopied bed. Woman holds swaddled child towards her.	f. 29r, Matins: border roundel to main <i>Annunciation</i>	<i>Fitzwilliam Hours</i> . c. 1418-31. Rohan workshop. Use of Paris. Previously owned by Isabel Stuart and probably Yolande d'Anjou.	Fig. 56
27	<i>Horae</i> Fitz. 63	Mary	1	J	Anne sits in canopied bed. Joachim behind her, hands clasped in prayer. In foreground woman bathes child in a tub.	f. 25r, Matins: border roundel to <i>Annunciation</i>	Mid-late XVc. Use of Paris.	



No	Reference	Birth of	women	men	Brief Description	Folio/Text	Ownership/date etc. (where known)	Illust. X-Ref
28	<i>Horae</i> Fitz. 74	Mary	2		Anne (haloed) lies in canopied bed. One woman stands behind the bed, another washes the child (haloed) in tub on the floor.	f. 29r, Matins: border roundel to <i>Annunciation</i> .	Late XVc. Use of Paris.	
29	<i>Horae</i> Fitz. 96	Mary	1		Domestic interior with latticed windows, table and jug. Anne sits in canopied bed holding swaddled child. Woman stands beside her. In the foreground, a stool; a bath has been prepared.	f. 28r, Matins: framed border miniature to <i>Annunciation</i> .	XVc. Use of Paris. 'mademoiselle de' written at bottom of f. 162r.	
30	<i>Horae</i> BN lat. 1156A	Christ	1	Jp	Stable setting. Mary breastfeeding Christ; she also places her hand in a bath being prepared by female attendant. Joseph and angel watch. Ox and ass behind.	f. 48r, Prime: main image.	<i>Paris Hours of René d'Anjou</i> c. 1434. Rohan workshop. Use of Paris.	Fig. 46
31a	<i>Horae</i> BN lat. 9471	Cain and Abel	1		Stable setting. Eve, with manner and garb of Virgin, holds child. Another woman holds the other child. In foreground Adam works the ground and Eve spins.	f. 14v, Calendar border: October. Border scene from <i>Bible moralisée</i> , 'Ici est la nativite de Caym et dabel [...]'].	c. 1417. <i>Grandes Heures de Rohan</i> . Rohan workshop. Use of Paris. Possibly commissioned by Yolande d'Aragon.	Fig. 35

No	Reference	Birth of	women	men	Brief Description	Folio/Text	Ownership/date etc. (where known)	Illust. X-Ref
31b		Esau and Jacob	1		Stable setting. Rebecca gives birth to twins who are pulled from her lap, one on the heel of the other, by another woman. At the side of the image, Esau with a bow.	f. 55r, Hours of the Virgin: border scene from <i>Bible moralisée</i> , 'Icy est Ysaac avec Rebecca [...]'].		Fig. 36
31c		Perez and Zerah	1		Backdrop of dark blue sky and gold clouds. Tamar gives birth to twins. They are delivered by a midwife who had tied red thread to first child.	f. 67r, Hours of the Virgin: border scene from <i>Bible moralisée</i> , 'Et puis prist une aultre fame qui out nom thamar [...]'].		Fig. 37
31d		Christian children (Ecclesia)	1		Crowned figure, representing Ecclesia. Two children emerge from her lap, beneath her cloak.	f. 67v, Hours of the Virgin: border scene from <i>Bible moralisée</i> , 'Ce que le premiere des enfans sen issu [...]'].		Fig. 39
31e		Male children of Israel	2	1	Stable setting. A woman pulls child from woman's lap, beneath a blanket. Another woman stands behind, hands raised. Male figure looks on.	f. 127v Litany: border scene from <i>Bible moralisée</i> series, 'Icy nourrissent les fames tous leurs enfans masles [...]'].		Fig. 38
31f		Moses	1	Father	Moses's mother sits in canopied bed. Child pulled forth from beneath blanket over her lap by another woman. Father looks on.	f. 129v Litany: border scene from <i>Bible moralisée</i> , 'Icy naist moyses du ventre sa mere [...]'].		Fig. 40



No	Reference	Birth of	women	men	Brief Description	Folio/Text	Ownership/date etc. (where known)	Illust. X-Ref
31g		Christ	1	Jp	Stable setting. Virgin gives birth to Christ, who is pulled from beneath covers over her lap. Joseph looks on.	f. 130r Litany: border scene from Bible <i>moralisée</i> , 'La nativite moyse senefie la nativite nostre seigneur [...]'		Fig. 41
32a	<i>Horae</i> Yates- Thomp. 13	John	1	1	(f. 54v) Elizabeth lies in bed. Gestures towards woman who holds swaddled child. (f. 55r) Zacharias with scroll.	ff. 54v-55fr, Hours of the Trinity. Both images in <i>bas-de-page</i> .	<i>Taymouth Hours</i> . XIVc, use of Sarum.  Made for aristocratic woman as seen in donor portraits (e.g. f. 7r). Arms of later female user of Neville family added. Illustrated on ff. 55v-59v in <i>bas-de-page</i> with scenes leading to birth and presentation of the Virgin.	
32b		Mary	1		Anne lies in bed and holds both hands out towards woman at end of bed, who holds swaddled Mary. Hand of God appears above and touches Mary's halo.	f. 58r, Hours of the Trinity.		
33	<i>Horae</i> JR Inc 9607	Mary	1		Anne in bed, a woman holds VM, loosely wrapped in a sheet, towards her mother.	p. C1a, Matins.	Printed by Jehannot in [Paris] 1492/93; Use of Angers.	Fig. 28
34	<i>Horae</i> JR Inc 10793	Mary	1		Anne in bed, a woman holds VM, loosely wrapped in a sheet, towards her mother.	p. B3b, 11a, borders: litany of saints, Gospels	Printed by Philippi Cruzenach. in [Paris] 1497.	
35	<i>Horae</i> JR Inc 151444	Mary	2		Anne in bed, gestures towards a woman who holds VM wrapped in a sheet. Another woman pours water into a tub.	p. B8b, C7a, F3a, 18b, O6b, borders: Matins, Lauds, <i>Salve Regina</i> , <i>Deus Meus</i> , <i>Laudate Dominum</i> .	Printed by Kerver in [Paris] 1498.	Fig. 27

No	Reference	Birth of	women	men	Brief Description	Folio/Text	Ownership/date etc. (where known)	Illust. X-Ref
36	<i>Horae</i> Leeds, Brotherton Inc KER	Mary	2		Anne in bed, gestures towards a woman who holds VM wrapped in a sheet. Another woman pours water into a tub.	p. E7b; F4b; J2a; N7b, borders: Hours of Virgin, prayers to Virgin and Christ.	Printed by Kerver in [Paris] 1497 for the English market. Use of Sarum.	
37a	<i>Life of Mary</i> Add. 29434	Concep- tion of Mary	2	Jm	Anne lying in bed, the child visible in her womb. God the father beams doves/rays down to her womb. Joachim seated by bed, hands in prayer. Two women behind him, hands raised in gesture.	f. 9v, 'Beata virgo in utero matris [...]'].	Late XIIIc, early XIVc Fly leaf states it is an English MS.	
37b		Mary	2	3	Anne lying down; two women bathing child over wooden bath; Joachim and three 'vicini' also present. Takes place outside with two suns shining.	f. 11r, 'De signis qui fiebant in nativitate beate virginis [...]'].		
37c		Christ	2	Jp	Rachel and Salomé returning with Joseph. Salomé embraces Mary; Christ swaddled in cradle, with beasts. Rachel, Salomé and Joseph in adoration.	f. 39r		
38a	Beauvais <i>Speculum</i> R. 14 E i	Alexander	3		Mother in canopied bed, woman hands child to her. Two other women in fashionable dress by bed.	f. 177v, framed miniature: 'De la nativite dalexandre et de la fuite neptanabus en macedone. Premier chapitre...'	Late XVc. Made for Edward IV of England, possibly in Bruges.	



No	Reference	Birth of	Women	Men	Brief Description	Folio/Text	Ownership/date etc. (where known)	Illust. X-Ref
38b		Cyrus	1	2	Mother in canopied bed. Woman hands swaddled Cyrus to men. In distance one of the men hands child to shepherd, gesturing outside.	f. 133r, framed miniature 'Ou commencent du regne cyrus es perses...'		
39	Wavrin, <i>History of England</i> R. 15 E iv	Const- antine	1		Room viewed from outside. Mother in canopied bed, handed child by another woman.	f. 72r, framed miniature: 'Comment constans vint en angleterre et espousa hellaine [...]'	XVc. Made for Edward IV of England.	Fig. 7
40	Mansel, <i>Fleur des histoires</i> R. 18 E vi	Mary	2	Z outside	Anne in bed, fireplace just visible in room, curtains round bed, one woman holds Mary who stands upright on bed. Joachim outside walls of house, eyes/head averted from scene.	f. 8r, framed miniature: 'Combien que la matiere principal [...]'	XVc. Made for Edward IV of England, in Bruges.	Fig. 69
41a	de Voragine, <i>Legende doree</i> R. 19 B xvii	John			Elizabeth in bed, turned aside. John in cradle in front of her. Angel in sky.	f. 148r, framed miniature: 'La nativite saint johan baptiste fu de nonciee de lange gabriel en ceste maniere [...]'	French, made in 1382. Owned by the Beaufort family after original patron. Then in Henry VIII's library in 1535.	

No	Reference	Birth of	women	men	Brief Description	Folio/Text	Ownership/date etc. (where known)	Illust. X-Ref
41b		Mary	1		Anne in bed, turned to the side. Woman bathes Mary in wooden tub on floor in foreground.	f. 243r, framed miniature: 'La nativite vierge mere de la lignie de iuda et du lignage de david [...]'. f. 7v, framed miniature: (line drawing with washes) 'Ortus mariae'.		
42	<i>Speculum</i> Harley 3240	Mary		Jm	Anne lying prostrate in bed, holding Mary beside her. Joachim holding Mary's other hand.	f. 7r, framed miniature: 'In precedenti capitulo audivimus de beate virginis annunciation [...]'. 1 <sup>st</sup> branch, roundel 'Bene factus [illegible] [...]'. XIVc. German.		
43	<i>Speculum</i> Harley 4996	Mary		Jm	Anne sitting up in bed. She and Joachim hold Mary between them. Curtains round bed.			
44a	<i>Arbor</i> <i>Caritatis</i> JR L 18 (roll)	Mary	4	Jm	Anne in bed breast-feeding. Two women in foreground preparing bath, two others behind bed holding towels/plates. Joachim on right, hands clasped in prayer.			



No	Reference	Birth of	women	men	Brief Description	Folio/Text	Ownership/date etc. (where known)	Illust. X-Ref
44b		John	4 inc. VM	Z +2	Elizabeth in bed. Mary presents John to her. Two women behind Mary, one holding round pot. In foreground woman prepares cradle. Two men approach Zacharias who holds a scroll.	4 <sup>th</sup> branch, roundel 'Fuit homo missus a deo qui nomen erat iohannes...' also (on rhs of Isaac med.) 'Dominus ab utero vocavit me. De ventris matris mee recordatus est [illeg.] [...]'		
44c		Isaac	3	Abraham	Sarah sits up in bed. Abraham gives Isaac to her. Two women on right, one holding plate with fruit, other with basket. Another woman in front preparing cradle or bath [? item not visible]	4 <sup>th</sup> branch, roundel. Text about John and Isaac roundels. 'Ystoria quali hellysabeth uxor zacarie peperit filius que fuit beatus iohannes baptista. [Illeg.] quali [illeg.] Sara peperit abrahae seru filius - Ysaach sibi ad to permissum Genesis xxi		
45	<i>Miroir historiale</i> BN f. fr 52	St Ponce [?]	4		Domestic interior, mother in canopied bed. Child stands in bath, two women gesture before him. Another woman breast feeds swaddled child.	f. 117v, framed miniature: Et quant il fu orphelin de pere et de mere il mectoir souvent une evangile [...]'	XVc.	

No	Reference	Birth of	Women	Men	Brief Description	Folio/Text	Ownership/date etc. (where known)	Illust. X-Ref
46	<i>L'histoire de Merlin</i> BN f. fr 91	Merlin	3		Large narrative scene: section with birth shows view into interior with mother in bed and women placing child in a basket. Also shows basket lowered to women waiting outside, below the room.	f. 7r, framed miniature: 'Par ceste raison sceult il les choses faictes et dictes quil saissa [...]'. f. 122r, framed miniature: 'La nativite saint Jean Baptiste [...]'. f. 200v, framed miniature: 'De la nativite notre dame [...]'. Fig. 25	XVc. French. Made for Bishop of Geneva, Jean- Louis de Savoie c. 1480-85.	
47a	<i>Legende Doree</i> BN f. fr 242	John	1	Z	Elizabeth in bed, a woman holds swaddled child and leans towards the bed. Zacharias with writing tablet seated on right. Stylised chequered background		XVc. French	
47b		Mary	3		Anne in bed, two women bathe child over bath tub, another holds out a towel; stylised chequered background.			





No	Reference	Birth of	women	men	Brief Description	Folio/Text	Ownership/date etc. (where known)	Illust. X-Ref
49a	<i>Miroir historiale</i> BN ms f. fr 316	Isaac	1		Mother in bed; woman stands behind holding swaddled child. Curtains, but otherwise no domestic details.	f. 68v, framed miniature: 'De la nativite ysaac. [...]']	XIVc. French	
49b		Esau and Jacob	2		Two women hold children: Jacob swaddled, Esau held towards mother, not swaddled and hairy. Mother in bed; curtains but no domestic details.	f. 81r, framed miniature: 'De la folle de sepouture double et de Rebecca et de son enfantement'.		
49c		Moses	2		Mother in bed, turned away; one woman holds swaddled child, the other gestures with hands; curtains but no domestic details.	f. 81v, framed miniature: 'De la nativite moyses [...]']		
49d		Alexander	1		Mother in bed, crowned. Woman holds swaddled child behind bed. Curtains but no domestic details.	f. 182r, framed miniature: 'Comment alexandre fu ne [...]']		
49e		Sélencos	2		Mother in bed, turned aside. Two women behind bed, one hands swaddled child to the other. No domestic details.	f. 218r, framed miniature: 'Comme la ocide certes mere de cestui selenche nichanor fust mariee a antiochis le cler [...]']		



No	Reference	Birth of	women	men	Brief Description	Folio/Text	Ownership/date etc. (where known)	Illust. X-Ref
49f		Mary	2		Anne in bed, turned aside; two women – one holds child, the other gestures with hands. No domestic details.	f. 291r, framed miniature: 'De la nativite a la benedite vierge marie [...]']		
49g		Christ		Jp	Child in crib, regarded by ox and ass. Joseph gestures with hands; Mary in bed, turned aside. No domestic details.	f. 302r, framed miniature: 'De la description du monde et de la nativite du sauveur'		
50a	<i>Bible moralisée</i> BN lat. 9561	Cain and Abel	1		Eve sits covered by blanket, holding child. Another woman holds the other child. In foreground Adam works the ground and Eve spins.	f. 10r, top roundel of three. 'Ici est la nativite de caim et dabel et ici labore eve et adam [...]']	XIVc. Neapolitan. Model for marginal series in <i>Grandes Heures de Rohan</i> . Poss. brought back from Naples by Louis II d'Anjou or entourage.	
50b		Esau and Jacob	2		Rebecca seated. Two children emerge, one on the heels of the other, from opening in her stomach. They are pulled forth by woman. Another woman stands behind. On the frame of the miniature, Esau with bow.	f. 19r, top roundel of three. 'Ici si est ysaac avec rebequa. Ici a rebequa ii enfans esau et Jacob [...]']		

No	Reference	Birth of	women	men	Brief Description	Folio/Text	Ownership/date etc. (where known)	Illust. X-Ref
50c		Male children of Israel	2	1	Mother half-lying down. Child pulled forth by another woman from beneath blanket covering lower half of her body. Woman stands behind, arms raised. Another figure, poss. male, stands on left.	f. 45r, central miniature of row of three. 'Ici menent les femes et norrissent tos les enfans mailles et ne nocient nul'.		
50d		Moses	2	1	Moses's mother sitting with hands clasped in prayer. Child delivered by another woman from under blanket over woman's waist. Father looks on.	f. 46v, left miniature of row of three. 'Ici nest moyses del ventre sa mere et la ventriere le recoit et le pere se demente quil enpora fere'.		
50e		Christ	1	Jp	Mary sitting with hands raised. Christ delivered from beneath her cloak by woman. Joseph sits on right, head resting on hand.	f. 47r, left miniature of row of three. 'La nativite de Moyses senefie la nativite Ihesu Crist [...]'		
50f		Mary	2	J	Architectural setting. Anne sitting in bed, holding swaddled child. Two women gesture towards her on right. Joachim on the left.	f. 118v, main miniature. 'Cest lystore coment sainte anne enfanta de nostre dame [...]'		



No	Reference	Birth of	women	men	Brief Description	Folio/Text	Ownership/date etc. (where known)	Illust. X-Ref
51	JR Inc 12018.1 Voragine, <i>Golden Legend</i>	Virgin			Anne lies in bed. Behind the bed are two women, one of whom holds swaddled child. Domestic interior with latticed windows and fireplace.	p. 84a	Translated and printed by Caxton, Westminster 1497.	Fig. 26

## APPENDIX 3

### GENEALOGICAL TREES OF THE HOUSES OF FRANCE, ANJOU, BRITTANY, AND BURGUNDY

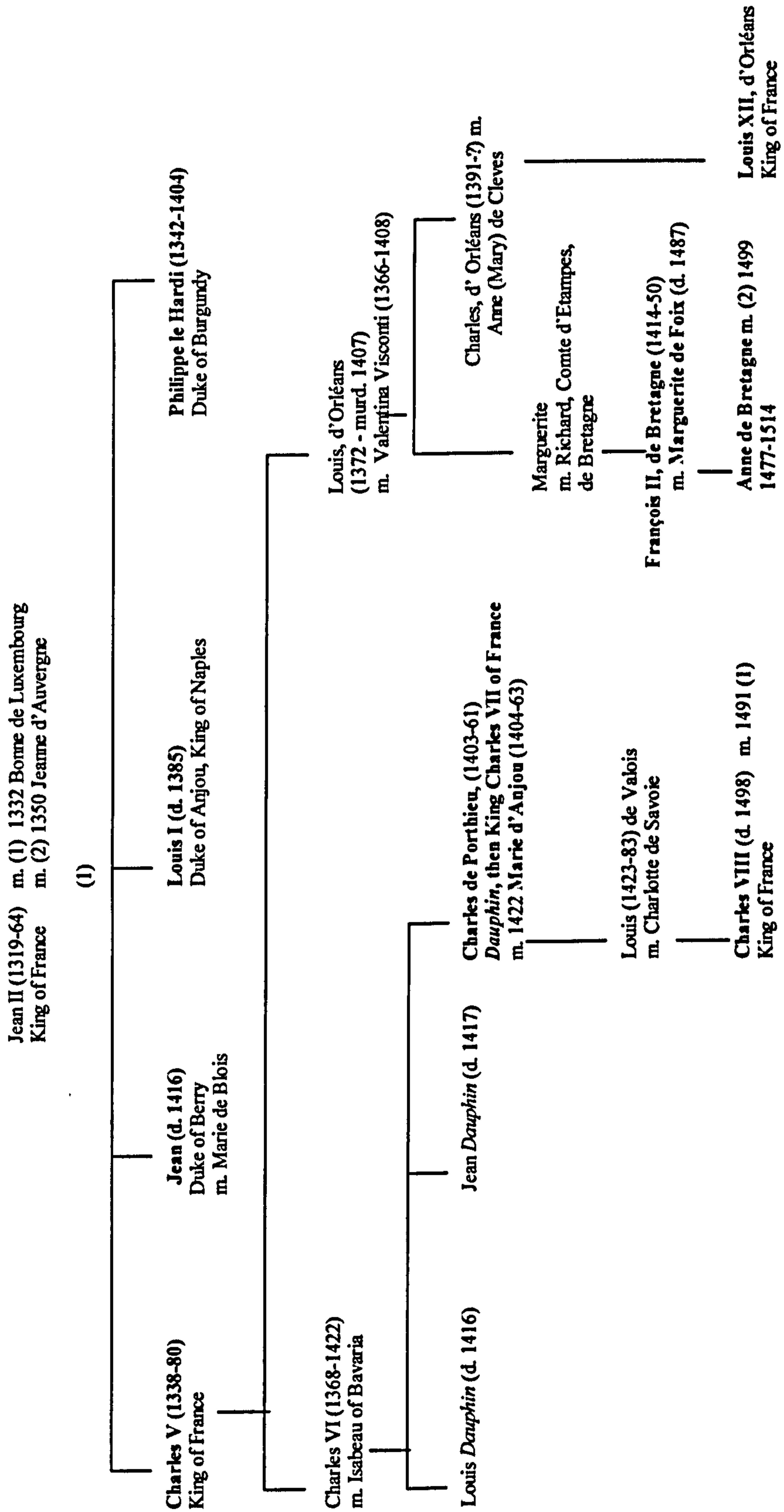
The information in these genealogical trees is compiled from those in Harthan, *Books of Hours*, and John S. C. Bridge, *A History of France from Death of Louis XI*.<sup>1</sup> For reasons of space it has not been possible to include all the children of certain unions. The names marked in bold refer to people specifically discussed in this thesis.

---

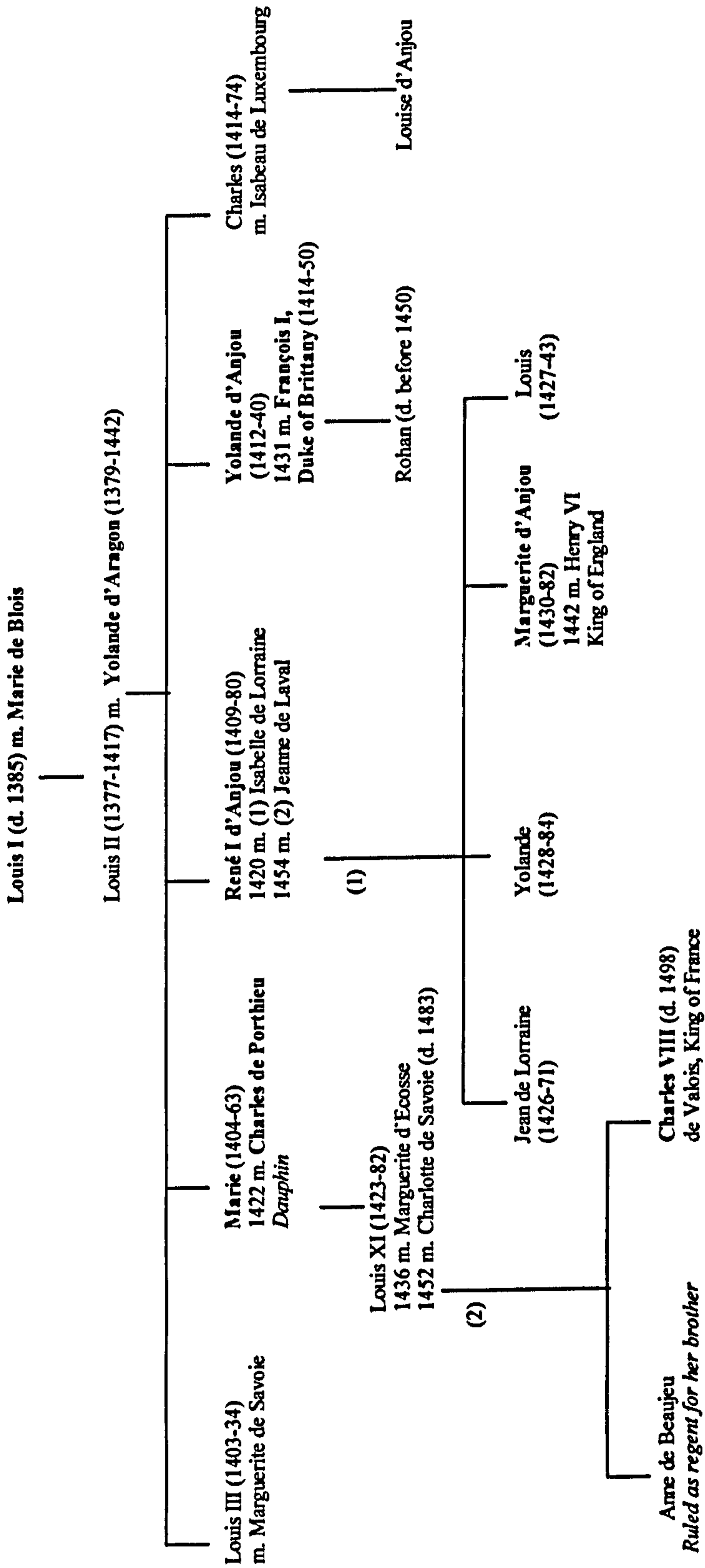
<sup>1</sup> John S. C. Bridge, *A History of France from Death of Louis XI*, 5 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921), 1, *The Regency of Anne of Beaujeau, 1483-93*



**Genealogy of the House of France**



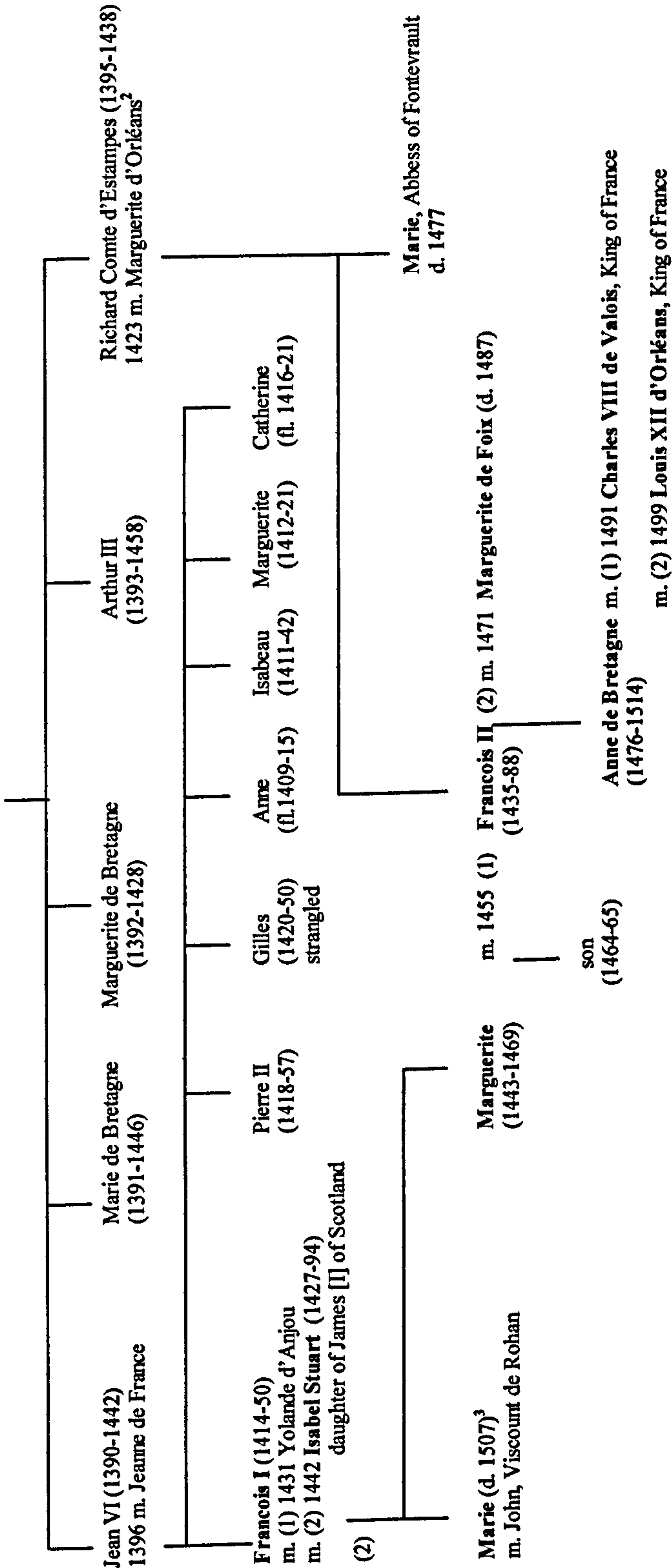
**Genealogy of the House of Anjou**





### Genealogy of the House of Brittany

Jean V (1340-1399) m. 1386 Jeanne de Navarre (1370-1437)<sup>1</sup>



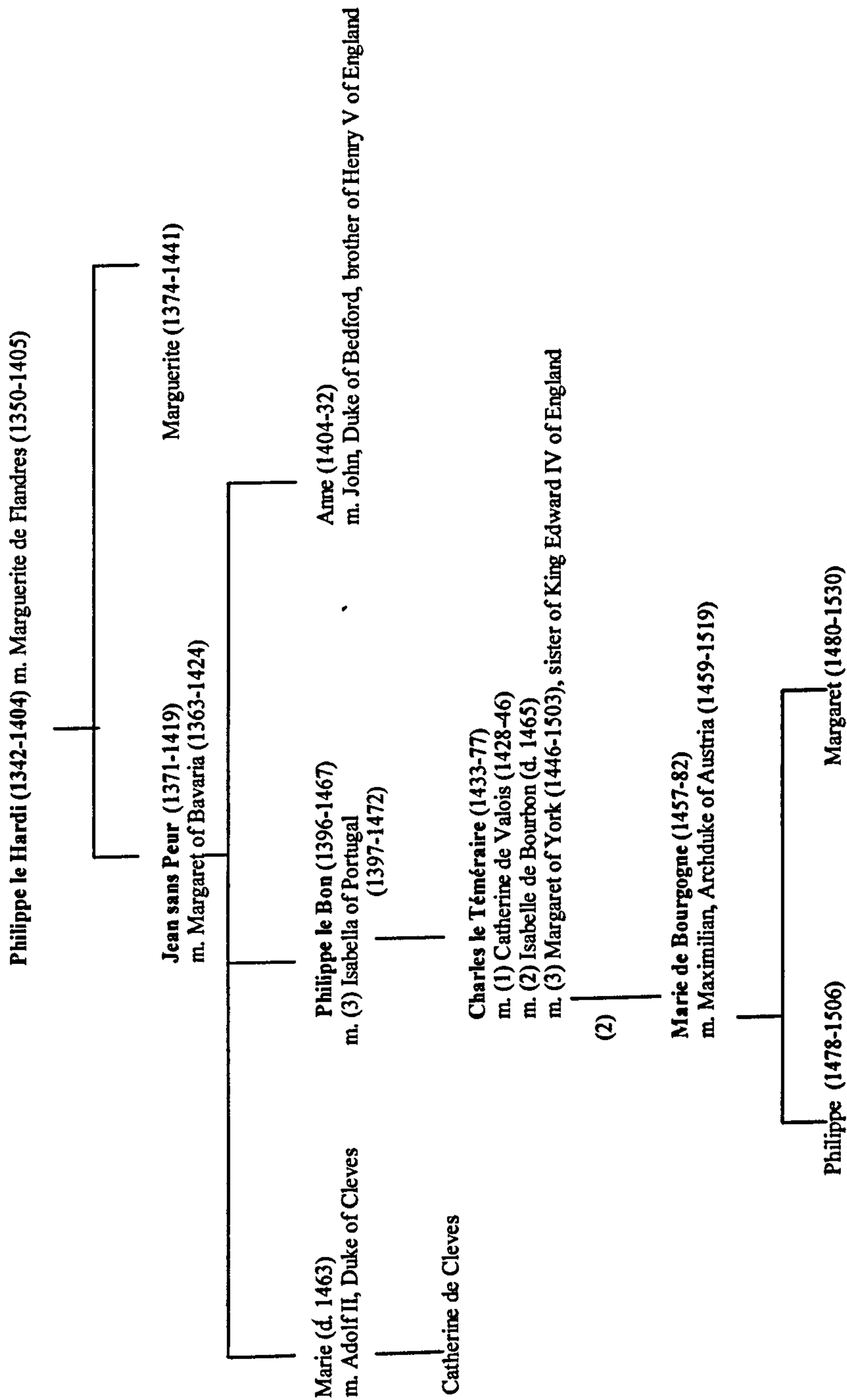
Marie, Abbess of Fontevrault  
d. 1477

<sup>1</sup> This was Jean's third marriage, his previous unions being without children.

<sup>2</sup> There were five other children from this marriage.

<sup>3</sup> Marie was actually Isabel's youngest daughter: she is represented here first to facilitate reading the genealogy.

**Genealogy of the House of Burgundy**





## APPENDIX 4

CHILDBIRTH PRAYER IN THE *HOURS OF*  
*MARGUERITE DE FOIX* (NO. 24)<sup>1</sup>

[f. 223r] Domine deus omnipotens cuius sapientia conditi sumus ac 1  
 pietate conservati qui tua bonitatis plenitudine cuncta de nichilo creasti  
 tantorumque mirabilium operum tuorum orbem decorasti nec ulli  
 poscenti te toto corde defuisti, steriles fecundas fecisti: Sarre Ysaac  
 patriarcham sterili constituisti, Anne uxori Helcane Samuelem 5  
 prophetam [f. 223v] lacrimanti condonasti, Sansonem fortissimum  
 uxori Manne angelo nunciante infecunde tribuisti, Johannem batistam  
 Elizabeth adornate senectute dedisti, Jeremiam et Joannem in utero  
 sanctificasti et, quod in oculis cunctorum mirabile, Mariam Christi  
 matrem et virginem predestinasti, Moysen ut populo Israel preesset a 10  
 Pharaonis decreto liberasti : nobisque famule [f. 224r] tue obprobrium  
 sterilitatis abstulisti, humili deprecor parte: Fateor te futura ut precrita  
 nosse cognitione cuius cuncte carent creature. Quid de futuro postulare  
 velim ignaram me quasi penitus reddo. Si tue tamen videatur providentie  
 rei publice ac petende persone honestum et utile totis mentis nisibus 15  
 et affectu supplico hoc in modo mitissime Deus, aures [f. 224v] tue  
 pietatis nostris precibus accommoda: meritis unigeniti filii tui ac virginis  
 sacratissime matris eius, totius curie celestis angelorum patriarcharum  
 prophetarum apostolorum martirum confessorum virginum  
 penitentium contemplativorum activorum singularique presidio 20  
 sanctorum Gicquelli, Salomonis martirum, Britannie regum Donaciani  
 et Rogatiani martirum [f. 225r] comitis Nannetensij filiorum beatorum,  
 Sansonis, Melani, Maclovii<sup>2</sup>, Clari, Vincentii, Guillermi, Corentini,  
 Yvonis, Pauli, et omnium sanctorum et sanctarum quorum reliquie et  
 venerationes hoc in ducatu complectantur Francisci gloriosissimi 25

<sup>1</sup> This version of the Latin and the translation which follows have been achieved with the help of Mr Ian Moxon, to whom I am very grateful.

<sup>2</sup> In the ms I read maclo[...] ending in four minim strokes. Moxon suggests Maclovii to make a genitive but in the ms double ii is written 'ij' and is always dotted. The notes from the V&A read the name as a version of St Malo (Maclou).

confessoris Anthonii Paduani Margarite virginis et martiris: quatinus  
nobis Francisco Britan[f. 225v]norum duci et Margarite eius uxori  
natum qui viriliter ad honorem dei viventis et salutem presideat<sup>3</sup>  
subditorum subsidium utilitatis et honoris concedas per eundem  
dominum nostrum Ihesum Cristum filium tuum qui tecum vivit et  
regnat in secula seculorum. Amen.

30

---

<sup>3</sup> Watson at the V&A and I both read 'presidentis' with contraction over the 'e'. Moxon, however, suggests that a subjunctive verb is needed at this point and proposes 'presideat' in this context.



**TRANSLATION OF CHILDBIRTH PRAYER IN THE  
*HOURS OF MARGUERITE DE FOIX*<sup>4</sup>**

God almighty, by whose wisdom we have been created and by whose goodness we have been preserved, <you> who created everything from nothing by your full measure of goodness and who embellished the circle of your so great wonderful works [i.e. the world] and who failed no one begging you with all his heart, <you> who made the barren fertile: to the barren Sarah you assigned <as a son> the patriarch Isaac, to Anna [Hannah] in her tears, the wife of Elkannah, you presented the prophet Samuel, to the infertile wife of Manoah through the announcement of the angel you assigned the very strong Samson, to Elizabeth distinguished by her old age you gave John the Baptist; you made Jeremiah and John holy in the womb and, something remarkable in the eyes of all, you appointed in advance Mary, mother of Christ and virgin; you set free Moses from the dictate of the Pharaoh in order that he might be in charge of the people, Israel, and you have taken away from us [i.e. me] your servant the disgrace of barrenness, I in my humble position earnestly pray: I acknowledge that you know the future as you know the past, the knowledge of which all living creatures lack. I as it were completely hand myself over, not knowing what I would like to ask about the future.<sup>5</sup> However, if it should seem honourable and advantageous to your forethought<sup>6</sup> for the state and to your person that must be prayed to I earnestly request with all the efforts and will of my mind in the following manner: O most gentle God, apply the ears of your goodness to our [i.e. my] prayers: through the services of your only begotten son and the most holy virgin his mother, of the whole heavenly court <consisting> of angels, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, confessors, virgins, penitents, contemplative <monks>, active <monks>, and through the unique protection of the holy martyrs Gicquellus <and> Salomon, of the kings of Brittany Donatianus and Rogatianus, <i.e.> the martyrs, <i.e.> the blessed sons of the Count of

---

<sup>4</sup> Square brackets indicate idiomatic English readings or spellings. Angled brackets indicate ellipses in the Latin which require rendition in English.

<sup>5</sup> This is Moxon's suggested reading of this peculiar passage, where some of the Latin is unclear.

<sup>6</sup> This is an abstract standing for a concrete, i.e. your holiness, your highness.

Nantes, of Sanson, of Melanus, of Maclovius, of Clarus, of Vincentius, of Guillermus, of Corentinus, of Yvon, of Paulus, and of all the male saints and female saints whose remains and cults are embraced in this dukedom of the most glorious François, <namely> of the confessor Anthonius of Padua, <and> of Margarita the virgin and martyr<sup>7</sup>: <I earnestly pray><sup>8</sup> that in the name of the same Lord our Jesus Christ your son who lives and reigns with you for ever and ever you grant to us, François duke of the Bretons and Marguerite his wife, a son who may direct<sup>9</sup> the support consisting of advantage and honour for the honour of the living God and for the safety of his subjects.<sup>10</sup> Amen.

---

<sup>7</sup> Gicquellus, Salomon of La Martyre, Donatian and Rogation, sons of the count of Nantes, Samson of Dol, Melanus of Rennes, Malo, Clarus of Nantes, Vincent Ferrer of Valencia and Vannes, Guillaume Pinchon of St Brieuc, Corentin of Quimper, Yves of Trégieur, Paul; St Anthony of Padua and St Margaret. Some of these saints are specific to Brittany.

<sup>8</sup> This is a reiteration of the plea in l. 12

<sup>9</sup> This is translated as 'direct' reading Moxon's suggestion of 'presideat' here; see above.

<sup>10</sup> Moxon has suggested this rearrangement of the text in the translation.



**APPENDIX 5**  
**CHILDBIRTH PRAYER IN THE PRAYER BOOK OF**  
**ANNE DE BRETAGNE**  
**CHICAGO, NEWBERRY LIBRARY MS 83**

[f. 49v] Oratio habita per beatum Leonardum. Qua liberata fuit 1  
 Regina Francie. Que in partu deficiebat nec parare poterat iam desperate.  
 Et est maxime virtutis quoties devote legitur [f. 50r] et attente auditur  
 cum mulier est in partu. Oratio, Deus omnipotens solus sine fine et initio.  
 Qui totum mundum creasti ex nihilo. Ad cuius imperium in stabile 5  
 volvitur celum. Terra autem immobilis persistit in eternum. Cuius luce  
 illuminantur sydera celi. Cuiusque nutu luna noctem. Sol occupat tempus  
 diei. Cuius inmensa et inenarrabilis claritas abissi profundas irradiat  
 tenebras. Cuius [f. 50v] precepto mare constringitur: dum ultra terminos  
 numque progreditur. Qui ex eodem mari flumina producis et flamma 10  
 ventorum in cavernis terre concludis. Qui etiam inextimabili potentia  
 tua ex durissimo lingo molha deducis femina. Qui adam de limo terre  
 plasmasti deque eius latere mulierem formans pro adjutorio et in  
 coniugium sociasti. Quibus ad propagandam posterum sobolem.  
 Per [f. 51r] legitimam coniugij copulationem perpetuam dedisti 15  
 benedictionem dicens: Crescite et multiplicami et replete terram et  
 dominamini piscibus maris et volatilibus celi, quin etiam bestijs totius  
 diversitatis. Qui abraam patriarcham coniugemque eius Saram licet  
 provector maturiori etate fecundasti insperate prolis novitate. Qui etiam  
 cooperante spiritu sancto de sinu tuo misisti filium tuum ad intemerate 20  
 virgi[f. 51v]nis uterum. ut in ea ds<sup>1</sup> Deus fieret homo et humana lege  
 impregnatis lateret divina. Atque etiam post novem mensium legitimum  
 numerum matre virgine pariente de thalamo procedens nascendo virginis  
 relinqueret uterum. In cuius nomine te deus pater Cum spiritu sancto  
 invoco Et ad exaudiendam vocem deprecationis mee. Solita clementia 25

---

<sup>1</sup> End of the line: justification abbreviation for Deus, which appears on the following line.

qua me semper exaudis. Quatenus velox et exaudibi[f. 52r]lis adsis.  
Suppliciter obsecro. Intret in conspectu tuo oratio mea. Inclina  
aurem tuam [/o/] pijssime ad preces meas. Tu enim per sacratissimum  
os filij tui domini nostri iesu Christi. Duodecim apostolis ceterisque  
fidelibus Christianis inquires promisisti. Quodcumque petieritis patri 30  
in nomine meo dabitur nobis. Peto itaque omnipotens pater per unicum  
filium tuum. Simulque etiam per spiritum sanctum. Ut huic pre angustia  
pariendi ingemiscenti mu[f. 52v]lieri superveniat tue pietatis auxilium.  
Quatenus ab instanti periculo liberata possit nobiscum glorificare nomen  
tuum. Qui est benedictus in secula seculorum. Amen. De sancta 35  
margarita.



**TRANSLATION OF CHILDBIRTH PRAYER IN THE  
PRAYER BOOK OF ANNE DE BRETAGNE<sup>2</sup>**

Prayer made by St Leonard by means of which the queen of France was released. She was not succeeding in bringing to full term and was not able to produce children, being at that stage beyond hope. And <the prayer> is of very great power whenever it is read piously and listened to attentively when a woman is in course of bearing children. Prayer: ‘Only <and> almighty God without end and without beginning, who created the whole universe from nothing, at whose command the changing sky is turned, while the earth continues unmoving for ever, by whose light the stars of the sky are lit up and at whose nod the moon <takes over> the night, the sun takes over the day time, whose vast and indescribable brightness shines upon the deep darkness of the bottomless pit, by whose command the sea is controlled to the point that it never advances beyond its bounds, who brings forth the rivers from the same sea and <who> shuts up the blasts of the winds in the caves of the earth, who also by means of your inconceivable power draws soft thighs out of the hardest timber, who formed Adam from the clay of the earth and, forming from his flank a woman as helper to him, associated <them> in marriage. To them for the purpose of engendering issue in terms of descendents through the lawful coupling of marriage you gave an everlasting blessing, saying “Increase and multiply and fill the earth and rule over the fishes of the sea and the flying creatures of the sky, even over the beast of every varied type.” <God>, who made fertile with the strange phenomenon of unhoped for offspring Abraham the patriarch and his wife Sarah, though well advanced in old age, who also, with the holy spirit working alongside, sent forth from your bosom your son into the womb of a pure virgin in order that God might be made man, and <in order that> the divine <law> of the begetter might lie hidden by the human law and in order that also, when his virgin mother gave birth after the lawful number of nine months, he, coming forth from the chamber, might by being born leave the womb of the virgin. In His [i.e. Christ’s] name I call upon you, <O> God the

---

<sup>2</sup> This translation has been achieved with the help of Mr Ian Moxon, to whom I am very grateful.

father in company with the holy spirit, and <I call upon you> to listen favourably to the words of my earnest prayer with the customary mercy with which you always listen favourably to me. I earnestly beg that you be present swiftly and attentively. Let my prayer enter into your sight. Bend your ear, O most holy one, to my prayers. For you made a promise through the most holy mouth of your son our Lord Jesus Christ when you said to the twelve apostles and to the other faithful followers of Christ: “Whatever you will have asked from the father in my name will be given to you”. Therefore I ask, almighty father through your one and only son and at the same time too through the holy spirit, that the assistance of your holiness may come upon this woman who is groaning because of the difficulty of giving birth in order that she, having been released from immediate danger may be able along with us to praise your name – you who are blessed for ever and ever. Amen.’



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Printed Primary and Secondary Sources

- Aers, David, and Lynn Staley, eds, *Powers of the Holy: Religion, Politics and Gender in Late Medieval Culture* (Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press, 1996)
- Anderson, Jaynie, 'Rewriting the History of Art Patronage', *RS*, 10 (1996), 129-38
- Ashley, Kathleen, and Pamela Sheingorn, eds, *Interpreting Cultural Symbols: Saint Anne in Late Medieval Society* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1990)
- Astell, Ann, *The Song of Songs in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990)
- Avril, François, and Nicole Reynaud, *Les Manuscrits à peintures en France, 1450-1520* (Paris: Flammarion-Bibliothèque nationale, 1993)
- , and Sylvie Lisiecki, 'Le livre d'heures de Jacques II de Châtillon', *Chroniques de la Bibliothèque nationale de France*, 17 (2002), 7-10
- Aymar, A., 'Le sachet accoucheur et ses mystères: Contribution à l'étude du folklore de la Haute-Auvergne', *Annales du Midi*, 38 (1926), 273-347
- Barasch, Moshe, *Gestures of Despair in Medieval and Early Renaissance Art* (New York: New York University Press, 1976)
- Baxandall, Michael, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972; repr. 1986)
- , *The Limewood Sculptors of Renaissance Germany* (London: Yale University Press, 1980)
- Beadle, Richard, ed., *The York Plays* (Edward Arnold: London, 1982)
- Beer, Gillian, 'Representing Women: Re-presenting the Past', in *The Feminist Reader*, ed. by Catherine Belsey and Jane Moore (London: Macmillan, 1989), pp. 63-80
- Bell, Susan Groag, 'Medieval Women Book Owners: Arbiters of Lay Piety and Ambassadors of Culture', in *Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Mary Eler and Maryanne Kowaleski (London and Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1988), pp. 149-87

- Berdini, Paolo, 'Women under the Gaze: A Renaissance Genealogy', *Art History*, 21 (1998), 565-90
- Biddick, Kathleen, 'Genders, Bodies, Borders: Technologies of the Visible', *Speculum*, 68 (1993), 389-418
- Blumenfeld-Kosinski, Renate, 'Illustration as Commentary in Late Medieval Images of Antichrist's Birth', *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, 63 (1989), 589-607
- , *Not of Woman Born: Representations of Caesarean Birth in Medieval and Renaissance Culture* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990)
- Boffey, Julia, 'Women Authors and Women's Literacy in Fourteenth- and Fifteenth-Century England', in *Women and Literature in Britain 1150-1500*, ed. by Carol M. Meale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 159-82
- Bradshaw, Paul F., ed., *The Canons of Hippolytus*, trans. by Carol Bebawi, Alcuin Liturgical Study 2 (Nottingham: Grove Books, 1987)
- Braekman, W. L., 'Notes on Old English Charms II', *Neophilologus*, 67 (1983), 605-610
- Brandenburg, Ton, 'St Anne and Her Family', in *Saints and She-Devils: Images of Women in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (London: Rubicon Press, 1987), pp. 101-27
- Bridge, John S. C., *A History of France from Death of Louis XI*, 5 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921)
- Brunel, Clovis, 'Une Nouvelle vie de Sainte Marguerite en vers provencaux', *Annales du Midi*, 38 (1926), 385-401
- Buettner, Brigitte, 'Women and the Circulation of Books', *JEBS*, 4 (2001), 9-31
- Bühler, Curt F., 'Prayers and Charms in Certain Middle English Scrolls', *Speculum*, 39 (1964), 270-78
- Butler, Judith, *Gender Trouble: Femininity and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990; repr. 1999)
- Bynum, Caroline Walker, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1982)
- , *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: the Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986)



- , *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1991)
- Camille, Michael, 'The Illustrated Manuscripts of Guillaume de Deguileville's "Pèlerinages" 1330-1426' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Cambridge, 1985)
- , *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art* (London: Reaktion Books, 1992; repr. 1995)
- Cartlidge, David R., and J. Keith Elliot, *Art and the Christian Apocrypha* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001)
- Cassidy, Brendan, 'A Relic, Some Pictures and the Mothers of Florence in the Late Fourteenth Century', *Gesta*, 30 (1991), 91-99
- Caviness, Madeleine H., 'Patron or Matron? A Capetian Bride and a *Vade Mecum* for Her Marriage Bed', *Speculum*, 68 (1993), 333-62
- Coletti, Theresa, 'Purity and Danger: The Paradox of Mary's Body and the Engendering of the Infancy Narrative in the English Mystery Cycles', in *Feminist Approaches to the Body in Medieval Literature*, ed. by Linda Lomperis and Sarah Stanbury (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1993), pp. 65-93
- , 'Devotional Iconography in the N-Town Marian Plays', in *Drama in the Middle Ages: Comparative and Critical Essays*, ed. by Clifford Davidson, C. J. Gianakaris, John H. Stroupe (New York: AMS Press Inc, 1982), pp. 249-71
- Coster, William, 'Purity, Profanity, and Puritanism: The Churching of Women, 1500-1700', *Woman and the Church*, Studies in Church History, 27 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), pp. 377-387
- Cressy, David, 'Purification, Thanksgiving and the Churching of Women in Post-Reformation England', *Past and Present*, 141 (1993), 106-46
- , *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997)
- Cullum, Patricia, and Jeremy Goldberg, 'How Margaret Blackburn Taught her Daughters: Reading Devotional Instruction in a Book of Hours', in *Medieval Women: Texts and Contexts in Late Medieval Britain: Essays for Felicity Riddy*, ed. by Arlyn Diamond, Rosalynn Voaden and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), pp. 217-36
- Cunnington, Phillis and Catherine Lucas, *Costume for Births, Marriages and Deaths* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1972)
- De Hamel, Christopher, *A History of Illuminated Manuscripts* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1986)

Delany, Sheila, *Impolitic Bodies: Poetry, Saints, and Society in Fifteenth-Century England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998)

Delisle, Léopold, *Mélanges de paléographie et de bibliographie* (Paris: Champion 1880)

Delva, Anna, *Vrouwengeneeskunde in Vlaanderen tijdens de late middeleeuwen*, Vlaamse Historische Studies 2 (Brugge: Genootschap voor Geschiedenis, 1983).

Diamond, Arlyn, Rosalynn Voaden and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, eds, *Medieval Women: Texts and Contexts in Late Medieval Britain: Essays for Felicity Riddy* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000)

Driver, Martha W., 'Mirrors of a Collective Past: Re-considering Images of Medieval Women', in *Women and the Book: Assessing the Visual Evidence*, ed. by Lesley Smith and Jane H. M. Taylor (London: The British Library and Toronto University Press, 1996), pp. 75-93

Duffy, Eamon, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992)

—, 'Holy Maydens, Holy Wyfes: the Cult of Saints in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century England', *Women and the Church*, Studies in Church History, 27 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), pp. 175-96

Durrieu, Paul, 'Les armoires du Bon Roi René', *Comptes-rendus des Séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres*, [no vol.] (1908), 102-114

—, 'Le Maître des "Grandes Heures de Rohan" et les Lescuier d'Angers', *Revue de l'art ancien et moderne*, 2 (1912), 81-98; 161-88

Dutton, Anne, 'Passing the Book: Testamentary Transmission of Religious Literature to and by Women in England 1350-1500', in *Women, the Book and the Godly*, ed. by Lesley Smith and Jane H. M. Taylor (Cambridge: Brewer, 1995), pp. 41-54

Eames, Penelope, *Furniture in England, France and the Netherlands from the Twelfth to the Fifteenth Century* (London: Furniture History Society, 1977)

Elsackers, Marianne, 'In Pain You Shall Bear Children: Medieval Prayers for a Safe Delivery', *Studies in the History of Religions*, ed. by Anne-Marie Korte (Boston, Leiden, and Cologne: Brill, 2001), pp. 179-209

Finucane, Ronald C., *Miracles and Pilgrims: Popular Beliefs in Medieval England* (London, Melbourne and Toronto: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd, 1977)

—, *The Rescue of the Innocents: Endangered Children in Medieval Miracles* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1997)



- Foster, Marjory Bolger, 'The Iconography of St Joseph in Netherlandish Art, 1400-1550' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Kansas, 1978)
- Franz, Adolph, *Die kirchlichen Benediktionen im Mittelalter*, 2 vols (Freiburg: Herder, 1909; repr., Graz: Akademischer Druck U.-Verlaganstalt, 1960)
- Freud, Sigmund, 'Femininity', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. by James Strachey, 24 vols (London: Vintage, 2001), pp. 112-35
- Friedländer, Max J., *Early Netherlandish Painting*, trans. by Heinz Norden, 14 vols (Leyden: A. W. Sijthoff, 1967-76)
- Gélis, Jacques, *History of Childbirth: Fertility, Pregnancy, and Birth in Early Modern Europe* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1991)
- Gibson, Gail McMurray, ' "Porta haec clausa erit": Comedy, Conception, and Ezekiel's Closed Door in the *Ludus Coventriae* Play of "Joseph's Return" ', *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 8 (1978), 137-56
- , *The Theater of Devotion: East Anglian Drama and Society in the Late Middle Ages* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1989)
- , 'Saint Anne and the Religion of Childbed: Some East Anglian Texts and Talismans', in *Interpreting Cultural Symbols: Saint Anne in Late Medieval Society* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1990), pp. 95-110
- , 'Blessing from Sun and Moon: Churching as Women's Theater', *Bodies and Disciplines: Intersections of Literature and History in Fifteenth-Century England*, ed. by Barbara A. Hanawalt, and David Wallace (London and Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), pp. 139-54
- , 'Scene and Obscene: Seeing and Performing Late Medieval Childbirth', *JMEMS*, 29 (1999), 7-24
- Gombrich, E. H., *The Story of Art*, 16th edn (London: Phaidon, 1995; repr. 1997)
- Gousset, Thomas, ed., *Les Actes de la Province Ecclesiastiques de Reims*, 2 vols (Reims: L. Jacquet, 1843)
- Gray, Douglas, 'Notes on Some Middle English Charms', *Chaucer and Middle English Studies in Honour of Rossell Hope Robbins*, ed. by Beryl Rowland (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1974), pp. 56-71
- Green, Monica H., 'Women's Medical Practice and Health Care in Medieval Europe', *Signs*, 14 (1989), 437-473
- , 'Obstetrical and Gynecological Texts in Middle English', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 14 (1992), 53-88

- , 'From "Diseases of Women" to "Secrets of Women": The Transformation of Gynecological Literature in the Late Middle Ages', *JMEMS*, 30 (2000), 5-39
- , *Women's Healthcare in the Medieval West*, Variorum (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000)
- Greilsammer, Myriam, 'The Midwife, the Priest, and the Physician: The Subjugation of Midwives in the Low Countries at the End of the Middle Ages', *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 21 (1991), 283-329
- Guest, Gerald B., *Bible Moralisée: Codex Vindobonensis 2554, Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek* (London: Harvey Miller, 1995)
- Haas, Louis, 'Women and Childbearing in Medieval Florence', in *Medieval Family Roles: A Book of Essays*, ed. by Cathy Jorgensen Itnyre (New York and London: Garland, 1996), pp. 87-99
- Hale, Rosemary Drage, 'Joseph as Mother: Adaptation and Appropriation in the Construction of Male Virtue', in *Medieval Mothering*, ed. by John Carmi Parsons and Bonnie Wheeler (New York and London: Garland, 1996), pp. 101-116
- , 'Rocking the Cradle: Margaretha Ebner (Be)Holds the Divine', in *Performance and Transformation: New Approaches to Late Medieval Spirituality*, ed. by Mary A. Suydam and Joanna E. Zeigler (London: Macmillan, 1999), pp. 211-39
- Hamburger, Jeffrey, *The Visual and the Visionary: Art and Female Spirituality in Late Medieval Germany* (New York: Zone Books, 1998)
- Hanawalt, Barbara, ed., *Women and Work in Pre-Industrial Europe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986)
- Harbison, Craig, *The Art of the Northern Renaissance* (London: Everyman, 1995)
- Harthan, John, *Books of Hours and Their Owners* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1977)
- , *An Introduction to Illuminated Manuscripts* (London: HMSO, 1983)
- Heimann, Adelheid, 'Der Meister der "Grandes Heures de Rohan" und seine Werkstatt', *Städel Jahrbuch*, 7-8 (1932), 1-61
- Henderson, W. G., ed., *Manuale et processionale ad usum insignis ecclesiae eboracensis*, Surtees Society, 63 (London: Whittaker and Co, 1875)



- Herlihy, David, and Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, *Tuscans and their Families: A Study of the Florentine Catasto of 1427* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985)
- Hughes, Diane Owen, 'Invisible Madonnas? The Italian Historiographic Tradition and the Women of Medieval Italy', in *Women in Medieval History and Historiography*, ed. by Susan Mosher Stuard (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1987)
- Hunt, Tony, *Popular Medicine in Thirteenth-Century England: Introduction and Texts* (Woodbridge: Brewer, 1990)
- Jackson, Stevi, *Heterosexuality in Question* (London: Sage, 1999)
- Jacquart, Danielle, and Claude Thomasset, *Sexuality and Medicine in the Middle Ages*, trans. by Matthew Adamson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988)
- James, M. R., *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Fitzwilliam Museum* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1895)
- , *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Latin Manuscripts in the John Rylands Library at Manchester* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1921)
- , trans., *The Apocryphal New Testament*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924)
- Johnson, Geraldine A., 'Beautiful Brides and Model Mothers: the Devotional and Talismanic Functions of Early Modern Marian Reliefs', in *The Material Culture of Sex, Procreation, and Marriage in Premodern Europe*, ed. by Anne L. McClanan and Karen Rosoff Encarnación (New York: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 135-61
- Jolly, Penny Howell, 'Jan van Eyck's Italian Pilgrimage: A Miraculous Florentine *Annunciation* and the Ghent Altarpiece', *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 61 (1998), 369-94
- Kamerick, Kathleen, 'Patronage and Devotion in the Prayer Book of Anne of Brittany, Newberry Library MS 83', *Manuscripta*, 39 (1995), 40-50
- Keiser, George R., ed., *Works of Science and Information* (New Haven: The Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1998)
- Kempe, Margery, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by Sanford Brown Meech and Hope Emily Allen, EETS, o.s. 212 (London: Oxford University Press, 1940)
- Kemperdick, Stephan, *Rogier van der Weyden* (Keulen: Köneman, 1999)
- King, Catherine, 'Medieval and Renaissance Matron, Italian Style', *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 55 (1992), 372-93

- , 'Women as Patrons: Nuns, Widows and Rulers', in *Siena, Florence and Padua: Art Society and Religion 1280-1400*, ed. by Diana Norman, 2 vols (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), II, pp. 243-66
- Klapisch-Zuber, Christiane, *Women, Family and Ritual in Renaissance Italy*, trans. by Lydia Cochrane (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1985)
- Kristeva, Julia, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. by Leon Roudiez, trans. by Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine, and Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980)
- , 'Stabat Mater', trans. by Léon S. Roudiez, in *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. by Toril Moi (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), pp. 160-86
- Laborde, A. de, *La Bible moralisée illustrée conservée à Oxford, Paris, et Londres*, 4 vols (Paris: [Npub], 1911-27)
- Lafontaine-Dosogne, Jacqueline, *Iconographie de l'enfance de la Vierge dans l'empire byzantin et en occident* (Brussels: Palais des Academies, 1964)
- Laget, Mireille, *Naissances: L'accouchement avant l'âge de la clinique* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1982)
- Laqueur, Thomas, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991)
- Lavezzo, Kathy, 'Sobs and Sighs Between Women: The Homoerotics of Compassion in *The Book of Margery Kempe*', *Premodern Sexualities*, ed. by Louise Fradenburg and Carla Freccero (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 175-198
- Lee, Becky R., 'The Purification of Women After Childbirth: A Window onto Medieval Perceptions of Women', *Florilegium*, 14 (1995-96), 43-55
- , 'A Company of Women and Men: Men's Recollections of Childbirth in Medieval England', *Journal of Family History*, 27 (2002), 92-100
- Legaré, Anne-Marie, 'Reassessing Women's Libraries in Late Medieval France: The Case of Jeanne de Laval', *RS*, 10 (1996), 209-29
- , 'Charlotte de Savoie's Library and Illuminators', *JEBS*, 4 (2001), 32-87
- , 'La réception du *Pèlerinage de Vie humaine* de Guillaume de Digulleville dans le milieu angevin d'après les sources et les manuscrits conservés', in *Religion et mentalités au Moyen Âge: Mélanges en l'honneur d'Hervé Martin*, ed. by Sophie Cassagnes-Brouquet and others (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2003), pp. 543-52



Leroquais, Victor, *Les Livres d'heures manuscrits de la Bibliothèque nationale*, 3 vols (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale, 1927)

Letts, Malcolm, ed., *The Travels of Leo Rozmital: Through Germany, Flanders, England, France, Spain, Portugal, and Italy, 1465-1467*, Hakluyt Society, second series, 108 for 1955 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957)

Lipton, Sara, *Images of Intolerance: The Representation of Jews and Judaism in the Bible moralisée* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of Paris, 1999)

Manion, Margaret, and Bernard J. Muir, eds, *Medieval Texts and Images: Studies of Manuscripts from the Middle Ages* (Chur: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1991)

—, eds, *The Art of the Book: Its Place in Medieval Worship*, (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1998)

Marrow, James H., 'History, Historiography, and Pictorial Invention in the *Turin-Milan Hours*', in *In Detail: New Studies of Northern Renaissance Art in Honor of Walter S. Gibson*, ed. by Laurinda S. Dixon (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), pp. 1-14

Maskell, William, ed., *Monumenta Ritualia Ecclesiae Anglicanae* (London: William Pickering, 1846)

Mause, Lloyd de, ed., *The History of Childhood* (Norwich: Psychohistory Press, 1974)

McCash, June Hall, ed., *The Cultural Patronage of Medieval Women* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996)

McClanan, Anne L., and Karen Rosoff Encarnación, eds, *The Material Culture of Sex, Procreation, and Marriage in Premodern Europe* (New York: Palgrave, 2001)

McInerney, Maud Burnett, 'In the Meydens Womb: Julian of Norwich and the Poetics of Enclosure', in *Medieval Mothering*, ed. by John Carmi Parsons and Bonnie Wheeler (New York and London: Garland, 1996), pp. 157-82

McLaughlin, Mary Martin, 'Survivors and Surrogates: Children and Parents from the Ninth to the Thirteenth Centuries', in *The History of Childhood*, ed. by Lloyd de Mause (Norwich: Psychohistory Press, 1974), pp. 101-81

Meale, Carol M., ed., *Women and Literature in Britain 1150-1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993)

—, '“...alle the bokes that I haue of latyn, englich, and frensch”: Laywomen and their Books in Late Medieval England', in *Women and Literature in Britain*

1150-1500 ed. by Carol M. Meale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 128-58

Meiss, Millard, *French Painting in the Time of Jean de Berry*, 3 vols (London and New York: Thames and Hudson, 1967-74)

Mellinkoff, Ruth, *Outcasts: Signs of Otherness in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages*, 2 vols (Berkeley, Los Angeles and Oxford: University of California Press, 1993)

Meredith, Peter, ed., *The Mary Play From the N. Town Manuscript* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1997)

Miller, Julia I., 'Miraculous Childbirth in the Portinari Altarpiece', *Art Bulletin*, 77 (1995), 249-61

Minois, George, *Anne de Bretagne* (Lille: Fayard, 1999)

Mirk, John, *Instructions for Parish Priests*, ed. by Edward Peacock, EETS, o.s. 31 (London: Oxford University Press, 1902)

—, *Festial*, ed. by Theodor Erbe, EETS, e.s. 96 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1905)

Morrison, Susan Signe, *Women Pilgrims in Late Medieval England: Private Piety as Public Performance* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000)

Müllerheim, Robert, *Die Wochenstube in der Kunst* (Stuttgart: Ferdinand Enke, 1904)

Musacchio, Jacqueline Marie, *The Art and Ritual of Childbirth in Renaissance Italy* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999)

—, 'Imaginative Conceptions in Renaissance Italy', in *Picturing Women in Renaissance and Baroque Italy*, ed. by Geraldine A. Johnson and Sara F. Mathews Grieco (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 42-60

Nash, Susie, *Between France and Flanders: Manuscript Illumination in Amiens in the Fifteenth Century* (London: The British Library and University of Toronto Press, 1999)

Naughton, Joan, 'A Minimally-Intrusive Presence: Portraits in Illustrations for Prayers to the Virgin', in *Medieval Texts and Images: Studies of Manuscripts from the Middle Ages*, ed. by Margaret Manion and Bernard J. Muir (Chur: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1991), pp. 111-26

Nelson, Marie, 'A Woman's Charm', *Studia Neophilologica*, 57 (1985), 3-8



Ogden, Margaret S., ed., *The Liber de Diversis Medicinis in the Thornton Manuscript*, EETS, o.s. 207 (London: Oxford University Press, 1938)

—, ed., *Cyrurgie of Guy de Chauliac*, EETS, o.s. 265 (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1971)

Olsan, Lea, 'The Arcus Charms and Christian Magic', *Neophilologus*, 73 (1989), 438-447

—, 'Latin Charms in British Library Royal MS 12 B xxv', *Manuscripta*, 33 (1989), 119-28

Orth, Myra Dickman, 'Family Values: Manuscripts as Gifts and Legacies among Renaissance French Women', *JEBS*, 4 (2001), 88-111

Pächt, Otto, 'René d'Anjou et les Van Eyck', *Cahiers de l'Association internationale des études françaises*, 8 (1956), 41-67

Panofsky, Erwin, 'Reintegration of a Book of Hours Executed in the Workshop of the "Maître des Grandes Heures de Rohan"', in *Medieval Studies in Memory of A. Kingsley Porter*, ed. by Wilhelm R. W. Koehler, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1939), II, pp. 479-99

—, *Early Netherlandish Painting: Its Origins and Character*, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1953)

Park, Katharine, and Robert A. Nye, 'Destiny is Anatomy: *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* by Thomas Laqueur', *The New Republic*, 204 (1991), 53-57

Parsons, John Carmi, and Bonnie Wheeler, eds, *Medieval Mothering* (New York and London: Garland, 1996)

Penketh, Sandra, 'Women and Books of Hours', in *Women and the Book: Assessing the Visual Evidence*, ed. by Lesley Smith and Jane H. M. Taylor (Toronto: University of Toronto Press and the British Library, 1997), pp. 266-80

Pettit, Edward, ed., *Lacnunga Polyglot: Anglo-Saxon Remedies, Charms, and Prayers from British Library MS Harley 585: The Lacnunga* (New York: E. Mellen Press, 2001)

Philips, Kim M., 'Bodily Walls, Windows, and Doors: The Politics of Gesture in Late Fifteenth-Century English Books for Women', in *Medieval Women: Texts and Contexts in Late Medieval Britain: Essays for Felicity Riddy*, ed. by Arlyn Diamond, Rosalynn Voaden and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), pp. 185-98

Pierce, Joanne M., '“Green Women” and Blood Pollution: Some Medieval Rituals for the Churcing of Women after Childbirth', *Studia Liturgica*, 29 (1999), 191-215

Plummer, John, ed., *The Hours of Catherine of Cleves* (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1966)

—, *The Last Flowering: French Painting in Manuscripts, 1420-1530: From American Collections* (New York: Pierpont Morgan Library and Oxford University Press, 1982)

Porcher, Jean, 'Two Models for the “Heures de Rohan”', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 8 (1945), 1-6

—, *French Miniatures from Illuminated Manuscripts* (London and New York: [NPub], 1960), p. 69

—, *The Rohan Book of Hours* (London and New York: [NPub], 1959)

Randolph, Adrian W. B., 'Renaissance Household Goddesses: Fertility, Politics, and the Gendering of Spectatorship', in *The Material Culture of Sex, Procreation, and Marriage in Premodern Europe*, ed. by Anne L. McClanan and Karen Rosoff Encarnación (New York: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 163-89

Rorimer, James J., ed., *The Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux Queen of France, at the Cloisters* (New York: [Npub], 1957)

Riddy, Felicity, '“Women Talking About the Things of God”: A Late Medieval Sub-Culture', in *Women and Literature in Britain 1150-1500* ed. by Carol M. Meale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 104-27

Rieder, Paula M., 'Insecure Borders: Symbols of Clerical Privilege and Gender Ambiguity in the Liturgy of Churcing', in *The Material Culture of Sex, Procreation, and Marriage in Premodern Europe*, ed. by Anne L. McClanan and Karen Rosoff Encarnación (New York: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 93-113

Ring, Grete, *A Century of French Painting* (London: Phaidon, 1949)

Robertson, Elizabeth, 'Medieval Medical Views of Women and Female Spirituality in the *Ancrene Wisse* and Julian of Norwich's *Showings*', in *Feminist Approaches to the Body in Medieval Literature*, ed. by Sarah Stanbury and Linda Lomperis (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), pp. 142-67

*The Rohan Hours: Bibliothèque nationale, Paris (ms lat. 9741)*, partial facsimile with introduction and commentary by Millard Meiss and Marcel Thomas (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973)

Rowland, Beryl, *Medieval Woman's Guide to Health: The First English Gynecological Handbook* (London: Croom Helm, 1981)



Rublack, Ulinka, 'Female Spirituality and the Infant Jesus in Late Medieval Dominican Convents', *Gender and History*, 6 (1994), 37-57

Saengar, Paul, *A Catalogue of the Pre-1500 Western Manuscripts at the Newberry Library* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989)

Schiesari, Juliana, *The Gendering of Melancholia: Feminism, Psychoanalysis, and the Symbolics of Loss in Renaissance Literature* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1992)

Sheingorn, Pamela, 'The Holy Kinship: Ascendency of Matriliny in the Sacred Genealogy of the Fifteenth Century', *Thought*, 64 (1989), 268-86

—, 'Appropriating the Holy Kinship: Gender and Family History', in *Interpreting Cultural Symbols: Saint Anne in Late Medieval Society*, ed. by Kathleen Ashley and Pamela Sheingorn (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1990), pp. 169-98

—, 'The Wise Mother', *Gesta*, 32 (1993), 69-80

—, 'The Maternal Behaviour of God: Divine Father as Fantasy Husband', in *Medieval Mothering*, ed. by John Carmi Parsons and Bonnie Wheeler (London: Garland, 1996), pp. 77-99

Sheldon, Susan Eastman, 'Middle English and Latin Charms, Amulets and Talismans from Vernacular Manuscripts' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Tulane, 1978)

Smith, Lesley, and Jane H. M. Taylor, eds, *Women, the Book and the Godly* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1995)

Smith, Lesley, and Jane H. M. Taylor, *Women and the Book: Assessing the Visual Evidence* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press and the British Library, 1997)

Staniland, Kay, 'Royal Entry into the World', in *England in the Fifteenth Century: Proceedings of the 1986 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. by Daniel Williams (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1987), pp. 297-313

Stanton, Anne Rudloff, 'From Eve to Bathsheba and Beyond: Motherhood in the Queen Mary Psalter', in *Women and the Book: Assessing the Visual Evidence*, ed. by Lesley Smith and Jane H. M. Taylor (London: The British Library and University of Toronto Press, 1996), pp. 172-89

Stoerz, Fiona Harris, 'Suffering and Survival in Medieval English Childbirth', in *Medieval Family Roles: A Book of Essays*, ed. by Cathy Jorgensen Itnyre (New York and London: Garland, 1996), pp. 101-20

Stones, Alison, 'Nipples, Entrails, Severed Heads, and Skin: Devotional Images for Madame Marie', in *Image and Belief: Studies in Celebration of the Eightieth Anniversary of the Index of Christian Art*, ed. by Colum Hourihane (Princeton: Princeton University Press/ICA, 1999), pp. 47-64

Storms, G., *Anglo-Saxon Magic* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1948)

Thomas, Keith, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (London: Penguin, 1973; repr. 1991)

Toynbee, Margaret R., 'The Portraiture of Isabella Stuart, Duchess of Brittany (c. 1427-after 1494)', *Burlington Magazine*, 88 (1946), 300-306

Tucker, M. J., 'The Child as Beginning and End: Fifteenth and Sixteenth Century Childhood', in *The History of Childhood*, ed. by Lloyd de Mause (Norwich: Psychohistory Press, 1974), pp. 229-257

Vale, M. G. A., *Charles VII* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1974)

Warr, Cordelia, 'Painting in Late Fourteenth-Century Padua: The Patronage of Fina Buzzacarini', *RS*, 10 (1996), 139-155

Watson, Rowan, 'The Marguerite de Foix Book of Hours', *The V&A Album*, 2 (1983), 45-60

—, *The Playfair Hours* (London: The Victoria and Albert Museum, 1984)

Weston, L. M. C., 'Women's Medicine, Women's Magic: The Old English Metrical Childbirth Charms', *Modern Philology*, 92 (1994-95), 279-93

Wieck, Roger, *Time Sanctified: The Book of Hours in Medieval Art and Life* (New York: Braziller and The Walters Art Gallery, 1988)

Wiesner, Merry E., 'Early Modern Midwifery: A Case Study', in *Women and Work in Pre-Industrial Europe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), pp. 94-113

Wilson, Adrian, 'Participant or Patient? Seventeenth-century Childbirth from the Mother's Point of View', in *Patients and Practitioners: Lay Perceptions of Medicine in Pre-Industrial Society*, ed. by Roy Porter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 129-44

—, 'The Ceremony of Childbirth and its Interpretation', in *Women as Mothers in Pre-Industrial England: Essays in Memory of Dorothy McLaren*, ed. by Valerie Fildes (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 68-107

—, *The Making of Man-Midwifery: Childbirth in England 1660-1770* (London: UCL Press Ltd, 1995)



Zemon-Davis, Natalie, 'Women on Top' in, *Society and Culture in Early-Modern France* (London: Duckworth, 1975), pp. 124-51

### **Electronic Publications**

Caviness, Madeleine H., *Reframing Medieval Art: Difference, Margins, Boundaries*, published online at [www.tufts.edu/Caviness](http://www.tufts.edu/Caviness) Accessed: 13 July 2003.

Knödel, Natalie, *The Thanksgiving of Women after Childbirth, Commonly Called The Churching of Women*, published online at <http://users.ox.ac.uk/~mikef/church.html> Accessed: 3 Mary 2001

### **Electronic Sources**

Apocicon:

[http://faculty.maryvillecollege.edu/scripts/as\\_web4.exe?Command=First&File=Apocicon.ask](http://faculty.maryvillecollege.edu/scripts/as_web4.exe?Command=First&File=Apocicon.ask)

Accessed: 11 December 2002

Yolande d'Anjou:

<http://xenophongroup.com/montjoie/yolande.htm>

Accessed: 12 June 2003

*Catholic Encyclopaedia Online:*

<http://www.newadvent.org>

Accessed: 30 August 2003

The Bible:

<http://www.bible.crosswalk.com>

Accessed: 15 September 2003

Guisto de' Menabuoi:

<http://www.easyweb.easynet.co.uk/giorgio.vasari/giusto>

Accessed: 20 October 2003

Andrea Pisano:

[http://www.kfki.hu/~arthp/art/p/pisano/andrea/south\\_d/3birth\\_b.jpg](http://www.kfki.hu/~arthp/art/p/pisano/andrea/south_d/3birth_b.jpg)

Accessed: 20 September 2003